

# The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act



## 2002 Status Report

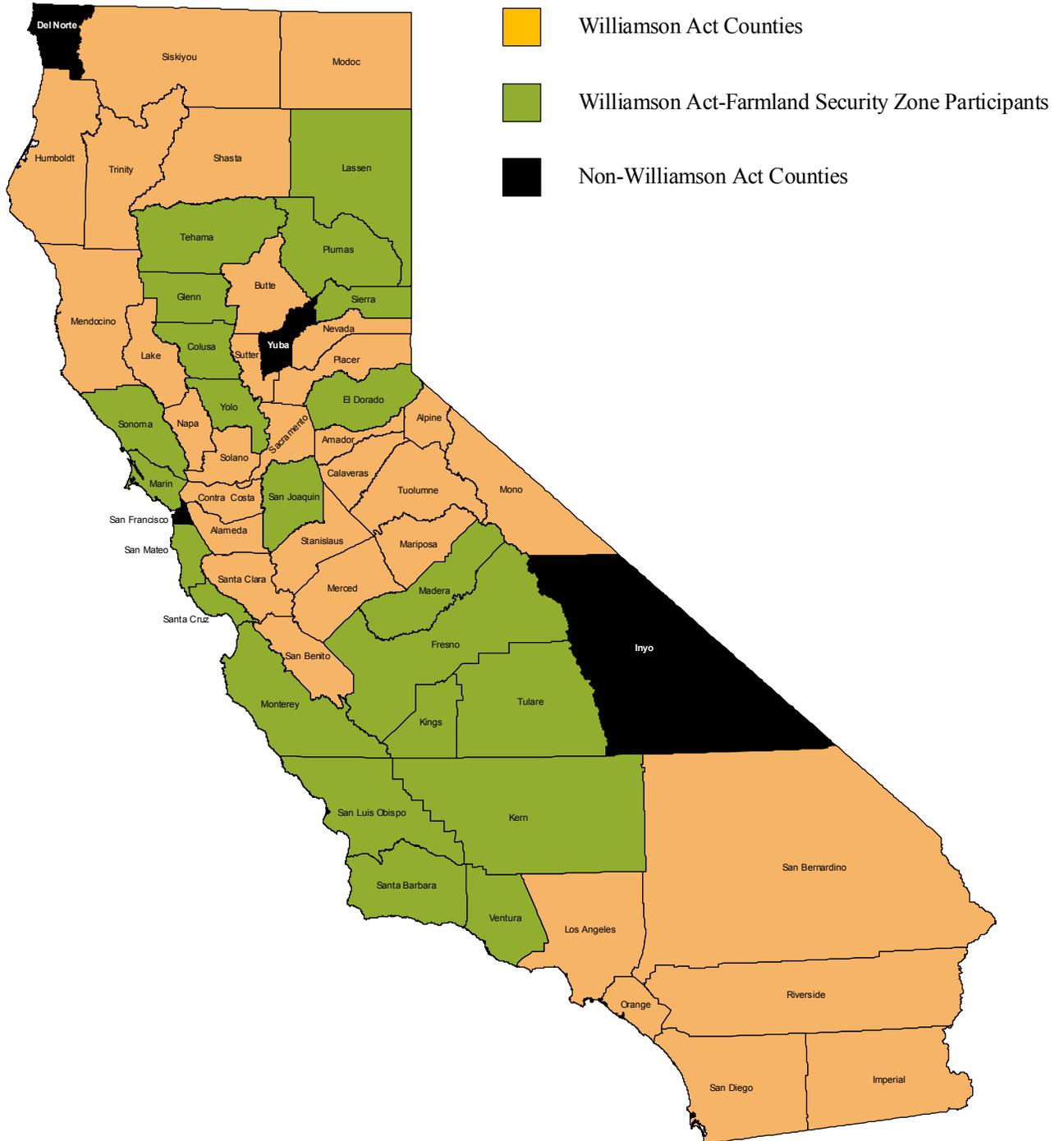


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# County Participation



# California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act Status Report 2002

(This report captures enrollment as of January 1, 2000 and January 1, 2001, and follows the "1997 to 1998 Land Conservation Act Status Report". No years have been omitted; rather, the Department of Conservation has changed the Status Report naming convention. Thus, the "1997 to 1998 Land Conservation Act Status Report" captures enrollment as of January 1, 1998 and January 1, 1999.)



Williamson Act Program  
California Department of Conservation

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# INTRODUCTION



*Providing information to guide land use planning decisions and programs that allow agricultural and open space landowners to voluntarily protect their land.*

*--Division of Land Resource Protection's Mission Statement*

## **The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act**

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, has been the state's premier agricultural land protection program since its enactment in 1965. The Williamson Act preserves agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive use contracts. Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses under minimum 10-year rolling term contracts with local governments. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value. In August of 1998, the Legislature enhanced the Williamson Act with the Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) provisions. The FSZ provisions offer landowners greater property tax reduction in return for a minimum rolling contract term of 20 years. For more information about the Williamson Act please refer to Appendix B.

