

Sustainability Council of Ventura County

Equitable Society, Sound Economy, Healthy Environment
P. O. Box 7817 Ventura, CA 93006-7817 805-662-2432

July 15, 2000

Paul Calderwood
UCSB
Office of Budget and Planning
1325 Cheadle Hall
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2030

Dear Paul Calderwood:

The Sustainability Council of Ventura County has an interest in the economic viability of agriculture of Ventura County. Our goal is to educate the public about the need for a sustainable relationship among economic, social, and environmental sectors. In our view agriculture has a central place in both the economic and environmental areas. We believe that agriculture must continue to play a significant role in the county's economic life as well as its serve as a means to maintain its semi-rural character. We also believe that innovative agricultural techniques will improve productivity and preserve the environment as well.

We therefore appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Hansen Agricultural Learning Center "Initial Study."

We are impressed by the mission and the building plans for the whole center, including the Faulkner House plans as described in the "Initial Study" document.

We have two areas of concern.

The first is the possibility of bringing a nearly mile long sewer line to the property. The likely outcome addressed in section 16-2 b of the "Study" is that this would spawn new development in the surrounding area. We find this an unfortunate consequence of extending a sewer line. Infrastructure development like this could open the way for all sorts of development nearby and offset some of the goals of preserving the rural character of this historic farm property. The on-site sewage treatment plan suggested in 6-3 c is much preferable in our view. Furthermore, we suggest that you explore waste treatment systems that are "stand-alone" systems that recycle waste and water through various bio-filters and ponds, resulting in fresh water and usable waste products. We believe that such a system would not only be the best sort of on-site system, but would also enhance the Hansen Center as a source of state-of-the-art, sustainable innovations that provide the community with demonstration projects that foster imitation.

The second is that we want to encourage the experimentation with sustainable agricultural techniques at the Center. Long term studies of the kind you plan to conduct seem geared to crop efficiencies and improved growing practices to increase yields (1-3). We encourage you to experiment with sustainable agricultural regimens as well. Integrated pest management, composting, water management, and other practices form part of progressive agricultural practices today, but, for example, until we can measure the input energy used to produce and ready the crop for market, we may not be able to determine whether the crop is being produced efficiently at all. We hope to see explicit reference to sustainable agriculture in the document.

We believe that the Hansen Agricultural Learning Center will promote agricultural in general and can play a key role in developing and introducing progressive farm practices, leading to the goal of a truly sustainable agriculture, so sought after by many commercial farmers.

The Sustainability Council of Ventura County