



News Release

The Coalition For Agriculture's Future

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Coalition For Agriculture's Future Feels Fairgrounds Proposal Harmful To Ag Economy

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Initial review of a proposal by the Canyon County Fair Board to move the Canyon County Fair to a new 80-plus acre site next to the Ada County line indicates the move will be harmful to the County and would result in an unwise impact to the County's agricultural economy, officials with the Coalition for Agriculture's Future said today.

"The Coalition has measured the economic, social and physical impacts of moving the fair to the new site against accepted land use practices involving agricultural lands and the proposal as it exists would be harmful in every aspect," said Roger Batt, CAF Executive Director.

Among the impacts would be an overall fiscal loss of tax revenue to the County; it would launch an inevitable and irreversible commercial and residential development in that area that would eventually consume huge amounts of additional farmland; and the project will trigger an escalation in land costs that would greatly hamper farmers from buying or renting farmland in the general area thus reducing the County's overall agricultural production.

Right off the top, the plan eliminates 80 acres of farmland that historically have been a positive fiscal provider to the Canyon County agricultural economy. According to a University of Idaho study, the net effect of converting the grounds from agriculture to commercial use results in a fiscal loss to the County tax rolls. That's because providing services to agricultural lands costs less than the tax revenues generated by the land while the reverse is true when services must be provided to commercial or residential lands.

"Our initial review strongly suggests the project contradicts the protection of agricultural lands elements set forth in the County's own Comprehensive Plan and with the spirit of the Idaho Land Use and Planning Act. Secondly, Coalition members are unanimous in their belief that the proposal is not in line with any of the established national standards used to evaluate a project's potential to impact the availability of agricultural lands," Batt added.

Those standards include such factors as :

- the commercial nature of the project is not in keeping with the general nature of the area in which it will be situated;
- the project will result in land use that is completely incompatible with adjacent land uses;
- the project will be located in an area where public infrastructure, services and facilities are not available or where there exists an established development pattern already present; and, perhaps most important,

- the project clearly contradicts the proven land use management principles of building out from present population centers.

Satellite imagery of the site and physical inspection of the area makes it obvious that the fairgrounds proposal is a large scale commercial enterprise that will be dropped into the middle of historic productive agricultural lands and which will drive additional commercial development around the site. That type of action always poses genuine concern for the Coalition because of its potential to impact agricultural issues in a much broader area than just the project site, Batt added.

Before deciding whether or not to formally oppose the project, the Coalition now will attempt to secure answers and explanations from the Fair Board regarding how it will address the issues that have been raised.

The Coalition for Agriculture's Future is formed from more than two dozen of the area's largest agribusinesses, financial institutions, Ag-related associations and other companies and individuals with agricultural interests in the Treasure Valley.

The Coalition believes that the continued loss of rural agricultural lands to urban development has begun to severely limit the ability of Idaho's agricultural industry to produce the sustainable volume of crops required to meet the food needs of the world. It is also concerned that historic agricultural heritage and traditions are being eroded as concrete and asphalt replace land historically used to grow crops.

More information about the Coalition is available from its website:
www.agriculturesfuture.org.

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