

**STRATEGIC PLAN
CACHE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD**

The mission of the Cache County Agricultural Advisory Board is to facilitate the development of programs that can be implemented by the Cache County Council and Planning Commission to strengthen the agricultural economy and minimize the conversion of farmland to urban uses.

GOAL 1: MINIMIZE THE CONVERSION OF FARMLAND AND REDUCE IMPACTS AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND URBAN LAND USES.

Implementation Policy 1: Work with the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to develop and adopt land use regulations that encourage the preservation of farmland and reduce the conflicts between urban and agricultural land uses

Strategy 1. Work with the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to adopt incentives and density bonuses in the Cache County Subdivision Ordinance that encourage cluster-type residential development.

Strategy 2. Work with the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to develop and adopt agricultural friendly zoning regulations.

Strategy 3. Work with the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to adopt zoning regulations, density bonuses, and other incentives that encourage development to existing urban areas with urban infrastructure.

Strategy 4. Work with State & Local government to develop and adopt transportation policies and standards that accommodate farm machinery.

Implementation Policy 2: Establish a County Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements Program in recognition of the economic, environmental, and societal benefits of farmland in Cache County, and to provide free-market incentives to the preservation of Cache County farmland. (A number of counties have developed Conservation Easement programs. The AAB will use resources such as Trust for Public Land, American Farmland Trust, and other counties to develop a program that will work for Cache County).

Strategy 1. Develop a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) program for Cache County to identify and prioritize critical agricultural landscapes.

Tasks: 1. Establish a LESA subcommittee to work with Cache County Extension, NRCS, Cache Countywide Planning and Development, BRAG, and the Sonoran Institute to develop the criteria for a Countywide LESA Determine which organizations, agencies, and representatives from each, and which landowners should be on the LESA development committee.

2. Send letters of invitation to potential committee members and request signed response of commitment (can be a form included with invitation letter).

Milestone: draft letter of invitation

Milestone: draft response/signature form

Milestone: send letters

3. LESA Committee and AAB Training will be conducted all day December 10,

2002 to guide the AAB and LESA committee in developing the land evaluation and site assessment components of the LESA, the rating and ranking process, and how to use the LESA to implement the AAB goals and objectives.

Milestone: DEVELOP FOCUS STATEMENT FOR LESA SYSTEM.
(what will Cache County LESA system to do?)

4. LESA development committee determines meeting schedule and format, to develop the LESA system.

Milestone: Select facilitator. Can be a member of the committee, but this changes his/her role somewhat in terms of being able to contribute their own input on factor development.

5. Committee meets regularly to hammer out LE and SA components.

Milestone: DEVELOP FOCUS STATEMENT FOR LESA SYSTEM.
(what will Cache County LESA system to do?)

Milestone: Develop LE component

Milestone: Decide on SA factors:

Which SA factors are important?

How many?

How to measure them?

How to weigh each?

Field test system.

Strategy 2. Establish Green Belt Rollback Tax as a funding source for purchasing development rights. Whereas real estate transfer taxes and impact fees (for the conversion of agricultural land) are not likely to ever be tools available in the State of Utah and whereas, the Green Belt Tax exists to discourage the conversion of farmland: The AAB should lobby the Utah State Legislature for enabling legislation that would allow for an increase in the Green Belt Tax rollback period to generate an incremental revenue source that could be used to purchase agricultural conservation easements.

Task: Request Senator Lyle Hillyard to draft legislation that will enable counties to extend the roll back period from 5 to 10 years so that the five additional years of rollback taxes collected can be used to purchase agricultural conservation easements. (Sub- Committee to be established to follow through with this).

Strategy 3. Establish a local public funding source to purchase agricultural conservation easements (ie; property tax, bonding, [or sales tax which is not likely to gain State Legislative support])

Task: 1. Opinion Poll to establish Ballot Question:

Follow the process established by Don Snyder, USU; Adam Eichberg, TPL; and Information Alliance to complete the Pre-poll Questionnaire; the Survey Instrument; Random Sample; Phone Interviews; Data Processing; Production of Topline Report and Crosstabulations;. Data Analysis and Summary; Presentation to AAB and County Council

2. Construct clear and concise ballot language that emphasizes programmatic components not mechanism

3. Work with County council to place ballot measure before voters for consideration.

The following additional steps need to be taken by a campaign committee:

4. Organize diverse campaign committee
5. Raise significant dollars in order to run a well-disciplined, message driven political campaign.
6. Conduct broad campaign outreach including, newspaper endorsements, organization presentations and endorsements, direct mail, radio advertisements, door-to-door leafleting, and phone calls.

Strategy 4. Establish a step by step application and review process and personnel for a Purchase of Conservation Easement Program

Task: Establish application process

Task: Establish the criteria that will be used in evaluating applications including LESA, leverage of fund, critical mass, etc.

Task: Establish method of evaluation by staff, committee, and county council

Task: Establish public input process: means for keeping public apprized of process and projects.

Task: Establish logistics and methodology for conservation easement transactions: recording, holding and monitoring easements.

