



California
**Department of
Conservation**
Division of Land Resource
Protection

Williamson Act & Compatible Use

Land Conservation Act of 1965

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Land Conservation Act of 1965 “Williamson Act”

- Voluntary program/contracts
- Local rules and regulations
- Restricts land usage
- 10–20-year contracts
- Contract renew annually
- Contract runs with the land





Intent of the Williamson Act

- Preservation of ag land
- Conservation of open space
- Discourage conversion of ag land to urban uses



What is DOC's Role?



California
**Department of
Conservation**

- Provide technical assistance and advice ([GC § 51206](#))
- Detailed review of WA processes
- Data/records retention, annual WA enrollment reports
- CEQA / WA review and commenting ([CEQA appendix G](#))





What's in it for the Landowner?

- Taxed on generated income vs. potential market value
- [Revenue & Taxation Code Section 421-431](#)
- ~ 20-70% property tax reduction
- Tax savings can be reinvested



What's in it for the Community?

- Ensures locally produced food and fiber
- Creates stability for support industries
- Provides buffers (planning tool)
- Mitigation





Compatible Use

- Principles of Compatibility
- [Government Code Section 51238.1](#)
- Varies by jurisdiction
- Solar
- Agritourism





Defined Compatible Uses



- Predefined Compatible Uses
- [Government Code Section 51238](#)
- Gas
- Water
- Communications
- Ag Labor Housing
- Commercial Cannabis [Government Code Section 51231\(b\)](#)



Mineral Extraction, Compatible Use?



A gravel mining area restored for hay production.

- [Government Code 51238.2](#)
- Underlying commitment to preserve land
- Surface Mining & Reclamation Act of 1975



Compatible Use: Solar?



Compatible Use: Solar?

- No compatibility findings
= Cancellation
- Size, scale, scope



Compatible Use: Agritourism?

- Agritourism definition
- Roadside fruit stand
- Tasting Rooms
- Wedding / Event Centers
- Bed and Breakfast
- Where to draw the line



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Compatible Use: Agritourism?

- Farm Tours
- Farm Stays
- Farm / Event Center
- Where to draw the line
- Size, scale, scope





Pop Quiz / Recap / Takeaways



- What year was the Williamson Act introduced?
- The offering of contracts and direct implementation of the Act is done by who?
- If a county or city chooses to offer WA contracts, what must it first do?
- What is the State's role in the Williamson Act?
- What is the overarching Government Code that guides compatible use called? Bonus points for the section number?
- Ultimately, who determines and approves compatible uses?
- Are compatible uses universal in all jurisdictions?
- Name one land use that may be considered a compatible use as outlined in Government Code?
- The Williamson Act was first introduced in 1965 by John Williamson of Yolo County.
- Contracts and direct implementation of the Act is done by the participating County/City.
- A county or city which chooses to participate in the Act must first establish its own set of rules and regulation for implementation of the Act including compatible uses.
- The State's role in the WA is to provide technical assistance, guidance, and advice with Williamson Act related Government Code as they relate to local implementation of the Act
- Compatible uses are guided by Government Code Section 51238.1, commonly referred to as the Principles of Compatibility.
- Compatible uses are determined and approved by the participating county or city.
- Compatible uses may, and often do, vary between the participating counties or cities.
- Gas, Water, Communications, Ag Labor Housing, Mineral Extraction, & Commercial Cannabis, may be considered a compatible use per Government Code.



THANK YOU

Questions?

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