

RESOLUTION NO. 12-050

RESOLUTION OF THE LASSEN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AMENDING THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CALIFORNIA LAND CONSERVATION ACT OF 1965 (WILLIAMSON ACT) IN LASSEN COUNTY

WHEREAS, the California Legislature adopted the Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) in 1965 to encourage preservation of limited supplies of agricultural land in the state. The Act provides a potential tax incentive to owners to maintain their land in agricultural production through contracts between the owner and the County; and

WHEREAS, the Williamson Act enforceably restricts the use of land under contract to commercial agriculture and compatible uses; and

WHEREAS, Government Code Section 51257 is ambiguous regarding the requirements for new Williamson Act contracts with lot line adjustments, and should be clarified as to how it will be applied in Lassen County; and

WHEREAS, with regard to minimum acreage for a contract, Government Code Section 51222 provides that the state shall presume that parcels are large enough to sustain their agricultural use, and thereby qualify for a Williamson Act contract if they are at least ten (10) acres in size for prime agricultural land and at least forty (40) acres in size for non-prime land; and

WHEREAS, until 2009, the State made "subvention" payments to local governments (pursuant to Open Space Subvention Act, enacted on January 1, 1972) in order to provide for the replacement of local property tax revenue foregone as a result of participation in the California Land Conservation (Williamson Act). Since 2009 nearly all funding for Williamson Act has been removed from the state budget; and

WHEREAS, the Board has held multiple public meetings and hearings to discuss appropriate action for Lassen County to take as a result of the States failure to fund the program; and

WHEREAS, the Board has on multiple occasions requested input regarding appropriate Board action to the state's failure to fund the program from the Lassen County Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and others; and

WHEREAS, The Policies and Procedures adopted by this resolution replace those Policies and Procedures adopted by the Board of Supervisors through Board Resolution Number 06-068 on September 12, 2006.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct.
2. The Board of Supervisors does hereby amend the policies and procedures for administration and implementation of the Williamson Act Program in Lassen County attached hereto as Exhibit A, and incorporates the following findings as the basis for these policies and procedures:

- a) Agricultural production is and will remain a principle land use in Lassen County.
- b) Agricultural production on lands within Lassen County constitutes an important physical, social, aesthetic and economic asset to the county.
- c) In addition to a range of economically important commodities, agricultural land provides open space and scenic values, wildlife habitat and land stewardship, and contributes significantly to the county's rural character.
- d) Properties which are not in compliance with the Act and/or contract provisions jeopardize the viability of the program within the county.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION was adopted at a regular meeting of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors on the 9th day of October, 2012, by the following vote:

AYES: Supervisors Dahle, Chapman, Wosick

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Supervisors Pyle, Hanson

Brian Dahle
Brian Dahle, Chairman
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Susan Osgood
Susan Osgood, Deputy Clerk of the Board

I, SUSAN OSGOOD, Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, County of Lassen, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Lassen County Board of Supervisors on the 9th day of October, 2012.

Susan Osgood
COUNTY CLERK AND EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

