

Funding Available for Agricultural Land Conservation Easements in the San Joaquin Valley

Agricultural Land Mitigation Grant Program

Funding is now available for the purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements (ACEs or easements) in areas impacted by construction of California's high-speed rail system.

Easements funded under this Program are a part of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's (Authority) commitment to mitigate for the loss of farmland for the high-speed rail program.

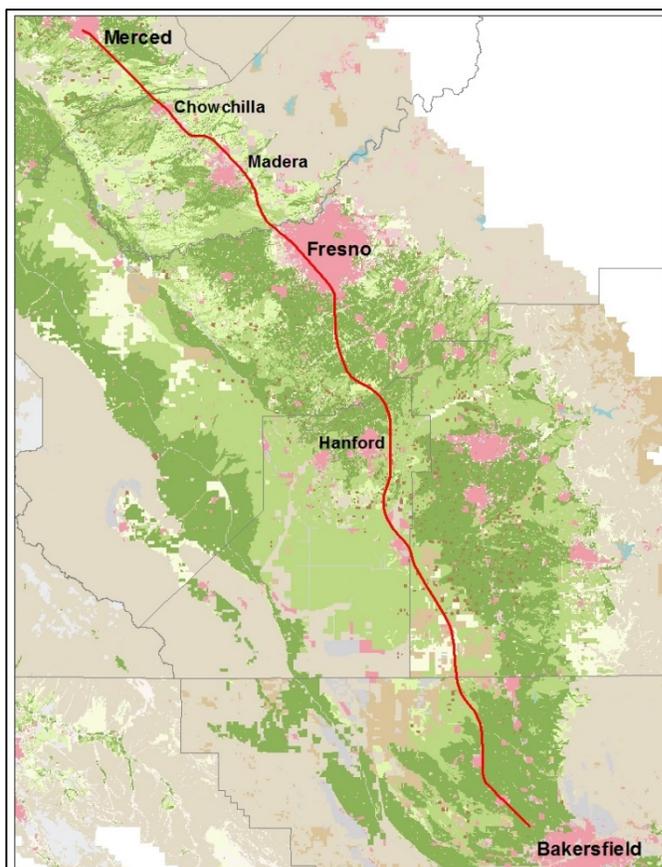
The California Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program (DOC-CFCP) will secure easements on behalf of the Authority. DOC-CFCP has worked with local partners and landowners to permanently protect more than 57,000 acres statewide.

Grant Solicitation Scope

Madera and Fresno counties, which will be first impacted by high-speed rail construction, are the initial focus area for easement purchases. DOC-CFCP can also provide upfront technical assistance to interested parties in the counties of Kings, Kern, Merced, and Tulare.

Program Goals

The Mitigation Program will fund the purchase of ACEs from willing sellers to conserve Important Farmland at a replacement ratio of at least one acre conserved for every acre impacted by the high-speed rail program. Agricultural land protected under these easements will be of similar quality to the impacted farmlands.



What are Agricultural Conservation Easements?

Agricultural conservation easements are voluntary, legally recorded deed restrictions that maintain agricultural resources by removing development pressures from the land. These easements remain in effect even when the land changes ownership.

Why would a Landowner want an Easement?

ACEs provide a multi-generational planning horizon for farm families. Landowners use easement proceeds to improve farming infrastructure, reduce debt, purchase additional land, and for financial or estate planning.

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Who is Eligible to Apply?

Grants may be awarded to local governments and private nonprofit (501(c)3) organizations that have among their defined purposes the conservation of agricultural lands. Interested landowners work with an eligible organization to apply for funds. The applying organization will hold and monitor the ACE.

How will the Program Work?

The Agricultural Land Mitigation Program will fund the entire cost of purchasing the easement, which includes the easement purchase price, transaction costs, and a stewardship fund that supports the easement holder's future costs. Landowners will be paid fair market value for the development potential of their property, as determined by independent real estate appraisers that are experienced in the valuation of agricultural land. Landowners whose farmland has been purchased in fee for the construction of the high-speed rail system's right of way or maintenance facilities will be reviewed prior to others received each application cycle.

Early consultation with DOC-CFCP regarding proposed easements is strongly encouraged to achieve the most efficient review process possible. Title issues may need to be resolved before an application can be deemed complete and ready for review. Applications will be competitively reviewed based on the eligibility and selection criteria found in DOC-CFCP statute (Public Resources Code), along with additional criteria specific to the Authority's needs. Applications will be evaluated three times per year for funding decisions.

The Request for Grant Proposals is available at:

www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp/mitigation/pages/AgLandMitigation_HSRA

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Check CFCP's website regularly for updates on the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program.