
California Farmland Conservancy Program

Focus on Farmland



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Newsletter of the CFCP
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This edition of Focus on Farmland features:

- CFCP Grant Protects Farmland in San Diego County
- Vineyards in Alameda County Protected with CFCP Funding
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- Other News and Upcoming Events

Tierra Miguel Foundation and Fallbrook Land Conservancy Protect Farmland in San Diego County

The Tierra Miguel Foundation and the Fallbrook Land Conservancy, with state and federal funding, recently completed a first-of-its-kind agricultural conservation easement project in northern San Diego County.

The California Farmland Conservancy Program and the federal Farm & Ranch Lands Protection

Program partnered to fund an agricultural conservation easement valued at approximately \$500,000 and held by the Fallbrook Conservancy. This is the first agricultural conservation easement grant funded by either the state or federal programs in the state south of Santa Barbara County.



At a celebration for the grant awards for the Tierra Miguel Foundation and Fallbrook Land Conservancy, from left to right: Wallace Tucker, President of the Fallbrook Conservancy (easement holder), Darryl Young, former Director of the California Department of Conservation, Charlene Orszag, President of the Tierra Miguel Foundation, and Jim Kocsis, Assistant State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Tierra Miguel Foundation (TMF) had leased the 85-acre organic farm with prime soils, a reliable water source, and located in an agricultural area faced with increasing development pressure from the high demand for residential estate homes in the Pauma Valley. The Tierra Miguel Foundation operates the farm in a Community Supported Agriculture model – selling subscriptions for weekly supplies of fresh produce to members of the general public in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties, as well as to classroom learning programs. TMF also offers numerous educational outreach and research programs to promote sustainable agriculture.

In another first, the California Farmland Conservancy Program temporarily granted \$1.4 million to TMF to purchase the underlying fee title to the property from the landowner who had leased TMF the property.

“We’re very happy to be able to permanently preserve this beautiful Pauma Valley land for agriculture,” said Charlene Orszag, president of the not-for-profit Tierra Miguel Foundation. “This project is a great example of how local organizations can work with the state and federal government to make a difference.”

Tri-Valley Conservancy Permanently Protects Wente Vineyards in Alameda County

In June, about 100 acres of vineyards owned by the Wente wine-making family were protected by agricultural conservation easements held by the Tri-Valley Conservancy based in Livermore, Alameda County.

The Conservancy used \$1.75 million of its own funds and a \$750,000 grant from the California Farmland Conservancy Program to buy agricultural conservation easements on two parcels of vineyards. Both easements are located within a mile of the City of Livermore’s Urban Growth Boundary and along the Livermore “wine trail”. According to Sharon Burnham, the Conservancy’s executive director, the valley was a premier wine-producing area before Prohibition. Vineyards dwindled to just 1,200 acres at that point, but now 5,000 acres in the Livermore Valley are used for vineyards.

The CFCP also made grant to the Tri-Valley Conservancy in 2000 to protect another 102 acres of agricultural land planted in vineyards. Since 1994, the Conservancy, formerly known as the South Livermore Valley Agricultural Land Trust, has protected 3,300 acres in agricultural conservation easements.

Funding Updates for Agricultural Conservation Easements

The State’s 2004-05 Budget has appropriated an additional \$12 million in grant funds to the CFCP. These funds come from Proposition 40, the voter approved California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, which designated funding for agricultural land conservation among its many purposes.

The CFCP’s grant application process remains the same as in past years. The program accepts proposals on an ongoing basis throughout the year and provides applicants with feedback as early as possible in the development of proposals. Hard copies of the CFCP’s Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) are available upon request. The RFGA and additional resources for grant applicants are also available at the CFCP’s website: www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp.

In addition to the agricultural land conservation grant funding provided by the State, the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) recently allocated \$3.4 million in grant funds to California for the current federal fiscal year. Federal funds are typically allocated based upon a single call for proposals in the spring, followed by funding commitments in the summer. Current year FRPP funds have been committed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to projects in Marin, Mendocino, Solano, Santa Clara, Mono, and San Luis Obispo Counties. The CFCP will provide matching funding to many of these projects. For more information on the FRPP, see www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.

