

# Important Farmland Mapping *in California*



Department of Conservation  
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

# California's Farmland Conservation Programs

- Williamson Act / Open Space Subvention Act - 16.3 million acres enrolled.
- Farmland Security Zones – 20 year contracts – 640,000 acres.
- Farmland Conservancy Program – permanent – 53,000 acres.
- Technical Assistance and Grants - Watershed Coordinator Program; RCD support.
- Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program.

**\* Emphasis on voluntary programs.**

# Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program

- Created in 1982 to answer the question:  
*What's happening to California's farmland???*
- Develop maps and statistics for land use change.
- GIS data updated every two years
  - using air photos, site visits, local review of maps.
- Based on current land use and soil quality.
- Documents amount of *Prime Farmland* threatened by development, and other types of change.

**\* Under Section 65570  
of CA Government Code**

## Uses for the Data

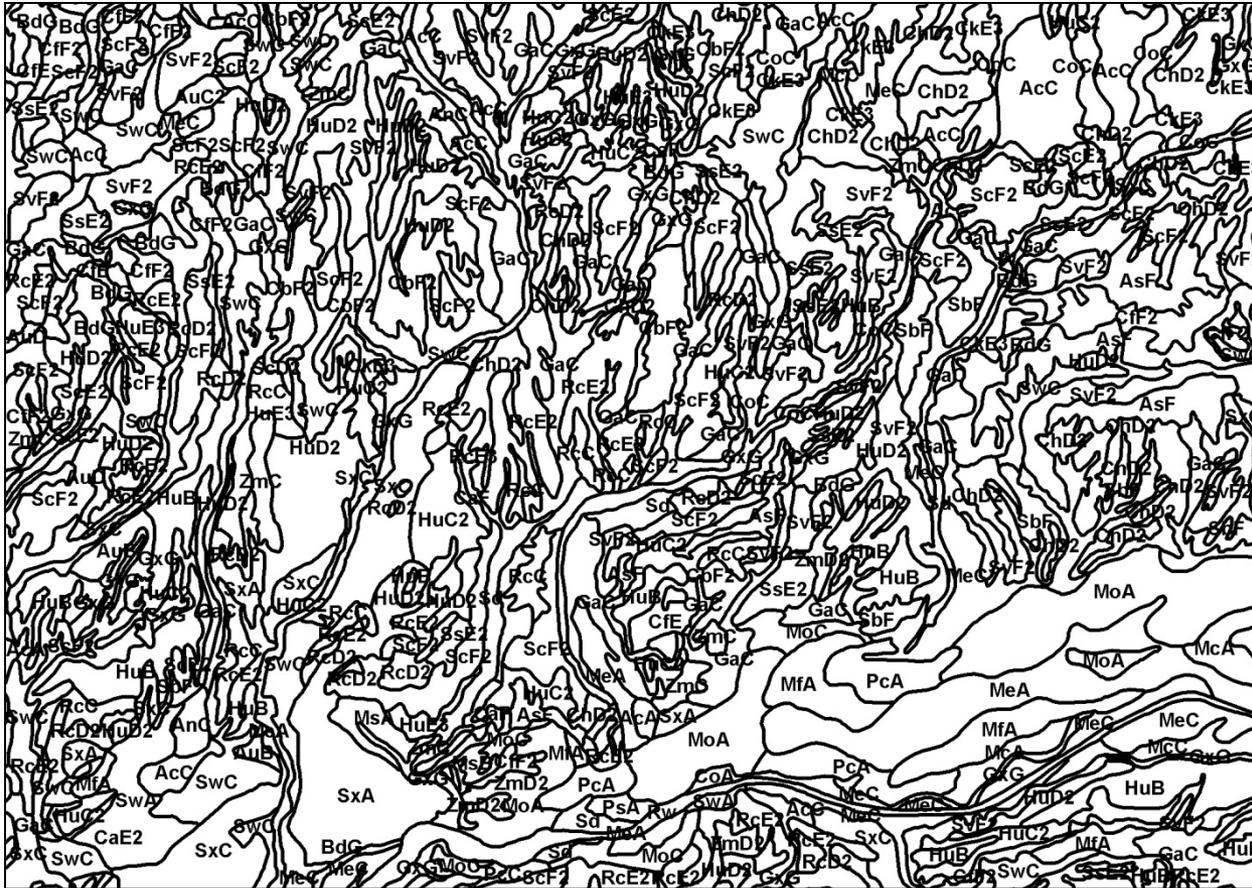
- CEQA: data source to determine ag impacts.
- Real estate disclosure – proximity to farmland for land sales.
- General Plans, specific plans, etc.
- Ag mitigation ordinances: conversion may trigger fees, easement requirements.
- Farmland Security Zone enrollment (20-year Williamson Act contracts) tied to FMMP categories.
- Trend analysis, modeling, proximity studies.
- Education.

