



This guide is organized by the following categories: land use, stewardship, protection, and succession planning. Each section includes recommendations of relevant partners and resources that can support in managing agricultural land for long-term sustainability.

Acronyms

ACOE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	NMFS National Marine Fisheries Service
AFT American Farmland Trust	NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
BMP Best Management Practices	RCD Resource Conservation District
CALTRANS California Department of Transportation	RWQCB Regional Water Quality Control Board
CEQA California Environmental Quality Act	SAA Streambed Alteration Agreement
CESA California Endangered Species Act	SRT Sequoia Riverlands Trust
CFT California Farmland Trust	SWRCB State Water Resources Control Board
CRT California Rangeland Trust	UCCE University of California Cooperative Extension
CWA Clean Water Act	USBR U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
DWR Department of Water Resources	USDA U.S. Department of Agriculture
EPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	USFS U.S. Forest Service
FIC Farmland Information Center	USFWS U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
LAFCo Local Agency Formation Commission	USGS U.S. Geological Survey

Land Use

As navigating the regulatory process can entail multiples agencies and approvals, it’s important to start the process early, engage all the relevant players simultaneously, and know the associated fees up front. At the start, prepare a project outline so that you’re able to approach agencies with it and ask all necessary questions. If your project impacts any neighbors, contact them at the beginning so you are aware of possible concerns or issues. As you work through the process, be sure to document each step and keep copies of your forms. Your main goal, which the following organizations will help you to achieve, is to minimize or reduce any adverse environmental impact the project may cause.

LOCAL

City/County Planning Department

Since each project warrants different permits and approvals, it’s best to kick off a project at the city or county planning department. Schedule a meeting with a local planner to understand relevant project requirements as criteria varies between different areas.

City/County Environmental Health Department

County environmental health departments are intended to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of

the public, and preserve and improve the quality of the environment. Check in with this agency for projects pertaining to food sanitation, water quality, land use, and groundwater.

Local Irrigation, Water or Flood Control District

These districts are focused on protecting water resources within certain jurisdictions and, as such, may require a permit for specific projects. The first step is to determine if the location of the projects falls within a local district, which can be done by connecting with your Local Agency Formation Commission office (calafco.org/about-us/lafco-directory) to learn the district where you're located. Next, reach out to the district to understand if there any applicable permits related to the project.

STATE

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

North Central Regional Office (covers San Joaquin County): wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/2; 916-358-2900

Central Regional Office (covers Stanislaus County): wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/4; 559-243-4005 ext. 151

For a map of all regional offices: wildlife.ca.gov/Regions

Contact CDFW before beginning any project that may substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream or lake. If CDFW determines that the activity may adversely affect fish and wildlife resources, a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement will be needed.

California State Water Resources Control Board

The California State Water Resources Control Board administers the state's water quality, water pollution control, and water rights functions under California's Environmental Protection Agency. The state board provides policy guidance and budgetary authority to the nine regional water quality control boards, which conduct planning, permitting, and enforcement activities.

California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (covers both San Joaquin & Stanislaus counties): waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley; 916-464-3291

For information on statewide regional control boards: waterboards.ca.gov/waterboards_map.html

While regional boards provide a variety of functions, their regulatory function relevant to projects on agricultural land pertains to pollutant or nuisance discharges affecting surface or groundwater.

Applicable permits relate to pollution discharge and water quality.

FEDERAL

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Sacramento District Office: spk.usace.army.mil; 916-557-5250

If a project affects a local river, stream or wetland, a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may be required. Contact the local Corps district office to schedule a project consultation, obtain regulatory information or request a permit application.

Land Protection

There are a variety of ag land conservation options available depending on the location and circumstances of each landowner, including agricultural conservation easements. These options can

often be integrated into farm succession, transfer, and estate planning. The following organizations can offer guidance and potentially serve as a partner on land protection projects.

American Farmland Trust

farmland.org/initiatives/california-agricultural-land-protection-program; 916-448-1064

Working across California, AFT partners with landowners and farmers to help them understand the various forms of land protection, including agricultural conservation easements, donations, and annuities. Additionally, AFT undertakes land protection projects on a case-by-case basis, frequently collaborating with regional land trusts on referrals.

An additional resource AFT offers is the Farmland Information Center, which serves as an information hub for people working to protect and steward agricultural land. The FIC supplies statistics and research, easements and ordinances; recommends applicable model laws or documents; and makes referrals to other farmland protection entities as appropriate. Contact the FIC via farmlandinfo.org or at 800-370-4879.

California Farmland Trust

cafarmtrust.org; 916-687-3178

The California Farmland Trust works with willing farmers and landowners who want to ensure their farms will remain farms forever. They help place legal protections, in other words easements, on properties across the state.

