



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER**

**Agenda Number:**

**Clerk of the Board of Supervisors**  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** County Counsel  
**Department No.:** 013  
**For Agenda Of:** March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Tme:** NA  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** NA  
**Vote Required:** Simple Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Board Member Joni Gray, 4<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor

Department Glenn Russell,  
Director: Planning & Development

Contact Info: Michael R. Ledbetter, 568-2950  
Deputy County Counsel

**SUBJECT:** Resolution in support of Land Trust grant applications for the purpose of acquiring a California Farmland Conservation Easement on the Hibbits Property, APN 099-150-003, 099-150-029, 099-150-030 and 099-150-005, Fourth District

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

Yes

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

Consider adoption of the attached resolution in support of the Land Trust's application for state and federal funding for the purpose of acquiring a California Farmland Conservation Easement on the Hibbits Property

**Summary Text:**

The 395-acre Hibbits Ranch is located south of La Purisma State Park, on both sides of Highway 246. The property has been farmed by the Hibbits Family for many years and is currently enrolled in the County's Agricultural Preserve Program. Adoption of the attached resolution would enable the Land Trust to apply for state and federal grant funds for the purpose of acquiring a permanent farmland conservation easement covering the Ranch.

**Background:**

The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County ("Land Trust") proposes to acquire a farmland conservation easement on the Hibbits Ranch, located in the Fourth District as described more particularly below. The Land Trust requests that your Board adopt the attached resolution supporting its application for state and federal funding. The proposed easement would restrict the property in perpetuity to agricultural and related uses.

Most of the Hibbits Ranch is enrolled in the County's Agricultural Preserve program. Recording the conservation easement would not change the owner's obligations under the existing Agricultural Preserve contracts, nor would it allow any additional uses on the property. Neither the Land Trust nor the owner is requesting any changes in the Agricultural Preserve contracts. For these reasons, review by the Agricultural Preserve Advisory Committee is not required.

The attached resolution contains three findings:

(a) The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.

(b) County of Santa Barbara has a Comprehensive General Plan (republished May 2009) which demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment is reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the Comprehensive General Plan, the Agricultural Element of that Plan, the Right to Farm Ordinance and the Agricultural Preserve Program, as they relate to the area of the unincorporated area where the easement acquisition is proposed. In particular Land Use Element – Lompoc Area policy states, *"Prime agricultural lands should be preserved for agricultural use only. Preservation of lesser grades of presently producing or potential agricultural land should be actively encouraged."*

(c) Without conservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to experience pressure for subdivision and conversion to nonagricultural use in the future.

The following evidence support these proposed findings:

- Three of the four parcels proposed for the easement are enrolled in the County's Agricultural Preserve program:
  - APN 099-141-005 - Agricultural Preserve Contract # 67-AP-002 - 112.11 acres

- APN 099-150-003 - Agricultural Preserve Contract # 74-AP-012 - 80.8 acres
  - APN 099-150-029 - Agricultural Preserve Contract # 75-AP-014 - 199 acres
  - APN 099-150-030 - Not part of an Agricultural Preserve - 2.29 acres
- The three parcels enrolled in the Agricultural Preserve program are designated by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Unique Importance and Grazing Land (*Important Farmland Maps*, 2008). Class I and II prime soils present on the site are a good indicator of agricultural productivity.
- Staff has confirmed that the recitals in finding “(b),” above, are correct. The characterization in that finding of the relevant planning documents is accurate.
- Policy I.D., in the Agricultural Element of the General Plan, supports the implementation of agricultural protection programs: “Policy I.D. The use of the Williamson Act (Agricultural Preserve Program) shall be strongly encouraged and supported. The County shall also explore and support other agricultural land protection programs.”
- The Hibbits Ranch is located in a triangle of prime farmland framed by the City of Lompoc to the west, the Santa Ynez River and Santa Rosa Hills to the south and east, and Mission La Purisima State Historic Park to the north. Many of the surrounding parcels are extensively farmed. A wide array of irrigated vegetable, fruit, nut and seed crops are grown in the area.
- Most of this farmland is within two miles of the city limit of Lompoc. The Land Trust proposal is intended to protect this property from conversion to non-agricultural uses. According to the Land Trust, the current Lompoc General Plan provides for residential subdivisions on agriculturally-zoned land annexed to the west, north and south of the City of Lompoc.

