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Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan Receives the State's Highest Environmental Honor

The [Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan](#) (Ag Plan), authored by Santa Clara County and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority will receive the distinguished Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award (GEELA) for Ecosystem and Land Use Stewardship at a ceremony in Sacramento, Wednesday, December 5, 2018, the Governor's office [announced](#) today.

GEELA is awarded to individuals, organizations and businesses that have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made notable, voluntary contributions to conserving California's precious resources, protecting and enhancing our environment, building public-private partnerships and strengthening the state's economy.

The Ag Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2018, provides a tool box of policies and strategies to curb the conversion of nearly 28,391 acres of viable farmland and rangeland to development. In the past 30 years alone, Santa Clara County has lost more than 21,171 acres of its working lands to development.

"It is an honor to be recognized for the work we are doing at a local level to preserve and grow the agriculture economy while protecting the environment for generations to come," said Supervisor Dave Cortese, who served as co-chair with Supervisor Mike Wasserman on the county's Agricultural Preservation Task Force.

The Task Force, which met over the last seven months, developed recommendations for the Board of Supervisors to implement the Ag Plan, which include the creation of an Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Purchasing Program.

"Santa Clara County's Agricultural Plan serves as a model for what local governments around the state should be doing to engage in the preservation of California's precious farmland," said John Laird, Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency in California. "We encourage more local governments to follow a similar path. It is important to take time to plan to protect agricultural land most at risk, and then implement preservation consistent with that planning."

“This collaborative effort between the County of Santa Clara and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority demonstrates what can be accomplished when everyone works together,” Wasserman said.

“We’re thrilled to receive the Governor’s recognition for this innovative Ag Plan, which links the protection of farmland with climate resilience,” said Andrea Mackenzie, General Manager for the Authority. “In this day and age, it’s more important than ever to protect Santa Clara Valley’s last remaining viable agriculture and the many benefits it provides for our communities.”

The final report of the Ag Task Force will head to the Board of Supervisors at the beginning of the year. Among the recommendations are creation of an Agricultural Advisory Commission to oversee the ACE program.

For more information, please click [here](#) or contact the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese at 408-299-5030.

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