



ELK GROVE FFA

9800 Elk Grove Florin Rd.
Elk Grove , California 95624
(916) 686 -7741

CALIFORNIA FOREVER

HOW WILL YOU VOTE?

California State Contest
May 4, 2024

Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

Course(s) in which instruction occurred, including the number of students involved in the instruction of the issue.

Instruction related to this issue occurred in the following courses taught within the Elk Grove High School Agriculture Department: Advanced Interdisciplinary Science in Sustainable Agriculture, the (76 students) completed units on the environmental effects of urban sprawl and on the long-term effect urbanization is having on agricultural production. Economics in Agriculture (64 students) completed a unit of instruction dealing with the economic effects of the threat of development in the Central Valley on California's ability to remain the top agricultural producer in the nation. In Agricultural Biology (156 students) and Agricultural Chemistry and Soil Science (123 students), the California Forever Development was covered as an agricultural current event as a threat to local agricultural production. Total: 419 students.

Why is this issue important now?

Urban sprawl has been a growing problem in California for decades. New developments and the expansion of cities' spheres of influence have caused farmland and environmentally sensitive areas to be paved over and built upon, forever changing the landscape of California. The development, California Forever, is just one example of many of the issues that have divided communities when land use is considered. In this specific case, over 60,000 acres in Solano County, currently used for grazing, hay and small grain production have been purchased by the developer with the intent of building a mixed use community where 50,000 people would live in 20,000 homes. The East Solano Homes, Jobs and Clean Energy Initiative will be listed on an upcoming Solano County ballot and backers of the project are currently seeking approval from the voters (California Forever, 2024). As election day moves closer, both the proponents and opponents of the initiative and the development have become more vocal in their cause.

What is the nature of the issue?

The need for housing versus the want for open space and the protection of our agricultural lands have been debated at all levels of citizenship and government. Land use and urban sprawl have long been an issue for discussion in California. The vote of Solano County's citizens that will be occurring in November has heightened the discussion in both the media and on a personal level. Many public and virtual forums have been held as the issues within the topic are brought to light. Those seeking an increase in affordable housing within the bay area corridor are in favor of the concept of a well planned community, while those with interests in open space, agriculture or environmental issues are still not sold on the concept, or rooted deeply against it. Those representing Travis Air Force Base are very cautious about a new community so close to the hustle and bustle of its flight paths.

Who is involved in the issue?

The issue breaks itself into two sides: those clearly for the development and those against. There are also additional groups that have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, these include the county government, US Military, and other government entities. Those supporting the plan are the investors and developers that have put their own money forward to purchase the land and create the proposal. To date, they have spent over \$800 million to bring this issue to a vote. Others in favor are affordable housing advocates and land owners that were ready to cash out of their land holding. Those clearly against the proposal are ranchers and farmers that have lived and worked the land for generations, and whose livelihood is threatened. They believe that they are being forced off their property with these secrets. These purchases were kept secret until the plan was unveiled. Environmentalists are concerned that the Suisun Marsh, the largest of its kind in the United States, will be jeopardized by the development, and that the home to the numerous species that use them during migration, and as their permanent home, could be affected.

How can the issue be defined?

The issue is a continuing altercation between the parties involved that presumably will end when the votes are counted. Currently, there are over 60,000 acres in Solano County owned by a group of investors led by Jan Sramek, that have been labeled as the home of a new planned community called California Forever. The community will sit in eastern Solano County and link the cities of Rio Vista and Dixon to the east, with Travis Air Force Base and Suisun to the west. Currently, this land is being used for grazing livestock as well as the production of hay and small grains. This development will encroach on the Suisun Marsh, a very fragile ecosystem.

Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

What is the historical background of the issue?

The California Forever project was initially announced last August, and has drawn wide-spread attention with its pretentious ambitions and impressive financial support. Jan Sramek is the founder and CEO of Flannery Associates and California Forever, who have designed a town in Solano County and named it “California Forever”. With the help of billionaires Laurene Powell Jobs, Reid Hoffman, Marc Andreessen, Michael Moritz, and others, Flannery Associates has purchased nearly 62,000 acres of land privately over the course of five years, starting in 2018, to create a “dream community.” The hope is to create a town that benefits everyone, but there are many community members and organizations who are unhappy with this proposal. Solano County passed in 2007, and again in 2008, an Orderly Growth Initiative to limit growth on agricultural lands. The end of the current issue should come with the November 5, 2024, vote on the East Solano Homes, Jobs and Clean Energy Initiative (Skolnik, 2024).

