A Factbook
About our Agricultural Working Landscapes

THE SACRAMENTO REGION’S
Agricultural Summit 2004
Introduction: What is in this collection

How does a region maintain its valuable agricultural landscape in the face of rapid urbanization? The six-county Sacramento region is no different from California’s other major agricultural areas in the steady loss of farmland to expanding cities and low density rural residential parcels. In the last ten years, the region added about 350,000 residents and thereby lost 36,700 agricultural acres—15% in prime farmland. Even under the most rosy of land use scenarios, by 2050 another 57,000 acres of farmland will be converted as more residents are added to our region.

This factbook, and the October 2004 Agricultural Summit conference for which it was prepared, both approach the issue of maintaining agricultural landscape from a farmer and rancher perspective. In particular, we concentrate on economic incentives to landowners for keeping their properties in agriculture. In place of the land use planning and regulatory techniques that usually take center stage in discussions of protecting farmland, our focus is on the multiple public benefits inherent in agricultural landscapes and techniques and programs for compensating landowners for land conservation purposes.

This factbook was prepared as a resource for the participants in the Agricultural Summit 2004. It also has value as a stand-alone source of information on the agricultural economy and landscape of the Sacramento region. This collection of tables, maps, and narrative contains information about the Sacramento region’s:

- Agricultural operators, commodities and markets
- Public amenities provided by agricultural landscapes
- Past farmland conversion trends and future projections
- Compensatory techniques and programs for maintaining agricultural landscapes

The Agricultural Summit 2004 builds on the Blueprint project organized by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). Blueprint brought together several thousand residents to deliberate future growth scenarios for the region. Maintaining the agricultural landscape is a key task for implementing a smart growth scenario for the region.

Acknowledgements

Much of the information contained in the factbook came from standard statistical sources such as the Census of Agriculture, the annual reports of county Agricultural Commissioners and the biennial reports of California’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

We also relied on the creative work of real people to add value to the collection. In particular, the Graphic Information Systems (GIS) experts who provided the customized maps to our exacting standards merit special attention. They were Naomi Kalman of the Information Center for the Environment at UC Davis, and Laura Bell and Joe Concannon of SACOG. Finally, we note with much appreciation the skillful editing and formatting of Jeff Woled in turning a loose conglomerate of files into a readable and attractive report.

Cover photograph

University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources Communications Services Media Library
Valley Vision Mission Statement

Valley Vision is committed to improving the quality of life in the Sacramento Region.

We organize participation in solutions to regional issues and provide fact-based information for decision making.

We focus our work on the creation of livable communities, on ensuring sustainable natural resources and agricultural lands, and on the promotion of educational, economic, and social well-being for all our citizens.

Agricultural Issues Center Mission Statement

The Agricultural Issues Center is a statewide program of the University of California. Housed on the Davis campus, it provides broad-based and objective information about the issues confronting California agriculture in a global environment. The Agricultural Issues Center tackles topics dealing with the competitiveness of the state’s agricultural industries, agricultural-natural resource connections, international trade, commodity markets, productivity, and technological advances in agriculture, agribusiness, farm management, and agriculture-urban relationships.

For 18 years, the Agricultural Issues Center has served as a forum where important and often controversial trends involving California agriculture are identified, studied, and debated. When issues are selected for study, the Center draws on UC faculty, other researchers, and representatives of government and industry to design and carry out the research and educational projects.

Valley Vision’s Valuing Agriculture Committee

In preparing this factbook and organizing the Agricultural Summit program, Valley Vision and the Agricultural Issues Center have been advised by the Valuing Agriculture Committee which is a diverse group of agricultural leaders, public agency representatives, nonprofit organization leaders, and others from throughout the Sacramento region. This is a standing committee that will continue to help direct Valley Vision’s programs in the agricultural area.
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Cover photograph:  Gerry Tsuruda
I. AGRICULTURE IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION: PEOPLE, COMMODITIES, MARKETS

Valley Vision’s Conversations with Agriculturalists: Regional Priorities for Maintaining Working Landscapes

Farm Operator Characteristics, 2002

Market Values ($ Million) and Rank among California Counties, 2002
Valley Vision’s Conversations with Agriculturalists:  
Regional Priorities for Maintaining Working Landscapes

In preparing for the Agricultural Summit, Valley Vision hosted a series of Conversations with Agriculturalists in April and May, 2004. The gatherings provided an informal setting for small groups of farmers and ranchers in each of the six Sacramento region counties to discuss issues and opportunities for agricultural land preservation and enhancement. The roundtable discussions gathered participants’ views about: (1) county or regional barriers to the maintenance of working agricultural lands; (2) opportunities for advancing the economic viability of the region’s agricultural economy; and (3) what local policy makers and urban community leaders can do to support the agricultural landscape. In total, 63 farmers and ranchers participated in these conversations.

Key Outcomes and New Opportunities

Participants’ concerns about the challenges facing agriculture were remarkably consistent from county to county, although agricultural landscapes vary considerably across the region. Two issues dominated the discussion: (1) the impacts of rapid and inefficient urban growth on the agricultural landscape, and (2) the frustrating loss of agricultural profitability in an era of increasing costs of doing business.

Participants in two or more counties identified the following barriers to maintaining land in the region in agricultural production:

- Limited understanding of the realities of agricultural by policy makers and urban residents.
- Diminishing influence of agricultural voices as the urban population and economy expands.
- Increasing land costs making agricultural occupations problematic for future generations of would-be farmers.
- Losses in agricultural infrastructure which cut into farm and ranch profits.
- Future water supply uncertainties that lessen long-term commitments to remaining in agriculture.
- Unclear regulatory and permitting processes affecting agricultural operations.
- Insufficient funding to implement land preservation strategies that compensate landowners at fair values for preserving their agricultural land.