EXHIBIT A

**LASSEN COUNTY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE
LAND CONSERVATION ACT OF 1965 (WILLIAMSON ACT)**

1. **Establishing or Modifying an Agricultural Preserve; or Entering into or Modifying a Williamson Act Contract**
 - a. To enter into a Williamson Act contract, the land must first be in a qualifying agricultural zoning district (E-A, Exclusive Agriculture; U-C, Upland Conservation; or U-C-2, Upland Conservation/Resource Management) and must be in an Agricultural Preserve.
 - b. Application(s) to rezone land to a qualifying agricultural zone and to establish or modify an agricultural preserve, and/or enter into or modify a Williamson Act contract shall be filed with the Lassen County Planning and Building Services Department on forms provided by that Department and shall include at least the following (additional information may be required):
 - Name(s) of Landowner(s) of record
 - Location of property, including maps depicting the location and boundaries of all affected lands
 - Complete legal description of all lands to be placed in agricultural preserve and contract
 - The total size of the affected property
 - Details regarding the agricultural commodity(ies) produced on the property, and any proposed compatible land uses
 - All additional information required for processing, as determined by the Planning and Building Services Department.
 - c. Applications shall be accompanied by the appropriate fee(s) established by the Board of Supervisors.
 - d. Applications for new or modified agricultural preserves and contracts shall be reviewed by the Lassen County Land Conservation Committee to determine eligibility. The Committee will forward its recommendation to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
 - e. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider the application(s) as required by zoning regulations, and shall forward its recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The Board will hold its own public hearing and will consider the Planning Commission and Land Conservation Committee findings and recommendations, and shall determine whether or not all criteria have been met for an agricultural preserve and render its decision on the application(s).
 - f. After formation of the agricultural preserve, the applicant is eligible to be offered a Williamson Act contract which, when signed by the County and the Landowner, is binding upon the land for terms of at least ten (10) years, or twenty (20) years in the case of a

Farmland Security Zone. During the term of the contract uses of the land are enforceably restricted by the provisions of the zoning ordinance, the contract and the Williamson Act.

g. Except as provided in subsection 1(i), in the minimum acreage required to be eligible to enter into an agricultural preserve in Lassen County shall be 100 acres of Class I soils or Class I equivalent soils, using the Natural Resources Conservation Service Land Classification System, as prescribed in Lassen County Resolution No.1924, and summarized below.

NRCS Soil Class	Acres Required for 1 Acre of Class I Equivalent
I	1
II	1
III	2
IV	4
V	6
VI	6
VII	10
VIII	20

- h. Except as provided in subsection 1(i), the minimum acreage to be eligible to remain in or enter or into a Williamson Act contract in Lassen County shall be one of the following:
- a. One hundred (100) acres of NRCS Class I through V soils with a functioning irrigation system (functioning irrigation system means an adequate and available water source and delivery system). Said irrigation system must be capable of delivering an adequate and available water source to a minimum of 100 acres to qualify under this provision; or
 - b. Four hundred (400) acres of dry (no irrigation) or partially irrigated land.
- i. The Board of Supervisors may establish agricultural preserves on less acreage than prescribed in 1(g) in accordance with Government Code Section 51230, and may enter into Williamson Act contracts on less acreage than prescribed in 1(h), except that in no case shall an agricultural preserve be established or a contract be offered on acreage less than is presumed by the state to be large enough to sustain its agricultural use (GC §51222).
2. Boundary Adjustments, Division or Transfer of Property under Williamson Act Contract.
- a. No ownership that meets the minimum county acreage standard for a contract before lot line adjustment shall, as a result of adjustment, become substandard.
 - b. Lot Line Adjustments shall be considered by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) pursuant to the County Code. Any Lot Line Adjustment approved by the TAC on

lands under contract shall be conditioned upon the Board of Supervisors making the required findings in accordance with Government Code Section 51257. Prior to consideration by the Board of Supervisors, any Lot Line Adjustment that affects one or more Williamson Act Contracts shall first be reviewed by the Lassen County Land Conservation Committee, which shall forward its findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

c. An application to divide land under Williamson Act contract may be considered by the County in accordance with the County Subdivision Ordinance and the Subdivision Map Act, provided that each of the proposed parcels after division must meet the parcel size requirements of the Zoning Code and the County's minimum acreage standard for a Williamson Act contract.

d. Where a land division or lot line adjustment would result in separate ownerships under a single contract, a new contract for each newly created or adjusted parcel (or ownership) may be required as a condition of Tentative Map, Parcel Map or Lot Line Adjustment approval. For Lot Line Adjustments the following general guidelines will apply, subject to case by case review:

- i) Where a lot line adjustment involves parcels located entirely within a single contract under one ownership, new contracts will not be required;
- ii) Where a lot line adjustment involves parcels under two or more separate contracts and/or two or more ownerships, new contracts may be required;
- iii) Where a lot line adjustment results in lands not under contract being added to lands under contract, new contracts will be required as necessary to include the new land.

e. Except as provided in Government Code §51230.1, §51230.2, and as may otherwise be allowed with a binding Joint Management Agreement, no parcel or group of parcels that make up a "substandard portion" of land under contract may be divided and/or sold separately from the remaining lands under contract. As used here "substandard portion" means a parcel or group of contiguous parcels that do not collectively meet the minimum county acreage standard for a contract as established in Policy 1(h), above.

f. The provisions of County Code Section 18.108.250 "Segregation of Homesites in Agricultural Zones," may apply to lands under Williamson Act contract only if the segregated homesite meets the minimum acreage of ten (10) acres of prime land and forty (40) acres of non-prime land, or is subject to a binding Joint Management Agreement with adjoining land under contract, where the segregated homesite parcel and the adjoining lands collectively meet the County's minimum acreage requirement for a contract.

g. A notice on nonrenewal shall be filed on any contract that enters or has entered into a conservation easement. By August 31 of each year the County Assessor shall provide information to the Planning and Building Services Department necessary to allow recordation of said notice of nonrenewal. The Planning and Building Services Department shall record a notice of nonrenewal for all the parcels so identified by October 31 of that year. If for any reason said notice is not recorded in the year it was discovered that there is a conservation

easement on all or a portion of the restricted lands, said notice shall be recorded the following year.

h. A notice on nonrenewal shall be filed on any contract lands that are sold or otherwise transferred and result in a "substandard portion." By August 31 of each year the County Assessor shall provide information to the Planning and Building Services Department necessary to allow recordation of said notice of nonrenewal. The Planning and Building Services Department shall record a notice of nonrenewal for all the parcels so identified by October 31 of that year. If for any reason said notice is not recorded in the year it was discovered that there is a conservation easement on all or a portion of the restricted lands, said notice shall be recorded the following year.

3. Residential, Commercial and Industrial Structures on Property under Williamson Act Contract

a. On land under contract that meets or exceeds the county minimum acreage for a contract, one single family residence that is consistent with the Williamson Act may be permitted. Other residential structures, including additional dwellings, attached units such as a duplex, or a dormitory or bunkhouse for employee housing, may be approved upon securing a Certificate of Conditional Use, Use Permit, or other permit as required by the zoning code.

b. On land under contract that is less than the county minimum acreage for a contract, all residential development will be subject to discretionary review and approval. The County may also consider non-renewal of the contract on such lands.

c. On lands under contract, structures that would otherwise not be permitted without existing commercial agriculture (e.g., barn, equipment storage, residence), may, on a case by case basis, be considered for approval concurrently with the establishment of the commercial agricultural operation, provided that the combined floor area of all proposed structures is under 2,500 square feet; the property meets the county minimum acreage for a contract; and a Certificate of Conditional Use specifying the type and extent of commercial agriculture proposed and a timeline for establishment, is first secured.

d. No new structures shall be permitted on lands under Williamson Act contract unless they are directly related to, or are incidental to, on site commercial agriculture or other compatible use(s).

4. Definition of Agriculture for Williamson Act Purposes

Agriculture or Commercial Agriculture. As used in relation to the Williamson Act, the terms "agriculture" and "commercial agriculture" shall mean the use of land for the production of agricultural commodities (i.e., crops or livestock produced for food, fiber, flowers, fuel and oils) principally for sale to others.

5. **Definition of "Contract" for Lassen County Williamson Act Purposes.**

Contract. As used in relation to the Williamson Act, the term "contract" shall mean the contract actually entered into by the Board of Supervisors and a property owner. If the original contract is not owned by a single property owner or group of property owners, "Contract" shall also mean an "inured contract," which is defined as a portion of one or more prior contracts now owned by a unique property owner or group of property owners.