What caused the issue?

The purchase of the land and subsequent filing of the proposal with the County of Solano created the beginning of the disagreement concerning the use of the over 60,000 acres owned by California Forever (California Forever, 2024). Many attest that the land was purchased in a less than forthright way using tactics that pushed the proposal through the planning and regulatory agencies without public acknowledgement. Those against the issue have pushed for more public disclosure and have accused the developers of using misinformation to gather signatures for the ballot initiative.

What are the risks?

The risks, as outlined by the opponents, fall into three categories. The first is the risk to the agricultural producers in the region. The loss of the rangeland and farmland could cause a ripple effect through local agribusiness, costing loss of productivity and jobs. Once the land is developed, there is no going back. Second, environmentally, this project will lead to the detriment of native plants, wildlife, and water resources that the community depends on daily. There would be a disturbance in the balance of the ecosystem causing species to be lost. Additionally, where will the water come from to maintain this landscape and the houses? Currently, most of the land is unirrigated and there is no infrastructure or plan to move water to the proposed city. The threat to the long term viability of Travis Air Force Base is the third risk. The “not in my backyard”, NIMBY attitude of new homeowners and glare from 10,000 acres of solar fields, could cause public criticism of the base and cause a break in our nation's defense.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the development to the citizens of Solano County are an increase in tax revenue that would result from the increase in property taxes, sales tax and other fees. There should be an increase in affordable housing for the region and open space, parks and improvements that will come from a well planned urban community. Currently, California has an affordable housing shortage. Solano County's biggest city, Vallejo, has a median price average of \$515,000, with a median income of \$86,000. In San Francisco, less than 60 miles from the development, the median home price is \$1.34 million and the average income is \$136,000 (Larson, 2024). Another benefit will be the increase in renewable energy through the solar production planned as a feature of the California Forever development.

Is there strong disagreement on how the issue should be solved?

Those in favor of the development believe that the city will be an asset, using marginal agricultural land to increase housing, tax base, and energy production in the region. They commonly say that the development will make people proud to be a Californian again. The opponents believe that this is simply a money grab with many hollow promises and that there is no guarantee that the development will ever be built, or that any of the improvements promised will be honored. The rhetoric surrounding the ballot initiative has divided the residents of Solano County.

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Documented Forums

Organization	When	Location	# Present
Sacramento County Young Farmers and Ranchers	4.16.2024 @ 4:00PM	Elk Grove, CA	4
Solano County Farm Families	4.17.2024 @ 5:30PM	Elk Grove, CA	6
California State Legislative Staff	4.18.2024 @ 1:00PM	Sacramento, CA	6
Ag Association Management Services, Inc	4.18.2024 @ 3:00PM	Sacramento, CA	11
California Farmland Trust	4.23.2024 @ 3:30PM	Sacramento, CA	7



Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

Sacramento Farm Bureau

April 16th, 2024
4:00 PM

Sacramento Farm Bureau Board Room -
Elk Grove, CA

Number In Attendance: 4

Contact Person: Georgia Fedler
Committee Chair
916-717-3838



April 23, 2024



Elk Grove FFA
Elk Grove High School
9800 Elk Grove-Florin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95624

Members of the Elk Grove FFA AG Issues Team,

The Sacramento Young Farmers and Ranchers committee was delighted to listen and provide feedback to the Elk Grove FFA Ag Issues Team on Tuesday April 16th. They presented a thorough and well researched forum on the proposed "California Forever" development. The students focused on the agricultural impacts of the issue while tying in the economic, ecological, and social influence. Members of the YF&R committee applaud the Elk Grove FFA Issues team for taking on such a controversial issue and presenting it so well.

The students represented various interest groups and accurately articulated the pros and cons of the housing development in Solano County. They represented a member of the city planning committee, a biologist, a farmer, military personnel, and a representative from California Forever. They did research from each viewpoint and were able to support their claims when asked questions following the forum.

Members of YF&R present were past FFA members and were beyond impressed by the quality of the forum. The Sacramento YF&R is made up of agriculturists who have taken an interest in the proposed development as it may affect some of our members. As we follow along with the issue in real time, we wish the Elk Grove FFA Issues team the best of luck as they head towards state finals.