As to compensatory solutions, participants expressed a great deal of interest in the agricultural easement technique, but raised critical questions about the permanency (perpetuity) of easements and the extent to which they restrict the choices of commodities grown and agricultural practices.

Described below are the regional and county-specific strategies and opportunities for maintaining agricultural landscapes that participants suggested.
### Regional Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td><strong>Conduct thorough research into the potential for term (less-than-perpetuity) agricultural easements in the Sacramento region.</strong> Believing that the economic incentives of California’s Williamson Act (property tax breaks) are no longer sufficient to support farming in the face of intense urban development, participants supported the examination of new compensatory techniques. Foremost is the potential of long-term but less than perpetuity (term) easement programs, perhaps featuring annual income to landowners in place of one-time cash payments for relinquishing development rights. How feasible is such a technique and what are the appropriate funding sources?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Education   | **Develop an agriculture education campaign to inform local residents, planners, and public officials about the realities of doing agriculture in the Sacramento region.** This education campaign should highlight the policies and programs that local jurisdictions could implement to better support their working landscape. This campaign could involve a series of county-specific meetings and ag “reality tours” to improve the awareness of the issues facing agriculture today.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

### County-Specific Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td><strong>Examine the feasibility of implementing a term agricultural easement program with parcel payments to landowners.</strong> This requires funding a collaborative process with urban and agricultural stakeholders to determine how a term program and funding could accommodate common interests in maintaining the agricultural landscape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Yuba/Sutter| **Develop an education and outreach program about agricultural easements and land preservation mechanisms tailored to fit the basic learning needs of these counties.** An education program could highlight the various options to support agriculture and identify local champions to guide implementation. **Support the development of new funding for long-term agricultural preservation through compensating landowners for the flood control values of their land.** Determine whether agricultural landowners would be interested in permanent land preservation in areas that are not slated for development according to the Blueprint project. Determine the amount of economic benefits that are needed to make agricultural easements appealing to landowners. Assess the willingness of urban residents to financially support the dual goals of agricultural land preservation and flood protection. |

| Yolo       | **Improve local mitigation and easement programs to maximize the impacts of these investments.** Yolo County agriculturalists had several ideas about ways to improve the efficacy of local programs in protecting the agricultural landscape. Support is needed to organize and facilitate the local pursuit of these goals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
El Dorado Facilitate agriculturalist engagement in the General Plan development process to integrate important policies emerging from the Conversation session with Valley Vision. Agricultural interests in El Dorado should receive greater support in county General Plan policies, including the development of Agricultural Districts and associated agriculture economic development centers.

Support an El Dorado marketing program that plans for agritourism development and agriculture product marketing based upon exemplary land stewardship practices. El Dorado County should capitalize on its assets as a rural county with high levels of recreation opportunities, scenic values, and niche agricultural operations. These assets should be worked into a regional agricultural marketing strategy.

Placer Research the latest strategies employed by jurisdictions in California to create new funding mechanisms for agriculture and open space preservation, and determine whether these mechanisms would work to fund Placer Legacy programs. Placer Legacy establishes strong county guidelines for land preservation, but it is necessary to create a new strategy for funding mechanisms for the implementation of the farmland protection efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Dorado</td>
<td>Facilitate agriculturalist engagement in the General Plan development process to integrate important policies emerging from the Conversation session with Valley Vision. Agricultural interests in El Dorado should receive greater support in county General Plan policies, including the development of Agricultural Districts and associated agriculture economic development centers. Support an El Dorado marketing program that plans for agritourism development and agriculture product marketing based upon exemplary land stewardship practices. El Dorado County should capitalize on its assets as a rural county with high levels of recreation opportunities, scenic values, and niche agricultural operations. These assets should be worked into a regional agricultural marketing strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placer</td>
<td>Research the latest strategies employed by jurisdictions in California to create new funding mechanisms for agriculture and open space preservation, and determine whether these mechanisms would work to fund Placer Legacy programs. Placer Legacy establishes strong county guidelines for land preservation, but it is necessary to create a new strategy for funding mechanisms for the implementation of the farmland protection efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prepared by Kristine C. Mazzei*
As portrayed in the graphic and table below, the average age of farm operators declined in 1997-2002 from 55.5 to 54.7. For California as a whole, the trend was in the opposite direction with the statewide average increasing from 56.5 to 56.8. Proportions of operators listing agriculture as their principal occupation and residing at their farms increased during the same period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of Farms</th>
<th>Tenants (% Total Operators)</th>
<th>Female (% Total Operators)</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Farming as Primary Occupation</th>
<th>Place of Residence on Farm Operated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Dorado</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>41 (4%)</td>
<td>283 (25%)</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placer</td>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>83 (6%)</td>
<td>364 (25%)</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>1,513</td>
<td>164 (11%)</td>
<td>348 (23%)</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter</td>
<td>1,391</td>
<td>187 (13%)</td>
<td>125 (9%)</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolo</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>190 (18%)</td>
<td>182 (17%)</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>83 (10%)</td>
<td>136 (16%)</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento Region</td>
<td>7,381</td>
<td>748 (10%)</td>
<td>1,438 (19%)</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>79,631</td>
<td>8,101 (10%)</td>
<td>12,615 (16%)</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Agriculture, County Data, 2002
Market Values ($ Million) and Rank among California Counties, 2002

The farm market value (before processing and other added values) of agricultural commodities grown in the region is about $1.1 billion per year. The top commodities by this measure are rice ($198 million), grapes ($124 million), tomatoes ($101 million), and a variety of other products ranging in value from peaches ($59 million) to almonds ($13 million). The bottom numbers on the map refer to that county’s statewide rank in terms of market value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>El Dorado</th>
<th>Placer</th>
<th>Sacramento</th>
<th>Sutter</th>
<th>Yolo</th>
<th>Yuba</th>
<th>Regional Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Rice, Milling</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Grapes, Wine</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes, Wine</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Nursery Products</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Milk, Market</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>Peaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>Pears, Bartlett</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>Walnuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees, Xmas</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Nursery Stock</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>Plums, Dried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture Range</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Pasture, Irrigate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Agricultural Statistics Service, Summary of Agricultural Commissioner’s Reports, 2001-2002
II. THE PUBLIC BENEFITS OF MAINTAINING AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Regional and Community Public Benefits of Maintaining the Agricultural Landscape

