

The Ag/Art/Nature Tourism in Merced County meeting held at the Arts Center in Merced.

**November 16, 2009:** notes by Jean Okuye

Present: Maxwell Norton, Staci Santa, Karen Baker, Rose Marie Burroughs, Maria Azevedo, Sam Minturn, Kim Forrest, John Jantz, Penny Leff, Rhonda Lowe, Roxanne Maldonado, Jean Okuye, Anna Riedinger, Jack Sparks, Tim Whitfield

After welcome by Farm Advisor, Maxwell Norton, Penny Leff with UC Small Farm Center gave presentation of eight organizations in other counties including info: year started, primary organizers, initial funding, current membership fees, current funding, current staffing/support and current website hosted by. A one-page summary is available from Jean Okuye

Some topics discussed were: Ethnic local food (Calif Women for Ag had an event a few years ago), river rafting, Wild on Wetlands history (Jack Sparks and Kim Forrest updated us on plans for opening of education center in 2011), Elderhostel possibilities, Morgan Hill cattle event, a model.

Need for a central calendar was expressed.

Rhonda Lowe updated on plans in Los Banos for tourism and special event:  
Tomato Festival: Oct. 1, 2011.

Discussed desire to learn more about Williamson Act, Liability Insurance and Risk Management, placing signs crops (eg: Almonds, Peaches signs along highways/RR tracks).

We now have a google groups pages being managed by Alan Schoff.  
<http://groups.google.com/group/rural-tourism-merced-county/members?hl=en>

Next meeting was set for Dec. 14 at Hilmar Cheese, 10-noon. Risk Management and Liability Insurance will be on agenda. We will also learn about their visitor related marketing efforts.