

What's New

BASELINE

The year is already coming to an end, again! "Where did the time go, and what did we do all year" are common questions we all ask ourselves when another year is nearing completion. We reflected on that and found that we have actually been doing a lot of exciting work throughout the Bay Area and in the Central Valley. Some of the work has been for clients we have worked with for many years, and some for new clients; while other work/research has been financed by BASELINE on topics that simply caught our imagination.

Below, are some examples of what we have been up to. You can always call us if you want to get more information about any of our projects.

DAIRIES IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

Dairies are one of the largest agricultural businesses in California. They have historically been concentrated in the Chino Basin in Southern California. Due primarily to urban pressures, the dairies have been looking for new homes in other portions of the State, including the Central Valley. Many counties permitted the establishment of dairies either "by right" or through the conditional use permit process.

The CEQA review process for new dairies had resulted in the preparation of Negative Declarations. About three years ago, environmental groups sued a number of counties who had issued Negative Declarations contending that the operation of large dairies resulted in unavoidable adverse environmental impacts, which require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

BASELINE was one of the first companies to prepare EIRs on dairies in the Central Valley (for Kings and Kern counties). The major challenges in evaluating environmental impacts have been to estimate the air emissions from the cows and manure management, as well as potential impacts to groundwater resources. These

challenges were a result of minimal regulations related to air quality (agricultural emissions were exempt from regulations) and complexities in evaluating the consequences of salt loading to groundwater quality due to the combination of irrigation and fertilizer use in the Central Valley.

Environmental impacts on air and water quality are major concerns as dairies try to relocate in the Central Valley.

BASELINE worked closely with the counties, the applicants, and legal counsels to devise precedent-setting mitigation measures for large dairies in the Central Valley. BASELINE also performed the environmental review for the Kings County Dairy Element to the General Plan. The Dairy Element and the accompanying EIR was approved/certified by the Board of

Supervisors in August 2002, and will allow new dairies to locate in Kings County without a conditional use permit, provided they adhere to the requirements in the Dairy Element and the mitigation measures in the EIR.

Kevin O'Dea, C.E.G. and Vice-President of BASELINE, has been the project manager for all dairy related projects; his understanding of the complexities associated with estimating impacts from dairies is unrivaled in the State.

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THIRD STREET LIGHT RAIL - SAN FRANCISCO

In the planning stages for more than five years, the Third Street Light Rail in San Francisco is now under construction. The light rail line will run for more than five miles from the southern border of the City near U.S. 101 and Candlestick Park along Third Street to the Caltrain Station on Fourth Street, by the new Giants' ball park; later a subway segment will be added that will go through Union Square to Chinatown. The light rail will thus connect Bayview/Hunter's Point with downtown and the emerging Mission Bay areas.

BASELINE was initially part of the team preparing the EIR/EIS for the project. Subsequently, we have assisted the City in classifying the soil to be excavated as part of the light rail system construction (more than one million cubic yards) to plan for appropriate disposal of the excavated materials.

We are now providing construction oversight on behalf of the City to implement the Mitigation Monitoring Program, required by the California Environmental Quality Act. Lydia Huang, P.E. is managing the project and Ragnar Stefansson is in the field every day providing oversight.



Third Street Light Rail is becoming a reality, connecting Bay View/Hunters Point with Mission Bay and downtown. This is the Third Street/U.S. 101 bridge that will be reconstructed to accommodate the light rail.

STOCKTON-U.S. EPA PILOT BROWNFIELDS PROJECT

The Stockton Channel is located in downtown Stockton in San Joaquin County. The area surrounding the Channel has historically been an industrial area, which is now being redeveloped



for retail, entertainment, and office uses. One of the obstacles to redevelopment of the area has been the presence of residual contamination in the soil and groundwater from historic land uses.

The City of Stockton received one of the first Brownfields Pilot Grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to characterize the area and develop an Environmental Master Plan. The purpose of the Master Plan was to identify the remedial needs for each parcel in the area around the Stockton Channel. BASELINE was part of the team developing the environmental data base for the Brownfields area.

EPA's Brownfields Pilot Program has helped the City of Stockton in its redevelopment program for the downtown waterfront area.