Map: Wetland and Riparian Areas in the Sacramento Region

Map: Approximate Locations of Threatened and Endangered Species in the Sacramento Region
### Regional and Community Public Benefits of Maintaining the Agricultural Landscape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Benefit</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe and secure source of food</td>
<td>The most obvious and most market-related benefit. Access to locally-grown food is valued at a community and regional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water runoff and drainage</td>
<td>As compared to impervious surfaces (buildings, pavement, etc.), farmland allows a natural dispersion of runoff, limiting flooding and consequent damage. Especially beneficial to downstream properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquifer recharge</td>
<td>Pervious landscapes allow the gradual recharge of groundwater supplies from the surface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water quality</td>
<td>Variable, depending on farm cultivation practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air quality</td>
<td>Variable, with tradeoffs between farm activity emissions and carbon sequestration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil quality</td>
<td>Variable, depending on cultivation practices. Good farming practices can retain soil quality and limit erosion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural habitat for plants</td>
<td>Variable, depending on cultivation practices. The least intrusive forms of farming (cattle grazing, dryland agriculture) generally provide the most natural protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenery</td>
<td>As open space, farmland provides an attractive visual resource, especially valued as an antidote to urban congestion and the manmade environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>Preserving wetlands produces multiple values, including habitat, drainage, and aquifers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit the spread of noxious weeds and other plant pests</td>
<td>Cultivated landscapes generally reduce the extent of weeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomass</td>
<td>Potential source of energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit urban sprawl</td>
<td>Large blocks of protected farmland serve as barriers to urban expansion, redirecting growth and perhaps increasing development efficiency. As greenbelts, they also help to define the geographical limits and separate identities of communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited public service costs</td>
<td>As compared to urbanized land, agricultural land is far less costly to serve with roads, emergency services, roads, schools, and other public programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation</td>
<td>Variable, depending on access allowed by farmland owners. Hunting, agri-tourism, hiking and riding trails, farm tours, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher property values</td>
<td>Residents on adjacent and nearby properties enjoy higher property values because of the proximity of open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life – rural community values and traditions</td>
<td>Farmland and family farm operations contribute to community-oriented sentiments and symbols concerning the value of rural heritage and lifestyles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wetland and Riparian Areas in the Sacramento Region

Source: California Department of Fish and Game

Landuse Categories
- Flooded Agriculture
- Other Wetlands and Riparian
- Agricultural Land
  - Prime Farmland
  - Other Important Farmland
  - Grazing and Other Land
  - Cities and Other Urban Land
  - Water

Map Produced by: Information Center for the Environment
III. AGRICULTURAL LAND AND URBANIZATION

Map: Agricultural and Urban Land in the Sacramento Region, 2000

Acres Converted to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1992-2002

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Map: Rural Residential Land Projected Through 2050, Status Quo Scenario

Map: Rural Residential Land Projected Through 2050, Preferred Blueprint Scenario
Acres Converted to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1992-2002

Annually, about 0.2% of the Sacramento region's total agricultural land and about 0.1% of its prime farmland is converted to urban uses, as suggested by 1992-2002 trends. Conversion rates are highest in Sacramento, Placer, and El Dorado counties, lower in Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties.

Current (2002) Agricultural and Urban Land Acres (Except Yolo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Important Farmland</th>
<th>Grazing Land</th>
<th>Total Ag Land</th>
<th>Urban and Built-Up Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prime</td>
<td>Other Important Farmland</td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Dorado</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>66,558</td>
<td>67,508</td>
<td>201,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placer</td>
<td>9,481</td>
<td>130,517</td>
<td>139,998</td>
<td>35,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>111,984</td>
<td>114,492</td>
<td>226,476</td>
<td>165,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter</td>
<td>166,019</td>
<td>129,677</td>
<td>295,696</td>
<td>50,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolo (2000)</td>
<td>264,452</td>
<td>144,389</td>
<td>408,841</td>
<td>144,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba</td>
<td>44,378</td>
<td>44,839</td>
<td>89,217</td>
<td>144,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Total</td>
<td>597,264</td>
<td>630,472</td>
<td>1,227,736</td>
<td>741,301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2004
Agricultural and Rural Residential Land Values in the Sacramento Region, 1999-2003

Land values in the Sacramento Valley area vary according to commodity in cases of agricultural production uses and location when residential factors are considered. The range of values in three cross-county regions within the Sacramento Valley can be used to illustrate the similarities and differences.

Yuba Sutter Area (Feather River Basin and Sutter Basin)

Land used for rice, vegetable crops, and other irrigated field crops is generally lower in value than other property, but has been relatively stable and in some cases is increasing in the Yuba Sutter area. The range over the 5-year span 1999-2003 has been from approximately $2,500 an acre to $2,800-$4,500, depending on the commodity. Land used for walnuts, peaches, and prunes has fluctuated over this period, but still remains higher in value than other cropland, selling for between $4,000 and $10,000 an acre. The biggest increases in activity and price ranges are in markets for rural residential land with prices ranging from $100,000 to $300,000 per acre in 2003.

South Sutter, Western Placer, North Sacramento, and Yolo Counties

Rice, vegetable crops, and other irrigated croplands are selling for similar prices per acre as the Yuba Sutter area. While prices for rangeland have been increasing to a moderate degree (from $250-$700 an acre to $500-$1,000 an acre) between 1999-2003, decreases have been noted in values of land used for pear orchards and vineyards. 1999 price levels per acre of $7,000-$12,000 for pears and $12,000-$20,000 for grapes have dropped to between $4,500-$6,000 and $4,300-$12,500 for each commodity, respectively. The market for rural residential land is among the highest in the region, commanding prices between $200,000 and $500,000 an acre.

