
California Farmland Conservancy Program

Focus on Farmland



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Borina Farms Easements Established in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties

A three-year effort by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other partners to permanently protect 534 acres of prime farmland in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties recently reached fruition.

"These properties -- eight different farms -- are in the heart of one of the most productive and desirable farming regions in the state," said Brian Leahy, assistant director in charge of the Division of Land Resource Protection.

Five of the properties are in Santa Cruz County; the other three are in Monterey County. The properties range from 29.5 to 129 acres in size and grow high-quality vegetable and fruit crops such as lettuce, strawberries, celery, cauliflower and raspberries. Several of the farms are immediately east of the City of Watsonville, which is experiencing significant growth pressure. In 2002, Watsonville passed Measure U, defining planning areas and an urban limit line. The Borina properties are located in a 20-year protection area. However, three of the protected farms are within one mile of Watsonville's sphere of influence, while the remaining properties are within 3¼ miles. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is attempting to protect a sizeable amount of farmland in the Pajaro area prior to the expiration of Measure U.



Aerial photo showing three of the eight Borina properties near the eastern edge of Watsonville. Photo courtesy of Jim Ryder.

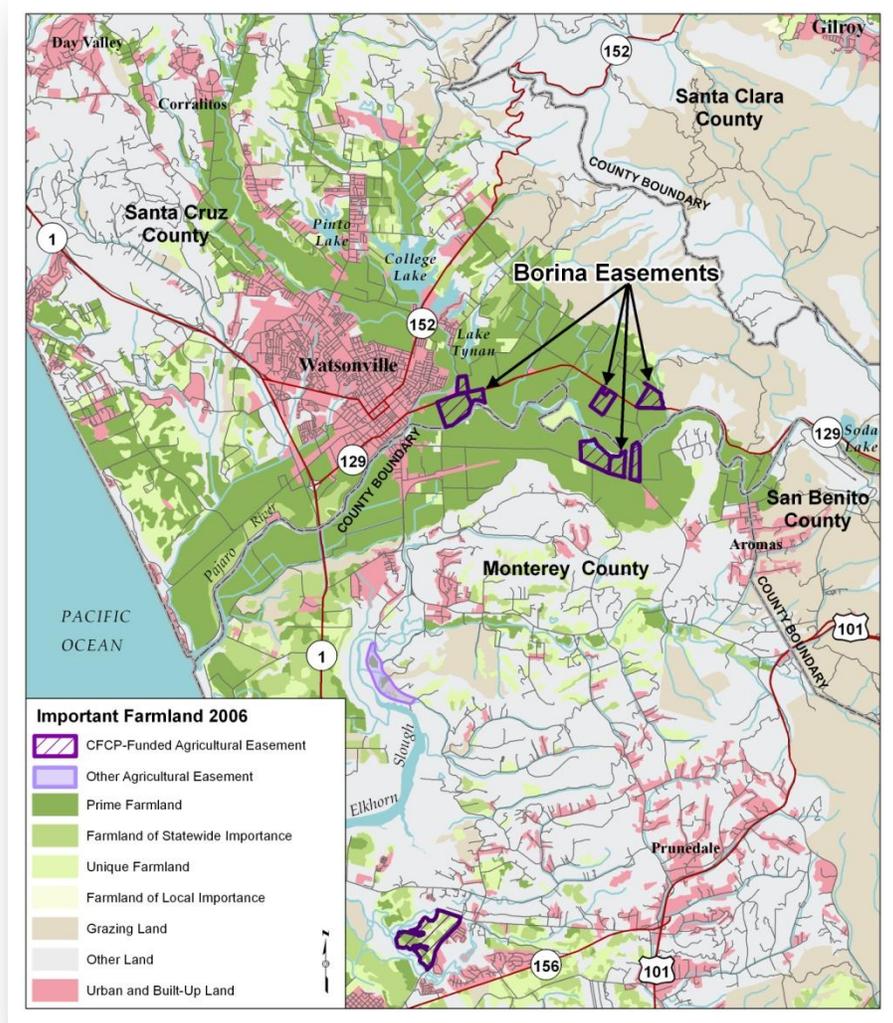
“This is the first time anyone has permanently protected prime farmland in the Pajaro Valley,” said Terry Corwin, Executive Director of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. “We are working now on protecting other farms, with the goal of permanently protecting the valley’s agricultural future.”

