

# MENDOCINO

## Local Agency Formation Commission

Ukiah Valley Conference Center | 200 South School Street | Ukiah, California 95482  
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### COMMISSIONERS

**Jerry Ward,**  
Chair & Treasurer  
Public Member

**Carre Brown, Vice Chair**  
County Board of Supervisors

**Kevin Doble**  
Ukiah City Council

**Gerardo Gonzalez**  
Willits City Council

**John McCowen**  
County Board of Supervisors

**Theresa McNerlin**  
Ukiah Valley Sanitation District

**Tony Orth**  
Brooktrails Township CSD

**Scott Ignacio, Alternate**  
Point Arena City Council

**Dan Hamburg, Alternate**  
County Board of Supervisors

**Carol Rosenberg, Alternate**  
Public Member

**Jenifer Bazzani, Alternate**  
Ukiah Valley Fire District

### STAFF

**Executive Officer**  
Uma Hinman

**Analyst**  
Larkyn Feiler

**Commission Clerk**  
Elizabeth Salomone

**Counsel**  
Scott Browne

### Regular Meetings

First Monday  
of each month  
at 9:00 AM  
in the Mendocino  
County Board  
of Supervisors Chambers  
501 Low Gap Road

*Approved by Commission November 5, 2018*  
**MINUTES**

## Local Agency Formation Commission of Mendocino County

### Regular Meeting of Monday, September 10, 2018

County Board of Supervisors Chambers, 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah, California

#### 1. **CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL** (Video Time 1:23)

Chair Ward called the meeting to order at 9:03am.

Members Present: Commissioners Carre Brown, Kevin Doble, Gerardo Gonzalez, John McCowen, Theresa McNerlin, Tony Orth, and Jerry Ward

Alternate Members Present: Commissioners Jenifer Bazzani and Dan Hamburg

Alternate Members Absent: Scott Ignacio and Carol Rosenberg with apologies

Staff Present: Uma Hinman, Executive Officer  
Elizabeth Salomone, Clerk

#### 2. **PUBLIC EXPRESSION** (Video Time 1:54)

Lisa Weger, Mendocino County resident, addressed the Commission regarding the Mendocino Coast Hospital District. She referred to her letter to the Commission (undated but received September 8, 2018 and distributed to Commissioner via email), in which she noted the pre-election literature from the District omitted areas of the District boundary map as approved by the Commission in 2014. She asked the Commissioner to consider reviewing the District's MSR in regards to boundary and detaching the parcels in question.

Barry Vogel Mendocino County resident, concurred with Lisa Weger, and asked the Commission for support in the suspension of the per parcel tax. Commissioner McNerlin explained that LAFCo does not have any authority in regards to taxes. Mr. Vogel further requested the Commission express support within their ability.

Tom Madden, Mendocino County resident, expressed support with Lisa Weger and described to the Commission his personal efforts in this situation.

Commissioner McCowen suggested giving direction to staff to review the issues and history of the Mendocino Coast Hospital District boundary, as well as review the possibility of scheduling the Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence update in 2019. Commissioners McNerlin and Gonzalez stressed the need for the Commission to be responsive to the public and asked the issue be brought back to the full Commission. The members of the public asked to be provided an update and notice of the agenda item.

**3. OTHER BUSINESS** (Video Time 20:20)

**3a) Alternate Special District Representative**

Jenifer Bazzani was sworn in as Alternate Special District Representative.

**4. CONSENT CALENDAR** (Video Time 22:00)

**4a) Approval of the August 6, 2018 Regular Meeting Summary Minutes**

**4b) Approval of the August 2018 Claims and Financial Report**

**4c) Approval of AB 2258 (grant program) support letter**

Chair Ward pulled Consent Item 4b) Approval of the August 2018 Claims.

Upon motion by Commissioner McCowen and second by Commissioner Gonzalez, Consent Calendar items 4a) Approval of the August 6, 2018 Regular Meeting Summary Minutes and 4c) Approval of AB 2258 (grant program) support letter were approved by roll call vote:

Ayes: (7) Brown, Doble Gonzalez, McCowen, McNerlin, Orth, and Ward

Chair Ward noted the Budget Track was \$30 off in the line for rent and the bookkeeping expense for August included audit preparation.