Cattle Ranches (including regions of El Dorado Counties) in $ per Animal Unit (AU)

Land used for cattle ranching purposes has seen a moderate but steady increase from 1999 to 2003. Measured in dollars per animal unit (AU), cattle ranches using more than 15% of public rangelands generated between $1,000 and $1,800 per AU in 1999 and have increased in value to between $1,700 and $2,500 AU in 2003. Ranches relying on only partial use of public land (0-15%) have seen values increase from $1,500-$3,500 per AU in 1999 to approximately $2,500-$4,000 in 2003 with a relatively less active market than the former. Recent values have yet to reflect the potential impacts experienced by the livestock industry from the Mad Cow Disease scares of the past year.

Source: California Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, 2004 Trends.
SACOG Growth Projections: The Impact on Farmland

The maps on the next four pages project through 2050 the impacts of urban growth in the Sacramento region. They are based on SACOG’s Blueprint project, which involved several thousand residents participating in a series of community and county forums, capped by one regionwide gathering, in the deliberation and selection of alternate growth preferences.

The maps compare two growth scenarios:

- **Scenario A—The Base Case/Status Quo.** The continuation of recent trends featuring fairly low density development and outward growth patterns.

- **Scenario C—Smart Growth.** Selected by a majority of Blueprint participants, this projects considerably higher densities and more infill development than the Status Quo, although slightly less than the most efficient of the four scenarios presented.

The first two maps compare the amount of additional land to be consumed by urban development (*red color*) in the region:

- **Scenario A** – 661 additional square miles
- **Scenario C** – 293 additional square miles

Included within this urban growth is the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses. Losses of the best quality soils (farmland that is classified as prime, unique, and of statewide significance) are projected at:

- **Scenario A** – 166 square miles
- **Scenario C** – 90 square miles

The conversion of agricultural land of lesser quality (farmland of local importance and grazing land) are not covered in these projections.

The final two maps compare the additional land in acres to be consumed by rural residential development (*yellow color*) in the region, a relatively inefficient use of land that features large lots:

- **Scenario A** – 122,746 additional acres
- **Scenario C** – 22,342 additional acres
Urban Land
Projected Through 2050 -
Preferred Blueprint Scenario
IV. POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR MAINTAINING THE AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Optional Policies and Tools for Farmland and Open Space Protection in California

Easements on Agricultural Lands: Two Forms

Map: Agricultural and Related Conservation Easement Programs in the Sacramento Region

Preserving Agricultural Landscapes Through Mitigation

Land Trusts and Conservancies in the Sacramento Region
Optional Policies and Tools for Farmland and Open Space Protection in California

Many measures for protecting agricultural and other open space resources are available to California communities and regions. This outline distinguishes between: (1) Broad strategies or fundamental policies about the direction and form of urban growth; (2) More specific regulatory tools; and (3) Market techniques that compensate landowners for maintaining working agricultural landscapes. In addition, the outline identifies several techniques that are not currently used in the Sacramento region.

Broad Strategies/Fundamental Policies

1. DIRECT GROWTH TO CITIES
   Some counties prohibit or firmly limit development in their unincorporated areas, diverting it instead to cities. As well as serving to protect farmland and other open space, city referral policies also have the purpose of reducing public infrastructure and service delivery costs, limiting the role of county government as an urban service provider, and promoting compact and contiguous development. Such policies are often backed up by formal county-city agreements.

2. LIMIT RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
   California counties vary in the extent of their acceptance of rural residential development. The recognition that scattered, large lot development has a negative effect on agricultural operations competes with the desire to accommodate the residential demand for such parcels. A related but separate issue is the number of new homesites allowed on agriculturally-zoned parcels.

3. AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT IN THE GENERAL PLAN
   This is an optional element that concentrates in one part of the General Plan a variety of provisions relating to agriculture, thus indicating an emphasis on supporting farming. The element may refer to overall farmland policy, marketing of agricultural products, farm labor housing, irrigation water, drainage, and farm-related businesses.

4. REDUCE LAND USE CONFLICTS AT THE FARM-URBAN EDGE
   Agriculture and urban development, especially nonfarm residences, are inherently incompatible land uses. When commercial farms and urban residences are in close proximity, negative impacts flow in both directions. Agricultural-urban edge conflicts can be minimized, however, through mutual adjustments and land use techniques. On the agricultural side of the edge, this means restricting farm cultivation and other practices through pesticide and other regulations. On the other side, appropriate strategies call for urban design that is sensitive to adjacent agricultural production and for a degree of tolerance on the part of non-farm neighbors.

5. MORE EFFICIENT USE OF LAND IN CITY EXPANSION
   Municipal expansion through annexations and new development is the primary source of farmland conversions in California. More efficient use of land in the city development process, through higher density and more infill development, minimizes the rate and extent of conversion.

6. INTERGOVERNMENTAL FISCAL AGREEMENTS
   City-county revenue sharing agreements, covering sales and property taxes and other revenue sources, are a mechanism for maintaining intergovernmental cooperation on land use and growth matters. As used by a few Central Valley jurisdictions, county sharing in city revenues supports a policy of diverting growth away from unincorporated areas to cities.
Regulatory Tools

This category includes both techniques applied specifically to farmland protection and measures that more broadly manage urban growth in counties and cities.

1. AGRICULTURAL ZONING
This is a common land use tool used by virtually all California counties that is intended to segregate farms from all other land uses. Critical features include minimum parcel sizes and allowable uses including homesites and farm related businesses. There is a major distinction between Agricultural Exclusive and other forms of agricultural zoning which allow multiple uses of farm properties.