California Rangeland Trust

rangelandtrust.org; 916-444-2096

The California Rangeland Trust is a nonprofit focused on conserving the open space, natural habitat, and stewardship provided by California's ranches. Using conservation easements, CRT's protected ranches are located statewide.

San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust

riverparkway.org; 559-248-8480

The River Parkway Trust focuses on protecting and restoring the San Joaquin River. The organization works with willing landowners to protect land through land purchase and donations for public open space, or conservation easements to protect habitat and working landscapes such as agriculture or ranching. They also participate in public planning efforts on issues affecting the river.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust

sequoiariverlands.org; 559-738-0211

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a regional nonprofit focused in Tulare, Fresno, Kern, and Kings counties. The organization is committed to selecting and protecting in perpetuity ranches, farms, scenic vistas, cultural sites, wildlife habitat, and waterways in the Kings, Kaweah, Tule, and Kern River watersheds.

Land Stewardship

To assist in maintaining the long-term sustainability of your land, there are multiple resources and organizations that provide advisory services on planning for and adopting climate-smart practices benefiting soil, water, and other natural resources.

American Farmland Trust

farmland.org/california; 916-448-1064

AFT's Women for the Land and Underserved Farmer Outreach programs deliver technical assistance workshops on climate-smart agriculture. Through statewide learning circles and trainings, AFT connects landowners and farmers with resource providers to discuss topics ranging from farmland protection to soil and water conservation techniques and succession planning. Reach out to AFT directly to inquire about upcoming trainings.

In addition, AFT features the climate-smart agricultural practices of California farmers and ranchers in its Profiles in Stewardship project. This online collection of profiles serves as a knowledge-sharing resource highlighting various problems and solutions that farmers encountered. To view the full collection, visit: stewards.farmland.org.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS Modesto: 209-287-3670

NRCS Stockton: 209-337-2124 ext. 3

For a full list of statewide service centers, visit: offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrsc

As an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary programs to landowners and farmers to provide financial and technical assistance around sustainable management of natural resources. Through these programs, the agency offers financial assistance for planning and implementing conservation practices that address natural resource opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal, and related resources on ag land. This assistance may be in the form of resource assessment, conservation practice design, resource monitoring or follow-up of installed practices. NRCS is non-regulatory and does not provide permits, only recommendations.

Resource Conservation Districts

San Joaquin County RCD: sjcrcd.com; 209-472-7127 ext. 125

East Stanislaus RCD: eaststanrcd.org; 209-491-9320

For a full list of statewide RCDs, visit: carcd.org/rcds/find

Resource Conservation Districts are non-regulatory local entities which give assistance to agricultural and other landowners. RCDs are empowered to conduct soil and water resources research, make improvements on public lands, disseminate conservation information, assist private landowners, develop soil and water conservation plans, and establish standards of cropping tillage and range practices. They often work in conjunction with NRCS to provide technical assistance on projects and specific resource problems.

University of California Cooperative Extension

UCCE San Joaquin County: cesanjoaquin.ucanr.edu; 209-953-6100

UCCE Stanislaus County: cestanislaus.ucanr.edu; 209-525-6800

To find another UCCE office in the state, visit: ucanr.edu/About/Locations/

University of California Cooperative Extension is a network of researchers and educators who solve real-world problems in agriculture, the environment, and human and community well-being. UCCE has farm, 4-H, nutrition, family, and consumer sciences advisors based in more than 50 county offices throughout California. Through their regionally-based research and extension centers, UCCE faculty and staff provide technical and program support for agriculture and natural resource management including habitat restoration.

Succession Planning

Creating a sound land transfer and estate plan is a multi-step process. Some initial steps you can take is to define your values and goals for your land, inventory your assets (in other words make sure you understand what you own and how you own it), identify any issues you're facing, and build your team of professionals (such as a tax advisor and attorney) to support your planning. The following organizations can support you in this process.

American Farmland Trust

farmland.org/initiatives/farm-legacy; 916-448-1064

AFT is committed to strengthening the strong connection between sound estate planning and farmland protection, as well as assisting farmers and ranchers with our expertise in both. As a national organization, we're able to support farmers and landowners across the country through our Farm Legacy program. Although AFT cannot serve as a personal estate planning advisor, we can familiarize landowners with some of the key issues and land protection options as well as help them move down the right path.

California Farmlink

californiafarmlink.org; 831-425-0303

Through their Ag Elders and the Next Generation project, California Farmlink assists farmers in setting clear goals for business transition, linking, financing, and mentorship. The goal is to support established farms pass on valuable knowledge and infrastructure to the next generation. Farmlink works across the state, with a particular focus on the Central Coast, Central Valley, and North Coast regions.

This guide was adapted from the "Guide to Watershed Project Permitting for the State of California" created by the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.