<u>August 2018 Claims totaling</u>	<u>\$ 14,342.94</u>
Hinman & Associates Consulting	\$ 11,564.50
P. Scott Browne	\$ 600.00
Ukiah Valley Conference Center	\$ 450.37
Commissioner Reimbursement	\$ 178.07
Pehling & Pehling	\$ 1,550.00

Upon motion by Commissioner Brown and second by Commissioner Gonzalez, Consent Calendar item 4b) Approval of the August 2018 Claims and Financial Report was approved by roll call vote:

Ayes: (7) Brown, Doble Gonzalez, McCowen, McNerlin, Orth, and Ward

**5. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS** (Video 25:00)

None

**6. WORKSHOP ITEMS** (Video time 25:05)

None.

**7. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION** (Video time 25:15)

**7a) Proposed Area of Interest**

EO Hinman presented the proposed "Area of Interest" policy that was considered by the Policies & Procedures Committee and recommended to the Commission for discussion. The policy is a tool to identify areas outside of a sphere of influence that would benefit from greater coordination between agencies. Comments and questions were offered by Commissioners Gonzalez, Orth, McCowen, Brown, and Ward.

Commissioner Orth noted the Brooktrails Township Community Services District Board voted in support of the LAFCo Area of Interest Policy.

Upon motion by Commissioner McNerlin and second by Commissioner Gonzalez, Resolution 2018-19-01 approving the Area of Interest Policy was adopted as presented by roll call vote:

Ayes: (7) Brown, Doble Gonzalez, McCowen, McNerlin, Orth, and Ward

**7b) White Paper on Agricultural Preservation**

EO Hinman presented an informational report regarding CALAFCO and American Farmland Trust's White Paper on Agricultural Preservation, noting the Commission's policies and procedures include recommended measures therefore not requiring any enhancement. Comments and questions were offered by Commissioners Ward, Orth, Brown, and Gonzalez.

Commissioner Orth suggested notifying the clearinghouse of the Commission's desire to make comment on any general plan updates in the County.

Commissioner Brown described the committee in place to continue monitoring sustainability of agriculture preservation, led by Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD.) Commissioner Orth noted for the record that MCRCD is the main contractor for the mitigation lands near Willits and the bypass serves as an urban barrier.

## 8. INFORMATION/ REPORT ITEMS

### 8a) Work Plan, Current, and Future Proposals (Video Time: 43:09)

EO presented the staff report, noting no new changes to the applications on-hold, pre-applications, or potential future projects. She reviewed the updated project status Gantt Chart. Comments and questions were offered by Commissioners Ward and McCowen.

### 8b) Correspondence (Video Time: 45:43)

EO Hinman noted letters received from Norman de Vall and Lisa Weger that were provided to the Commission and verified approximately 32 property owner letters of support were submitted by Lisa Weger during the public comment portion of the Commission meeting.

### 8c) Executive Officer's Report (Video Time: 46:28)

EO Hinman reported on the following:

- Nominations for the Regular and the Alternate Special District member seats are due September 13.
- Letters of interest for the public seat are due October 26.
- Four commissioners and the Executive Officer are attending the upcoming CALAFCO conference.

### 8d) Committee Reports

The Executive Committee is meeting directly after the regular meeting for a quarterly review of the work plan and any other relevant issues. No Policies and Procedures committee meeting was held due to participants' summer scheduling difficulties.

### 8e) Commissioners Reports, Comments or Questions

*Commissioner McCowen* noted the Executive Office is working closely with CAL FIRE, property owners, the City of Ukiah, and other agencies in how to improve fire mitigation and prevention in the western hills of Ukiah and provided information, noting the inter-agency cooperation and that public meetings are expected to be held.

*Commissioner Orth* offered comments on similar efforts by the Brooktrails Township Community Services District to do pre-fire work on existing dirt road structures to allow for rapid ingress by emergency personnel, particularly in fire suppression efforts.

*Commissioner Brown* noted the legislature is looking at conflicting policies and the Board of Supervisors is looking into the Air Quality Management District.

### 8f) CALAFCO Business and Legislation Report

EO provided updates, noting that AB 2258 (grant program) has passed the legislature and is now ready for the Governor's signature. The funding portion for the bill was pulled for this year. The intent now is

to get it signed by the Governor this year and budgeted next year. AB 2262, The Coast Life Support District bill, met challenges when the California Emergency Medical services opposed it and no resolution was found. The bill has been dropped for now.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 9:56am the meeting was adjourned. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 1, 2018 at 9:00am in the County Board of Supervisors Chambers at 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah, California.

