



California  
**Department of  
Conservation**

Division of Land Resource  
Protection

# Williamson Act

Land Conservation Act of 1965

WA Prime Farmland vs. FMMP Prime  
Farmland: Defined

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<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/wa>



# Land Conservation Act of 1965 “Williamson Act”

- Voluntary program/contracts
- 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 in Williamson Act?

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



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# Williamson Act “Prime” Definition



## [GC 51201](#)

(c) *"Prime agricultural land" means any of the following:*

*(1) All land that qualifies for rating as class I or class II in the [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) land use capability classifications.*

*(2) Land which qualifies for rating 80 through 100 in the Storie Index Rating.*

*(3) Land which supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and which has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture.*

[USDA NRCS “Using Web Soil Survey” presentation](#)



# Williamson Act “Prime” Definition



GC 51201 (continued)

(c) *"Prime agricultural land" means any of the following:*

*(4) Land planted with fruit- or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes or crops which have a nonbearing period of less than five years and which will normally return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) per acre.*

*(5) Land which has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant products an annual gross value of not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) per acre for three of the previous five years.*



# Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program (FMMP)

- Prepares, updates, and maintains Important Farmland Series Maps ([GC 65560\[f\]](#)) every two years
- Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status
- The best quality land is classified as Prime Farmland





# FMMP Important Farmland Data



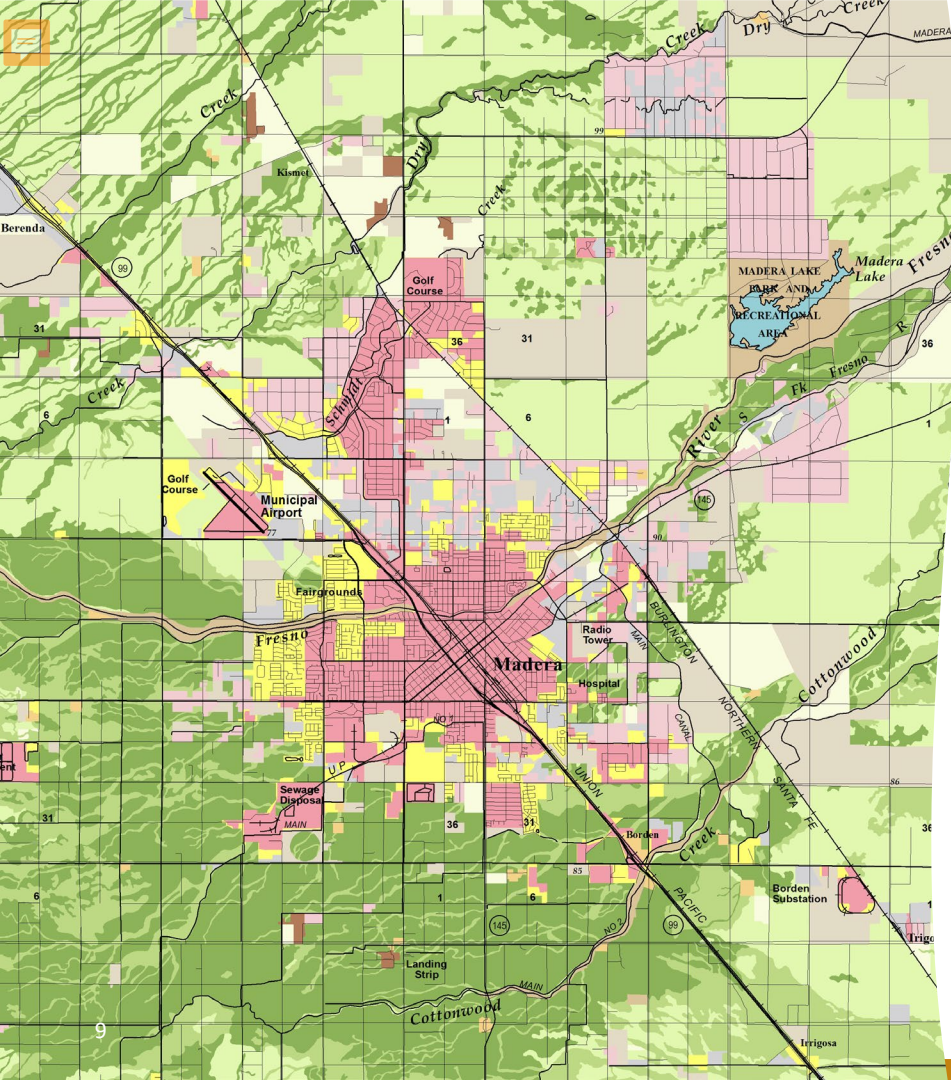
Important Farmland data is composed of land use + USDA soils

- Land use = air photo/imagery interpretation by FMMP staff
- USDA soils data
- [FMMP link](#)



# FMMP Prime Farmland

- Definition developed by USDA-NRCS as part of the nationwide Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) system
- LIM definition modified for use in California:
  - Prime Farmland must be irrigated





# FMMP “Prime” Definition

Government Section [65570\(b\)\(3\)](#) defines the categories used by FMMP:

*(3) "Category of agricultural land" means **prime farmland**, **farmland of statewide importance**, **unique farmland**, and **farmland of local importance**, as defined pursuant to United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California, and **grazing land**. "Grazing land" means land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of livestock.*



## FMMP Prime Farmland Criteria:

- Soil quality
- Growing season
- Moisture supply
- Must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date
- Does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing ag use





# CEQA Appendix G use of FMMP “Prime Farmland” Definition



a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[CEQA Appendix G](#)





# Prime Farmland Similarities & Differences



Williamson Act “Prime” Criteria	
Soils rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Livestock production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Food crop production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Food crop gross value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

FMMP “Prime” Criteria	
Soils rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Land use (FMMP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Production of irrigated crops (FMMP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water availability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Flooding potential	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rooting depth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



# THANK YOU

Questions?

Williamson Act/CEQA Team  
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<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/wa>