

# San Mateo County Times

**Tom LANTOS**

**Farm Bureau's objection to**

**Tuesday, September 23, 2003** - I take strong exception to the recent piece in the Times by Bruce Blodgett, director of national affairs at the California Farm Bureau, regarding my legislation to protect some

5,000 of the most beautiful acres in San Mateo County by including the land in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Both the House and the Senate approved my legislation last year, and the Farm Bureau had nothing to say at the time. The legislation did not pass the House and Senate in the same form, because differences over provisions unrelated to my legislation were not resolved before Congress adjourned in November 2002. This year, the Senate has already passed its version of my bill, and the House Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the legislation has already held hearings at which my legislation received a positive reception.

Mr. Blodgett is making a fuss over including 232 acres in the national park because those acres are currently used for farming. Now his allies in Washington are attempting to block my legislation.

The 232 acres on the San Mateo Coast are not really the issue. My legislation is simply being held hostage by Mr. Blodgett and his allies because they have concerns about federal government land policies in the Klamath Basin in northern California and areas in southern California affected by the Desert Protection Act.

The Farm Bureau has been one of the most vocal and strongest advocates for property rights. The owner of the 4,262 acres of the Rancho Corral de Tierra, including the 232 acres currently being farmed, is the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), an area nonprofit group dedicated to preserving and protecting pristine open space treasures. POST wants to see its entire property included in the national recreation area.

It is the absolute height of hypocrisy for the Farm Bureau to tell POST it cannot convey the property it owns to the recreation area.

Indeed the study conducted by POST in consultation with the National Park Service anticipates continued farming, and the recreation area has indicated it has no problem with continuing to lease the land in question for farming.

The threat to farmland in the Bay Area is population growth, not conservationists and government agencies. The private/public partnership developed to buy the land from willing sellers offers a realistic opportunity to permanently protect one of the last parcels of undeveloped property in San Mateo County.

This extraordinary landscape includes Devils Slide, Rancho Corral de Tierra, Montara Mountain and the headwaters and most of the watershed of four major coastal streams. It is home to a number of threatened and endangered species. The panoramic views on this property distinguish and define the San Mateo coastal region. Including Rancho Corral in the recreation area not only will protect this property from development but also will open this excitingly scenic wilderness to visitors of the National Park.

And there is an added attraction. The private/public partnership has been established to make this jewel available to the National Park Service for about half of the actual cost. The federal government would provide \$15 million of the \$30 million purchase price.

Opportunities like this do not happen everyday. I urge the Farm Bureau to stop holding Rancho Corral de Tierra hostage to its problems and concerns elsewhere. U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo) represents the 12th District, which includes the land in question.