

*Oct. 8, 2025***Subject: Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program Round 10 Award Recommendations**

Reporting Period: July 2025 – October 2025

Staff Lead: Shanna Atherton-Bauer, Division Director, Department of Conservation (DOC)

Recommended Action

Approve the staff recommendation to award \$120,198,339 to support the identified 39 agricultural conservation easement acquisitions, eight fee title acquisitions, and four planning grants identified in this report through Round 10 of the SALC Program. Approve the staff recommendation to award \$3,837,678 in remaining acquisition funds to one additional fee acquisition project contingent on additional funds becoming available to cover the full request amount by Nov. 26, 2025. Continue awards for up to \$3,044,000 in capacity grants to the December 2025 California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) meeting.

Summary

The SALC Program provides grants to fund agricultural conservation easement and fee title acquisitions, as well as grants for agricultural conservation capacity and project development, and local government plans to protect agricultural lands from conversion to more greenhouse gas (GHG) intensive uses. This is Round 10 of the program. The program has awarded recipients on an annual basis; however, it will shift to multiple awards per year for the upcoming funding cycle.

Staff received 74 applications for acquisition funding, four applications for planning grants, and 21 applications for capacity grants. Of the \$127,594,741 available (including \$91,326,033 from Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund auction proceeds and \$36,268,708 carried over from prior rounds), staff recommend funding 47 acquisition projects and four planning grants for an award total of \$120,198,339.

Staff recommend reserving \$3,044,000 for capacity and project development grants and continuing capacity awards to the December 2025 SGC meeting. Staff also recommend awarding the remaining \$3,837,678 after the award of Round 10 acquisition grants to fund one additional Tribal-led fee title acquisition contingent upon additional funds sufficient to cover the entire project cost becoming available by December 2025. This award is recommended for a project with a total request of \$7,810,000. Staff anticipate the remaining \$3,972,322 in funds will come available by November 26, 2025 through residual funds from previously awarded SALC grants. The recommended acquisition projects aim to protect approximately 40,244 acres spanning 23 counties as far north as Humboldt

and Shasta Counties, and as far south as Imperial County. When completed, this suite of conservation acquisition projects will avoid an estimated 3,329,401 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. The recommended planning grants include projects from two counties, one Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and one Resource Conservation District (RCD) in partnership with a LAFCO.

Background

About SALC

Senate Bill 862, Chapter 36, Statutes of 2014, established the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program (AHSC) to be administered by SGC, “to reduce GHG emissions through projects that implement land use, housing, transportation and agricultural land preservation practices to support infill and compact development...” (Pub, Resources Code § 75210).

In July 2014, the Council approved the Department of Housing and Community Development to help implement the housing, transportation and infrastructure components of AHSC, and designated the DOC and the California Natural Resources Agency to assist implementation of the agricultural lands protection component of AHSC, known as the SALC Program.

The SALC Program facilitates the reduction of GHG emissions by protecting agricultural lands—such as cropland, rangeland and lands used by Tribes for cultivating traditional foods, herbal medicine, fibers and dyes—that are at risk of conversion to urban and rural residential development. The program accomplishes this by investing in three project types: agricultural conservation acquisitions (including easements and fee-title purchases), capacity and project development grants, and local government planning grants.

Acquisition projects extinguish development rights, thereby reducing opportunities for expansive, vehicle-dependent forms of development and avoiding increases in GHG emissions; in the future, however, development rights may be banked for transfers to urban areas under a “transfer of development rights” program. Capacity and project development grants fund the development of agricultural conservation easement and fee acquisition projects and/or cover associated costs to help close acquisition projects where the acquisition cost is covered by an alternative source of funding. Planning grants support the implementation of Sustainable Communities Strategies or other local plans that reduce GHG emissions.

Conservation Acquisition Grants

In January 2025, DOC SALC staff received 109 acquisition pre-proposals for review. With guidance from SGC Staff, staff determined that 20 of the 109 projects submitted for consideration were not eligible, and 45 required additional information to determine eligibility.

Staff received 74 acquisition applications in July 2025, 18 for fee title projects and 56 for easement acquisitions. Of these, two fee acquisition applications were withdrawn prior to award

recommendations, one fee acquisition application was deemed ineligible, and five easement applications were deemed ineligible as proposed. Staff reviewed the remaining 66 applications for readiness, then awarded points based on SALC guidelines' selection criteria. The selection criteria reflect a project's agricultural use, support for infill, other program goals, equity, and other co-benefits.

Of the 74 Round 10 acquisition applications submitted, 42 were developed using SALC capacity and project development funding, and 33 of those are recommended for award.

SALC recommends awarding a total of \$118,198,339 for conservation acquisitions: \$28,061,007 in funding for eight fee title acquisition projects and \$90,137,332 in funding for 39 conservation easement projects. There remains \$3,837,678 that SALC Staff recommends be allocated toward an additional \$7,810,000 fee title purchase, contingent on at least \$3,972,322 in residual funds becoming available from previously awarded SALC projects.

