## APPENDIX E – Conservation Management Plan and Carbon Farm Plan Contents

**General Requirements**

For easements, both conservation management plans and carbon farm plans must be approved by the Department and signed by the grantee and landowner prior to the execution of the deed. For fee acquisitions, the plan must be approved by the Department and signed by the grantee and landowner within one year of close of escrow on the acquisition, within the grant term. The plan must be developed by a qualified planner or resource conservation district.

Conservation management plans and carbon farm plans are living documents that must be reviewed by the landowner and grantee at least every 10 years. These plans are intended to provide flexibility for management of the land within the purposes of the acquisition. The grantee must notify SALC of any changes to the management that have the potential to significantly impact the conservation values or conservation purpose of the acquisition.

The plan must be updated if changes to the agricultural operations on or ownership of the property occur that have the potential to significantly impact the conservation values or purpose of the acquisition. The grantee and landowner must obtain an updated plan from qualified planner or resource conservation district in the event of such changes.

The grantee must report the landowner’s implementation of the plan and any changes in the agricultural operation or ownership that have the potential to impact the conservation values or purpose from the previous year on its annual monitoring report. If the landowner is not complying with the plan, the grantee must identify how compliance will be achieved. If a change in operations or ownership that has the potential to impact the conservation values or purpose is reported, the grantee must instruct the landowner to update the conservation management plan. If, at the time of the next annual monitoring report, the landowner has not obtained an updated plan (and it is not due to inaction by SALC), then the landowner is in violation of the provisions of the deed and the grantee is responsible for bringing the landowner into compliance.

**Conservation Management Plans**

At a minimum, the conservation management plan must:

1. Identify and describe the qualifications of the individual(s) who prepared the plan, including the individual’s name, organization, title, and contact information.
2. Describe the procedure for monitoring and reporting the implementation of the plan in accordance with these Guidelines, as well as the process for reviewing and updating the plan as required.
3. Include a description of the property’s conservation values and conservation purpose as identified in the grant agreement, grant deed, or other project documents. The plan should also describe the activities that promote the long-term viability of the land to meet the purposes for which the Acquisition was acquired. Examples of such activities may include:

* Landowner’s membership or involvement in local agricultural or natural resource conservation organizations
* Implementation of agricultural conservation, planning, or efficiency programs, such as EQIP, SWEEP, or CAPGP
* Actions taken to mitigate the effects of drought, flood, wildfire, or other natural disasters
* a farm or ranch succession plan

1. Include a description of the current farm or ranch management system. The plan should provide detailed information about existing farm or ranch operations that may include descriptions of the following (as applicable):

* Irrigation systems and water use
* Soil health and erosion control
* Nutrient management
* Crop selection and rotation
* Weed, insect, and disease management
* Stocking rates
* Grazing patterns
* Infrastructure maintenance
* Public access

Other information may include a description of seasonal influences on farm or ranch operations, irrigation water right volumes needed to sustain agricultural activity on the property, invasive species control, and wildlife habitat management. The conservation management plan may incorporate or refer to information from baseline documentation reports, as appropriate.

1. Identify required and recommended conservation or management practices that address the conservation values and conservation purpose for which the Acquisition was awarded, including practices to protect biodiversity and facilitate climate adaptation. The plan should include a discussion of existing and/or future threats to the property’s conservation values, the management objectives or desired outcomes, and a detailed description of the required or recommended practices that may include specifics related to:

* Who will implement or assist in implementing the practice
* Any advanced planning, equipment, or permits that may be required
* Measurable or observable indicators or conditions that may influence management decisions
* Anticipated timelines for initiation and completion of required or recommended practices
* The area or location on the property impacted by the practice
* The scientific, cultural, or experiential basis for management decisions

The conservation management plan may incorporate, or cross-reference practices identified in other plans, such as an organic system plan for organic operations, USDA NRCS Conservation Plans, CDFA’s Office of Environmental Farming and Innovations Planning Grants Program plans, a comprehensive nutrient management plan for animal feeding operations, or care of historic sites for easements with historical or archeological resources.

1. Identify additional or specific criteria associated with permissible and prohibited activities consistent with the terms of the deed. For example, if a deed specifies that the location of the building envelope may be adjusted if it does not adversely affect the agricultural resources, the conservation management plan should describe the agricultural resources and how they may be impacted by construction of structures. Not every conservation management plan will need to specify additional or specific criteria for deed terms; whether such criteria are required should be determined by the grantee based on the agricultural resources present on the property and the clarity of the deed restrictions.

**Carbon Farm Plans**

At a minimum, the carbon farm plan must:

1. Assess the carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reduction potential of the property.
2. Include a description of the farm or ranch management system.
3. Describe recommended and required actions and activities to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions based on the carbon assessment and consistent with the conservation purpose of the acquisition. The carbon farm plan may incorporate, or cross-reference practices identified in other plans, such as organic system plans for organic operations, USDA NRCS Conservation Plans, CDFA’s Office of Environmental Farming and Innovations Planning Grants Program plans, and comprehensive nutrient management plans for animal feeding operations.