Signs of the Times

Although not among the principal issues in the development of an agricultural conservation easement, the placement of signs on a property can be an important consideration for landowners, land trusts, local governments, and state agencies. Signs or prohibitions against signage can evoke strong opinions and emotions. The issue of signage is among the many that should be fully discussed with landowners during preliminary explanation of specific easement terms.

Signs Acknowledging Protected Lands

Signs acknowledging the location of protected lands can be excellent promotional tools for local land trusts. In certain situations, funding sources may require the posting of informational signs beside protected properties, acknowledging the contribution of public funds in the protection of land. For example, acquisitions funded by Proposition 12 bond funds have specific signage requirements. In situations where the CFCP has provided Proposition 12 funding for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement, land trusts have the option of receiving required signs directly from the CFCP or creating their own, incorporating elements that have been defined by the Resources Agency. If desired, landowners may also include information indicating that the land is private property, and that no right of public access is authorized.

Signs for Commercial Advertising

If farmland has high roadside visibility, commercial signs can be an additional source of income for a landowner, while having minimal impacts upon the productive uses of the land, particularly if limited to portions of the property that are not farmed. However, if a conservation easement includes the preservation of open space and scenic vistas among its stated Conservation Purposes, placement of commercial signage could be in direct conflict with those purposes, and an easement holder may prefer to have easement terms that specifically prohibit or limit such signs. In addition, local jurisdictions and state agencies such as CalTrans may also have specific prohibitions against commercial signage that a conservation easement cannot override. Land trusts should become familiar with any local ordinances and state requirements and prohibitions for commercial signage.



A sign on Zimmerman Ranch in Marin County, protected by an easement held by the Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

In Brief:

CFCP Calendars: For the past four years, the CFCP has released a full-color "Conserving Farmland For Future Generations" calendar. This annual calendar has highlighted successful local efforts to conserve important farmland resources, with photos of conserved farmland and messages concerning local land trusts and the CFCP. Unfortunately, the costs of production and ongoing budget limitations have resulted in the CFCP being unable to release a 2005 version of the calendar. We regret that we will not be providing this informational calendar that many individuals and organizations have come to expect. At the same time, we look forward to exploring new opportunities and partnerships that may allow us to resume production of the calendar. We invite your suggestions for potential funding to bring back this valuable calendar in the future. Please send comments or ideas to cfcpc@conservation.ca.gov.

CFCP Staff News: **Tim Bryant** and his wife Anita are now proud parents to Davis Allan Bryant, born August 22, 2004. **Deniz Tuncer** has returned from her maternity leave and is now back in the office on a half-time basis. Deniz, husband Derek Cressman and baby Sylvie also managed to fit in a trip to Turkey this summer. **Catherine Caldwell** married Department of Conservation Network Administrator Blake Rushworth on a beach in Humboldt County in July. Not to be outdone, **Chuck Tyson** and his wife Melissa recently became the happy owners of an Australian Shepherd puppy, Logan. **Deanna Dobrinen** and her husband David added a back yard water fountain this summer, which attracts a variety of beautiful wildlife.

Upcoming Events:

Agricultural Summit 2004: The Future of Our Working Landscapes will be hosted by **ValleyVision** and the **UC Davis Agricultural Issues Center** on October 27. To register, visit www.valleyvision.org.

The **Land Trust Alliance's National Land Conservation Conference** will be held October 28-31 in Providence, Rhode Island. This four-day conference is the largest gathering of land conservation leaders in the country. The last day to pre-register is October 4. For more information, visit www.lta.org.

The **Great Valley Center** is hosting a number of upcoming events. The **Land Trust Summit** will be held November 12-13 in Modesto. The Land Trust Summit provides technical and organizational development training for Central Valley land trusts and agricultural land trusts outside of the region. For more information, contact Theresa Kiehn at (209) 522-5103 or theresa@greatvalley.org. In addition, the Great Valley Center is holding the 2004 **Sacramento Valley Forum: "Our Authentic Economy"** October 21 in Chico. For more information, see <http://www.greatvalley.org>.

The **American Farmland Trust** will hold their National Conference "**Farming on the Edge: Meeting the Challenge**" from November 15-17 in Lexington, Kentucky. For more information, visit www.farmland.org

We hope you've found this issue of *Focus on Farmland* useful and informative. Please contact us with any questions or ideas you have for future editions. Feel free to forward this email to other interested parties.

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