



Customer Focus

For nearly 30 years, David Zollinger has grown peaches, almonds and walnuts on his O.Z. Ranch, near Delhi. He has constantly sought out new ways to build a ranch that is progressive and productive. Working under the FPP, Mr. Zollinger has adopted several methods for protecting the natural resources on 74 acres of his ranch.

Beginning in late winter, O.Z. Ranch will show a green carpet of legumes and grass spreading between trees on selected test sites around the ranch. The legumes enrich the soil with nitrogen formed in nodules in the roots. The stand of vegetation also stabilizes the soil, protecting it from wind and water. Eventually the plants are mowed and incorporated back into the soil, adding organic matter, improving soil structure and increasing the sandy soils nutrient and water holding capacity. By using new databases that combine inputs from the weather and the plant's metabolism, water needs can be more precisely calculated and can optimize irrigation timing to conserve water, while keeping the orchard healthy. To maintain good nutrient management, Mr. Zollinger also tests the nutrient level in both the soil and the trees' leaves, times fertilization accordingly, and uses cover crops, which reduce the amount of nitrogen applied.

Mr. Zollinger is protecting these conservation gains through the FPP. The O.Z. Ranch will continue to be a productive parcel of open space, providing nutritious food and natural resource protection for generations to come.

Farmland Protection Program California Summary

Overview The USDA Farmland Protection Program (FPP) helps farmers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program assists States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations by purchasing conservation easements for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides up to 50% of the easement cost to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership. Every protected farm operates under a conservation plan approved by the local Conservation District. Nationally, over \$52 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. Proposals were accepted in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001.

Accomplishments In FY 2001, \$1,117,400 went to California landowners to protect up to 327 acres on approximately 7 different parcels of land. Since the FPP was established in 1996, California programs have requested over \$50.3 million to protect 24,483 acres on 30 farms. Since 1996, applications for funding were received in each of the four years that funds were available. Proposals are selected through a competitive process to protect the most strategic farms that will help accomplish FPP and local land use goals. The easements also protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and cultural resources.

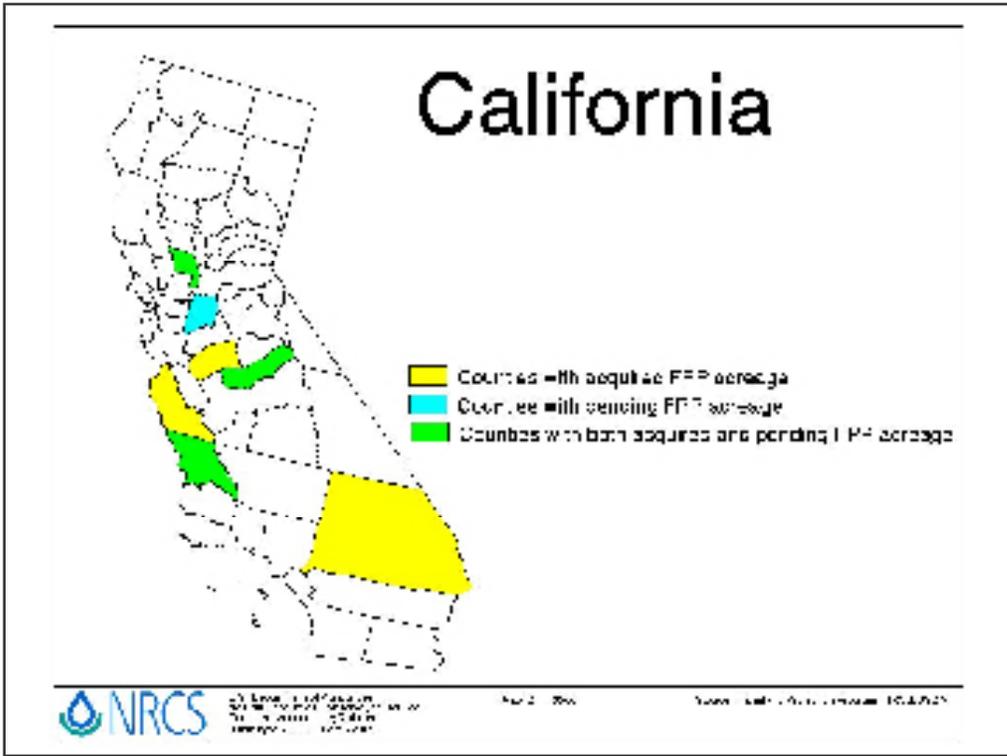
Outlook According to the California Department of Conservation, the Southern California and San Joaquin Valley regions showed significant conversions of land to urban uses, with a total of 22% and 66% of new Urban Land, respectively, coming from irrigated land. Some conversions are significant in that land once used for specialty crops that require unique climate and soil for successful farming, and are not found in other areas of the state, was converted. For areas subject to development, the FPP plays a significant role in providing farmers and ranchers with alternatives to preserve farming operations. Because of the increasing development pressure, funds requested from the FPP have increased each year, with over \$3.5 million requested to protect 3,500 acres of land on approximately 10 parcels of land in 2001.