Task: Determine who will hold the conservation easements: county, state, and/or non-profit

Strategy 5. Establish a structure for providing technical assistance to property owners who wish to sell or donate conservation easements

Task: Host workshops for professional advisors (lawyers, CPA's appraisers, financial planners, realtors) on conservation easements and estate planning

Task: Host a workshop for landowners on conservation easements and estate planning

Strategy 6. Establish a mechanism for accepting charitable contributions for purchasing agricultural conservation easements and for accepting donated conservation easements.

Task: Establish a County Open Lands Board to oversee the existing 501c(3) foundation that Cache County already has in place. A line item for accepting conservation easements and donations for purchasing conservation easements needs to be approved by the County Council.

Task: Coordinate with the private sector to establish a local land trust 501c(3)

Implementation Policy 3: Work with the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to Establish a Transfer of Development Rights program that would promote farmland conservation in high value agricultural areas while encouraging smart growth in developed and developing sections of the county.

Strategy 1. Develop a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) program for Cache County to identify and prioritize critical agricultural landscapes.

Strategy 2. Develop model to assess the economic value of transfer development rights program.

Implementation Policy 4: Recommend language to the Cache County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to strengthen Agriculture Protection Areas.

Strategy 1: Increase the long term viability of agriculture in Agricultural Protection Areas.

Task: Define the procedure to be followed if land that is within an APA is annexed into a municipality.

Task: Define the procedure to be followed after the APA has been in place for 20 years, wherein the decision must be made to continue, modify or terminate the APA.

Task: Expand the distance requirement (from 300 feet to 1400 feet) on the plat that is filed with the county recorder providing notification to land owners that they are living in the vicinity of an APA in which normal agricultural uses and activities are afforded the highest priority use status.

Task: Consider reducing the time required from application to approval with county legislative body.

Task: Consider disallowing uses that are not compatible with agriculture within APAs. The Planning and Zoning Commission must take into account the purpose of the APA and that land use decisions for properties within APA's should be compatible with or enhance the long term viability of agriculture.

Task: Encourage multiple landowners to share applications for establishing larger APAs.

Implementation Policy 5 Help residents moving into agricultural areas to understand the farming activities that are likely to occur in their vicinity.

Strategy 1. Develop an agricultural notification pamphlet that describes in detail typical farming activities that new residents will notice and will need to be cautious of.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE FARM PROFITABILITY

Implementation Policy 1. Increase the diversity of Cache County's agricultural economy.

Strategy 1. The AAB should work with Utah State University, Utah Department of

Agriculture and Food, Utah Association of Conservation Districts, USDA, NRCS, American Farmland Trust, SARE Sustainable Agriculture Network. RC&D and other appropriate entities to implement programs that provide organizational, outreach, and development assistance to increase the viability, growth, and sustainability of businesses that produce value-added agricultural commodities or products.

Task: Actively support the establishment of an Agriculture Innovation Center (Section 6402 of the 2002 Farm Bill) at USU that will provide technical assistance to small farmers to help them develop new markets and value added commodities and products.

Strategy 2. Develop and implement marketing strategies that develop new markets for local producers.

Task: Start “Buy Local” programs that connect consumers with local producers:

- Subscription Marketing and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms
- Cooperative Marketing
- Sales to Restaurants and specialty food stores
- Direct marketing
- Adding value through processing
- Farmers markets

Task: Participate and encourage local producers to participate in regional marketing networks such as the Southwest Marketing Network, USDA Agricultural Product Market Development Program and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Wholesale and Alternative Markets program www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing, and SARE Sustainable Agriculture Network www.sare.org

Task: Investigate markets for organic produce and commodities

Task: Investigate non-food products

Task: Investigate sustainable alternative farming practices and crops

Strategy 3. Take Advantage of International Trade Practices

Resource: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy www.iatp.org

Strategy 4. Develop Recreation and Tourism Opportunities

Task: The Bear River Heritage Area has been established to promote heritage tourism and heritage businesses. Such businesses may include dude ranching, farm hand for a day, education on the farm. Other value added opportunities may include corn maze, hunting/fishing. Such businesses are strongly encouraged and should be promoted as part of the activities of the Bear River Heritage Council.

Strategy 5. Assist in establishing markets to allow for the production of higher value "cash" crops that can be grown locally.

Task: Request that USU, the Utah Department of Agriculture and appropriate

farm services agencies institutionalize programs to provide research and technical assistance to help farmers identify new higher value crops that have growing niche markets. Assistance should be further provided to assure access to those markets.

Task: Establish a program through USU Extension to develop Alternative Crop Guides that address planting; weed, pest and disease control; harvest; storage; uses; and marketing and economics of alternative crops that could be grown by local producers. (Similar to Jefferson Institute www.jeffersoninstitute.org)

Strategy 6. Identify Value Added Opportunities

Task: Promote the Bear River Kitchen Incubator that provides start up assistance for food processing

Task: Encourage the development of speciality food products

Task: Encourage USU Food and Nutrition and Culinary Arts programs to institutionalize a food processing center similar to the University of Nebraska that focuses more on food processing than restaurant service.