We have continued to work with the City, U.S. EPA, and Cal EPA to define the environmental conditions in the area and to assist the City's Housing and Redevelopment Department in readying the area for redevelopment. One of the successes so far is the creation of the Weber Block waterfront park, a popular open space for outdoor activities at the head of the Stockton Channel. Julie Pettijohn, MPH, is managing this project for BASELINE.

RESEARCH ON LAND USE CONFLICTS VINEYARDS AND URBAN FRINGES

BASELINE staff members Bruce Abelli-Amen, Senior Hydrogeologist, and Eric Parfrey, Senior Planner, published a “Survey of Land Use Conflicts Associated with Vineyards and Pesticide Use” in the Fall 2002 edition of the Association of Environmental Professionals Environmental Monitor, a quarterly magazine.



The research, sponsored by BASELINE, examined some of the environmental impacts related to land use conflicts between vineyards and their neighbors. The environmental and land use controversies associated with vineyard operations have become the most heated in the world famous wine-growing regions of Napa and Sonoma counties, fifty miles north of San Francisco. Both counties have come under pressure to adopt more stringent regulations to control vineyard design and management practices.

The conflicts between vineyards and urban uses are not just confined to Northern California, but are being experienced in other major wine growing areas of the State.

In 2001, BASELINE completed a survey of city and county planning agencies and county agricultural commissioners in California's wine growing areas to learn more about the extent and types of land use conflicts. The survey found that **the most serious conflict is related to the use of pesticides by grape growers**. The second issue most frequently cited by survey respondents is typical land use conflicts that occur when new developments (usually new

homes) are constructed adjacent to agricultural operations.

We asked agencies about the effectiveness of General Plan policies and/or zoning regulations in addressing rural/urban interface issues relative to vineyards. Most of the agencies that have implemented measures (primarily setbacks and buffers) to address the conflicts report that these measures are only somewhat effective. **More than one-third of the agencies contacted reported conflicts and/or complaints about vineyard-related pesticide use near the urban interface**. Nearly one-half of the responding agencies continue to receive complaints.

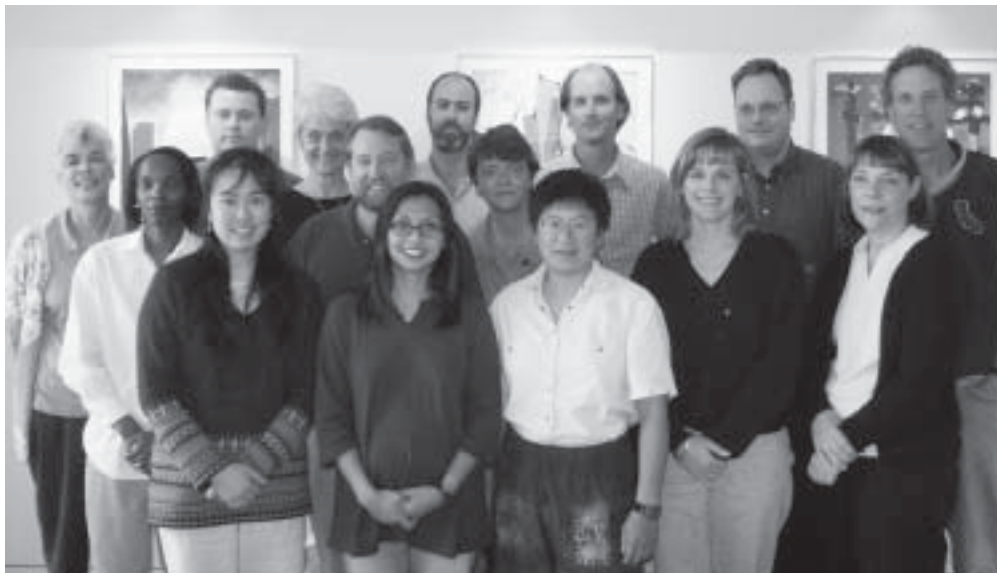
Based on the responses from this survey, it does not appear that any of the agencies involved with planning and mediation of urban-rural interface conflicts have developed an effective policy to resolve these conflicts. It is clear that the existing requirements for setbacks and buffers, which were not based on scientific research, are not completely effective. As the demand for new housing and wine grapes continues to expand, interface conflicts between rural and urban constituents are likely to become more and more frequent.

You can get a copy of the article by contacting Eric Parfrey at (510) 420-8686 or email eric@baseline-env.com.

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2002 Newsletter



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