*Live web streaming and recordings of Commission meetings are now available via the County of Mendocino's YouTube Channel. Links to recordings and approved minutes are also available on the LAFCo website.*


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIEXv6z2P8&index=8&list=PLraKTU7AyZLTmV-2PpmufbzkvpN3QCnog>



Resource Conservation District  
Mendocino County

# Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Committee (SALC)

Presentation to LAFCO  
Megan McCluer, Executive Director  
Mendocino County Resource Conservation District  
(MCRCD)  
November 5, 2018



Resource Conservation District  
Mendocino County  
*Conserving Wild and Working Landscapes Since 1946*

**The MCRCD assists the County with regulatory compliance, economic development, and public safety, through stewardship of wild and working landscapes.**

**Approach:** The MCRCD is a non-regulatory, small special district made up of technical experts that assist the County and private landowners in four main Focus Areas:

- Water Resources
- Soil Health Management
- Forest Health
- Fire Recovery and Resiliency

## Sustainable Ag Lands Strategy Report - Background



In 2015, the MCRCDC was funded to conduct an agricultural lands planning assessment by the Ag Commissioner and a grant from the Dept of Conservation's Strategic Growth Council.

Contributing partners included: County of Mendocino, USDA-NRCS, UC Cooperative Extension, MC Farm Bureau, AV Land Trust, Mendocino Land Trust, and Inland Mendocino County Land Trust

Report was published in October 2017 and in May 2018, the SALC (Committee) was reconvened to bring attention to the results and assist the County in future land use planning and policy.

## Sustainable Ag Lands Committee - Key Members

Carre Brown, Mendocino Co Board of Supervisors  
 Harinder Grewal, Mendocino Co Agricultural Commissioner  
 Carol Mandel, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
 Devon Jones, Mendocino Co Farm Bureau  
 Megan McCluer, Mendocino Co Resource Conservation District (RCD)  
 Greg Nelson, Planning Commissioner/Farmer  
 Glenn McGourty, UC Cooperative Extension  
 Ann Cole, Mendocino Land Trust  
 Barbara Goodell, Anderson Valley Land Trust  
 Alan Nicholson, Inland Mendocino Land Trust  
 Kyle Farmer, Rancher

## Sustainable Ag Lands Committee (SALC) Vision / Mission

- ▶ *The Vision of the Committee is a well-balanced mix of urban, rural, agricultural, and grazing lands, forest, waterways and wetlands in Mendocino County that sustains humans, local food production, ecosystems, working landscapes and wildlife.*
- ▶ *The primary Mission of the Committee is to conserve agricultural and natural resource lands throughout Mendocino County while encouraging responsible and balanced development.*



## Sustainable Ag Lands Committee (SALC) Approach

- ▶ *Raising awareness about ag lands contributions to the economy, ecosystem, and quality of life.*
- ▶ *Encouraging a planning process that includes the use of ag land conservation tools such as conservation easements, tax incentives, urban growth boundaries, zoning, and ag land loss mitigation programs*
- ▶ *Increase communication and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and decision makers.*
- ▶ *Provide clear and concise information to allow for responsible and well-balanced development that embraces Mendocino County's natural resources and agricultural benefits.*



## Sustainable Ag Lands Committee (SALC) Collaborations

▶ ALIGNING WITH PARTNERS AND KEY DOCUMENTS

- CA LAFCO White Paper: "State of the Art on Agricultural Preservation"
- California's Strategic Growth Council's "DRAFT 2018-19 Guidelines for the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP)" Currently out for comment at: [www.conservation.ca.gov](http://www.conservation.ca.gov)
- Greenbelt Alliance's "Tools for Local Farms, Ranches and Municipalities to address Land Conservations and Cost"

▶ INVESTIGATING STAKEHOLDER NEEDS

- Revisiting survey results from 2017
- Outreach to partners for collaboration

▶ For More Information: [Megan.McCluer@mcrd.org](mailto:Megan.McCluer@mcrd.org)



Resource Conservation District  
Mendocino County  
*Conserving Wild and Working Landscapes Since 1945*



# Mendocino County Sustainable Ag Lands Committee (SALC)

## FACT SHEET



### Background

In November of 2015, the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture was awarded a grant for the *Strategic Growth Council – Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy* through the California Department of Conservation. The County contracted with the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) to conduct an assessment of agricultural lands at risk of conversion and develop recommendations for policies and actions that could be undertaken by the County and community partners to conserve agricultural land resources.

