



SONOMA COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

January 18, 2013

Jennifer Barrett
Sonoma County PRMD
2550 Ventura Drive
Santa Rosa CA 95403

Dear Ms. Barrett,

The Sonoma County Farm Bureau's Natural Resources & Environment Committee has met and discussed the issue of renewable energy on agricultural lands. We welcome and encourage the voluntary development of renewable energy on public and private lands. In the decision-making process for renewable energy projects, priority should be given to those projects located on marginally productive or nonproductive land. These energy projects located on private agriculturally productive lands should be subordinate to the agricultural operation and should not permanently impede or reduce the productive agricultural capacity of the land for future uses. Renewable energy projects proposed for exclusively agricultural zoning designations should require a conditional use permit to mitigate the potential negative impacts on neighboring farming operations.

Additional setbacks and/ or buffer zones shall be required of any renewable energy project and not be the burden of agricultural operations. This amendment should also set forth the right of an agricultural operation to change its farming practices or crops without prejudice even if the change could prove detrimental to the renewable energy project.

Sonoma County Farm Bureau's Natural Resources & Environment Committee would welcome the opportunity to meet with Permit & Resource Management Department and Planning Commission staff to discuss the renewable energy issue before it is presented to the Board of Supervisors. I can be reached at (707) 975-3152. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Azevedo, chair
Natural Resources & Environment Committee

Cc. board of directors



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April 3, 2013

To: Jennifer Barrett, PRMD
Sonoma County Planning Commission
2550 Ventura Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2809

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us these past few months regarding renewable energy on agricultural lands. We would like to reconfirm our position on this issue. Our discussions have included but are not limited to the following. Renewable energy projects:

- Should be excluded from prime agricultural lands
- Should be subordinate to the agricultural operation
- Should not impede or reduce the production or agricultural capacity of the land
- Should require conditional use permit to mitigate potential negative impacts on neighboring farming operations
- Should require setbacks and buffer zones on project lands
- Should not limit, alter or change existing farming practices or place any limitations or restrictions on future change of crops or cultural practices which may prove detrimental to the energy project
- Will establish a "decommission fund" for removal of abandoned or non-functioning energy projects on agricultural zoned lands
- If allowed as a compatible use on Williamson Act lands, the project will be limited to 15 percent up to a maximum of 5 acres, whichever is less
- Will not take viable permanent crops out of production

Thank you again for your willingness to work with us on this important issue. Sonoma County Farm Bureau's primary objective is to protect Sonoma County's important and irreplaceable farmland and agricultural resources for the future.

Sincerely,

John Azevedo, chair
Natural Resources & Environment Committee