2. RIGHT TO FARM ORDINANCES
These county and city ordinances are not legal regulatory measures. Rather, with the purpose of reducing complaints from urban dwellers about farming practices (pesticides, dust, noise, etc.) on adjacent agricultural lands, they are essentially informational requirements. The ordinances usually affirm that agricultural operations are a community asset and require that purchasers of residences adjacent to farms be notified about potential nuisances associated with agriculture. The ordinances of a few jurisdictions establish formal procedures for handling complaints about farming practices.

3. AGRICULTURAL BUFFERS
Buffers are designated strips of land of various widths (sometimes known as “setbacks”) intended to separate farmland from urban uses, thus reducing the conflict at the agricultural-urban edge. New development may be required to provide buffers as a condition for approval.

4. CEQA - CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT
Under CEQA, California’s unique environmental review requirement for proposed development, the conversion of farmland parcels to urban uses may be considered a “significant” environmental impact that should be addressed via a formal study. Factors to be considered include (a) the extent to which farmland which is prime, unique, or of statewide importance will be converted and (b) conflict with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts.

5. MITIGATION FOR FARMLAND LOSS
This technique, which in concept is related to CEQA's purpose of minimizing the environmental impacts of development through agricultural mitigation measures, is applied in a few California jurisdictions. It requires that farmland lost to urban development be matched with the preservation of a comparable amount and quality of other agricultural acres in the same area. The match may be on a 1-1 acre or greater basis. Mitigation is typically accomplished by putting conservation easements on the preserved acres, funded by urban development either directly or through pooled development fees.

6. MITIGATION FOR HABITAT LOSS
Habitat mitigation is more widespread in the Sacramento region and elsewhere in California than agricultural mitigation because of state and federal species protection laws and wetland protection/restoration requirements. The increasing trend is that mitigation efforts are designed by Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs), are overseen by state and federal agencies, and funded by urban development.
7. LESA - LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT
LESA is a tool for quantifying the merits of retaining agricultural-use parcels proposed for conversion to more intensive, urban purposes. Originally developed by the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service), LESA employs a system of numerical weights assigned to different characteristics of a parcel: soil quality, agricultural productivity, water availability, location in an agricultural preserve.

8. URBAN LIMIT LINES
Also called “Urban Growth Boundaries” this technique seeks to define the long-term limits of urban expansion on one or more sides of a growing city as a means of protecting farmland and producing compact development. If seen as firm boundaries, such designations can reduce urban development expectations in a particular area and thus affect land values. They are established either by county or city governing boards or as the result of voter initiatives.

9. LAFCO STANDARDS/MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY CONTROLS
In reviewing and approving sphere-of-influence amendments and city annexations, Local Area Formation Commissions (LAFCO) in California counties have the power to direct the rate and direction of urban expansion. State law requires LAFCOs to give priority to farmland protection in their reviews, and some have adopted strong farmland policies as a result.

   Market-Based Tools - Compensating Landowners with Cash or Tax Benefits

1. WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACTS - PREFERENTIAL TAXATION
This has been a mainstay of California’s approach to agricultural land protection for more than 30 years. Under the Land Conservation Act of 1965, landowners and counties voluntarily enter into 10-year, renewable contracts prohibiting urban development in exchange for lowered property taxes. Enrolled farm and ranch land is taxed at its use or agricultural production value rather than its usually higher Proposition 13 or market values. The state compensates counties for a portion of the lost property taxes. The Super Williamson Act, legislated in 1998 as the Farmland Security Zone program, adds a 20-year option, with a 35% additional property tax decrease, for farmland of statewide or local importance that is threatened by development.

2. PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) - AGRICULTURAL EASEMENTS
Perpetual agricultural easements are created when landowners voluntarily give up their development rights in return for cash and/or tax benefits while retaining all other rights of private ownership. Easements are typically priced at the difference between a property’s full market (speculative) value and its lower value for agricultural production. Easement programs are administered by nonprofit land trusts or government agencies with funds provided by state, federal, foundation, private contributions, and other sources. As well as through direct purchase (PDR), easements can be acquired through landowner donation (for tax benefits), mitigation, and Transfer of Development Rights as described elsewhere in this outline.

3. FEDERAL CONSERVATION PAYMENTS
Agricultural landowners enrolled in the conservation programs administered by the USDA receive compensation (cost-sharing) for engaging in certain conservation practices or for retiring their land from cultivation for periods of time. Mostly managed by USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the programs are intended to conserve soil, water, and other resources. They include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).
4. BOOSTING LOCAL FARM ECONOMIES
A different kind of economic incentive for helping to maintain working agricultural lands is seen in programs that assist farmers to better market their products and use their assets for related income-producing activities. These are business activities such as agitourism opportunities, on-farm sales of products, farmers’ markets, programs that promote local agriculture products, and on-farm hunting and fishing opportunities.

Techniques Not Currently Employed in the Sacramento Region

1. TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDRs)
This technique for creating perpetual agricultural or conservation easements relies on the transferability of development rights from one area to another within a governmental jurisdiction. They are transferred from one or more “sending” areas where agricultural or other open space preservation is intended to one or more “receiving” areas where higher development densities are desired.

2. LESS-THAN-PERPETUITY EASEMENTS
More a concept than a current practice, this technique seeks to increase the flexibility of the easements acquired through the purchase of development rights and make them more attractive to landowners. There are considerable obstacles to offering “term” easements to agricultural landowners, including widespread support for the preservation merits of permanent restrictions and landowner tax liabilities. One suggested scenario calls for periodic review of an easement arrangement at fixed long intervals (e.g., 30 years), allowing for their termination if the easement holder, the landowner, and a court jointly agree that the restriction is no longer sustainable because of the intrusions of urban development on agricultural operations or other changes. An easement termination would require the landowner to pay a fiscal penalty representing a portion of the original purchase price.