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*Hillside Vineyard
Terraces in Sonoma
County, California*

*Photo by:
Lynn Betts, NRCS*



**Farmland Protection Program
California Easements
(As of December 2001)**

County: Madera / Acres: 259
Total Easement Cost: \$1,178,000
Average per acre: \$4,548
Federal Payment Amount: \$589,000
Percentage: 50%

County: Merced / Acres: 74
Total Easement Cost: \$368,000
Average per acre: \$4,973
Federal Payment Amount: \$184,000
Percentage: 50%

County: Monterey / Acres: 778
Total Easement Cost: \$3,450,200
Average per acre: \$4,435
Federal Payment Amount: \$1,725,000
Percentage: 50%

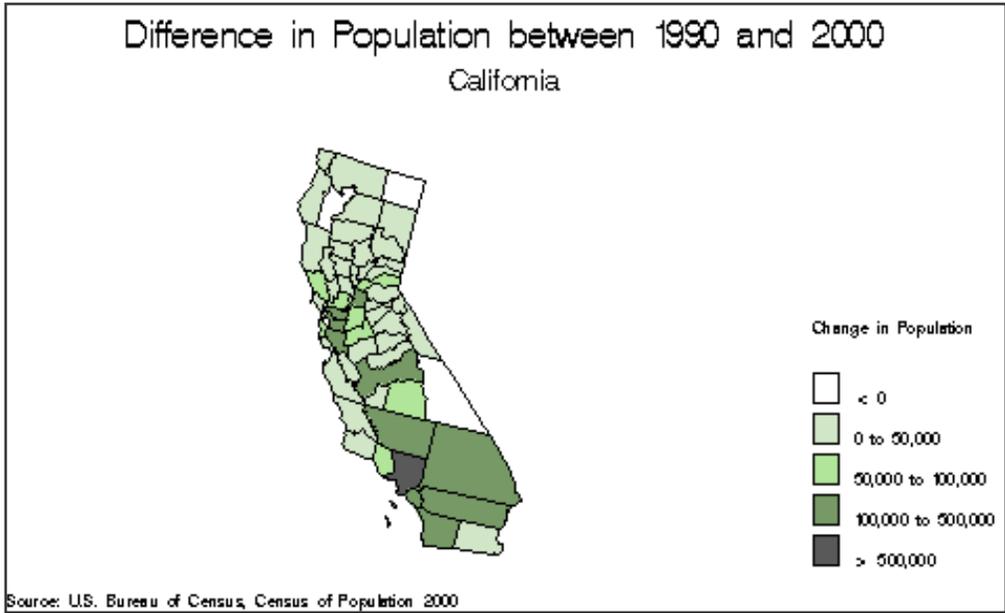
County: San Bernardino / Acres: 9
Total Easement Cost: \$756,659
Average per acre: \$84,073
Federal Payment Amount: \$600,000
Percentage: 79%

County: San Joaquin / Acres: 60
Total Easement Cost: \$408,000
Average per acre: \$6,800
Federal Payment Amount: \$204,000
Percentage: 50%

County: San Luis Obispo / Acres: 200
Total Easement Cost: \$1,520,000
Average per acre: \$7,600
Federal Payment Amount: \$550,000
Percentage: 37%

County: Yolo / Acres: 442
Total Easement Cost: \$4,355,337
Average per acre: \$9,854
Federal Payment Amount: \$648,100
Percentage: 15%

California Totals:
Acres: 1,822
Easement Costs: \$12,036,196
Average per Acre: \$6,606
Federal Payment Amount: \$4,505,100
Percentage: 37%



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