Implementation Policy 2. Educate City and County Economic Development Directors and Staff on Agriculture's contribution to our local Economy and Quality of Life. Help them to be pro-active in enhancing agriculture and developing a long term vision that keeps Agriculture as the Leading Industry.

Implementation Policy 3. Increase opportunities for more viable farm tracts

Strategy 1. Find ways to help reconsolidate parcels. Help families to reclaim original farm stead parcels. Build upon the century farms.

Strategy 2. Facilitate Transfer of Land from Farmer to Farmer.

Strategy 3. Establish Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easements program (See Goal 1. Implementation Policy 2.)

Strategy 4. Implement zoning and other policies, ordinances and programs that allow for land to be valued for agriculture rather than speculative development

Strategy 5. Promote larger farm tracts as appropriate

Implementation Policy 4. Work to enhance the opportunities for future farmers by developing an active network of organizations committed to providing programs, services and advocacy for new farmers

Strategy 1: Develop programs that link future farmers with retiring farmers

Strategy 2: Develop a Beginning Farmer Program that provides mentoring and technical assistance to beginning farmers regarding farm financial management, crop production, dairy health, record keeping, personnel & labor management, risk management, market access, and farm conservation

Strategy 3: Establish Revolving Loan Fund for Beginning Farmers

Task: Explore financing needs and existing resources with commercial banks, Farm Service Agencies, USDA, and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. Identify gaps and make appropriate recommendations.

Strategy 4: Programs for planning farm transfers should be available

Implementation Policy 5. Explore various cooperative arrangements.

Strategy 1: Farm Equipment Co-Ops

Strategy 2: Shared trucking opportunities for out of state distribution and supplies

Strategy 3: Marketing Co-op

Strategy 4: Shared labor pool (similar to sos) that would allow farmers to take a few days off without worrying about who will milk the cows.

Implementation Policy 6. Support State and Federal Legislative Relief for hard farming years

GOAL 3: ENSURE ADEQUATE WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY FOR IRRIGATION AND MUNICIPAL AND INDUSTRIAL (M&I) NEEDS IN CACHE COUNTY.

This Goal is of strong common interest to the Cache County Agricultural Advisory Board and the Cache County Water Policy Advisory Board and should be addressed in a coordinated manner.

Strategy 1: The AAB will support, promote, and assist in the following strategies in concert with the CC Water Policy Advisory Board and vice versa:

Strategy 2: Improve Storm Water Management/and cooperation between canal companies and municipalities on this issue and associated liability issues

Strategy 3. Define irrigation's contribution to ground water recharge through monitoring in a supporting role to U. S. Geological Survey and Utah Division of Water Rights efforts.

Task: Support any funding opportunities and efforts that assist in the collection of data that demonstrates ground water recharge from irrigation.

Strategy 4. Maintain Groundwater Quality Protection, and support the setting of reasonable degradation limits on groundwater through using all available technical tools as a non-arbitrary way of protecting both land and water resources.

Strategy 5. Educate the public regarding water conservation, in both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions.

Strategy 6. Increase water storage capacity of below and above ground water sources according to the least costly solution. Intangible values, social costs or benefits, direct or indirect, must be included in the economic analysis.

GOAL 4: TO GAIN PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR THE AAB's GOALS AND PROGRAMS TO PROTECT IMPORTANT FARMLAND AND ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF AGRICULTURE, IT IS THE GOAL OF THE CACHE COUNTY AAB TO INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT THE ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIETAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM AGRICULTURE.

Implementation Policy 1 Inform farmers about the options they have for keeping land in agriculture and the opportunities for improving farm profitability (i.e. inter-generational transfers, Ag Protection Areas, clustering, conservation easements, niche markets (see Goal 2)

Implementation Policy 2 Inform the General Public to Gain Their Support for Cache County Agriculture and Agricultural Land Protection

Strategy 1. Attend meetings of and develop alliances with: farmers groups; civic organizations; environmental groups; hunting and fishing coalitions

Strategy 2. Develop concise meaningful easy to read informational pieces that describe the benefits of agriculture and the consequences of sprawl on agriculture and quality of life.

Strategy 3. Raise grass roots support for green space to facilitate a public financial commitment toward preserving green space (i.e. tax)

Strategy 4. Expand “ag awareness in the class room” curricula for public schools.

Strategy 5. Generate regular press releases for radio and newspaper media

Implementation Policy 3 Inform Elected Officials of agriculture’s contribution to the economy and environment and the impacts of their decisions on sustaining agriculture and enhancing our economy

Strategy 1. Attend meetings of and develop alliances with mayors association and city and county councils. Present concepts similar to Policy 2.

Strategy 2. Host workshops for planning commissions and elected officials that promote smart growth.

GOAL 5: UNDERSTAND COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION AS IT RELATES TO THE ABOVE STATED GOALS AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT CHANGES IN LEGISLATION THAT ENHANCE THE AAB GOALS.