Sincerely,

Georgia Fedler

gnfedler@gmail.com
Committee Member

The first major forum conducted was with the Sacramento County Farm Bureau (SCFB). This group is made up of young farmers and ranchers throughout Sacramento County. Most of these members are at risk of being affected by this issue and have taken a good look into the California Forever proposal. The SCFB prides themselves on being well versed in all issues facing not only Sacramento but neighboring counties as well.



Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

Denise Mellor

8931 Binger Drive
Elk Grove, CA 95624
916 804-8465

Elk Grove FFA, Elk Grove High School
9800 Elk Grove-Florin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95624

April 22, 2024

Dear Elk Grove FFA Ag Issues Team,

Thank you for inviting me to listen to your 2024 Ag Issues Forum presentation on California Forever. The presentation was held at Elk Grove High School on April 17th, 2024, at 5:30 pm. The moderator gave an overview of the proposal and then introduced speakers who represented individuals or groups. They included the arguments for and against from the perspectives of the developer, a city planner, the farmers/landowners, the Sierra Club and Travis Air Force Base PIO.

I grew up in Solano County (Dixon and then Rio Vista) and while I now live in Sacramento County, I still have deep ties to the area. We have a family farm in Dixon, and we have owned other land that is now part of the proposed development. As a result, I have been following the proposal closely. The developer is making many promises to get the proposal approved via a ballot initiative; however, I as well as the other landowners and residents of the county that attended have grave concerns about the impacts to traffic; water supplies and sprawl.

I very much appreciate the team selecting this topic and bringing attention to the proposal. They did a great job summarizing the proposal and selecting roles to present the issues.

Sincerely,

Denise Mellor

Denise Mellor
Solano County Landowner

Solano County Land Owners

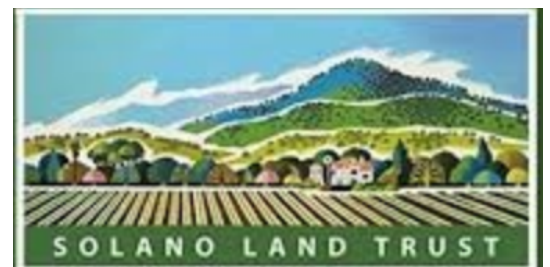
April 17th, 2024
5:30 PM

Elk Grove High School -
Elk Grove, CA

Number In Attendance: 6

Contact Person: Denise Mellor
Solano County Landowner
916-804-8465

Our second forum allowed us to present to various Solano County Land owners. The California Forever development proposal affects people from all different professional industries and most importantly affects the everyday lives of the residents that live there. The ballot initiative is at the forefront of all residents' minds and could have societal and economic impacts for their community.



Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

Legislative Staff

April 18th, 2024
1:00 PM

California Advocates Conference Room -
Sacramento, CA

Number In Attendance: 6

Contact Person: Katy Albiani
Legislative Aid
916-662-0336



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Assembly
California Legislature

VINCE FONG
ASSEMBLY MEMBER, THIRTY-SECOND DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
VICE CHAIR, BUDGET
VICE CHAIR, TRANSPORTATION
HEALTH
INSURANCE
PRIVACY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT

To Whom It May Concern,

On April 18th at 1:00 PM, six legislative staffers representing Senators and Assemblymembers from across the state, and particularly the Central Valley, met with the Elk Grove FFA Ag Issues team to provide feedback on their presentation regarding the proposed new development in Solano County, commonly known as the California Forever project. The staff members who participated in this panel are experts in policy areas relevant to this topic, such as environmental management, agriculture, water, urban planning, and housing. Our panel, as well as the Ag Issues team's intended audience, is interested and knowledgeable in open space and proper urban planning.

The students showcased their commendable and well-rounded knowledge on this potential development by focusing on the environmental, planning, economic and agricultural concerns surrounding this controversial ballot measure. Through their roles as a representative of the developer, a concerned rancher, a representative of Travis Air Force Base, the County of Solano planner, and a wetlands biologist, the students were able to demonstrate their vast understanding on the topic through the detailed, differing perspectives of each participant on the forum. We appreciated the role of the moderator in setting the stage and leading the debate. The members effectively explored the effects that California Forever would have on the environment, traffic congestion, agricultural production, and overall quality of life in Solano County and the surrounding region.

