



Connections

March 2009

Local Markets Workshop March 12

SACOG is hosting the second workshop for the region's Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) Local Markets Working Group on **March 12**.

The workshop will focus on innovations. Participants will be asked to:

- review the local markets innovations research and recommend innovations for further research;
- analyze the innovations to determine if they are short-, mid- or long-term implementation efforts; and
- assess the region's readiness to implement each innovation.

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Aquatic Resources Inventory Kicks Off

With initial funding secured, SACOG staff met last month with conservation plan representatives from Yolo, Placer, Sutter, Yuba and Sacramento counties and the Army Corps of Engineers to kick off the Six-County Aquatic Resources Inventory (SACRI). The meeting also included U.S. EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The first stage includes data assessment and procurement. Once complete, data will be synthesized and deficiencies will be identified. Phases two will be to categorize the data, followed by phase three, qualification.

Participants expressed strong interest in ensuring that all phases support ongoing conservation efforts, including that existing data be used as a baseline and that SACRI not create a new regulatory standard. Participants would like SACRI

to enhance the ability of the Corps, and other federal resource agencies to integrate an increasingly broad permitting scope for the region's conservation plans.

The Corps is asking other federal agencies to provide policy and financial support for SACRI, and U.S. EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service both expressed interest at the meeting. U.S. EPA encouraged SACOG to define a "tool" and apply for a grant they are currently soliciting proposals for. SACOG staff will submit a proposal prior to the March 31 deadline.

The development team for the inventory will be meeting at least bimonthly, and additional stakeholders will be regularly added to the team.

For more information contact Stacey McKinley at smckinley@sacog.org.

Much-Needed Road Rehab Money Available

On **February 19**, the SACOG Board of Directors authorized \$32 million for road rehabilitation projects in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties. The funding is part of the federal economic stimulus signed into law in February. These funds will help relieve some of the region's rural road maintenance burden. The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency and the El Dorado County Transportation Planning Commission are responsible for authorizing an estimated \$7.5 million for their counties.

Improving rural roads is vital for rural areas, which account for 48 percent of the road miles in the region but only 13 percent of the population. Over the years, commuters and heavy trucks have placed more demands on rural roads. In many areas, infrastructure has become increasingly inadequate to accommodate

these demands, and the condition of rural roads and bridges is suffering.

Rural road safety and operating efficiency is critical to rural economic vitality. Rural roads and infrastructure provide transport of agricultural and mineral resources, movement of large farm equipment, and mobility of rural workers and residents.

Cities and counties are responsible for funding maintenance, but dedicated funding sources are limited and insufficient. Typically, the only available sources are the local share of the state gas tax, sales taxes or general funds. Today, the gas tax covers only 25 percent of maintenance and rehabilitation needs.

More information on maintenance is available on the RUCS Wiki site at: www.sacog.org/rucs/wiki, or by contacting Matt Carpenter at (916) 340-6276 or mcarpenter@sacog.org.

Local Markets (continued)

Implementation of innovations will be discussed in detail at the workshop. Participants will work to identify who key regional planning partners are, what resources are needed and the feasibility of implementation on a regional scale.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Monica Hernández at (916) 340-6237 or mhernandez@sacog.org.

To receive updates on the RUCS project or meeting notifications visit:

www.sacog.org/rucs/get-involved.cfm and choose the topic areas you are interested in.

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Local Markets Research Update

Farmers, ranchers, distributors, chefs and other stakeholders gave valuable input at the Local Markets Working Group meeting in December. Since then, RUCS consultants have been adding to the research.

The **March 12** Local Markets Innovations workshop will be an opportunity to give feedback on the latest draft of the research paper. You can also review and comment on the paper on the RUCS Wiki at: www.sacog.org/rucs/wiki.

Suggestions from workshop participants about ways the local food system could be supported were combined into broader areas, such as local processing and distribution. Researchers conducted preliminary assessments of what is happening in the region already, discovering some exciting innovations such as the Sierra Foothills Meat Buyers' Club, four ranchers working with UC Cooperative Extension to expand their consumer base, and California FarmLink, which is connecting business training opportunities with their existing land link program. The paper also explores new possibilities, profiling examples from

outside the region where possible, such as a mobile meat processing unit in Washington and regional food advisory councils around the country.

Innovations in theory and in practice were shared among the stakeholders from across the region. An innovation of high interest is regional branding. Regional branding or marketing initiatives include labels such as PlacerGROWN and collaborative efforts like Capay Valley Grown.

To learn more, read the draft paper at: www.sacog.org/rucs/wiki.



Combining the “Green” and the “Grey”

The Conservation Fund, headquartered in Virginia, has a dual mission of conserving critical lands and fostering economic development through sustainable practices. The Fund, through the leadership of Kris Hoellen, has been instrumental in implementing strategic approaches for prioritizing conservation efforts in accordance with land use development—combining the green and the grey.

One project the Fund has invested in is the South Maryland 301 project. This project has been recommended by Meg Gaffney-Smith, Chief of Regulatory, USACE, as a potential model for the Six-County Aquatic Resources Inventory and for RUCS overall. SACOG learned more about the project while participating in a Peer Review hosted by FHWA, in which the project was lauded as an example of early coordination with federal agencies.

RUCS consultant Stacey McKinley and Christopher Hunter, Deputy Regulatory Chief, Sacramento District, had the opportunity to meet with Hoellen in February, and learned a great deal about The Conservation Fund's nationwide portfolio of green infrastructure investment and how they have successfully connected environmental, social and economic health across urban, suburban and rural settings.

The Conservation Fund has invited SACOG to participate in a four-day seminar in May, on strategic conservation planning using green infrastructure. They are also planning a study trip to the Sacramento region to offer a place-based seminar. More details will follow on this exciting opportunity.

For more information contact Stacey McKinley at smckinley@sacog.org.