Most of the land is owned by the Borina Foundation, which was created in 2003 to continue the Borina family’s farming tradition and use the farming revenue to benefit the Pajaro Valley. The Borina Foundation will donate \$1.85 million of the \$3.05 million it received for the easements on their properties to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, contribute \$690,000 to the land trust’s endowment, and retain the remainder for charitable giving in the Pajaro Valley.

The CFCP and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service provided nearly \$3.4 million in funding to purchase agricultural conservation easements on all eight farms. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County holds the easements.

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County was formed in 1978 by local citizens concerned about protecting the lands that make Santa Cruz County so special, the land trust has protected more than 2,000 acres of land and worked with other organizations to protect another 9,000 acres. The trust protects both working lands, like farms and timberland, and natural lands with high conservation value – thus protecting water supplies, wildlife habitats, and open space. For more information, visit <http://www.landtrustsantacruz.org>.

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program is a voluntary easement program that protects productive agricultural land by purchasing conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with state, tribal or local governments, and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. Additional information is available at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.html.



The eight Borina properties encompass 534 acres of world-class farmland in both Monterey and Santa Cruz counties

Staib Farm Preserved in Yolo County

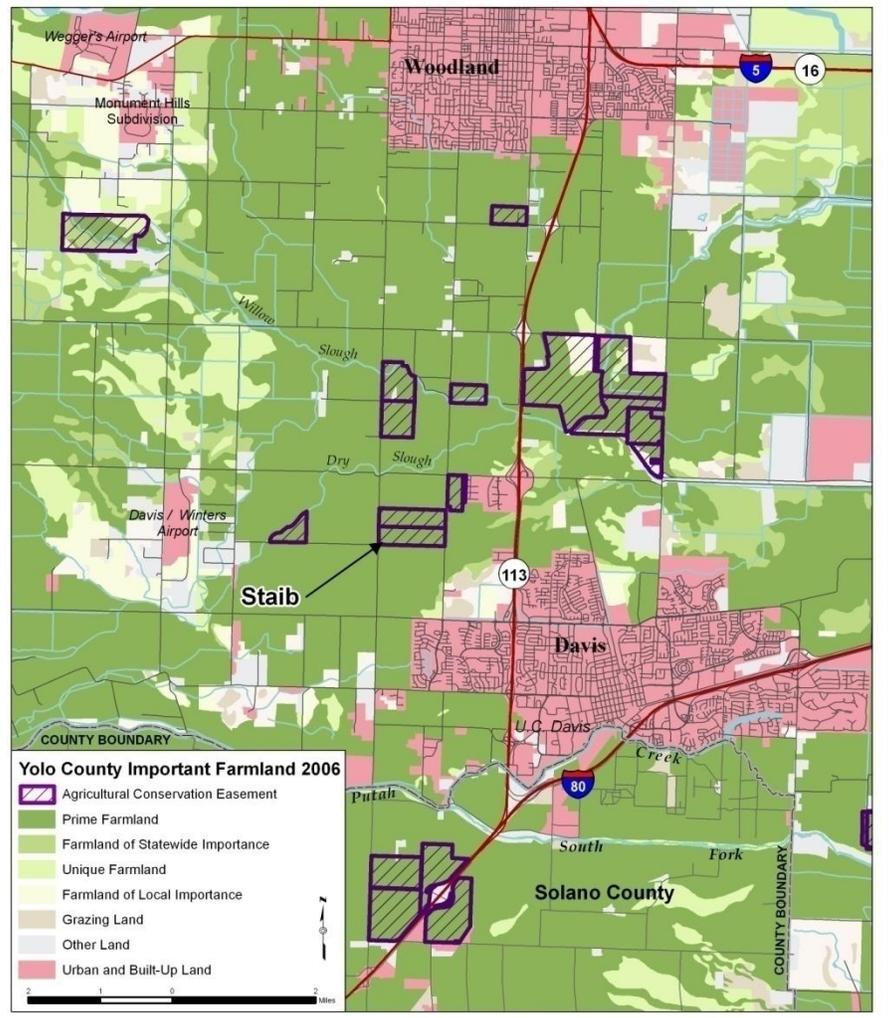
With easement funding provided by CFCP and the federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP), the Yolo Land Trust and the City of Davis recently partnered to purchase two contiguous conservation easements on 300 acres of the Staib Farm. The property is located one mile from the City of Davis city limit, one third of a mile from the Davis Golf Course subdivision, and is adjacent to an existing agricultural conservation easement. Without conservation, the property was at risk of being converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future due to the property's proximity to the City of Davis, easy accessibility from county roads, and continued high demand for rural residential homesites.

