



## California Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

### **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 both progressive and productive. Using funds from California's Department of Conservation and USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), Zollinger placed his ranch under a conservation easement in 1998, ensuring that the property will be protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses in perpetuity.*

*Zollinger has adopted several methods for protecting the natural resources on his 74-acre ranch. Beginning in late winter, the rows between the trees become a carpet of legumes. These legumes not only add nitrogen to the soil, but also stabilize the soil, protecting it from wind and water erosion. Eventually these legumes are mowed and incorporated back into the soil, adding organic matter, improving soil structure, and increasing the sandy soil's nutrient and water holding capacities.*

*Aside from planting legumes, Zollinger also adopts other best management practices to maximize nutrient and water inputs on his ranch. By using databases that combine weather and plant metabolism inputs, water needs are precisely calculated. This allows David to optimize irrigation timing and conserve water while keeping the orchard healthy. To maintain good nutrient management, nutrient levels are tested in both the soil and tree leaves, and fertilization is planned accordingly. He also uses cover crops, which reduces the need for nitrogen application.*

*By enrolling in FRPP and adopting these best management practices, Zollinger has ensured that 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.*

### ***Overview:***

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

### ***Accomplishments:***

Cooperating entities' proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish FRPP and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and historical and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, \$6.94 million in FRPP funds have been awarded to purchase easements on approximately 2,866 acres of valuable agricultural land in California.

Due to increasing development pressure throughout the state, requests for FRPP funds have increased dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the program's funding capacity. In FY 2003, partners in California requested \$19,727,000 in FRPP funds. This request represents 30 percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available nationwide in FY 2003. California was allocated \$2,489,000 to purchase conservation easements in FY 2003.

### ***State Contact:***

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### Outlook:\*

California is by far the number one agricultural producer and exporter in the United States. With 1999 production values reaching \$26.7 billion, California produced more than Texas and Iowa combined - the nation's second and third agricultural states. California is also the nation's most populous state and the fastest growing. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts California will grow by both the greatest number of people and by the largest percentage through the year 2020. The California Department of Finance projects that California will grow to nearly 59 million people by 2040, with much of that growth taking place in agricultural regions of the state.

The American Farmland Trust has ranked three areas of California among the nation's twenty most threatened farming regions: the Central Valley (#1), Central California Coastal Valleys (#15) and the Imperial Valley (#17). Despite wider public awareness of the issue, conversion of agricultural land to urban development is still occurring at a rapid rate in California. According to a May 2001 report by the Agricultural Issues Center of the University of California, the state lost approximately 500,000 acres of farmland to urban development between 1988-1998. (\*Source: American Farmland Trust)

### Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - California Easements as of June 2003 Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County

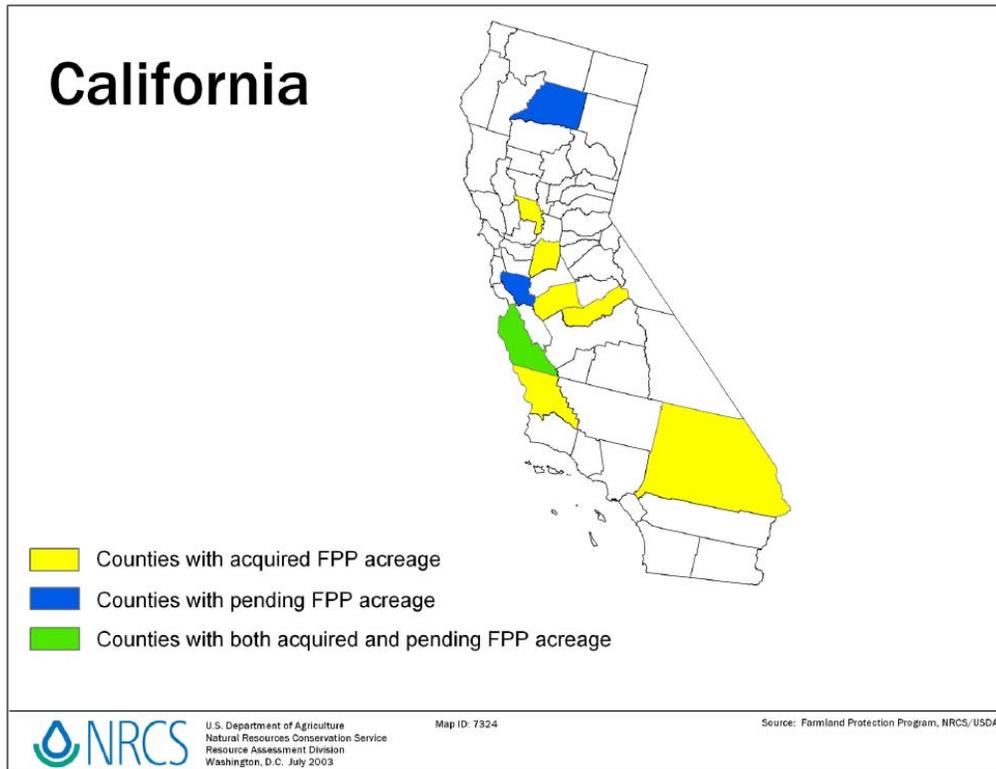
California					
County	Acres	Easement Cost		Federal Payment	
		Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
Madera	409	3,770,498	9,219	1,495,100	40%
Merced	74	368,000	4,973	184,000	50%
Monterey	778	3,450,200	4,435	1,725,000	50%
San Bernardino	9	756,659	84,073	600,000	46%
San Joaquin	60	408,000	6,800	204,000	50%
San Luis Obispo	38	380,000	10,000	190,000	50%
Yolo	113	150,000	1,327	75,000	50%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>1,481</b>	<b>9,283,357</b>	<b>6,268</b>	<b>4,473,100</b>	<b>48%</b>

\*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements

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# Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - California Easements as of June 2003

## Counties with Acquired and Pending FRPP Easements



## Trends in Population by County - California 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