The *Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy* was completed in October 2017 and can be found at: [www.mcrcd.org/](http://www.mcrcd.org/)

### Publications

Or for more information on the Committee, contact:  
Megan.McCluer@mcrcd.org



### Committee Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the Committee is to conserve agricultural and natural resource lands throughout Mendocino County while encouraging responsible and balanced development. This will be accomplished by:

- Raising awareness among Mendocino County communities about ag land contributions to the economy, ecosystem services and quality of life.
- Encouraging a planning process that is inclusive and includes the use of conservation tools such as conservation easements, tax incentives, urban growth boundaries, zoning and ag mitigation programs to conserve ag land.
- Increasing communication and collaboration with diverse stakeholders and decision makers.

### LEAD COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Carre Brown, Mendocino Co Board of Supervisors  
Harinder Grewal, Mendocino Co Agricultural Commissioner  
Carol Mandel, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Devon Jones, Mendocino Co Farm Bureau  
Megan McCluer, Mendocino Co Resource Conservation District (RCD)  
Greg Nelson, Planning Commissioner/Farmer  
Glenn McGourty, UC Cooperative Extension  
Ann Cole, Mendocino Land Trust  
Barbara Goodell, Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Alan Nicholson, Inland Mendocino Land Trust  
Kyle Farmer, Rancher

### The Benefits of Conserving Ag Land:

- A long-term, stable land base for the future of the County's ag industry
- A vibrant and diverse economy and production of local food
- The preservation of rural character, cultural heritage and quality of life
- Climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration
- Wildlife habitat and reduced habitat fragmentation
- Groundwater recharge, reduced storm water run-off and flooding
- Local food is fresher, more nutritious with less packaging and transportation needs

# Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Committee

## FACT SHEET



*Agriculture is a crucial component of the Ukiah Valley and Mendocino County's economy and cultural heritage. Agriculture provides numerous jobs for County residents and substantial tax revenue for Mendocino County.*

*The Vision of the Committee is a well-balanced mix of urban, rural, agricultural, and grazing lands, forest, waterways and wetlands in Mendocino County that sustains humans, local food production, ecosystems, working landscapes and wildlife.*

*The primary Mission of the Committee is to conserve agricultural and natural resource lands throughout Mendocino County while encouraging responsible and balanced development.*

*The committee will provide stakeholders and decision makers with clear and concise information to allow for responsible and balanced development while conserving agricultural values and natural resources throughout Mendocino County.*

### AGRICULTURAL FACTS:

- California lost 58,587 acres of irrigated farmland between 2010-2012.<sup>1</sup> Mendocino County lost 1,394 acres of important farmland between 2014-2016. Agriculture is an important economic, environmental and cultural resource in our county. For these reasons, agricultural conversion is a critical issue to pay attention to in relation to local land use policies.
- The county of Mendocino contains less than 50,000 acres of productive farmland, 27,044 acres of which is identified as Prime, Unique, or of Statewide Importance as of 2016.<sup>2</sup> The majority of this farmland is located in southern Mendocino County in areas anticipated to experience population growth and urbanization over the next two decades.
- A risk assessment conducted using applicable Agricultural Conservation Easement Grant Program 2015/16 risk categories, found that 90 percent of Prime agricultural land, 85 percent of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 83 percent of Unique farmland was at-risk of conversion to residential development. The highest risk areas in the county occur within municipal services boundaries and their Sphere of Influence or within two miles of these areas.

1. 2015 California Farmland Conversion Report. [http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/FMMP\\_2010-2012\\_FCR.aspx](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/FMMP_2010-2012_FCR.aspx)

2. CA Department of Conservation 2014-16 Mendocino Co. Land Use Conversion Data (latest report). <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/Mendocino.aspx>



# Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

Protecting California's agricultural lands from development



The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) utilizes Cap-and-Trade proceeds to protect agricultural lands on the outskirts of cities from development. Urban sprawl not only increases greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, as people have to drive further to get where they need to go, but also encroaches on agricultural lands that produce healthy food, store carbon and sustain our economy. SALC fights climate change by limiting these expensive, vehicle-dependent forms of development in favor of compact, transit-oriented communities.



## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

### Strategy and Outcome Grants

- Cities
- Counties

### Agricultural Conservation Easement Grants

- Cities
- Counties
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Resource Conservation Districts
- Regional Park or Open-Space Districts or Authorities

## WHAT DOES SALC FUND?

SALC funds projects that protect at-risk agricultural lands from conversion to more pollution-heavy land uses such as urban or rural residential development. The program provides two types of awards: Strategy and Outcomes grants and Agricultural Conservation Easement grants.

