

# Madera County Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation (SALC) Program

## Fact Sheet

With overdraft for Madera County as a whole estimated at 260,000 acre-feet per year with the 2015 crop mix, the County has been referred to as “ground zero” for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As one of several demand management actions, the County is undertaking a study to develop a Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation (SALC) program. The program would incentivize setting land aside for dry land farming, or retiring the land for a short or long duration, helping ensure that the SGMA groundwater sustainability goal is met while using existing and future water supplies efficiently and promoting groundwater recharge to maintain a productive agricultural sector for future generations.



One component of the study will develop criteria for different types of agricultural land in the county, and features of that land that may align with program goals. The land criteria will help evaluate the suitability of land for conservation, evaluating elements such as soil suitability, recharge areas, prime farmlands, existing crops, and proximity to water infrastructure. It will also assist in identifying lands that may be beneficial to other planned projects in the GSP or provide co-benefits through temporarily resting (not using as irrigated farmland), permanently retiring, retiring and restoring, or permanently protecting lands.

General land categories identified in the study of the SALC program include:

- Unirrigated land that may remain unirrigated
- Irrigated land that may become unirrigated
- Irrigated farmland that may remain irrigated

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The study will also develop a proposed incentive structure for agricultural land conversion or preservation in specific areas based on the land categories identified in the analysis. The program incentive structure will be consistent with other County demand management actions and other GSP projects. The study will also identify potential funding sources for the program. The incentive structure will consider operational, financial, hydrologic, and sustainability criteria for short- and long-term agreements for agricultural land conservation.



In addition to conforming to a diverse range of existing federal, State and local policies, guidelines and regulations, the program will be informed by stakeholder input. Stakeholder outreach will include an education component, focused on keeping the general public apprised of progress on the study, and an input-gathering component. Input will be collected at GSA meetings, through stakeholder interviews, and through a working group. Throughout the study period, interested parties will be able to provide input on the program at GSA meetings. The stakeholder interviews will be conducted with individual interest groups at the outset of the project and will identify areas of agreement and difference in their interests. After analyses of land categories and incentive structures have been conducted, the working group will provide additional input on particular program components that would benefit from a multi-interest stakeholder group discussion.