3. LANDOWNER ASSOCIATIONS
Called “Agricultural Preservation and Development Associations” in Colorado, these are voluntary private organizations formed by agricultural landowners in an area. Rather than responding to top-down regulatory and other programs, landowners take the initiative to plan for the future of landscapes larger than their individual holdings.

4. LANDPOOLING
The Landpooling technique takes the Landowner Association concept a step further, by having neighboring agricultural landowners pool their land assets to create a common program for combining the preservation of a large agricultural landscape with economic gains from moderate development over time. Landpooling confines development to select areas, allowing ecosystems to remain intact. Participating landowners share in the economic gains generated by the larger landscape, and are not necessarily dependent on development of their individual parcels.

5. DEVELOP NEW TOWNS
Assuming that they are located in areas of poor soils and minimally productive agriculture, large planned communities offer the possibility of diverting urban growth away from a region’s best farming areas. If economically self-contained and large enough to offer diverse employment, new towns have the potential to maintain a decent jobs-housing balance and reduce commuting costs. California’s permit and land use procedures, however, make it very difficult to advance this approach beyond the proposal stage.

Prepared by Alvin D. Sokolow
Easements on Agricultural Lands: Two Forms

Following map identifies the approximate locations of easement programs

More than 32,000 acres of land used to produce agricultural crops and animals are under easement in the six-county Sacramento region. In return for cash and/or tax benefits, landowners relinquish the development rights on these easement properties, but retain other private ownership rights.

**Agricultural and Conservation Easements.** A major distinction for farms and ranches under easement is the extent to which their agricultural operations are restricted for environmental purposes. **Conservation easements** cover the great majority of acres under easement in the region. They are created primarily for their habitat, wetlands, or other natural resource values; thus, agricultural operations are limited to activities that are minimally intrusive on the environment. Generally, light grazing and less intensively-cultivated row crops are allowed; orchards, vineyards, and other crops that require intensive cultivation and chemical applications are not. Some conservation easements are formed to provide mitigation for the loss of habitat through urban development.

**Agricultural easements,** by contrast, are created for the primary purpose of protecting working agricultural operations from urban development with environmental protection as a secondary objective. Landowners usually have the discretion to produce any types of agricultural commodities. Agricultural easement deeds usually contain some environmental provisions, including riparian area protections and avoidance of overgrazing. Approximately 15-20% of the easement acres in the region are under agricultural easements. The Yolo Land Trust operates the leading agricultural easement program in the region and it is one of the most active land trusts in the state.

**Funding.** Major funding sources used in the region to compensate landowners for giving up development rights include:

- Habitat mitigation fees paid by urban development (Natomas Basin Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy.)
- Agricultural mitigation fees paid by urban development (City of Davis–Yolo Land Trust).
- State funds (California Farmland Conservancy Program) for agricultural easements (Ducks Unlimited, Yolo Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Central Valley Farmland Trust).
- Federal funds (Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program) for agricultural easements (Yolo Land Trust).
- Landowner donations (virtually all programs).

Prominent by their absence from this list are local tax sources whether property taxes, sales taxes, or other types of public revenues collected at the community level. While such revenues (including property transfer fees) are widely used by communities in other states to fund agricultural and other open space easement acquisitions, California’s restrictions on
local government revenues make this finance approach difficult, if not impossible, to pursue. Property taxes are constitutionally limited and are now controlled by state government. And proposals to increase or institute other revenue sources must undergo approval by extraordinary voter majorities in most cases.

**Easement Programs.** Detailed below are the nine programs that have acquired easements on agricultural lands in the region. With one exception, the Placer Legacy program of Placer County Government, the programs are operated by non-profit conservation organizations. The Central Valley Farmland Trust is a newly created organization, formed from a merger of land trusts in four counties including the former Sacramento Valley Agricultural Land Conservancy.

Easement programs in the Sacramento region that concentrate exclusively on nonagricultural resources are not included on this list. They include the American River Conservancy (7,100 acres preserved) in El Dorado County and the Cache Creek Conservancy (130) acres in Yolo County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Agr Easement Acres</th>
<th>Commodities Produced</th>
<th>Other Easement Acres</th>
<th>Fee Owned Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placer</td>
<td>Placer Legacy</td>
<td>473 - 3 farms</td>
<td>grazing</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1,740¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placer Land Trust</td>
<td>30 - 1 farm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>Central Valley Farmland Trust²</td>
<td>318 – 2 farms</td>
<td>grapes, low crops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Nature Conservancy</td>
<td>22,060</td>
<td>dairy, grazing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacramento Valley Conservancy</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>alfalfa, grazing</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3,835¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natomas Basin Conservancy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter</td>
<td>Ducks Unlimited</td>
<td>3,343 - 3 farms</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolo</td>
<td>Yolo Land Trust</td>
<td>5,235 - 28 farms</td>
<td>tomatoes, alfalfa, grain, grapes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba</td>
<td>Yuba Sutter Conservancy</td>
<td>10 - 1 farm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Includes land leased for agricultural operations.
²Easements originally acquired by the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Land Conservancy, recently merged into the new Central Valley Farmland Trust that covers four counties—Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced.

Prepared by Alvin D. Sokolow from information provided by program managers and program web sites
Preserving Agricultural Landscapes through Mitigation

Preservation through mitigation is a market-based strategy for ameliorating the loss of agricultural and other resource lands caused by urban development. Mitigation means compensating for such losses by preserving a like (or more or less depending on the ratio) quantity of similar land, usually in the same jurisdiction. Preservation can be accomplished either by fee purchase and management of resource lands, or by compensating landowners for their development rights and creating perpetual conservation or agricultural easements. Usually urban development pays for mitigation through homebuyer fees and other funds.