**Strategy and Outcome grants** support the development of local and regional land use policies and strategies to protect critical agricultural land.

The program funds the following strategies:

- ✦ Establishing an agricultural land mitigation program
- ✦ Creating an agricultural conservation easement purchasing program
- ✦ Adopting an urban growth boundary
- ✦ Increasing the zoning minimum for strategic agricultural areas
- ✦ Setting in place an agricultural greenbelt

**Agricultural Conservation Easement grants** are used to permanently protect croplands and rangelands that are at-risk of conversion to sprawl development. Agricultural conservation easements are deed restrictions that landowners voluntarily place on their property to preserve the land's agricultural uses.

## HOW ARE OUTCOMES TRACKED AND MONITORED?

Outcomes for each award are monitored through tracking greenhouse gas emissions reductions and identifying co-benefits of funded projects. The greenhouse gas quantification methodology is certified by the California Air Resources Board. Co-benefits include health, environmental and economic features identified by the applicant at the grant's onset.

## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

SALC simultaneously supports California's food security while encouraging infill development and clean transportation to curb sprawl. It fights climate change by encouraging compact development, making it easier for Californians to walk, bike and use transit in their daily lives. SALC also has the added benefit of helping retain local jobs and agricultural revenue, improving air and water quality, protecting wildlife habitats and improving human health.

**52 EASEMENTS  
PROJECTS**  
— TOTALING —  
**81,081  
ACRES**  
— TO BE CONSERVED —

### CONTACT

Virginia Jameson

[cfc@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:cfc@conservation.ca.gov)

<http://sgc.ca.gov/programs/salc/>

2017

# Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy



Prepared by the Mendocino County  
Resource Conservation District for the  
Mendocino County Agricultural  
Commissioner  
Grant Number 3015-903

10/20/2017

## **Credits and Acknowledgments**

### **County of Mendocino**

Carre Brown, Board of Supervisors

Russell Ford, Cartographer Planner

Jennifer Krauss, Department of Agriculture Office Services Supervisor

Diane Curry, Agricultural Commissioner

### **USDA-NRCS**

Carol Mandel, District Conservationist

Erica Lundquist, Soil Scientist

### **U.C. Cooperative Extension, Mendocino and Lake Counties**

Glenn McGourty, Winegrowing and Plant Sciences Advisor

### **Mendocino County Farm Bureau**

Devon Jones, Executive Director

### **Anderson Valley Land Trust**

Barbara Goodell, Board Member

Trey Petrey, Office Manager

### **Mendocino Land Trust**

Doug Kern, Director of Conservation

Roger Sternberg, Conservation Consultant

### **Inland Mendocino County Land Trust**

Alan Nicholson, Board Member

*A Strategic Growth Council – 2015 Sustainable Agricultural Land Strategy Grant funded through the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection*

## **Executive Summary**

Mendocino County is a mosaic of highly productive agricultural valleys, forest, and rangeland—with only four incorporated cities and scattered rural communities dispersed along the ocean, coastal mountains, and interior valleys. At 3,878 square miles, the County is substantially larger than Marin, Sonoma and Napa Counties *combined*. The County's economy has historically been and continues to be resource-based, including vineyards, orchards, forest products, ranching, and now legal and illegal marijuana cultivation.

Mendocino County planning for agricultural lands lags far behind that of the more populated regions to the south, yet the County has prime agricultural resources that thus far have been relatively unimpacted by development pressures. This situation is changing rapidly. In the Ukiah Valley area, undeveloped land with residential zoning to accommodate increased population is limited and the area within the City of Ukiah limits is approaching build-out. Similarly, housing shortages in the Anderson Valley have moved County planners to consider future subdivision of large agricultural parcels. A proposed water project would also allow for buildout within the community of Boonville.

Mendocino County's rural landscape, low population densities, and popular boutique vineyards, agricultural cottage industries, and open spaces, are alluring qualities to Bay Area residents looking for second homes or more affordable communities in which to live. With improvements in telecommunications and constant media exposure, places like the Anderson Valley are becoming destination spots for food and wine enthusiasts. Increasingly, former visitors are becoming full-time residents that telecommute or entrepreneurs who are redeveloping and expanding local visitor serving facilities, such as conference centers, music festivals and wedding venues.

