
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-Funded Easements in Stanislaus, Calaveras, Santa Clara and Merced Counties
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- Funding Updates
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Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchased on Ranch in Stanislaus and Calaveras Counties

The Trust for Public Land, in partnership with California Rangeland Trust has just completed the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement on the 2,563-acre Orvis Ranch. Orvis Ranch is located along State Highway 4, the heavily traveled route to Yosemite. The ranch is approximately 11 miles east of Farmington, and lies in both Stanislaus and Calaveras counties (1,711 acres in the former, 852 in the latter) just below the oak woodlands. This is one of the largest agricultural conservation easements in the Central Valley, and it is the first agricultural conservation easement to be recorded in Calaveras County.

Established in 1873 as the Snow Ranch, the ranch raises purebred Hereford cattle. It features vernal pools and wildlife habitat, including unique plant communities that thrive in the serpentine deposits.

The conservation easement was purchased with \$1,705,000 in funding from the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), \$1,009,883 in funding from the USDA/NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection (FRPP), and \$385,117 via landowner bargain sale. The Great Valley Center provided funding assistance for costs associated with the transaction. The Trust for Public Land coordinated the transaction, and the California Rangeland Trust will hold the easement.

For more information about the Trust for Public Land visit www.tpl.org. The California Rangeland Trust's website can be found at www.rangelandtrust.org.

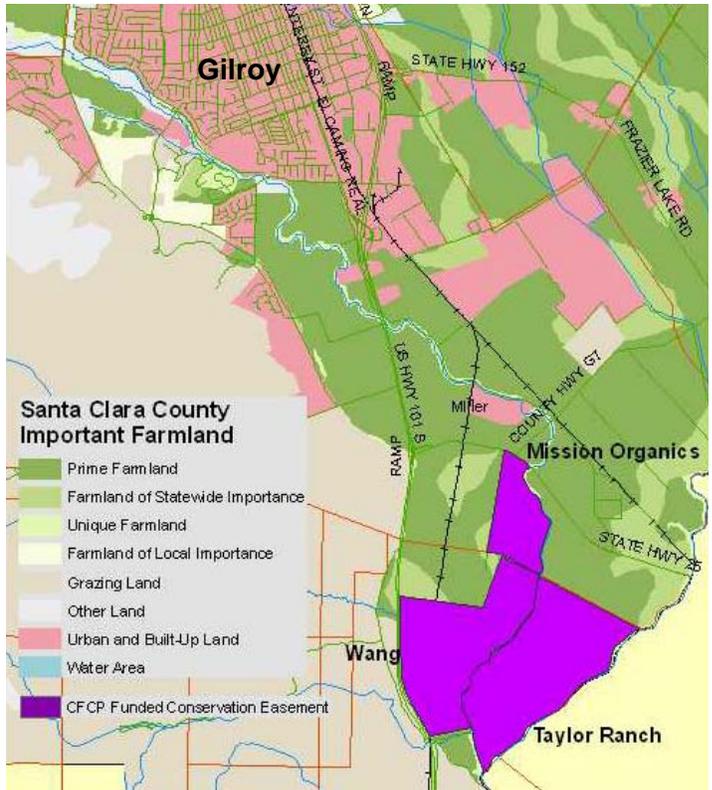


Orvis Ranch

New Easement Recorded South of Gilroy

The Silicon Valley Land Conservancy (SVLC), formally known as the Land Trust for Santa Clara County, recently purchased a 510-acre agricultural conservation easement on Taylor Ranch, with funding assistance from the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), the USDA/NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection (FRPP), and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (Authority). Located less than two miles south of the Gilroy city limits, Taylor Ranch is the largest farm in the region. Its western boundary runs the full length of Carnadero Creek, and its southern boundary runs the full length of the Pajaro River. The microclimate and soils of Taylor Ranch support specialty lettuce and other row crops. The operator is one of the largest growers and processors of baby lettuce in the region under the Earthbound Farms brand.

