

For Immediate Release
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Settlement Reached in Litigation over the 2010 Monterey County General Plan

Monterey County, The Open Monterey Project and LandWatch Monterey County have reached an agreement that could settle the remaining litigation over the 2010 Monterey County General Plan.

Monterey County adopted a revised General Plan in October of 2010. In 2013, the County settled a General Plan lawsuit filed by the Salinas Valley Water Coalition, the Farm Bureau, and others. That 2013 settlement involved amendments to the 2010 General Plan, including calling for a five-year study of Zone 2C in the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin, which is currently underway.

This new settlement calls for the County to consider various additional amendments to the 2010 General Plan. Those amendments would generally require a more binding commitment on the part of the County to adopt measures addressing overdraft conditions, seawater intrusion and falling groundwater levels in the Salinas Basin should the Zone 2C five-year study conclude that those conditions will exist or continue until 2030.

In addition, the amendments would provide as follows:

- New agriculture on steeper slopes (25 – 35%) would be limited to the Agricultural and Winery Corridor and the Cachagua area, and prohibited above 25% slope in all other areas of the County
- New development within an identified wildlife corridor or linkage would be required to implement design guidelines to preserve the functionality of the corridor or linkage
- Stand-alone inns and restaurants would be eliminated from the streamlined approval process for the Agricultural and Winery Corridor

The proposed amendments to the General Plan will undergo a full public review process, including hearings at the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, and be subject to environmental review. It is anticipated that this process will begin in February and conclude in late April or early May. The Board retains full discretion with regard to the adoption of the proposed amendments. If the proposed amendments are adopted and implemented, the remaining litigation would be settled; if not adopted, the litigation will continue. The agreement also calls for the payment of attorney fees to The Open Monterey Project and LandWatch in the negotiated amount of \$425,000 each.

This settlement represents a series of good faith compromises between the parties and was possible because all three parties shared the ultimate goals of protecting water supply, water quality, habitat, and wildlife corridors.

For further information or comments, contact the following representatives:

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