The recent legalization of cannabis cultivation is also expected to significantly impact agricultural land values as well as more traditional agricultural land uses. Sustainable agricultural land strategies are critically needed to balance future development and natural resource utilization and conservation in Mendocino County.

### **Sustainable Agricultural Land Strategy Planning Grant**

In November of 2015, the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture was awarded a *Strategic Growth Council – 2015 Sustainable Agricultural Land Strategy Grant* through the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection to complete a sustainable agricultural lands conservation strategy plan. As part of the grant agreement, the County contracted with the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) to conduct a two-year sustainable agricultural lands planning assessment.

Over the course of the grant agreement, MCRCD worked with the University of California Cooperative Extension, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mendocino Land

Trust, Anderson Valley Land Trust, Inland Mendocino County Land Trust, and the Mendocino County Farm Bureau to identify strategies to improve and expand agricultural land conservation efforts in the county. A core planning team was established for the two-year project with representatives from each of the agricultural support organizations and agencies in the County. The following report, "An Agricultural Lands Conservation Strategy for Mendocino County, 2017 to 2020," summarizes results from the two-year planning assessment.

Grant funds were allocated to:

- 1) Assist in the inventory and mapping of County agricultural lands, with a particular focus on agricultural lands most at risk of conversion;
- 2) Complete a survey of potential demand for agricultural conservation easements, and conduct a capacity assessment of land trusts operating in Mendocino County; and lastly,
- 3) Funding support for MCRCD's participation in a regional RCD conservation planning initiative to assist farmers and ranchers in adopting climate beneficial land management practices, as well as the development of a carbon sequestration quantification method for measuring and monetizing Green House Gas (GHG) reductions in the agricultural sector.

## **Key Findings**

### **Farmlands at-Risk**

The County of Mendocino contains less than 50,000 acres of productive farmland, 27,730 acres of which is identified as Prime, Unique or of Statewide Importance (FMMP 2014 data). The majority of this "Important farmland" is located in southern Mendocino County in areas anticipated to experience population growth and urbanization over the next two decades.

A risk assessment, conducted using applicable SALCP Agricultural Conservation Easement Grant Program 2015/16 risk categories, found that 90 percent of Prime agricultural land, 85 percent of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 83 percent of Unique farmland was at-risk of conversion to residential development. The highest risk areas in the county occur within municipal services boundaries and their Sphere of Influence or within two miles of these areas. The majority of farmland within the county is located within two miles of areas zoned for residential development with an average lot size of less than two acres.

In addition to assessing farmland at-risk of conversion, the assessment also focused on where small-scale food production is occurring in the county. The assessment found that only 27 percent of existing farms are sited on agriculturally zoned lands, while 19 percent were located on rangeland and 7 percent on forestland. The majority of small-scale row crop farms (45%) are located in rural residential zoning districts.



## **County-level Farmland Protection Programs**

### ***Williamson Act Participation***

Mendocino County landowners may participate in the Williamson Act through the Mendocino County Code, Resource Preserves (Ordinance 3428). As of 2014, 18,674 acres of "important farmland" were enrolled in Williamson Act contracts, representing approximately 62 percent of all "important farmland" in the County. Between 2006 and 2014, an additional 216 acres were enrolled; however, 272 acres went out of the Williamson Act in areas prone to development. A GIS analysis of farmland in Williamson Act contracts determined that areas prone to development had lower rates of enrollment than areas with less threat of conversion. The Ukiah Valley and Redwood Valley had the lowest rates of enrollment, at 43 percent and 55 percent respectively.

Of the 735,000 acres of privately held rangeland in the county, 43 percent were enrolled in Williamson Act contracts as of 2014. Between 2006 and 2014, over 19,300 acres were dropped from enrollment. This was most likely due to County monitoring efforts to ensure compliance with minimum agricultural utilization standards, as well as the purchase of ranches for non-agricultural uses or cannabis cultivation.

### ***Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs***

As part of the planning grant, a survey was sent out to 250 agricultural landowners. Survey participants were selected primarily based on size of landholdings. Response rate to the survey was a little over seven percent. While all of the survey respondents had heard of agricultural conservation easements (ACEs), the majority of respondents were unfamiliar with their unique characteristics and their value as an agricultural preservation mechanism. For example, the majority of respondents were unaware that an ACE keeps land in private/family ownership.