# 'Prime': *What is it?*

There are two official definitions for *Prime* in California:

- *FMMP Prime Farmland* is based on irrigated use and soils—it has the best physical & chemical attributes.
- It is determined with the use of imagery, soil surveys, site visits, and local input.
- *Williamson Act Prime Land* is land enrolled in the WA program that meets certain economic & production criteria—most irrigated farmland meets this criteria.
- *WA Prime Land* is eligible for a higher level of tax relief for the landowner than its *Open Space* category.

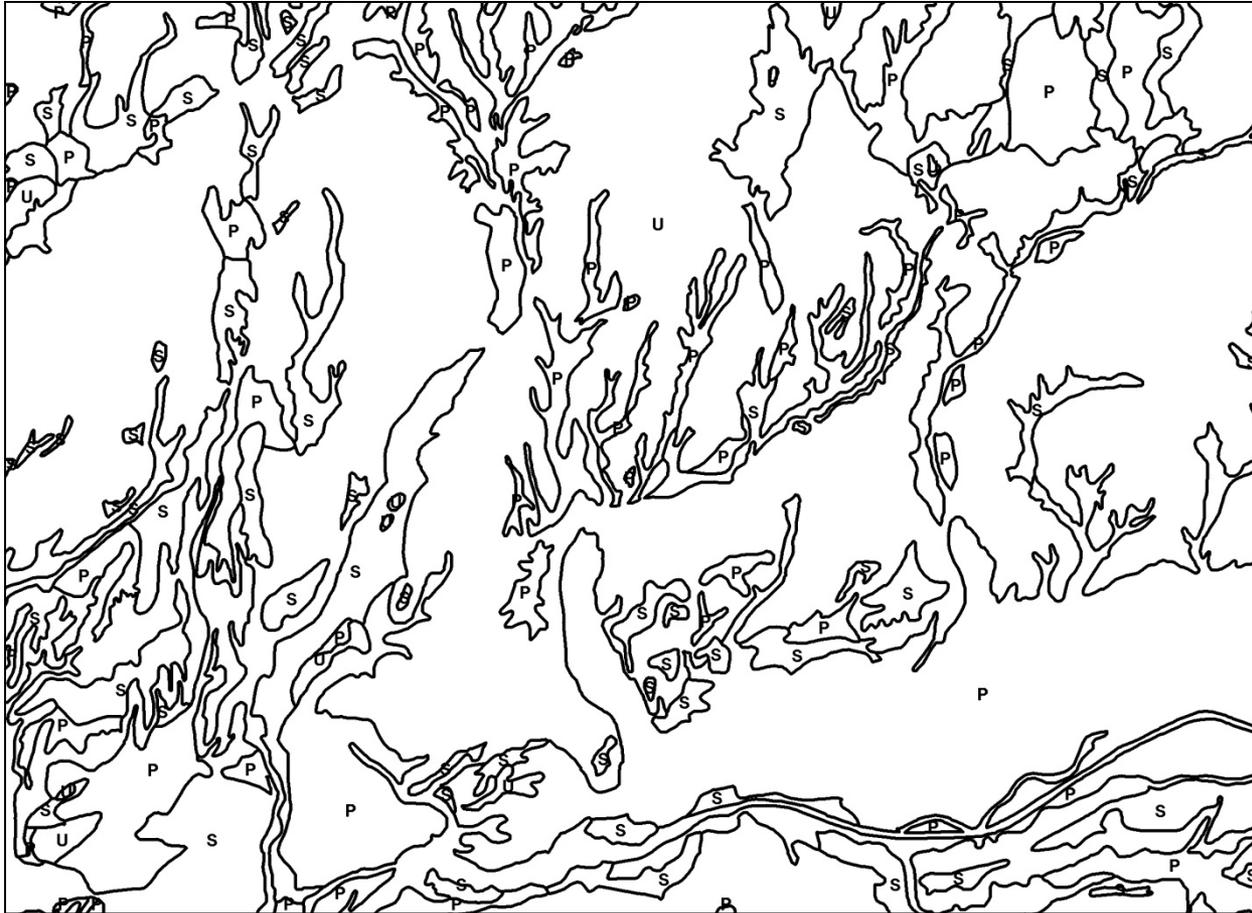
# Raw Soil Survey



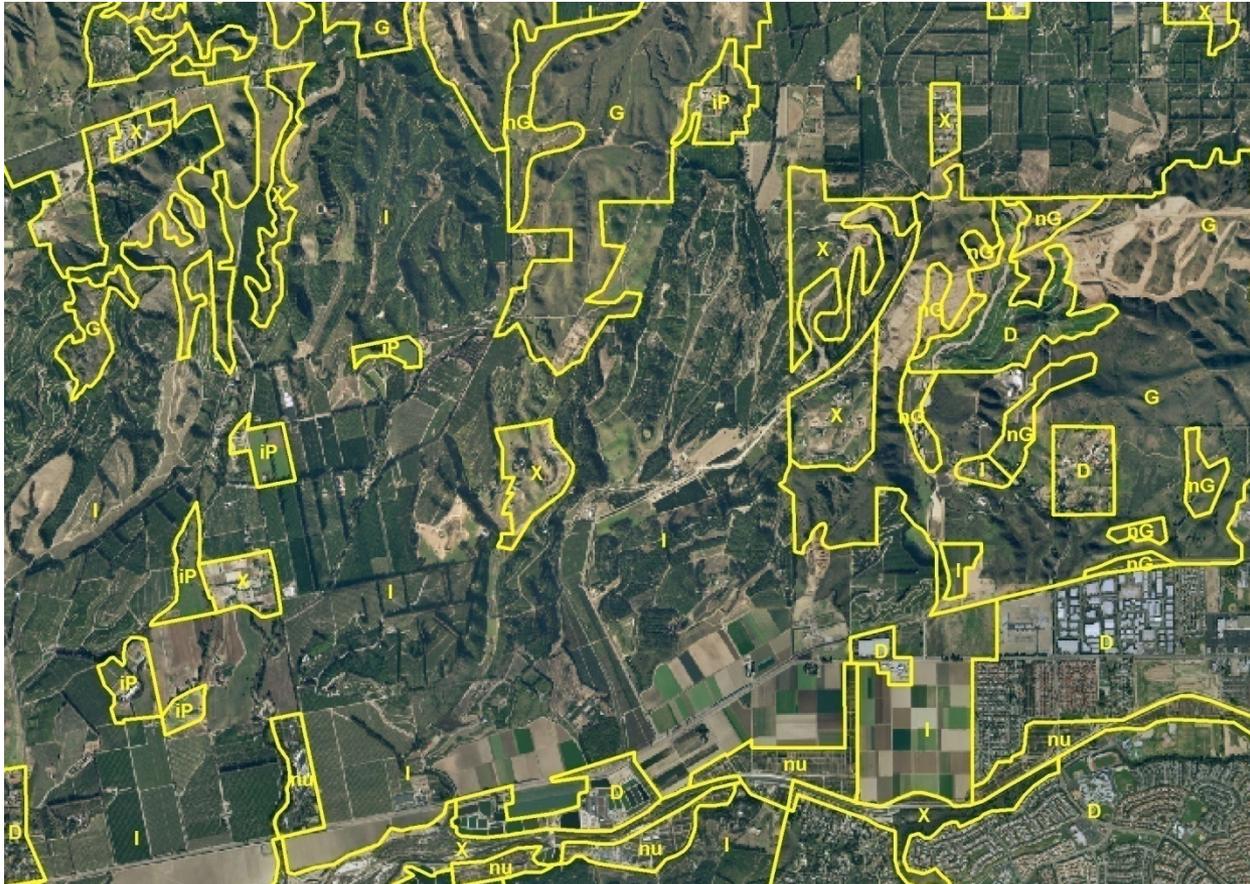
# Soil Units Coded by Quality



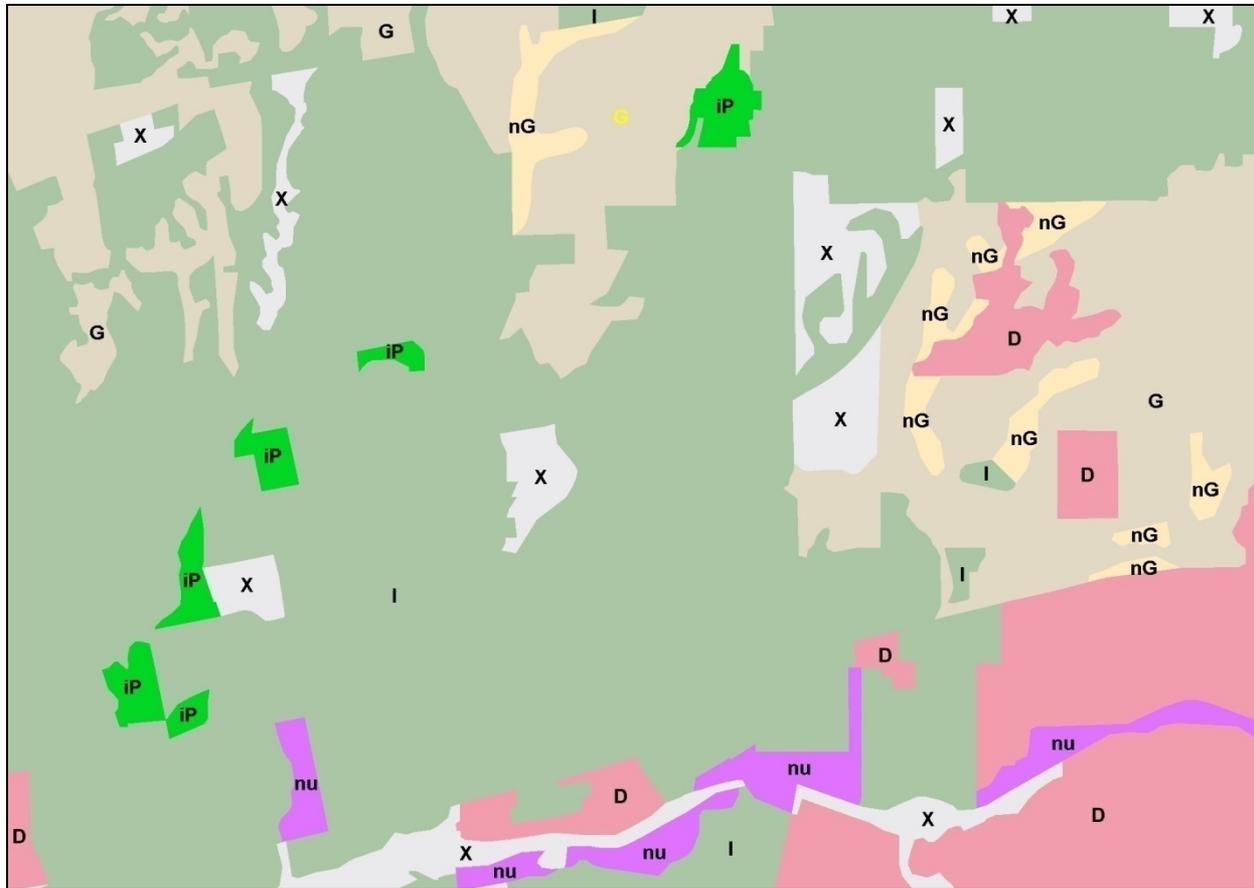
# Soil Units Merged



# Land Use Over Imagery

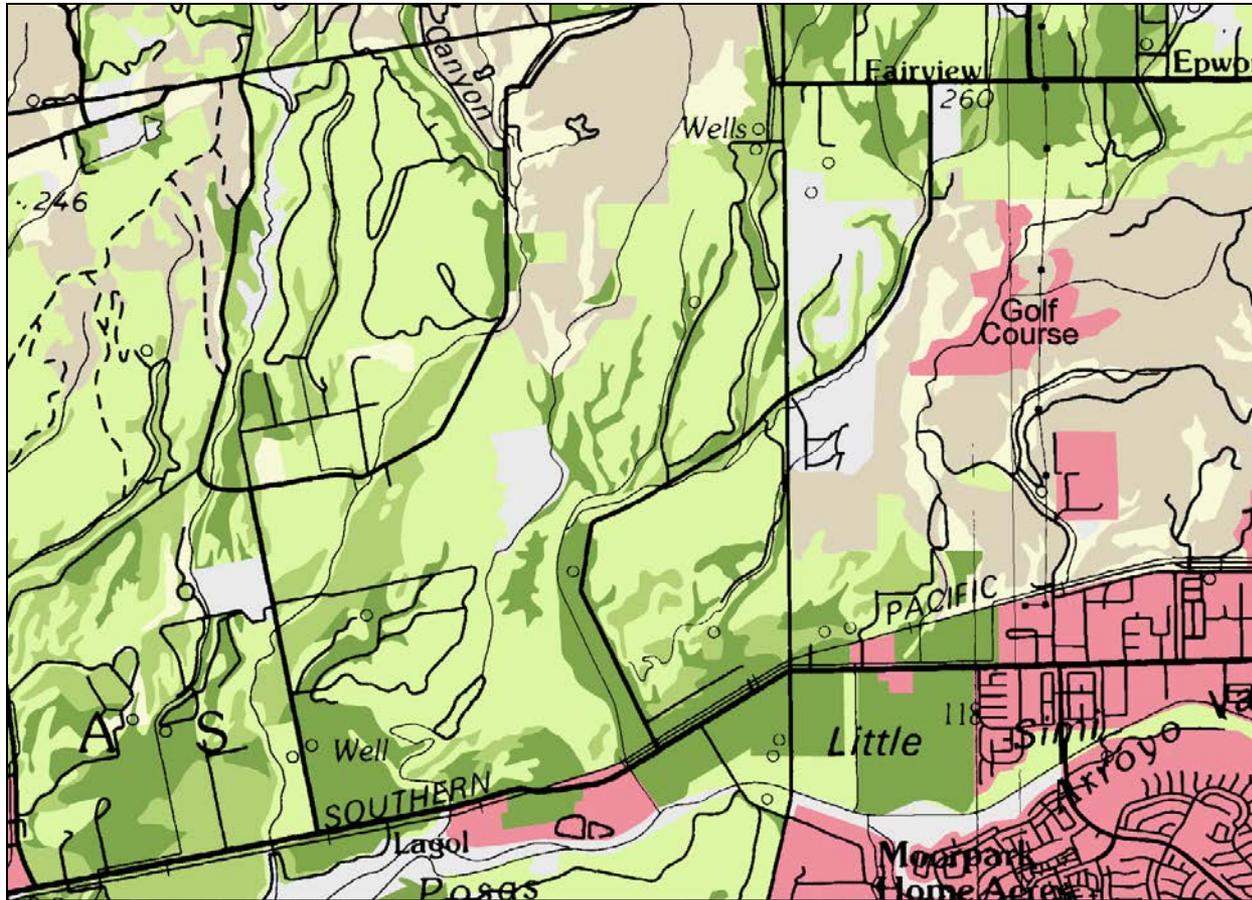


# Land Use Coded by Type

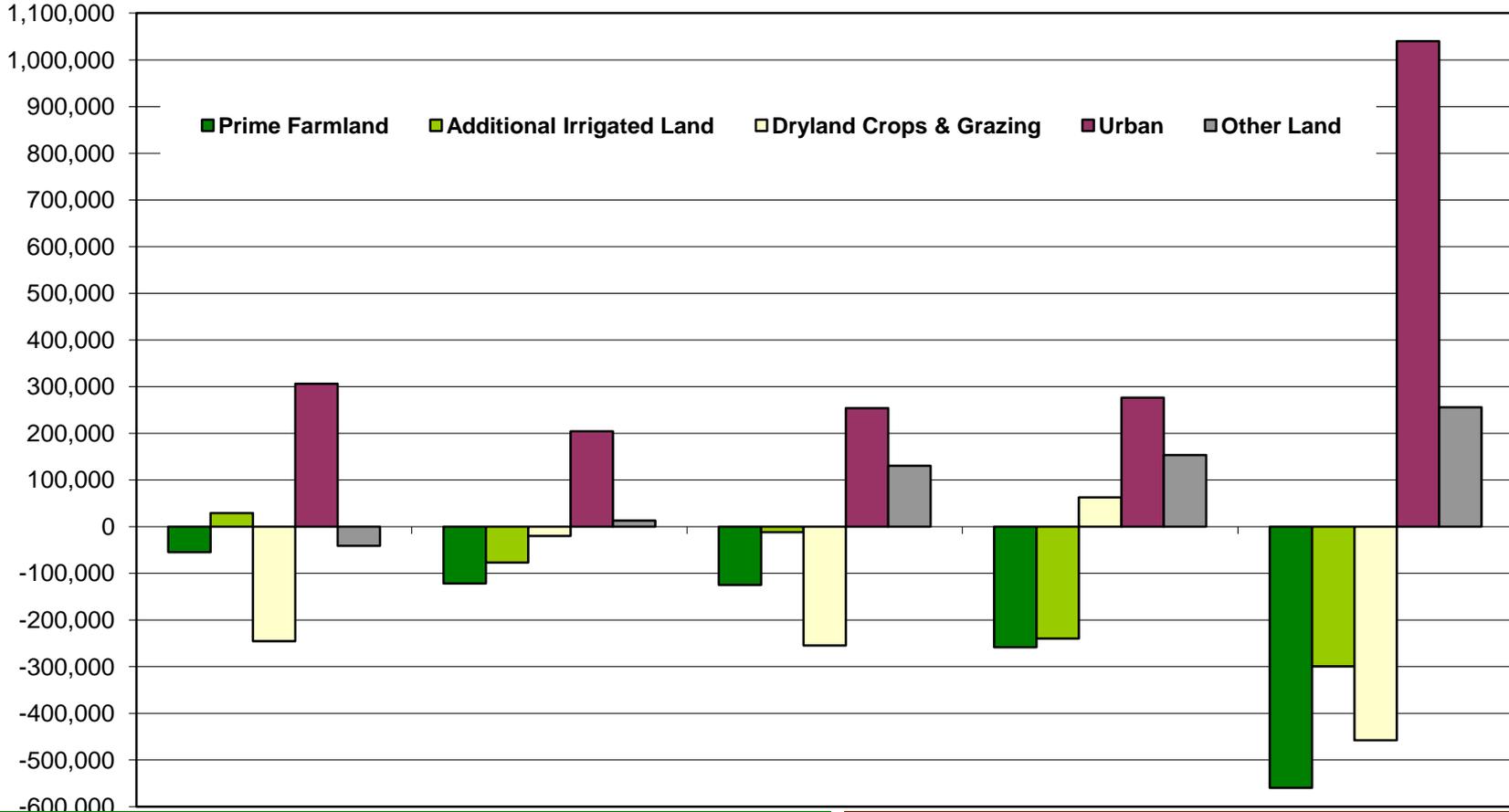




# Final Important Farmland Map (portion of Ventura County)



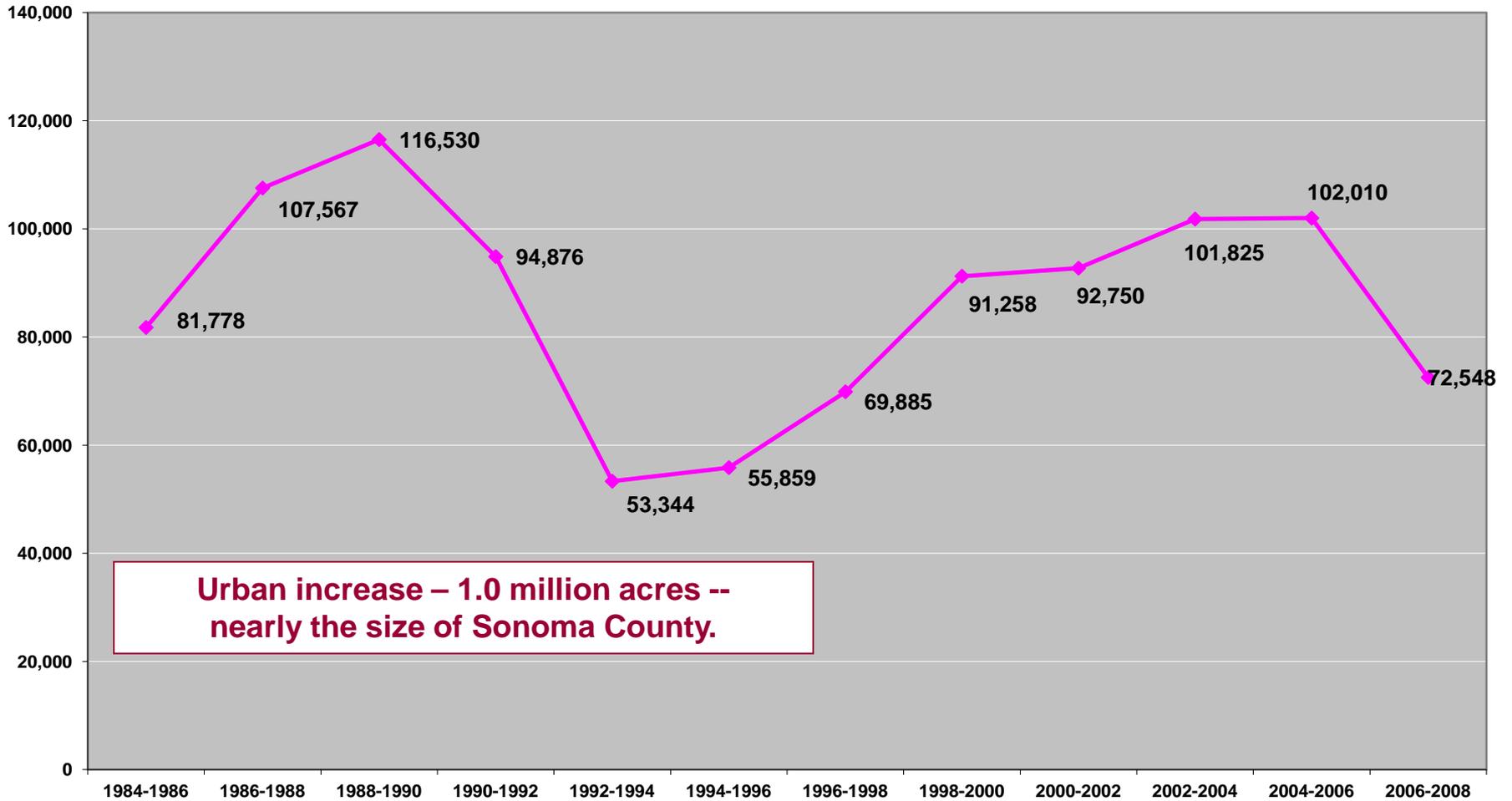
## Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program NET CHANGE IN LAND USE 1984-2008



**Prime Farmland decrease -- 559,000 acres -- nearly the size of Solano County.**

**Farmland and open space decrease -- 1.3 million acres -- larger than Merced County.**

FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM  
Increase in Urban and Built-up Acreage  
1984-2008



# 2010 Conversion Trends

(38 counties released to date)

- Urbanization - between 20% and 50% of historic rates.
- Urban infrastructure – water control, landfills, road widening, schools – exceeds housing in many areas.
- Abandoned subdivisions – sometimes Other Land.
- Land idling and ecological restoration - bigger impact on farmland losses.
- Orchards increase irrigated land in some counties.
- Less dairy construction.

# Current Issues

- Funding
- Solar!
- Solar!
- Solar!



- High Speed Rail.

# New Legislation

## SB 618 – Solar Use Easements

### Limited option to convert Williamson Act contracts to Solar Use Easements:

- Land with *significantly reduced productivity for agricultural activities* due to chemical or physical limitations, topography, drainage, flooding, adverse soil conditions, or other physical reasons.

OR

- Land has *severely adverse soil conditions detrimental to continued agricultural activities*: contamination by salts or selenium, or other naturally occurring contaminants.

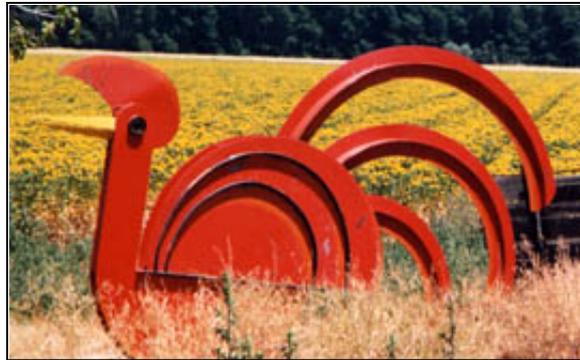
## New Directions in Land Conservation

- Looking toward performance-based incentives for conservation
- Recognize limited funding capability—use funds for projects that meet multiple goals
- Accounts for the ecosystem services that farmland also provides...flood protection, habitat, groundwater recharge, etc.

# Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program

Maps, reports and statistics are available at:

[www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp)



*Thank you for your interest!*