SVLC purchased the easement with \$820,000 in funding from CFCP, \$820,000 from FRPP, and \$500,000 from the Authority. SVLC has been working towards preserving a large block of viable agriculture in the vicinity during the past two years. This is the third CFCP grant in this agricultural area – with Taylor Ranch joining the Wang and Mission Organics properties, now more than 1,200 acres of contiguous irrigated cropland have been preserved. SVLC is dedicated to preserving and protecting agricultural lands, open space, and critical habitat for endangered species in Silicon Valley and the surrounding Santa Clara County. For more information about the SVLC, please visit www.siliconvalleylc.org.



Agricultural conservation easements south of Gilroy.

Central Valley Farmland Trust Purchases Ag Easement in Merced County

In January, the Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT) purchased an agricultural conservation easement on approximately 41 acres of the Du Granrut Ranch. Located in Merced County near the community of Delhi, Du Granrut Ranch grows primarily almonds. With its close proximity to Delhi, the fastest growing unincorporated community in Merced County, Du Granrut Ranch was threatened with conversion to rural residential development.

This project continues a trend of agricultural land conservation in the Delhi area and is the fifth CFCP grant in the vicinity. With the addition of this easement, over 400 acres have been cumulatively protected in the Delhi area, nearly all used for tree crop production. The effort is one of the clearest demonstrations of a land trust's adherence to a local strategy to protect farmland.

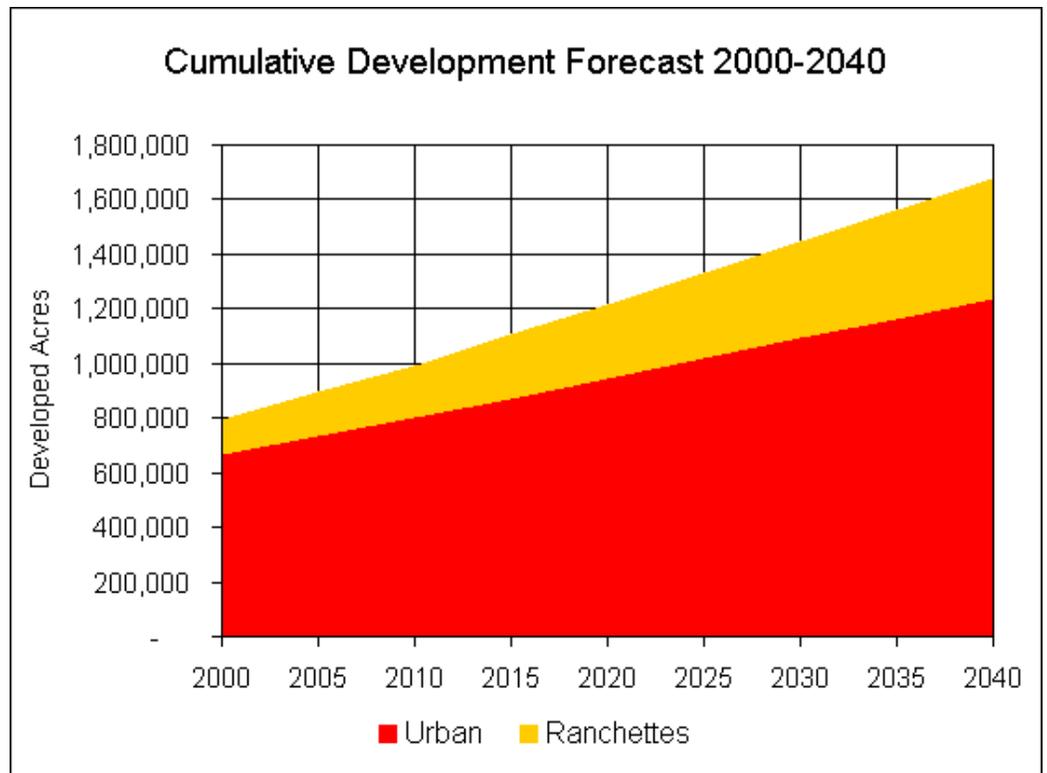
The CVFT purchased the easement with \$162,800 in funding from the California Farmland Conservancy Program and \$77,200 from the Great Valley Center's Agricultural Transaction Program. CVFT is a regional land trust dedicated to preserving farmlands in Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Sacramento Counties. For more information about the CVFT please visit www.valleyfarmland.org.

