

MEASURE A FACT SHEET

What is Measure A?

- Measure A is a countywide initiative to create an Open Space District that will preserve, enhance and restore the agricultural resources and natural qualities of Ventura County for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future County residents.
- Funded by a 10-year, ¼-cent sales tax, the Open Space District will purchase land and development rights from willing sellers throughout Ventura County to permanently protect areas such as wetlands, rivers, streams and coastal areas; hillsides, ridgelines and scenic viewsheds; wildlife corridors and natural habitat; agricultural lands; greenbelts between the cities; and natural parksites.

What kinds of places will the Open Space District protect?

- The Open Space District will fund acquisitions in three categories: agricultural land, open space, and parkland. Funds will be spread evenly across three geographic areas of the County, ensuring that all communities will enjoy the benefits of the District.
- Examples of potential acquisition areas include:
 - Agricultural easements in the **Oxnard Plain, Santa Clara River Valley, and Tierra Rejada** (between Moorpark and Thousand Oaks)
 - Parkways and hiking trails along the **Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers**
 - Wetlands and agricultural buffer zones around **Ormond Beach** (Oxnard)
 - Greenbelt buffers, wildlife corridors and natural habitat in areas such as: **Mountclef Ridge** (Thousand Oaks), **Broome Ranch** (Newbury Park), **Rockwell Open Space Buffer** (Lynn Ranch), **Alamos Canyon** (Simi Valley), **North Park Village** (Moorpark), **Adams Canyon** (Santa Paula), and the **Ventura hillsides**.

How does the Open Space District differ from SOAR or the Greenbelt Agreements?

- The Open Space District is a voluntary, market-based tool for purchasing land and conservation easements from willing sellers. It does not affect or determine land use or zoning designations or impact city or county general plans.
- The SOAR (Save Open-space and Agricultural Resources) urban growth boundaries and the Greenbelt agreements, on the other hand, are regulatory and political tools for land conservation. The SOAR boundaries essentially freeze open space and agricultural land use designations outside of the cities, but can be overturned by popular vote, and will begin expiring in sixteen years. The Greenbelt zones are informal, non-binding agreements between cities that can be breached any time by planning commissions and city councils.
- All of these are important and complementary tools, but the Open Space District will provide the only permanent protection of open space and agricultural lands in the County.

How will the Open Space District work?

- The Open Space District will function primarily as a granting agency. Usually it will not own or manage land, but will select projects and distribute funding for acquisitions to appropriate agencies and organizations, such as local park districts or non-profit land trusts. These in turn will own and manage the properties as parks and preserves.
- In the case of conservation or agricultural easements, the landowner retains title to the property but sells development rights – that is, in exchange for fair compensation, the owner is permanently restricted from developing the land, but can continue to farm it, live on it, etc. depending on the terms of the individual transaction.
- Funds will be only used to purchase land or development rights from willing sellers – the district cannot exercise eminent domain. The most successful projects will be locally driven with strong community support.
- Potential acquisitions will be evaluated and prioritized based on an extensive set of selection criteria that were developed by a broad-based citizen advisory committee. Selection criteria include such elements as: threat of development; strategic value in protecting water quality or scenic vistas; quality of natural habitat; soil quality and water supply (for agricultural lands); and availability of matching state, federal or private funds.

How will the Open Space District be funded?

- The District will be funded primarily by a ¼-cent sales tax for ten years, which will generate an estimated \$25 million a year or \$250 million total to be used to purchase land and development rights.
- The District will be able to significantly leverage these funds by attracting matching grants and donations from state, federal and private sources.

How will we be assured that Open Space District funds are invested wisely?

- Measure A has tough fiscal accountability provisions. A fiscal oversight committee and independent audits will ensure that the District's funds are spent properly. A technical advisory committee will provide guidance on the appropriate application of project selection criteria.
- The ¼-cent sales tax is limited to only ten years, at which time the voters will be able to judge the results and decide whether funding should be continued.
- The Open Space District will be an independent special district governed by a five-member appointed board – three representatives chosen by the cities, two by the County, to assure balanced perspectives, accountability and decision-making.

For more information contact the County Open Space Alliance
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