# Staff Report

Meeting Date: November 12, 2024

To: Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

From: Bernadette Cizin, Associate Planner

Subject: Proposed Merlo Williamson Act Rescission with Re-entry, Agricultural Preserve Amendment (APA-24-09) and CEQA Determination

## Background and Discussion

On July 1, 2024, the County received an application for a Williamson Act Contract amendment to bring approximately 320 acres, owned by E. Merlo & Son, a California Partnership, under one Williamson Act contract consisting solely of property under their ownership with the Agricultural Use of rangeland and pasture for livestock production and forage. The property is currently under a Williamson Act contract which has seven different property owners. In order to bring the subject property under an individual contract, the existing Agricultural Preserve should be amended to remove the subject property and a new Agricultural Preserve created as the existing preserve is under several different ownerships and the property is not contiguous.

They do not propose to increase or decrease the acreage in Agricultural Preserve.

**Agricultural Preserve Administrator Review**

Staff prepared a detailed report (Exhibit C) for review and recommendation by the Agricultural Preserve Administrator. Based on the report, the Administrator found the applicant’s request is consistent with the County Rules for the Establishment and Administration of Agricultural Preserves and Williamson Act Contracts and recommends the Board rescind and reissue the contract as proposed and amend the existing preserve to remove the subject property and establish a new agricultural preserve.

## Environmental Review

Staff is proposing that the proposed project be considered categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, *Open Space Easements or Contracts.* A Categorical Exemption implies that the project will not result in any significant adverse environmental effects. CEQA Guidelines Section 15317 specifically exempts the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, which is applicable to the subject action.

The Board of Supervisors must consider the proposed CEQA exemption together with any comments received during the public review process. Further, the exemption can only be approved if the Board finds, based on the whole record before it, that there is not substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment. Accordingly, a finding to this effect has been incorporated into both draft resolutions prepared for the Board’s consideration.



Figure 1: Subject Property

## Comments

Agency Comments

***Siskiyou County Assessor – August 5, 2024***

The Assessor’s office has provided estimated tax assessment values for the one parcel included in this project (Exhibit D).

Planning Response: No Response necessary.

Public Comments

Notice of the project was published and posted as required prior to the Board of Supervisors meeting and no public comment was received as of the preparation of this staff report.

## Recommended Action

Should the Board of Supervisors concur with staff’s analysis, staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors find that the proposed modifications to the Williamson Act contract and Agricultural Preserve are exempt from CEQA and approve said modifications.

A draft motion to this effect is provided below.

## Recommended Motions

I move to take the following actions:

1. Determine the project exempt from CEQA in accordance with Section 15317, Open Space Easements or Contracts; and
2. Adopt the attached resolution approving amendment to the existing Agricultural Preserve and establishment of a new preserve; and
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving the rescission and reentry of the applicable Williamson Act contract.

Exhibits to the Staff Report

1. Draft Resolution amending the existing Agricultural Preserve and establishing a new preserve
2. Draft Resolution Approving the Rescission of the subject property from the existing contract and Reentry into a new Williamson Act Contract
3. Exhibit A within Draft Resolution: Williamson Act Contract – Draft
4. Agricultural Preserve Administrator Staff Report with Recommendation
5. Comments