## **About This Report**

This biennial report is a compilation of statewide enrollment data for the Williamson Act. The focus of this report is Williamson Act enrollment as of January 1, 2000 and January 1, 2001. However, enrollment data from prior years are included to provide context in certain discussions. Nearly all of the enrollment data were gathered from applications for payment under the Open Space Subvention Act. The applications are submitted annually to the Department by participating counties and cities. Several cities that administer Williamson Act contracts do not submit applications. As such, the total amount of contracted land may be negligibly understated in this report. Appendix C contains the data tables used to generate the charts and graphics featured in this report.

A small amount of non-Williamson Act, enforceably restricted land is included in this report. Except for Appendix C, this "Other Enforceable Restriction Enrollment" is mingled with the Williamson Act totals and accounts for less than one percent of the total reported acreage.

This report is mandated by State law and is primarily a report to the Legislature. However, this report is also made available to other audiences, including local governments, researchers, and interested statewide organizations. All audiences may find this report useful as a tool for educational purposes, for anticipating farmland conversion trends, for tracking land use trends, for facilitating program comparisons among participating local governments, and for demonstrating the Williamson Act's relative effectiveness.

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# I. ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT: JANUARY 1, 2001

As of January 1, 2001, 16.3 million acres were enrolled under the Williamson Act statewide. This represents over half of California's farmland total of about 30 million acres, and nearly one-third of the state's privately owned land.

Of California's 58 counties, 52 have adopted the Williamson Act program (Alpine County has adopted the program, but has yet to execute a contract). Del Norte, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Inyo, Modoc, and Yuba Counties had not adopted the Williamson Act program as of the snapshot date. However, Modoc County adopted the program beginning January 1, 2002.

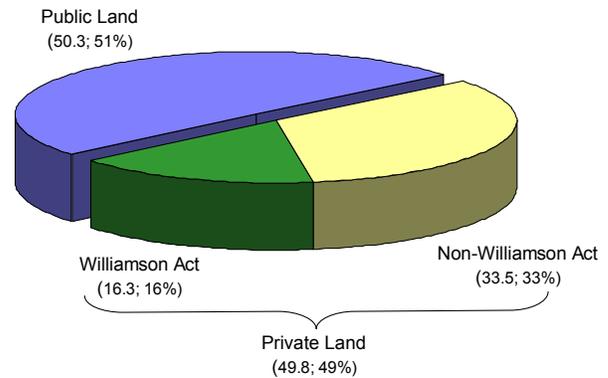
Imperial, Merced, Mono, and Sutter Counties adopted the Williamson Act program in 2000 and collectively enrolled over 384,175 acres under contract on January 1, 2001. Prior to these counties adopting the Williamson Act program, Mariposa County was the last county to adopt the program 23 years ago.

The farmland security zone (FSZ) program has been adopted by 22 counties, although not all of the counties have executed contracts. Seventeen counties reported a total of 564,887 acres of land under FSZ contract, which constituted nearly 3.5 percent of the statewide Williamson Act enrollment.

On January 1, 2001, there were 223,179 acres of contracted land at some stage of the nonrenewal process. The cumulative nonrenewal acreage constituted 1.4 percent of statewide Williamson Act enrollment.

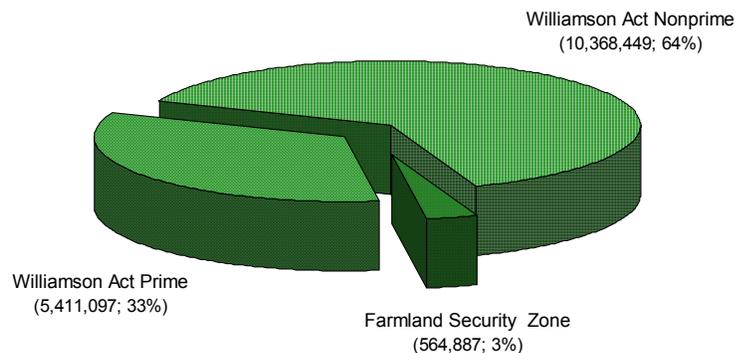
Participating local governments claimed \$38,761,471 in Open Space Subvention Act payments for the partial replacement of property tax revenue losses associated with contract enrollment as of January 1, 2001. That subvention claim is the largest since subvention payments started in fiscal year 1972-73.

**California Land Use  
(Million Acres; Percentage)**



Source: Department of Conservation: 2002 and California Almanac, Pacific Data Resources: 1991

**Williamson Act Acreage By Category  
(Acres; Percentage)**



# I. WILLIAMSON ACT REGIONS

