

CALIFORNIA FARMLAND CONVERSION REPORT 2004-2006



December
2008

Documenting changes in agricultural land use since 1984.



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor

Mike Chrisman, Secretary, Natural Resources Agency

Bridgett Luther, Director, Department of Conservation

California Department of Conservation

Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP)



Our Mission:

The Department of Conservation balances today's needs with tomorrow's challenges and fosters intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California's energy, land, and mineral resources. DLRP's goal is to lead the change in the value proposition for the conservation of agricultural and open space land in California.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)

The Program:

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program provides consistent, timely and accurate land use data for assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources.

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Cover Graphics

Front: View from Keever Vineyards, Yountville, Napa County. Image courtesy Carl Aamodt.

Back: Cattle brands used at California missions. The 21 missions from San Diego to Sonoma brought livestock husbandry to the state, along with many crops important in California today. For more on the California Mission Trail, see: www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22722

For a directory of cattle brands currently used in California, see:
www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/Livestock_ID/2007_Brand_Book.html

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California Farmland Conversion Report 2004 – 2006

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCE PROTECTION
FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

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Principal Data Sources include digital soil survey data, produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service; with aerial imagery from the National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) and AirPhotoUSA. Additional imagery for rural areas included Landsat 7 satellite data and aerial imagery acquired by the High Altitude Missions Branch of NASA.

Cultural base information for the Important Farmland Maps was derived from public domain data sets, based upon design of the U.S. Geological Survey, with updates generated by digitizing over current imagery.

Additional data on land management and land use conversion activity was made available from the U. S. Forest Service, California Department of Transportation, and the California Integrated Waste Management Board. GIS data posted at county and city websites proved valuable in many locations.

Map reviewer comments contribute substantially to improving the quality of the information. These reviewers include county and city planning offices, county agricultural commissioners, resource conservation districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service district conservationists, California Farm Bureau Federation, University of California Cooperative Extension, California Cattlemen's Association, local water and irrigation districts, public interest groups, and building industry representatives. Many of these groups also participated in development of the Farmland of Local Importance definitions for their respective counties.



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Dear Land Conservation Partner:

On behalf of the Department of Conservation I am pleased to present the **California Farmland Conversion Report 2004-2006**. This analysis of agricultural land use conversion trends, based on detailed geographic information system mapping, is the eleventh biennial report of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP).

The FMMP was established more than 20 years ago to document the location and extent of California's important farmlands, and to report on how they change over time. The Important Farmland Maps are used in the planning process to gauge the impact of planning decisions on agricultural land throughout the State. Population projections and today's environmental challenges make this information more important than ever.

Farm and grazing lands in California decreased by nearly 275 square miles (176,014 acres) between 2004 and 2006. The highest-quality agricultural soils, known as Prime Farmland, comprised 46 percent of the loss (81,247 acres). Urban land increased by 102,010 acres, nearly unchanged relative to the 2002-2004 reporting period, but conversions were focused in a smaller number of counties. Other types of change were substantial as well: land idling, conversion to wildlife areas, low-density residential uses, and confined animal agriculture facilities. The report contains county and regional summaries of the dynamics that occurred beyond the urban edge, providing context for larger planning issues.

Identifying strategic farmland resources is an important first step in maintaining California's agricultural vitality. The Department of Conservation thanks the agricultural organizations and local governments that work with us to produce these useful tools for conservation planning.

Sincerely,

Bridgett Luther
Director

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