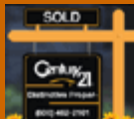


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Cattlemen oppose Conaway purchase

Daily Democrat

The Yolo County Cattlemen's and Wool Growers' Association does not have a history of being politically active, but recent action of this county compels us to voice our complaints. We are watching Yolo County's Board of Supervisors with disbelief. We believe the seizure of the privately-owned 17,000-plus acre Conaway Ranch through eminent domain is an attack on property and water rights of the entire community and sets a precedent in the county for more unaccountable seizures. We also feel that the Conaway acquisition is not an affordable option for the County of Yolo.

In the past eminent domain has been used to acquire private property for the public's benefit. The county has claimed in court it wishes to use the Conaway Ranch for the purpose of maintaining agricultural operations, as it is currently managed.

We see no reason nor has the county provided a sufficient explanation to seize the Conaway Ranch from taxpaying citizens. If the County feels the threat of development by the current owners, there are rules and regulations governing land use, and we should address it in that manner.

Yolo County has already spent an enormous amount of money to initiate this project. Who ends up with the title on this property if Yolo County defaults on the loan? Could the price, determined by the courts for this property, be too high? With the uncertainty of the appraisal and other unforeseen and extended court litigation, can Yolo County afford the cost?

This particular use of eminent domain has private property owners far and wide very nervous. Yolo County always touts itself as an agricultural community, but at every turn there is more regulation that is reducing the viability of agricultural businesses in the county.

If Yolo County really wishes to sustain an agricultural community, then the Board of Supervisors should direct strategies and policy that encourage farming and ranching on private property and ensure the community that their property will not be condemned for unexplained and unaccountable public benefits. If the current trends in the agricultural sector continue, livestock producers and farmers will be forced from the fertile soils of Yolo County with nowhere to go.

We encourage the Board to give us the facts of the Conaway Ranch purchase, and then put the final purchase of the Conaway Ranch to a countywide vote! Yolo County Cattlemen's and Wool Growers Association would like to be on record of being opposed to the acquisition of the Conaway Ranch by the County of Yolo, especially through eminent domain.

Stan Holland, president, Yolo County Cattlemen's and Wool Growers' Association

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