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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Annual Agricultural Preserve Questionnaires are in the Mail NOW

Ventura, California, December 8, 2016 – Just like that, another growing season has come to a close. Farmers are starting to prepare for the 2017 season, but for some land owners who agreed to restricted agricultural uses for big property tax savings by a Land Conservation Contract, it also means that the April 1, 2017 deadline for filing their *Agricultural Preserve Questionnaire* with the Assessor's Office will be here soon.

The Ventura County Assessor administers the property tax portion of the Ventura County's Agricultural Preserve Program under the Williamson Land Conservation Act. This program is referred to as the Land Conservation Act or LCA, and it encourages property owners to continue the agricultural use of their land instead of converting it to nonagricultural uses. It is accomplished by giving property owners a reduction in the property taxes for their agricultural land in exchange for long-term commitments to retain the land in agriculture.

The Assessor's Office mailed close to 1,100 questionnaires to contract holders this week, with a due date of **April 1, 2017**. By returning the completed questionnaires, which is a requirement under their LCA Contract, the Assessor staff is able to complete valuations based on information related to the specific agricultural uses and production of the property under contract. When the Assessor's Office is not in receipt of a completed *Agricultural Preserve Questionnaire*, the office must then estimate factors necessary to determine the annual restricted valuation under the property's LCA Contract. These estimates take many labor hours of additional time to process each year, and can have an unfavorable impact on the assessment.

The format of the questionnaire is the same as last year and contract holders may also attach a copy of their growers report in lieu of filling out portions of the form. The Assessor's staff welcomes any questions regarding the program or the questionnaire. The Assessor's Office is open Monday – Friday, from 8:00am until 5:00pm, and has specialized rural appraisers available to answer any questions. For more information, please visit our website at assessor.countyofventura.org, contact our office at (805) 654-2181 or in person at the Ventura County Government Center, Hall of Administration.

The Assessor and his staff would like to thank the Land Conservation Act contract holders in advance for returning these vital questionnaires and for preserving farmland in Ventura County for future generations.