

PROPERTY TAX NEUTRALITY METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The Settlement Agreement¹ and Stipulation² that established the Land Conservation Commitment require that the Land Conservation Plan being developed by the Stewardship Council provide property tax revenue, other equivalent revenue source, or a lump sum payment, so that the totality of dispositions in each affected county will be “tax neutral” for each county. Section 4.3 of Volume I of the Land Conservation Plan (LCP) adopted by the Stewardship Council in November 2007 described the Stewardship Council’s potential strategies and anticipated approach to achieving property tax neutrality at a programmatic level.

More recently, on September 17, 2009, the Stewardship Council adopted a funding policy. This policy further clarified the Stewardship Council’s approach to property tax neutrality and identified several potential vehicles to achieving this requirement. On March 30, 2011, the Stewardship Council adopted a set of guidelines which describe scenarios in which the Stewardship Council will make property tax payments to affected counties and further defined a set of overarching assumptions regarding property tax neutrality payments.

Table 1 in Appendix A lists the estimated acreage and estimated annual property taxes associated with PG&E watershed lands which have been recommended by the Stewardship Council Board of Directors for donation. The estimated total tax liability that would be subject to tax neutrality will depend upon the total acreage actually transferred, and the types of organizations receiving fee title to the lands. No PG&E watershed lands will be recommended for donation in counties that are not listed in Table 1.

PURPOSE OF PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this methodology is to establish a standard payment process when lands are transferred to organizations that are exempt from paying property taxes. The following methodology will be applied to all counties which experience a loss in property tax revenues due to a recommended donation of fee title as part of the Stewardship Council’s Land Conservation Commitment.

DETERMINING TAX NEUTRALITY PAYMENT AMOUNT

Following the Stewardship Council approval of a fee-title donation, the Stewardship Council will work with the affected county to calculate the payment amount for inclusion in the Stewardship Council’s Land Conservation and Conveyance Plan (LCCP).

1. Using the legal description and/or survey of lands identified for transfer to an organization which is exempt from paying property taxes, the Stewardship Council and PG&E will prepare an estimate of the annual taxes on lands to be donated. If assessed values on the lands recommended for donation change prior to the transfer of land, the

¹ *Opinion Modifying the Proposed Settlement Agreement of Pacific Gas & Electric Company, PG&E Corporation and the Commission Staff, and Approving the Modified Settlement Agreement*, December 18, 2003:

http://www.stewardshipcouncil.org/documents/Settlement_Agreement.pdf

² *Stipulation Resolving Issues Regarding the Land Conservation Commitment*, September 25, 2003:

http://www.stewardshipcouncil.org/documents/Stipulation_Agreement.pdf

Stewardship Council will revise the payment calculation included in the proposed tax neutrality funding agreement prior to its execution by the parties.

2. The reduction in annual taxes caused by the donation of acres to organizations exempt from property tax will constitute the “Annual Base Value” for the funding calculation.
3. The County will receive a one-time lump sum payment The Stewardship Council will provide a draft funding agreement for county review and approval using the Annual Base Value and payment option. The draft funding agreement is expected to include, among other items, the following acknowledgements by the county:
 - a. Payment by the Stewardship Council satisfies the tax neutrality requirement as specified in the Settlement and Stipulation for the subject fee-title donation.
 - b. The county has issued (or will not reasonably withhold) a Welfare Tax Exemption for the new landowner, if required.
 - c. The county will agree to distribute the lump-sum payment to the applicable special districts as dictated in the relevant Tax Rate Area at the time of payment. In consideration for the additional administrative responsibility of the county to set up the process to allocate payments to special districts, the Stewardship Council will make a \$3,000 payment to the county for county’s anticipated costs to perform such activities for the first fee title donation of lands in the county. Said payment will be made at the time the Stewardship Council makes its lump-sum tax neutrality payment. For subsequent fee title donations, if a county expects to incur more than \$3,000 in costs to perform such activities, then it shall make a request to the Stewardship Council for increased funding no later than 60 days following the recording of the grant deed for each additional fee title donation or the execution of a tax neutrality funding agreement, whichever comes later. The Stewardship Council will review each funding request and provide the county with sufficient funds to cover all reasonable anticipated costs.
4. The Stewardship Council will fund the settlement amount according to the terms of the tax neutrality funding agreement as described in number 3 above no later than 60 days following the recording of the grant deed for the fee title donation or the execution of a tax neutrality funding agreement, whichever comes later.

Lump-sum payment

Lump-sum payments in satisfaction of property tax neutrality would be calculated based upon the net present value of the Annual Base Value at the time that lands are removed from the property tax rolls. The lump-sum payment will be calculated using a discounted cash flows analysis for perpetual payment streams, otherwise known as a Capitalization Rate (Cap Rate).

The Cap Rate calculation requires an assumption of a long-term rate of return on comparable investments, and a long-term inflation rate. In order to develop a Cap Rate for a lump-sum payment, the Stewardship Council considered multiple long-term inputs, including long term equity and fixed income returns (Dow Jones Industrial Average, S&P 500, U.S. Treasury, CalPERS), weighted average borrowing costs for subject counties, and discount rate assumptions for pension and other post-employment benefits.

Based upon the analysis described above, **the Stewardship Council is offering counties a Cap Rate of 4.0%** to be used in the calculation of a lump-sum payment in satisfaction of property tax neutrality. The calculation for arriving at a lump-sum payment is as follows:

$$\text{Lump Sum Value} = \text{Annual Base Value} \div 4.0\%$$

The following table provides an example of the application of the Cap Rate to various Annual Base Values:

Annual Base Value	\$500	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Lump Sum at 4.0%	\$12,500	\$25,000	\$125,000	\$250,000

Lump-sum payments would be allocated based upon the applicable Tax Rate Area at the time of payment. The Stewardship Council envisions making these lump-sum payments as unrestricted payments in lieu of property taxes, subject to the distribution method described in section 4.c above. Counties and special districts would be free to determine the best use of the funds pursuant to the needs of the county or special district, including, if desired investment in a shared investment pool of the county's choosing.

Appendix A

Estimated acreage and property taxes associated with PG&E watershed lands which have been recommended by the Stewardship Council Board of Directors for donation.

Table 1

Table 1 – Estimated Property Taxes From Land Available for Donation³

County	Lands Available for Donation	Total Taxes (Annual)	Total Taxes (Lump)
Alpine	410	2,948	\$73,691
Amador	2,040	\$8,577	\$214,431
Butte	N/A	\$0	\$0
Calaveras	60	\$53	\$1,320
El Dorado	N/A	\$0	\$0
Fresno	267	\$2,413	\$60,334
Kern	N/A	\$0	\$0
Lake	986	\$31,844	\$796,090
Lassen	N/A	\$0	\$0
Madera	220	\$10,271	\$256,770
Mariposa	N/A	\$0	\$0
Mendocino	797	\$17,011	\$425,289
Merced	N/A	\$0	\$0
Nevada	1,867	\$13,150	\$328,758
Placer	2,683	\$46,794	\$1,169,882

Plumas	3,278	\$40,873	\$1,021,828
San Luis Obispo	N/A	\$0	\$0
Shasta	23,386	\$89,727	\$2,243,172
Tehama	151	\$45	\$1125
Tulare	N/A	\$0	\$0
Tuolumne	868	\$360	\$9,9009
Yuba	41	\$530	\$13,256
Total	\$37,054	\$264,597	\$6,614,955

^a This acreage includes lands within parcels that cross county boundaries