This approach has its legal roots in CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act that requires the review of the environmental impacts of urban projects, and federal and state laws for the protection of habitat. The Sacramento region has both Agricultural and Habitat forms of mitigation.

Agricultural Mitigation in the region is most advanced in the city of Davis. Other local governments also have initiated or are considering mitigation programs. Adopted in 1995 as probably the first of its kind in the nation, the Davis ordinance requires that farmland conversions resulting from new development annexed to the city be offset by preserving through easements on a 1:1 basis comparable farmland in the city’s General Plan Area. The program has put about 1,300 acres under permanent protection and has the Yolo Land Trust managing the easements.

Habitat Mitigation is more widely used in the Sacramento region and in the state because of the implementation of state and federal laws protecting plant and animal species and wetland restoration and preservation projects. In recent years, much of the mitigation activity has come under the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) process, overseen by the California Department of Fish and Game. Supplementing the earlier Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) process, NCCPs take a more proactive and broader landscape approach to conserving biological diversity rather than focusing on particular species. NCCP/HCP plans are implemented through both conservation easements and fee purchase of properties.

Different parts of the Sacramento region are at various stages in the development and implementation of NCCPs/HCPs and other habitat conservation efforts, as the table on the following page indicates. The two most advanced programs in mitigation activity in the region are the Natomas Basin Conservancy and the Cosumnes River Preserve. The two programs represent different organizational arrangements. The Conservancy is organized as a nonprofit agency created by local government, and the Preserve is operated as a multi-agency consortium encompassing two nonprofits, several state and federal agencies, and county government.
## Habitat Mitigation and Conservation Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Habitat Plan Organization</th>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Status as of mid 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Dorado</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placer</td>
<td>Placer Legacy</td>
<td>County government agency</td>
<td>NCCP plan in preparation. Easements and fee properties already acquired may be used for mitigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento – Natomas Basin</td>
<td>Natomas Basin Conservancy</td>
<td>Nonprofit conservation agency created by local government.</td>
<td>Most active program in the region in implementing a HCP process. 3,900 acres, mostly in fee ownership, have been acquired as multi-species mitigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento – Cosumnes River Preserve</td>
<td>The Nature Conservancy, BLM, DFG, DWR, etc.</td>
<td>Nonprofit land trust, state &amp; federal conservation agencies, county government.</td>
<td>Established by multiple agencies in 1987, the Preserve predates the HCP/NCCP processes. Its 46.163 acres of easement and fee owned properties protect riparian and wetlands resources. Preparation of a NCCP plan is in progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter-Yuba counties</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>No specific program is in place in Sutter and Yuba, although the two county governments have discussed a joint arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolo</td>
<td>Yolo County Habitat JPA</td>
<td>City-county joint powers agency</td>
<td>Formed in 2002, the JPA followed several years of work on conservation planning plans and the collection of mitigation fees from development. A final HCP/NCCP document is in preparation and potential mitigation properties are being identified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepared by Alvin D. Sokolow from information provided by program managers and program web sites
Land Trusts and Conservancies in the Sacramento Region

**American River Conservancy.** Founded in 1989, ARC has protected 7,100 acres in El Dorado County of fisheries, scenic vistas, recreational lands, endangered species and other wildlife habitat. The four primary target areas of the Conservancy are greenbelts and hiking trail corridors along the South Fork of the American River, critical riparian habitat throughout the Upper Cosumnes River Basin, rare and endangered plant habitat within the Pine Hill Ecological Preserve between Highway 50 and Folsom Lake, and a reproductive pond site area containing California Red-legged Frog habitat.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (530) 621-1224 e-mail: arc@arconservancy.org  
Web site: www.arconservancy.org

**Cache Creek Conservancy.** Created in 1996 to educate the public, implement projects, hold easements and manage wildlife habitat land along Cache Creek, the Conservancy covers the regions within Yolo County from Capay Dam to the Settling Basin. To date the biggest achievement has been the development and management of the Cache Creek Nature Preserve (CCNP), a 130 acre property along the lower Cache Creek corridor that is owned by the County of Yolo.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (530) 661-1070 e-mail: cachecrk@yolo.com  
Web site: www.cacheconserv.org

**California Rangeland Trust.** The Trust is a non-profit statewide organization formed in 1998 as an offshoot of the California Cattleman’s Association. It focuses on securing conservation easements on ranch land, mostly in the state’s foothills, including the rims of the Sacramento Valley. Easements are funded through a combination of state and other public funds and landowner donations.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (916) 444-2096 e-mail: nvail@rangelandtrust.org  
Web site: www.rangelandtrust.org

**Central Valley Farmland Trust.** Consisting of formerly individual conservancies or related government bodies (Sacramento Valley Agricultural Land Conservancy, San Joaquin County, Stanislaus Farmland Trust and the Merced County Farmland and Open Space Trust), CVFT was formed in 2004 and focuses on agricultural land within the noted Central Valley regions. Two easements totaling 271 acres of farmland (still legally held by Sacramento Valley Agricultural Land Conservancy) will eventually be transferred to CVFT, as will any easement properties held by the other former conservancies making up the Trust.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (916) 685-6958 e-mail: sacfarmbureau@msn.com

**Dry Creek Conservancy.** A non-profit organization created in 1996 to educate, preserve open space, restore habitat and enhance the recreational uses of the Dry Creek Watershed, the Conservancy operates in Placer and Sacramento counties.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (916) 773-6575 e-mail: dcc@surewest.net  
Web site: www.drycreekconservancy.org

**Ducks Unlimited.** Focusing on wetland conservation, restoration and waterfowl habitat management, Ducks Unlimited’s California Chapter has helped to protect around 300 acres in the Sacramento Region through programs such as its Valley Bay CARE (Conserving Agriculture Resources and Environment) and its related Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands Program in Sutter County. Funding is made up of donations and grants from Federal and State agencies as well as from private organizations.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: 916-852-2000  

**Middle Mountain Foundation.** Formed in the 1970s, the foundation has operated as a land trust for the Sutter Buttes region of Sutter County. The acceptance of conservation easements and other private, voluntary tools are used to permanently protect lands within the 75 square miles which make up the Sutter Buttes area.  
*Contact Information:* Phone: (530) 671-6116 e-mail: middlemountain@yahoo.com  
Web site: www.middlemountain.org

**Natomas Basin Conservancy.** The conservancy serves as “Plan Operator” for the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan adopted in 1997. It aims to promote conservation, economic development and agriculture in the 53,341-acre Natomas Basin which stretches across regions of northern Sacramento and southern Sutter counties. Mitigation fees
paid by urban developers planning projects in the area are used to fund the mitigation goals of the Conservancy which has helped to conserve nearly 3,000 acres since its inception.

