

No trespassing is allowed on private lands under conservation easements in this program. Public access is not allowed without landowner consent

### Why do we need Conservation Easements in San Joaquin County?

The demand for land in our region is well known. Many of our towns were built in the center of the best farmland. Over the next ten years, the County projects that almost 50,000 new housing units will be built, with a population increase of over 100,000. Urban expansion has already been planned and permitted for much of the farmland we see today, although grading and construction may not begin for a year or more.

Conservation Easements can be used to direct development away from the most productive farmland to the least productive land. This is often the only way to protect farms, and the wildlife habitat they provide, from development. After enough regional farmland has been lost to urban development, the facilities, suppliers and distribution networks that support growers begin to close down. This leaves the remaining growers who wish to continue production in an almost impossible situation.

*\* San Joaquin County 1998 Adopted Land Use Projections, San Joaquin Council of Governments*

**Agricultural conservation easements were recommended as one of ten strategies for preserving farmland** in a July 1998 report on Central Valley agriculture. This report was written by the *Agricultural Task Force for Resource Conservation and Economic Growth in the Central Valley*, a group which includes the California Farm Bureau Federation and other major agricultural interest groups.

### What you can do:

If you think that a conservation easement might be right for you, your farm, and your family, please call or write for more information and assistance in pursuing this option. We will gladly answer any other questions you may have regarding easements or the San Joaquin County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation and Open Space Plan.

#### San Joaquin Council of Governments:

**Steven Mayo or staff                      209-468-3913**

#### The following organizations can also provide related information:

##### Trust for Public Lands\*:

Erik Vink    916-557-1673

##### San Joaquin County Agricultural Commission\*:

Vicki Helmar or Scott Hudson              209-468-3300

##### U.C. Cooperative Extension\*:

Theresa Becchetti                                209-525-6800

##### Natural Resources Conservation Service\*:

Dave Simpson                                    209-472-7127 ext. 127

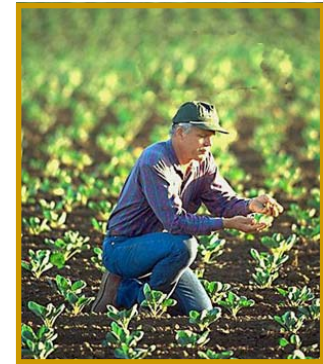
*\* The organizations listed here are not sponsors of this program, nor does their inclusion here indicate any endorsement of this program.*

### San Joaquin Council of Governments

555 East Weber Avenue  
Stockton, CA 95202  
Phone: 209-468-3913  
Fax: 209-468-1084  
www.sjcog.org



## The Conservation Easement Program



of the

### San Joaquin County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation and Open Space Plan

a joint project of:

### **San Joaquin Council of Governments**

*County of San Joaquin*

*City of Escalon*

*City of Lathrop*

*City of Lodi*

*City of Manteca*

*City of Ripon*

*City of Stockton*

*City of Tracy*

## What is the Conservation Easement Program?

The Conservation Easement Program uses a type of easement intended to maintain land in open fields and row crops, in order to provide foraging habitat for hawks and other wildlife. The San Joaquin County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation and Open Space Plan (SJMSCP) intends to purchase Agricultural Conservation Easements from landowners who wish to maintain row crops and open fields on their land.

## How do conservation easements work?

The sale of a conservation easement is the sale of the land's value as a location for urban development, such as a residential subdivision or a commercial center. By selling an easement, the farmer is able to continue farming and invest this added income in the farm operation or use it toward retirement.

The value of an easement is typically the difference between the market value of land, and the value of that same land when it can only be used for farming or other open space uses. Most easements cover many acres, and provide a significant amount of extra income for farmers. The price of an easement also varies according to the land's value as habitat or open space, and the types of restrictions placed on the land.

## How will an easement affect my farm?

- Each easement agreement is written according to the specific wishes of the seller and purchaser.
- An easement requires only minor changes, if any, to the existing farming practices on the easement land.
- Farm-related buildings and homes for family members can still be built on the property.
- The specific boundaries of the area to be covered by the easement are described in the agreement. It is possible to sell an easement covering only a portion of a farm or ranch.

## What if I want to sell my farm later?

**Farms under conservation easements can be sold just like other farms.** The only difference is the future buyer is also restricted to using that land only for agricultural purposes (including a residence). The details of easement agreements vary. Although easements under this local program will be in perpetuity, landowners may transfer easements to other properties. It is also possible, in extraordinary circumstances, to buy out of an easement in case of financial or other hardship. Review and revision of easement terms is possible, in order to better accommodate farming practices.

## Which lands are needed for easements?

**Farmland in row and field crops, dyland grazing, and in fallow qualify for enrollment in the San Joaquin County Conservation Easement Program.** Highest priority is given to row and field crops, dry grazing lands with vernal pools or oak woodlands, or those occupied by the San Joaquin kit fox. Farmlands next to rivers and streams or those with wetlands are also a high priority.

**Lands in orchards and vineyards are not eligible for this program, however they do qualify for many other easement programs.** The organizations named on the next page can provide information on such programs.

## Who will hold the easement on my land and what will they do?

**Landowners participating in this program will have their easement held by SJCOG, Inc.** SJCOG Inc. is a non-profit corporation established by the San Joaquin Council of Governments to administer the SJMSCP. SJCOG, Inc. will conduct limited occasional monitoring of the property to ensure that easement terms are met.

The easement holder will not enter the property except as specified in the easement agreement, and with prior permission from the landowner.