



March 12, 2019

Board of Supervisors Ventura County
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

**RE: March 12, 2019, Ventura County Board of Supervisors Public Hearing Regarding
Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement Corridors**

The Honorable Board of Supervisors:

The California Avocado Commission (Commission) operates under the authority of the California Department of Food and Agriculture and represents the approximately 3,000 commercial avocado growers in California who produce on nearly 50,000 acres. Ventura County is home to more than 750 of these growers who farm on over 18,000 acres.

The Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement Corridors (Proposal) will have significant detrimental impact on the avocado farming industry. The attached map (page 3) identifies 1,868 acres of avocado production within Ventura County that will be impacted by the Proposal.

Ventura County avocado farms provide economic value through revenue generation and job creation. Avocado groves also serve as a hedge against fire, as evidenced during the devastating Thomas Fire. In addition, avocado farming generates local taxes while placing low demands on county services, provides open space and environmental benefits, and adds aesthetic qualities to the Ventura County landscape.

Most of California's avocado groves, including those within Ventura County, are multi-generational, family owned farms. Farmers, in their very essence, are the epitome of environmental stewards. It's a simple concept – farmers understand their dependence on the land they farm, on its natural resources, and its natural habitats. Without a healthy, vibrant land, farmers know that they, and farming itself, will become extinct. They realize they are partners with nature and work judiciously to manage this delicate partnership in order to maintain a well-balanced ecosystem. Yes farmers, as difficult as it is to accept, are truly environmentalists.

I've been on countless avocado farms in Ventura County, and wildlife are not restricted by farming. Rather, wildlife and farming have learned how to coexist, and they do it well.



Many parts of the Proposal are concerning. For example, the proposed boundary for the east to west corridor through the Piru and Fillmore area. This boundary is immediately adjacent to the Los Padres National Forest, where literally thousands of square miles of protected national forest exist. Why not move the proposed corridor boundary just slightly north of Fillmore and Piru, and thereby avoiding the intrusion into private land? A small adjustment to the proposed corridor would keep it within the vast Los Padres National Forest. In that area there is no need to take away private property value, usage and protection of life, structures and groves when protected ground is just up the slope!

In closing, the Commission fully supports the points raised in the Ventura County CoLAB letter dated March 6, 2019. CoLAB has identified significant concerns that must be addressed. The Commission urges the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to table this Proposal until a satisfactory resolution is achieved.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ken Melban'.

Ken Melban

Vice President of Industry Affairs

