



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION

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February 2, 2009

Via Email

CEQA.GHG@opr.ca.gov

Cynthia Bryant, Director
Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3022
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

***Re: Comments on the Preliminary Draft California Environmental Quality Act
Guideline Amendments for Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

Dear Ms. Bryant,

The California Farm Bureau Federation (“Farm Bureau”) is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership California corporation whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the state of California and to find solutions to the problems of the farm, the farm home and the rural community. Farm Bureau is California’s largest farm organization, comprised of 53 county Farm Bureaus currently representing approximately 91,000 members in 56 counties. Farm Bureau strives to protect and improve the ability of farmers and ranchers engaged in production agriculture to provide a reliable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of California’s resources.

Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Preliminary Draft California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Guideline Amendments for Greenhouse Gas Emissions (“GHG”). Although guidance on the analysis and mitigation of the potential effects of GHG emissions under CEQA are needed, Farm Bureau has concerns over the proposed draft. Farm Bureau urges the Office of Planning and Research (“OPR”) to reevaluate and revise the following:

Proposed Changes in Appendix G are Inconsistent with Agricultural Preservation

Appendix G, the Environmental Checklist Form, is typically used in both the initial study process and in setting significance thresholds, and forms the foundation of every CEQA review. Given its importance, any modifications to the Checklist should be considered carefully, especially those areas affecting agriculture.

The purpose of the Agricultural Resources section is to determine whether the implementation of a proposed project would result in significant environmental impacts to agricultural resources. This analysis should identify all possible agricultural lands, including forest lands that could be lost or converted by implementation of the proposed project.

The proposed amendments to Section II of the Checklist modify “agricultural resources” to explicitly incorporate “forest resources.” The need for such explicit incorporation is unwarranted. Farm Bureau, along with others, defines agriculture to include the production of all plants, aquatic species, forestry, animals, and other related production activities. By adopting a broad definition of agriculture which encompasses all agricultural resources including forest lands, OPR can and should reject the proposed amendments and return to the prior language of the Checklist. If OPR adopts the proposed amendments, a broad definition of agriculture is still needed, along with additional revisions to Section II. In either case, flexibility must remain to allow those in agricultural production the ability to change crops¹ without it being considered a per se significant impact.

As the current proposed amendments stand, additional clarification and revision is needed, including the following:²

- Checklist item II(c) should be revised to state: “Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)) or timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code section 4526), *or a Timberland Production Zone.*”
- Checklist item II(d) and (e): If OPR feels the need to add proposed significance criteria or thresholds for forest lands, such language should embrace the concept that loss of forest land or conversion of forest land is only significant when it results in lands no longer used for agriculture.
 - Checklist item II(d) should be revised to state: “Result in loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to *non-agricultural use.*”
 - Checklist item II(e) should be revised to state: “Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of *Farmland or forest land to non-agricultural use.*”

¹ When appropriate and consistent with applicable zoning laws.

² Proposed changes are in italics.

*Comments on the Preliminary Draft CEQA Guideline Amendments for Greenhouse Gas
Emissions*

Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the draft Guidelines. We look forward to working with you further on future revisions to the CEQA Guidelines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kari Fisher".

Kari E. Fisher
Associate Counsel

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