The conservation easements are part of the ongoing effort by local governments and the Yolo Land Trust to preserve farm and habitat land between the cities of Woodland and Davis. In combination, the City of Davis and the Yolo Land Trust now hold a total of 13 agricultural conservation easements between the cities of Woodland and Davis.

The Staib easements were purchased with \$790,609 in funding from CFCP and \$559,391 in funding from FRPP. The City of Davis contributed additional monies towards the transaction costs using local mitigation funds.

"The Staib Farm includes some of the best farmland in Yolo County, and we're very proud to have been part of setting this land aside for agriculture forever," said Bridgett Luther, Director of the California Department of Conservation. "I congratulate our partners -- the federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, the City of Davis and the Yolo Land Trust -- as well as the landowners, and hope that other local farmers and ranchers explore this option for their own property."

The Yolo Land Trust is a private, non-profit corporation founded in 1988 by farmers, community leaders and conservationists dedicated to protecting the land resources of Yolo County. To date, Yolo Land Trust has helped landowners place conservation easements on almost 8,500 acres, permanently protecting their land for future generations. To learn more, visit www.yololandtrust.org.



The 300-acre Staib property shown near the City of Davis in Yolo County

Jorgensen Ranch Protected in Merced County

The Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT), CFCP, and the Modesto-based Great Valley Center (GVC) recently partnered to purchase an agricultural conservation easement on Jorgensen Ranch in Merced County near the City of Gustine. CFCP and GVC provided funding while CVFT provided project coordination and will hold the easement.

