

Handout 2.1-A
4/11/19

Respectfully submitted by the Agricultural Water Advisory Committee (AWAC) to
the Board of Directors
April 8, 2019

The AWAC opposes the proposed changes in the Open Space Credit policy at this time.

Members of the AWAC currently have the understanding that:

- 1) Valley Water apparently at this time does not have a precise, comprehensive valuation of the benefits that agricultural lands and open space provide in Santa Clara County with respect to mitigating flood risk,
- 2) Valley Water apparently at this time does not have precise estimates of the effect on flood risk that would result from various levels of urbanization of agricultural lands and open space in Santa Clara County,
- 3) Diverting funding from the Open Space Credit for the purpose of flood control may be counterproductive, and maintaining agricultural lands and open space may be among the most cost effective means of mitigating flood risk,
- 4) Agricultural land that is not under Williamson Act or conservation easement is the land that is most at risk for conversion to non-agricultural use.
- 5) At the moment when the County of Santa Clara has just launched a comprehensive Agricultural Plan with state and county funding to sustain agriculture and retain its many important benefits, this would be an unfortunate time to raise the cost of groundwater to most agricultural producers by almost 20%, and would undermine the hoped-for trust and collaborative spirit among diverse interests that will be needed for success of the plan.
- 6) Headlines about the proposed reduction in Open Space Credit might well read:
Valley Water hits farmers with 20% increase in water costs at time when county launches major effort to preserve threatened farming and open space
and
Valley Water's price hike to farmers in response to 2017 flooding may increase flood risks and costs

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