

Notes on Country Venture meeting, Monday Mar 14, 2011

1. Merced County General Plan Update Focus Group meeting notes Jean presented. The policies draft was presented to community reps of different groups, such as Valley Land Alliance, Asthma Coalition, Farm Bureau. Written comments will be accepted if submitted by next week. In a few days the consulting firm will make available an update of comments from the most recent Focus Group March 2 and 3 meetings. Jean represented Valley Land Alliance at three of the Focus Groups. Re farmstay development and ag, art & nature tourism: in Policy AG 1.5 “support agricultural tours, farm stays and trails which promote agricultural tourism” is in the draft (Jean had farm stays added) Policy AG 5.1 “Support development of agricultural tourism activities that promote the agricultural, open space, and natural resources of the County”, AG 5.2 “Support the expansion of agricultural tourism that helps maintain sites in agricultural production and provides supplemental income to property owners, provided these activities do not negatively impact on-going agricultural operations on adjacent lands.” Policy AG 5.3 “Promote the development of agricultural tourism centers, and visitor tourist centers along Interstate 5, State Rt 99, 152 and other State highways within the County”. (At the meeting we recommended to add Hwy 140 and 33). An Ag Advisory Committee is being suggested.
2. Update on State Fair booth. The County Chamber has not contacted CV regarding a meeting to plan booth. Suggestion made to send note to supervisors/and County Chamber.
3. Suggestion was made to contact East Merced Resource Conservation District to submit general plan update comments on agricultural tourism.
4. No update on Hwy 165 audio tour CD
5. Update on Tourism Map of Merced County. Jean and Heidi have been working with illustrator in Fresno. A draft will be made this week. For more information contact Heidi or Jean.
6. Growing Ag Tourism meeting Jan. 19 in Merced report: Ninety three people attended from 6 counties. Good ideas/Challenges were noted for Ideas in developing Agritourism Association Development, Start up agritourism operators, promoting regional agritourism, networking.
A follow up workshop will be in May or June at Azevedo’s Double T Acres in Stevinson. Penny Leff (paleff@ucdavis.edu) has details.
7. Announcement: online agritourism course through UC Davis Extension: Agritourism Development: Selling the Experience, Supporting the Farm, Building the Community contact Penny Leff at paleff@ucdavis.com.
8. Reservations for Stanislaus Regional Tourism Roundtable Forum. Jean plans to attend.
9. April meeting to finalize the map. Contact Jean at 209-394-2421
10. Plan to speak at MercedAhead, encourage people to speak at county supervisor and city council meetings
11. Consider a kickoff event for Country Ventures when map is ready, possibly at Bettencourts’ Farm.
12. Next mtg: ask Tony Azevedos or Larry Macedos to host. April 13 or 14 at 5:30pm Recorder, Jean Okuye