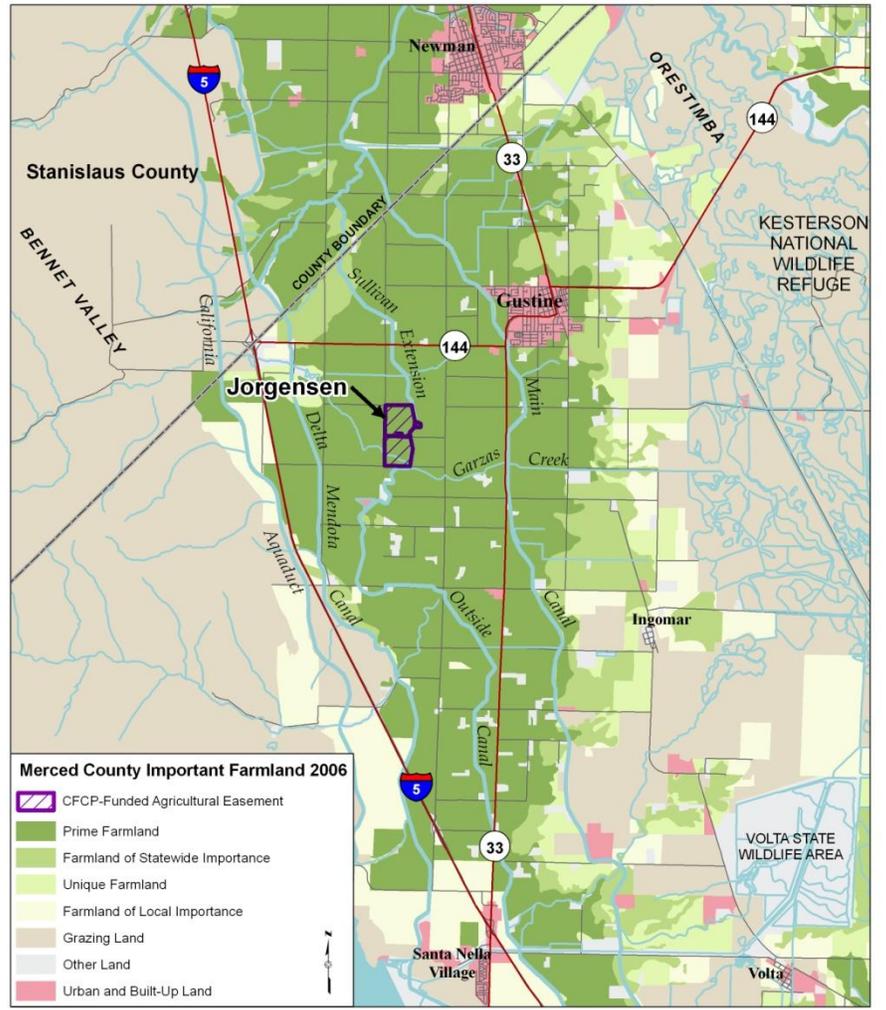
The 289-acre ranch is located 1.5 miles southwest of the City of Gustine. The threat of development exists from ranchetting north and south of Gustine, and from the property's location three miles east of Interstate 5 and State Highway 140, which provide commuter access to the Bay Area.

The ranch produces walnuts, beans, and alfalfa on soil that is classified as Prime Farmland. It has reliable water supplies from onsite and offsite wells and from the Del Puerto Irrigation District. The property is leased to a farmer that has been farming the property since 1975. The Jorgensen family has owned the ranch for about 100 years and the three sibling owners wanted to recognize the legacy of their antecedents by seeing the farm preserved forever.

The agricultural conservation easement was purchased with \$1,145,850 in funding from CFCP and \$194,150 in funding from GVC.

CVFT is a private, nonprofit, regionally-based land trust working with landowners who want to conserve their farmland for future generations. The organization works with landowners in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties. For more information, visit www.valleyfarmland.org.

Founded in 1997, GVC is a private, non-profit organization that supports activities and other organizations working to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of California's Central Valley, in partnership with the University of California, Merced. For more information on GVC, please visit its website at www.greatvalley.org.

