



Division of Land Resource Protection

Californians live among the most productive farmland and diverse open spaces in the world. The Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP) works with landowners, local governments, and researchers to conserve these resources for everyone's future. California has become both the most populated state in the nation and the largest producer of agricultural products. While millions of acres remain in agricultural use – primarily as grazing land – the challenge of accommodating projected population growth, maintaining a healthy natural environment, and supporting agricultural productivity has become more complex. DLRP provides tools and programs to help Californians tackle this challenge to make wise land-use decisions.

DLRP includes the following key planning tools:

The Land Conservation Act

Also called the Williamson Act, this is the state's premier agricultural land protection program. The Act preserves agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive-use contracts. Private landowners may limit their property 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. The Act has been widely credited with discouraging "leapfrog" development.

According to the 2014 Land Conservation Act status report, approximately 15.4 million acres were reported as being enrolled statewide in 2013. That total represents about 50 percent of California's farmland or about 31 percent of the state's privately owned land. Three counties had more than one million acres enrolled in the program in 2013: Kern, Fresno, and Tulare, at 1.7, 1.5, and 1.1 million acres, respectively.

The California Farmland Conservancy Program

The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) seeks to encourage long-term, private stewardship of agricultural lands; protect farming and ranching operations from conversion to non-agricultural uses; and encourage land-use planning for orderly urban growth and conservation of agricultural land.

The CFCP provides funding for cities, counties and nonprofit land trusts to purchase development rights, known as agricultural conservation easements, from willing farmland owners. This program complements the Williamson Act by focusing on farmland where long-term development pressures overwhelm tax incentives. The CFCP also funds planning projects related to agricultural land conservation.

Since initiation in 1996, the CFCP has provided more than \$83 million in funding to permanently shield more than 57,000 acres of the state's best agricultural land from development and has provided more than \$1.8 million towards planning efforts to protect agricultural land.

Most recently, CFCP began work with the High Speed Rail Authority to secure permanent easements on farms and ranches to offset the loss of agricultural land associated with the bullet train's alignment through the Central Valley. In January 2015, the CFCP initiated the Strategic Growth Council on its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program -- a first-of-its kind state program that invests in farmland conservation for its climate benefits.

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

On a county-by-county basis, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) tracks conversion of farmland to other uses (about 28.8 million of the state's 100 million acres are in agricultural use). The program's goal is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision-makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources.

The FMMP biennial mapping survey covers approximately 91 percent – 45.9 million acres – of the privately owned land in the state in 48 counties. Counties without significant agricultural production or lacking modern soil maps are excluded.

The survey details land conversion within a series of categories, from Prime Farmland (land with the best physical characteristics to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops), to Urban and Built-Up Land (land occupied by structures at a density of at least one unit per 1.5 acres). Land-use change is determined by a variety of methods and sources, including analysis of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and

field reconnaissance. Data is then combined with soil quality data in a geographic information system (GIS) to produce maps and reports.

Resource Conservation District Assistance

The Resource Conservation District Assistance (RCD) Program provides assistance to California's nearly 100 RCDs, which are "special districts" under state law, set up to be locally governed

agencies with their own locally appointed or elected, independent boards of directors. RCDs implement projects on public and private lands and educate landowners and the public about resource conservation. DLRP provides a variety of financial and other assistance to aid these districts in their mission of developing a land stewardship ethic that promotes long-term sustainability of the state's rich and diverse natural resource heritage.



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