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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NR#2016-16
August 9, 2016

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PROGRAM PRESERVES AG LAND FOR CLIMATE BENEFITS

*In Its Second Year, Cap-and-Trade Funded SALC Program
Commits \$37.4 Million to Shielding Agricultural Land from Development*

SACRAMENTO – Twenty California properties may be permanently set aside for agriculture thanks to a first-of-its kind state program that invests in farmland conservation in order to benefit the climate. The Strategic Growth Council launched the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in 2015. The program committed \$4.6 million in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to agricultural conservation easements and planning grants in its first year and is committing an additional \$37.4 million this year.

The SALC Program is part of the [California Climate Investments initiative](#). State agencies are investing cap-and-trade auction proceeds in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing a variety of additional benefits to California communities.

“The investment in protecting nearly 19,000 acres of California agricultural lands in this funding period is a monumental step forward in the State’s efforts to fight climate change and preserve invaluable agriculture,” California Resources Agency Secretary John Laird said. “This keeps important farmland in production, while helping to manage growth within discrete boundaries.”

Working in cooperation with multiple agency partners, the Department of Conservation’s Division of Land Resource Protection developed guidelines for the SALC Program, conducted public workshops, and reviewed 26 agricultural conservation easement proposals this year, ultimately recommending that the Strategic Growth Council fund 20. By preventing farms and ranches from being converted to more intensive land uses, such as urban or low-density sprawl, SALC will help avoid increases in greenhouse gas emissions that would result from these developments.

This \$37.4 million in grant awards will protect 18,988 acres of irreplaceable agricultural land and, by limiting development, will reduce emissions by eliminating nearly 47 billion vehicle miles. That equates to

nearly 19 million metric tons of carbon dioxide over a 30-year period or keeping more [than 4 million cars off the road](#) for one year.

“The Strategic Growth Council is excited to see such prime agricultural land remain intact to aid in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting California’s climate goals,” said Randall Winston, Executive Director of the Strategic Growth Council.

Notably, Monterey County – which in 2014 ranked fourth among California counties in agricultural production with nearly \$4.5 billion in commodities – had five easement projects and a planning grant approved.

“Investing significant climate dollars in Monterey County exemplifies the state’s dedication to preserving agricultural production,” said Department of Conservation Director David Bunn. “It also speaks to the foresight of Monterey County’s land planners, who pursued these grant opportunities and are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through responsible strategic planning.”

A complete list of grant recipients – which covers nearly a dozen counties throughout the state -- is available [here](#).

California Agriculture Secretary, Karen Ross said, “These working and natural lands are not just part of our landscape, they are part of the California story—and that’s worth preserving. Protecting these agricultural lands is an important part of our state’s strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fight climate change and continue agriculture’s contribution to our diverse, thriving economy.”

The Strategic Growth Council last year awarded nearly \$122 million in competitive grants and loans toward that goal using proceeds from the state’s cap-and-trade auctions. In addition to preserving agricultural land, the funds help reduce emissions by supporting more compact infill development patterns as well as encouraging active transportation and transit usage. More than three-quarters of that funding was aimed at benefiting disadvantaged communities.

The [Division of Land Resource Protection](#) also administers the California Farmland Conservancy Program. Since 1996, that program has funded more than 175 conservation easements, permanently conserving more than 57,000 acres of the state’s best farmland with more than \$83 million in funding. DLRP is also working with the High Speed Rail Authority on securing permanent agricultural conservation easements to offset the loss of farmland associated with construction of the bullet train.



California Climate Investments are programs funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund using proceeds from the State’s cap-and-trade auctions.