American Farmland Trust Releases Report on Central Valley Farmland

In early April, the American Farmland Trust (AFT) issued a new report *The Future Is Now: Central Valley Farmland at The Tipping Point?* which documents several disturbing trends in the nation's premier agricultural region:

- Local land use plans call for efficient development that avoids the best farmland, but are mostly ineffective at fulfilling their intentions.
- The most productive farmland is being developed the fastest.
- The land is being developed very inefficiently – an acre of farmland is lost for every 8 new residents.
- “Ranchettes” are proliferating and now occupy about one-third as much land as all urban development combined.
- Speculation is driving farmland prices above what growers – and land trusts – can afford.
- If current trends continue, by 2040 the Valley will lose another 880,000 acres with an agricultural output of \$800 million a year at the farm gate (in 2000 dollars).

The new AFT study is a sequel to the organization's 1995 report, *Alternatives for Future Urban Growth in California's Central Valley*. “That report,” says AFT California Director Edward Thompson, Jr., “was a wake up call to stop sprawl. But a decade later, it is clear that it was not heeded. And time is running out. The Valley is fast-approaching a ‘tipping point’ where the cumulative effects of inaction will make it politically, if not physically, impossible to save a meaningful amount of farmland.”



Projected development of farmland in the Central Valley by 2040 under current trends. Chart courtesy of American Farmland Trust.

According to the American Farmland Trust (AFT), the most successful farmland conservancies tend to operate in areas where urban development pressure is minimal or has been effectively controlled by local land use policies. Where land uses aren't stable and land speculation is rampant, growers aren't as interested in selling conservation easements. That's one reason the new focus of AFT in California is promoting better growth management, especially in the Central Valley.

AFT's new report, available only on the Internet, includes interactive maps and a feature that enables viewers to use their own criteria to rank their county's performance in farmland preservation. Find it, as well as details about AFT's other activities in California, at www.farmland.org.

Funding Updates

On April 3rd, the USDA-NRCS California office released the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) 2006 Request for Proposals and the California FRPP considerations in evaluating proposals. More than \$70 million will be available nationally for the 2006 funding cycle. The amount that has been allocated for California this year is \$2.44 million. Proposals are due to the NRCS state office by close of business on May 11. For additional information on the application process, contact Jim Kocsis, FRPP Program Manager, at 530-792-5605 or jim.kocsis@ca.usda.gov. The announcement of program funding can be found online at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/>.

The CFCP continues to receive grant applications on an ongoing basis, using the nearly \$15 million in grant funding appropriated during the current fiscal year. Many projects are eligible to receive both CFCP and FRPP grant funding.

Upcoming Events

The **Great Valley Center's** 2006 annual conference will be held on **May 10-11** in Sacramento. For more information, visit www.greatvalley.org/conference.

The **Bay Area Open Space Council** will hold its annual meeting on Friday, **June 2**, in San Francisco. For more information visit www.openspacecouncil.org.

The **Land Trust Alliance's** National Land Conservation Conference, Rally 2006, will be held on **October 12-15** in Nashville, Tennessee. For more information, visit www.lta.org or call 202-638-4725.

The **American Farmland Trust's** 2006 national conference, "Farming on the Edge: The Next Generation," will be held **November 13-15** in Newark, Delaware. For more information, visit www.farmland.org or call 202-331-7300.

The California Farmland Conservancy Program, administered by Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection, is designed to ensure that the state's most valuable farmland can be preserved. Through the program, local governments and nonprofit organizations can receive grants to purchase development rights from willing landowners, thus creating permanent conservation easements.

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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