After the presentation, we focused on workshoping potential questions, provided additional feedback on specific arguments, and suggested further pros and cons to the project from a legislative perspective. Given the legislative background of the panel, we were able to have a robust discussion on the legislative implications of the California Forever project, both from more conservative and progressive viewpoints. In our role as legislative staffers in the Capitol, we hope that our feedback and insights equipped the Elk Grove FFA Ag Issues team with even more information to make their future presentations at the state level successful.

Sincerely,



Katy Albiani

Legislative Aide, Assemblymember Vince Fong (R – Bakersfield)
(916) 662-0336



Our opportunity to present to Capital Staffers allowed us to understand some of the political issues surrounding land use and state water management. As advisors to the state policy makers, they play a vital role in environmental management, urban planning, agriculture, and housing developments.

Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

Ag Association Management Services, Inc.

April 18th, 2024
3:00 PM

Association Office - Sacramento, CA

Number In Attendance: 11

Contact Person: Jill Damskey
Executive Director
916-441-1064



April 22, 2024
Elk Grove FFA Ag Issues Team
Attn: Mr. Albani
Elk Grove High School
9800 Elk Grove Florin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95624

Re: Agricultural Issues Forum Presentation

Dear Instructors and Elk Grove FFA Team Members,

On behalf of Ag Association Management Services, Inc. (AAMSI), I would like to thank you for coming to our office on Thursday, April 18th to present your Ag Issues Forum on "California Forever. What is your vote?" As you know, urban sprawl is always a topic of extreme importance to the agriculture industry, and I commend you on being able to present multiple sides of this complex issue.

The presentation itself was conducted in a very professional manner and you clearly illustrated your understanding of the project, the differing perspectives, emotions, and long-term implications of this decision. Our team was incredibly impressed with the quality of the team presentation overall, including public speaking skills, poise, professionalism, and knowledge of the topic.

AAMSI is proud to represent over 40 different agriculture-based associations, foundations, commissions, and marketing orders. Our office is located in Sacramento County, which neighbors the county of concern in this presentation. Many of our members, as well as staff, live near this area as well, and it is a very real concern for all of us and the future of agriculture. I commend you, and thank you, for calling attention to this important issue.

Best of luck in your upcoming State Contest!

Best,

Jill Damskey
Executive Director

1521 "Y" Street
Sacramento, CA 95804 916-441-1064 T
916-444-1063 F agamsl.com



Ag Association management represents many trade associations with interests in Solano County. The feed grain producers and pork producers are examples of agricultural entities that their association advises and play an active role in Solano County agriculture.

Elk Grove FFA - California Forever

California Farmland Trust has a strong interest in the conversion of farmland into housing developments. Their job is to take action to protect the best viable farmland in order for our future generations to thrive. They are involved in many discussions facing the conservation of natural resources and agriculture.



CALIFORNIA FARMLAND TRUST

www.cafarmtrust.org

P.O. Box 1960
Elk Grove, California 95759

P: 916.687.3178
F: 916.685.1041

April 24, 2024

Mr. Mike Albani
Elk Grove High School
9800 Elk Grove Florin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95624

RE: Agricultural Issues Forum Presentation – California Forever

Dear Mr. Albani,

On behalf of the California Farmland Trust, I would like to express our gratitude for coming to our office on Tuesday, April 23rd, to present your Ag Issues Forum on California Forever.

The presentation was delivered professionally, and members of the team clearly understood the issue and the different viewpoints of the community, the developer, and the county. Following the presentation, the students and I discussed the concepts of various types of conservation easements, including those protecting farmland. We discussed CEQA, local land use policies that trigger mitigation, and the fundamentals of offsetting impacts of natural resources and agriculture through mitigation.

The California Farmland Trust (CFT) was founded in 2004 as a non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation with a mission to help farmers protect the best farmland in the world by conserving a unique natural resource that will enable future generations to thrive. CFT has successfully leveraged private donations and public funds to protect farmland throughout the Central Valley and several more thousands of acres in the process of protection, working with interested landowners wishing to conserve their farmland for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to present, and I wish you the best of luck.

With gratitude,

Charlotte Mitchell,
Executive Director



California Farmland Trust

April 23rd, 2024
3:30 PM

Company Office - Elk Grove, CA

Number In Attendance: 7

Contact Person: Charlotte Mitchell
Executive Director
916-687-3178



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