

Via electronic mail

January 8, 2019

Honorable Members of the Santa Clara Valley Water District Board of Supervisors  
5700 Almaden Expressway  
San Jose, CA

**RE: Open Space Credit Policy Discussion, Item 2.7, January 8, 2019; support staff's recommendation**

Dear Board Members:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the District's Open Space Credit Policy. Having attended yesterday's SCVWD Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting, and having heard all sides present pertinent issues, we write to express our support for staff's recommendation of adjustments to agricultural charges; their recommendation balances a number of interests.

The staff report confirmed the significant rate subsidies that agriculture receives, both in North County, and especially in South County—while most customers pay much higher rates. Agriculture is thriving, as demonstrated by the extra acreage that has been put into production, despite prior rate increases.

Williamson Act and conservation easement property tax benefits already represent a significant boon for the agricultural community. We would therefore suggest that the adjustments back to 6% of M&I charges for Williamson Act and conservation easement properties be considered only where those properties feature organically grown products (CCOF certification)—healthier for the public and the environment. Consideration should be also given to requiring that a certain percentage of these farm products be made available to our county's public schools, preferably at a reduced rate. Such a move would be in line with federal legislation from 2010 that supported expanding children's access to healthy, high-quality food in public schools and would represent a positive benefit for the community on the part of the District.

Respectfully,

Alan and Meg Giberson