Contact Information: Phone: (916) 649-3331  Web site: http://www.natomasbasin.org

Placer Land Trust. Formed in 1991, PLT works with landowners, public and private organizations and local communities to preserve natural open spaces, agricultural lands, wetlands, trailheads and recreational lands in Placer County. To date more than 200 acres have been protected through the use of conservation easements as well as fee title acquisition by PLT.

Contact Information: Phone: (530) 887-9222 e-mail: info@placerlandtrust.org
Web site: www.placerlandtrust.org

Placer Legacy. This open space and agricultural conservation program was organized in 1998 to protect the diversity of plant and animal habitat, promote a healthy agricultural economy and conserve and expand other scenic, historical or recreational areas within the county. It is administered by the County of Placer and uses both fee title acquisition and conservation easements to accomplish its program goals. More than 2,100 acres have been protected so far with hundreds of additional acres in the negotiation process.

Contact Information: Phone: (530) 886-3000  e-mail: planning@placer.ca.gov
Web site: http://www.placer.ca.gov/planning/legacy/legacy.htm

Sacramento Valley Conservancy. Founded in 1990, SVC has worked to protect close to 5,500 acres of land used for agricultural, recreational, natural resource and wildlife habitat purposes. It has employed donations, private purchase, public acquisition, conservation easements and other cooperative efforts. The overall aim of SVC is to protect the character of the region’s landscape and preserve the area’s quality of life.

Contact Information: Phone: (916) 492-0908  e-mail: Bond13mac@aol.com
Web site: www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org

The Nature Conservancy, California Field Office. TNC is an international conservation nonprofit with operations in many countries, states and regions. In the United States, TNC uses land acquisition as its principle conservation method, owning and managing about 15 million acres nationwide with more than 2 million additional acres protected with the use of conservation easements. In 1984, it established the Cosumnes River Preserve in southern Sacramento County with an initial 84 acre purchase. Since then, the preserve has grown to around 40,000 acres and is managed by TNC and other governmental and non-profit partners. The functions of the Cosumnes River Preserve include habitat protection, wetlands, reforestation projects and the development along with local farmers of sustainable agricultural practices.

Contact Information: Phone: (415) 777-0487  Web site: www.tnccalifornia.org

Wildlife Heritage Foundation. Wildlife Heritage Foundation is a statewide non-profit organization with the goal to protect and restore wildlife habitat by preserving agricultural lands, open spaces and forest lands throughout California. With the use of conservation easements, the foundation has helped to protect nearly 500 acres in the Sacramento Valley region including wetlands in El Dorado County and ranchland property in Yolo County.

Contact Information: Phone: (530) 633-4911 e-mail: info@wildlifeheritage.org
Web site: www.wildlifeheritage.org

Yolo Land Trust. The Yolo Land Trust was established in 1988 as an agricultural land trust. It has put easements on more than 5,000 acres of farmland in Yolo County, representing more than 25 farms and ranches. YLT is a major user of state and federal easement funds and is the most active agricultural land trust in inland California.

Contact Information: Phone: (530) 795-3110  e-mail: kkelly@yolo.com
Web site: www.yololandtrust.org

Yuba Sutter Land Trust. The Yuba Sutter Land Trust was founded in 1996 and is dedicated to water quality, preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, parks and historical areas within Yuba and Sutter Counties. To date, the Trust has protected 10 acres in the Yuba County foothills near Dobbins with the use of a donated conservation easement. The Trust intends to use conservation easements as well as fee title property acquisitions to further protect both working and natural landscapes in the region.

Contact Information: Phone: (530) 743-5068  e-mail: dwhitmor@dfg.ca.gov

Prepared by John Speka from web sites and phone interviews.
For Further Reading

The Sacramento Region: Agriculture, Urbanization, Demographics, Economy

3. Farming Conversion Report, California Department of Conservation
   www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp
4. Annual Resource Directory, California Department of Food and Agriculture –
   www.cdfa.ca.gov

The Public Benefits of Maintaining Agricultural Landscapes

   http://www.aic.ucdavis.edu

Agricultural Easements and Other Compensatory Techniques

   http://groups.ucanr.org/forest
   http://www/aic/ucdavis.edu
   –Albert G. Medvitz and Jeanne McCormack. “Negotiating an Agricultural Easement: A Landowner’s Perspective on Conflicting Production and Conservation Values.” 161-182
   –Alvin D. Sokolow and others. “What California Farmland Owners Like and Don’t Like about Compensatory Programs for Conservation.” 73-84.
5. Landpooling. www.landpooling.com
2004 Agricultural Summit Funders

Visionary Leaders
Soderquist Fund of the Sacramento Region Community Foundation
USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service
Valley Vision
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)

Community Builders
Blue Diamond Growers
California Rice Commission
Great Valley Center
Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLP
PRIDE Industries
Rumsey Community Fund
SACOG
Sacramento Valley Farm Credit
Wells Fargo Bank
Wildlands, Inc.

Friends
Charles Bacchi
Roger Baccigaluppi
Gail Ervin
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Pamela Marrone
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