Supervisor Gray asked County Counsel and Planning and Development to prepare and present this matter to your Board. Adoption of the attached Resolution will support the Land Trust’s application for grant funds for acquisition of the easement, and further its efforts to obtain the benefits of a perpetual agricultural easement on these properties.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

None

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Not Applicable

**Staffing Impacts:**

None. The Land Trust will pursue grant funding with its own forces.

**Attachments:**

Resolution

**Authored by:**

Michael R. Ledbetter, Senior Deputy County Counsel

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF  
SUPERVISORS OF SANTA BARBARA  
COUNTY IN SUPPORT OF THE LAND  
TRUST'S FUNDING APPLICATION FOR  
ACQUISITION OF A FARMLAND  
CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON THE  
HIBBITS RANCH, LOMPOC AREA

Resolution No.

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WHEREAS, it is a long-standing policy of Santa Barbara County to support retention and, where appropriate, expansion of productive agriculture for its many economic, social and environmental benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors recognizes that a combination of government, private and non-profit approaches are valuable in conserving land and sustaining agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the State Legislature has established the California Farmland Conservancy Program within the Department of Conservation, and through a grant program is providing assistance to conserve important agricultural land resources that are subject to conversion pressures; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture has established the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, which provides matching funds to states and qualified conservation organizations to acquire agricultural conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County (Land Trust) is a publicly supported, tax-exempt nonprofit organization that promotes voluntary conservation of agricultural land, natural resources and community open space, and is a “qualified conservation organization” within the meaning of California Public Resources Code section 10221 and California Civil Code section 815.3 and within the meaning of

Sections 501(c)(3) and 170(b)(1)(A)(iv) as defined by the United States Internal Revenue Code.

WHEREAS, the Land Trust intends to seek state and federal funds from available programs to acquire a conservation easement on a 395-acre farm, known as The Hibbits Ranch, near the City of Lompoc, California, which will conserve in perpetuity significant and productive prime farmland by restricting use of the property to agriculture and limited family and agricultural employee residential uses.

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors supports the Hibbits Ranch agricultural conservation easement proposal and finds that the proposed conservation easement meets the eligibility criteria set forth in Public Resources Code section 10251, to wit:

(a) The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.

(b) County of Santa Barbara has a Comprehensive General Plan (republished May 2009) which demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment is reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the Comprehensive General Plan, the Agricultural Element of that Plan, the Right To Farm Ordinance and the Agricultural Preserve Program, as they relate to the area of the unincorporated area where the easement acquisition is proposed. In particular Land Use Element – Lompoc Area policy states, *“Prime agricultural lands should be preserved for agricultural use only. Preservation of lesser grades of presently producing or potential agricultural land should be actively encouraged.”*

(c) Without conservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to experience pressure for subdivision and conversion to nonagricultural use in the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Recitals above are true and correct;
2. The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors hereby approves the filing of an application for funding from the California Farmland Conservancy Program to acquire an agricultural conservation easement on The Hibbits Ranch, and further supports the application of matching grant funds from the USDA Farm and Ranch Land Protection program.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara, State of California, this 16th day of March, 2010, by the following vote:

AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSENT:  
ABSTAIN:

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Chair, Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Barbara

ATTEST:  
MICHAEL F. BROWN  
CLERK OF THE BOARD

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

Approved as to Form:

DENNIS A. MARSHALL,  
COUNTY COUNSEL

By:   
Deputy County Counsel

Approved as to Form:

ROBERT W. GEIS,  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

By: 