



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSIONS ON EASTERN MERCED COUNTY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO BE HELD

Merced, CA – Beginning on August 1, 2001, Merced County's UC Development Office, UC Merced, and a collective of interested environmental and other groups will hold a series of public informational sessions on the Eastern Merced County Conservation and Development Program.

The Conservation and Development Program involves several processes, including physical planning and permitting of the UC campus and community, and regional conservation planning. The first two sessions will take place Wednesday, August 1 and Saturday, August 4, 2001.

First Public Information Session – August 1, 2001 Conservation and Development Program Overview

This session will be held on August 1 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom, located at 2145 Wardrobe Avenue in Merced. The program will provide interested citizens with an overview of the physical planning, permitting and regional conservation efforts underway in conjunction with the development of the UC Merced campus and the University Community Plan in Eastern Merced County.

This event is the latest in a series of public forums, community advisory group meetings, and development workshops that have been held for the planning process related to the development of the University and Community.

As part of the event, the University and County will present a detailed schedule of projected dates for significant milestones in the various permitting and public processes involved. The University and the County will update the public concerning several important documents which will be released on or about the week of August 6, 2001, including: a draft Long Range Development Plan [LRDP] and a draft Environmental Impact Report [EIR] on the creation of the proposed UC Merced campus, and a draft University Community Plan [UCP] and a draft EIR on the creation of the proposed residential University Community.

Second Session – August 4, 2001 -- CEQA Workshop

The California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] is a statute that requires state and local agencies to evaluate the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. CEQA provides citizens an opportunity to participate in the evaluation of decisions that will affect their community's quality of life. Studies of the environmental impacts attributed to the new UC Merced campus, the associated university community development, and regional conservation efforts are currently being created by the University and County.

A public workshop on CEQA will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Sam Pipes Room of the Merced Civic Center, located at 678 West 18th Street in Merced. The workshop will explain CEQA's environmental review requirements and suggest ways that citizens can more effectively participate in CEQA's public review process. The workshop is sponsored by National Audubon Society, co-sponsored by a coalition of agencies and organizations, and conducted by the Planning and Conservation League Foundation [PCLF]. Attendees will also receive a copy of PCLF's *Citizens' Guide to CEQA*.

For more information on these programs, please contact:
August 1 Workshop: Merced County UC Development Office, (209) 725-3700.
August 4 Workshop: Marc de la Vergne, PCLF, (916) 313-4520
Other information can be found at the web site <http://www.ucmercedplanning.net>.

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