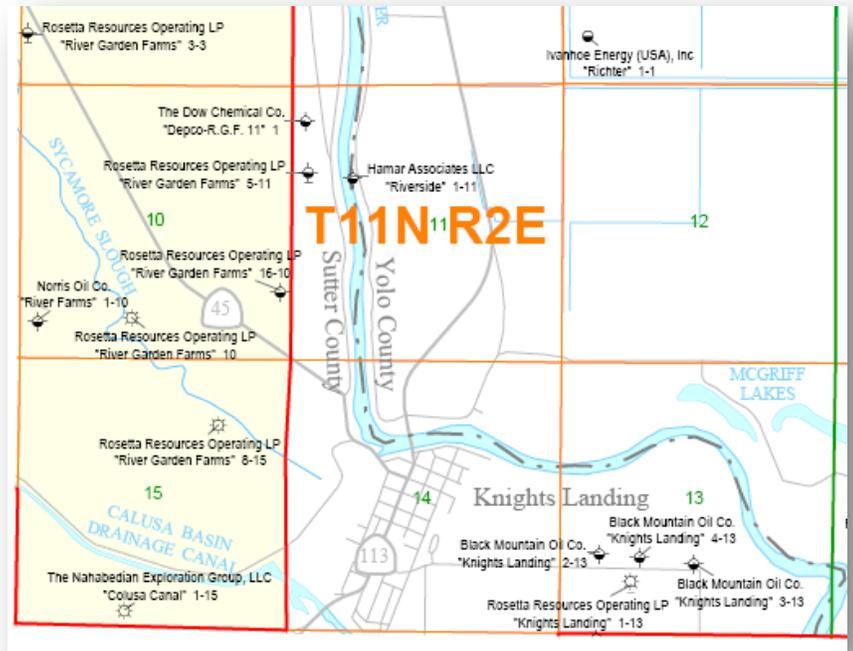


The 289-acre Jorgensen property shown near the City of Gustine in Merced County

DOC's Online Resources for Researching Hydrocarbon Resources

The status of mineral rights interests on a property is an important component of the due diligence that should be undertaken in any conservation easement project. While the ownership of mineral rights can generally be determined by review of title documents, it is often less clear what current and historic extraction activity has actually taken place on a given property.

The Department of Conservation's Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) maintains an online statewide database of oil and gas extraction activity. This database provides information that can be extremely helpful in assessing the level of surface impairment that may occur in the extraction of hydrocarbons from property that is under consideration for protection with a conservation easement. Within each of the six oil and gas districts comprising the state, maps are available that allow the determination of the location of specific oil and gas fields and individual wells. This information is available at: http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dog/maps/Pages/index_map.aspx



Screen capture taken from a portion of DOGGR's "Oil, Gas & Geothermal – District 6 Maps," available online

The DOGGR maps are sufficiently detailed to allow a given property to be located with a good degree of accuracy. Information is searchable by section/township/range. The maps list all known historic hydrocarbon extraction activity on a property, as well as the specific names and activity status of the wells (i.e., whether a well is active, inactive, capped, etc.). Additionally, DOGGR also maintains a database of actual well production for much of the state. With this information, one can obtain the monthly well production levels for individual wells, determine the last time wells were utilized, and assess production trends for a given area. The well production data are available at: <http://opi.consrv.ca.gov/opi/opi.dll>.

The issues of subsurface mineral rights must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis for conservation easement projects. The DOGGR databases provide important tools to make informed decisions in this regard.

CFCP / DOC News Updates:

Read about CFCP's Proposition 40-funded acquisitions: To date, CFCP has funded the acquisition of over 20 agricultural conservation easements across the state using Proposition 40 bond funds. The details of these acquisitions – including photos and maps – are available for viewing on the CFCP [website](#). This growing list of acquisitions will be updated periodically.

CFCP is now accepting applications in electronic form: To facilitate the electronic submittal CFCP has created a new e-application file that contains in one Word® document all of the various required

application forms and includes placeholders for other required documentation that must be submitted. There is a separate e-application file for acquisition grants and planning/policy grants. Some components of a CFCP application may not lend themselves to electronic submittal, in which case submitting those components in hardcopy form remains appropriate.

Applications are encouraged to consider using the more environmentally-friendly e-application for future submittals. For more information, please visit CFCP's application [webpage](#).

Upcoming Events:

The California Council of Land Trusts is hosting the 4th annual **California Land Trust Conference** on February 23 – 25 in Sacramento. The annual conference features conservation news, information, advocacy and networking opportunities with land trust and public agency colleagues. For more information please visit www.calandtrusts.org.

The **22nd California Small Farm Conference** ("Farming for the Future") is being held on March 1 – 3 in Sacramento. The conference is the state's premier gathering of small farmers and those who support them. The three day educational conference includes on-farm tours, focused workshops, general educational sessions and opportunities for peer networking. Conference registration is now open. To register, [click here](#).

The **2009 Green California Summit** is coming to the Sacramento Convention Center on March 16 – 18. The event offers an opportunity to learn, connect with colleagues and to get up-to-date on the latest developments in policy and technology. Admission to the Exposition is free – all you need to do is register. Keynote sessions are also free with your registration. To register, [click here](#).

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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