



# Dairy CARES Report

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## Fresno planners resist political scare tactics; recommend reasonable dairy ordinance

The Fresno County Planning Commission withstood extreme political pressure from local anti-dairy activists and a union-funded smear campaign this month to adopt recommendations for a reasonable dairy ordinance for the county. The Commission, on a 7-2 vote, agreed to provisions that set buffers for new and expanding dairies from urban boundaries. The rules also call for new or expanding dairies to undergo site-specific environmental review.

Dairy groups supported the changes, which end the “by-right” status for dairies in Fresno County. Although this means more regulation, it also ensures a more predictable process going forward. Representatives of the CARES coalition, Fresno County Farm Bureau and Nisei Farmers League all supported the ordinance.

CARES coalition members were able to educate the Commission about the many environmental regulations already in place for Central Valley dairies – and the need not to create confusing, duplicative or inconsistent rules. CARES was also able to accomplish a number of improvements in the ordinance through participation in the public review and comment process.

“This ordinance is an opportunity for all of Fresno County to welcome new business, new neighbors and new jobs,” said Fresno County dairy operator Donny Rollin, one of five speakers delivering comments as part of a team coordinated by CARES and Farm Bureau. “Dairies in Fresno County are already required to meet the nation’s toughest environmental regulations for both air and water quality.”

The CARES-led team submitted evidence of these regulatory requirements, including a copy of the 128-page General Order Waste Discharge Requirements for Existing Milk Cow Dairies, and more than 40 pages of air quality regulations enforced by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Fresno Dairy Operator Rodney Kamper, another member of the CARES team, submitted a copy of a nearly 500-page dairy Environmental Impact Report – an example of the type of review triggered by the new Conditional Use Permit process in the county, to demonstrate the thoroughness of the review each new project must undergo.

“The ordinance does not have to foresee every situation,” Kamper said. “It should contain rules and restrictions that would be reasonable on every proposed project, but it should avoid unnecessary restrictions that might be necessary on some projects but would only pose unneeded restrictions on others.”

As important as what the ordinance contains is what it does not contain. Activists – clearly hoping to discourage dairy development – called for enclosed dairy barns and mandatory biogas digesters on every new project, plus requiring so-called “financial assurance” bonds from projects. CARES coalition members submitted substantial evidence into the hearing record to support the county staff’s conclusions that such proposals are economically and technically infeasible.

The ordinance won’t become binding until adopted by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, who will consider the matter on October 23. Unfortunately, activists are expected to continue to exert political pressure on the supervisors before the meeting, including advertising campaigns intended to scare the public about the impact of dairies. CARES will work with Fresno County dairy producers, the Farm Bureau and its coalition members to ensure that the final ordinance remains fair and balanced. We also will defend against attempts by anti-dairy activists to load the ordinance with “poison pill” requirements.

The fact remains that Central Valley dairies are already under the most stringent environmental regulations in the world. The requirements pose significant economic burdens. The new ordinance will also trigger an Environmental Impact Report for new and expanding projects, which is the same requirements as in most dairy counties today and ensure site-specific review of each new project. The Board of Supervisor should follow the recommendations of the Planning Commission and resist additional ideas from activist groups that are not based on science or a desire to improve environmental performance, but merely intended to discourage growth of dairies and will only have the effect of driving dairies and jobs out of Fresno County.

*CARES is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability for California’s dairy industry. CARES members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, Crystal Cream & Butter, Dairy Farmers of America-California, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’ Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Saputo Cheese, Turlock Dairy & Refrigeration, Western United Dairymen, and others. For information about CARES, visit our web site at [www.dairycares.com](http://www.dairycares.com), write [dairycares@aol.com](mailto:dairycares@aol.com) or call 916-441-3318.*