An important finding of the survey was that a full 74 percent of respondents showed a strong preference for preserving the agricultural tradition on their land, yet only 58 percent responded that family members are interested in continuing to work the land. Twenty-six percent of respondents answered they would consider leasing agricultural land for agricultural production.

Both the Anderson Valley Land Trust (AVLT) and the Mendocino Land Trust (MLT) are committed to expanding their agricultural conservation easement programs to accommodate demand. Both land trusts are actively building capacity in anticipation of increased demand, and are applying or are planning to apply for Department of Conservation SALCP agricultural conservation easement funding.

## Linking Agricultural Management Practices to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Benefits

Modeled estimates of the GHG reduction impacts of implementing a selection of carbon beneficial agricultural practices indicate that climate investments in Mendocino County's agricultural sector could offset annually all of the baseline emissions from the County's Local Government Operations sector (22, 823.00 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e as of 2010) within six years of program initiation. By year ten, climate investments could offset annual emissions from all other sectors of the economy with the exception of Transportation and Mobile Sources.

Total climate investments over a ten-year period are estimated at \$24,455,450 or \$2,445,545 annually. These cost estimates are well within the range of current investments in agricultural operations in Mendocino County annually.

Table 4-3 (in report). Conservation practices, treatable acres, and 10 year and 20 year GHG reduction estimates

Conservation Practice	Acres	Metric Tons CO <sub>2</sub> e Reduction 10 Years	Metric Tons CO <sub>2</sub> e Reduction 20 Years
Compost Application (25% of pasture)	5,291.8	126,438.1	252,876.3
Compost Application (75% of cropland)	121.5	537.2	1,074.3
Compost Application (75% of vineyards & orchards)	14,995.5	66,306.6	132,613.3
Conventional Tillage to No-tillage (20% of vineyards)	3,561.4	2,914.6	5,829.3
Conventional Tillage to Reduced Tillage (20% of vineyards)	3,561.4	269.2	538.5
Permanent Cover Crop Establishment (10% of vineyards)	25.0	192.5	385.0
Cover Cropping (20% of vineyards)	3,561.4	302.7	605.4
Alley cropping (20% of orchards)	437.4	612.4	1,224.7
Vegetative Barriers	50.0	88.0	176.0
Riparian herbaceous cover	250.0	412.5	825.0
Riparian Restoration	250.0	7,975.0	15,950.0
Hedgerow Establishment	40.0	990.0	1,980.0
Silvopastoral practice on pastureland	50.0	368.5	737.0
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>207,407.4</b>	<b>414,814.8</b>

## Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy Recommendations

Mendocino County's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy planning process was intended to establish a long-term framework for greater coordination and collaboration between all of the agencies and organizations working on agricultural resource planning and conservation in the county. The goal of the two-year planning process was to create a shared vision, closer working partnerships, and additional shared tools and data for agricultural land use planning and policy development.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to set a path forward for sustaining and enhancing agricultural viability and land conservation in Mendocino County.

- Encourage the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors and Executive Office to explore new policies and taxation options for agricultural land conservation such as property transfer tax revenue, sales tax revenue, farmland mitigation development fees, and cannabis cultivation fees etc.
- Work with the Planning Commission to consider allowing large ranches to be subdivided with clustered development and shared ownership of rangeland. Concerns around this option could be addressed through strict covenants, conditions and restrictions and County oversight.
- Strong enforcement of Williamson Act contract provisions, as well as a strong outreach effort for new agricultural landowners to ensure agricultural land is kept in agricultural production.
- Seek funding for an agricultural conservation easement staff person at the County or one of the local land trusts to pursue public funding for new easement acquisitions.
- Invite staff from the Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and NRCS California's ACE Program for a tour of the County's agricultural valleys to discuss ACE funding priorities and opportunities. Include the local NRCS District Conservationist, U.C. Farm Advisors, Mendocino County Farm Bureau Executive Director and President, and MCRCD staff on the tour. This will lead to needed partnership building and will help with potential ACE agency cost-share.
- Establish an Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee and technical advisory group under the aegis of the Board of Supervisors.
- Work with County Planning and Building Services to keep conservation easement APN data updated in the County's tracking system.
- Encourage the Agricultural Commissioner and U.C. Farm Advisors to host annual workshops on agricultural conservation topics.
- Conduct a GHG Emissions Inventory for the forestry and agriculture sectors and adopt a Climate Action Plan for Mendocino County.
- Pursue funding for climate investments in sustainable agricultural land management practices.