Of the 47 projects recommended for funding, 23 projects aim to protect 7,538 acres of irrigated farmland, 14 projects aim to protect 20,432 acres of rangeland, three projects aim to protect 1,178 acres of mixed-use agriculture, and seven projects aim to protect 11,096 acres of land to be used by Tribes for cultivating food, herbal medicines, fibers and dyes. The contingent project would protect 221 acres to be used by a Tribe for cultivating food, herbal medicine, fibers and dyes.

These recommendations are based on total available funding, project scores, program priorities, and the amount of funding available for fee acquisition projects (up to 25% of funds available for a given round).

Six fee acquisition applications are not recommended for funding based on the amount of funding available for fee acquisition projects this round. The remaining 12 easement acquisition projects are not recommended for award based on their scores and lack of available funding.

Once complete, the suite of acquisitions recommended for funding will protect 40,244 acres of agricultural land and avoid an estimated 3,329,401 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. These projects are disbursed across 23 counties, ranging from Humboldt and Shasta in the north to Imperial in the south.

Acquisition Projects Recommended for Funding

Applicant	Application Number	County	Total Acres	Recommended Award Amount
California Rangeland Trust	SALC23_PP02_MNT	Monterey	1,538	\$3,910,000

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	SALC23_PP05_SON	Sonoma	371	\$1,000,000
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	SALC23_PP06_SON	Sonoma	393	\$1,500,000
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	SALC23_PP07_SON	Sonoma	421	\$1,500,000
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	SALC23_PP08_SON	Sonoma	480	\$3,000,000
Placer Land Trust	SALC23_PP09_PLA	Placer	90	\$1,189,500
Placer Land Trust	SALC23_PP10_PLA	Placer	120	\$924,000
California Rangeland Trust	SALC23_PP11_AMA	Amador	524	\$1,694,400
American River Conservancy	SALC23_PP13_ELD	El Dorado	1,040	\$2,709,520
Yolo Land Trust	SALC23_PP16_YOL	Yolo	87	\$438,000
Yolo Land Trust	SALC23_PP17_YOL	Yolo	156	\$528,000
Yolo Land Trust	SALC23_PP19_YOL	Yolo	479	\$957,200
California Rangeland Trust	SALC23_PP22_MAD	Madera	9,872	\$5,158,500
Oswit Land Trust	SALC23_PP23_IMP	Imperial	280	\$681,520
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	SALC23_PP24_PLA	Placer	1,339	\$3,020,000
Sacramento Valley Conservancy	SALC23_PP25_SAC	Sacramento	265	\$2,450,000



Oswit Land Trust	SALC23_PP26_IMP	Imperial	347	\$619,750
Shasta Land Trust	SALC23_PP33_SHA	Shasta	455	\$2,050,000
California Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP37_STA	Stanislaus	165	\$2,619,690
California Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP38_STA	Stanislaus	157	\$2,454,297
California Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP39_MER	Merced	69	\$807,360
Blue Lake Rancheria	SALC23_PP40_HUM	Humboldt	79	\$1,127,487
Sequoia Riverlands Trust	SALC23_PP41_FRE	Fresno	137	\$2,076,448
Amah Mutsun Land Trust	SALC23_PP48_SCL	Santa Clara	30	\$2,170,000
Land Trust for Santa Barbara County	SALC23_PP50_SBA	Santa Barbara	2,021	\$4,785,000
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority	SALC23_PP51_SCL	Santa Clara	412	\$14,800,000
Esselen Tribe of Monterey County	SALC23_PP52_MNT	Monterey	9,819	\$6,060,000
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County	SALC23_PP57_SLO	San Luis Obispo	16	\$501,000
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County	SALC23_PP59_SLO	San Luis Obispo	199	\$2,185,000
Bear Yuba Land Trust	SALC23_PP61_NEV	Nevada	1,191	\$1,672,000
Sierra Foothill Conservancy	SALC23_PP66_MPA	Mariposa	2,617	\$2,660,315
San Benito Agricultural Land Trust	SALC23_PP67_SBT	San Benito	395	\$3,257,880



American Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP69_STA	Stanislaus	155	\$2,092,750
Middletown Rancheria Of Pomo Indians	SALC23_PP70_LAK	Lake	560	\$6,059,000
California Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP71_MER	Merced	79	\$912,228
Solano Land Trust	SALC23_PP74_SOL	San Luis Obispo	74	\$645,000
Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust	SALC23_PP79_YUB	Yuba	1,678	\$5,147,470
Ag Land Trust	SALC23_PP80_MNT	Monterey	64	\$804,300
Northern California Regional Land Trust	SALC23_PP81_TEH	Tehama	137	\$812,500
Ag Land Trust	SALC23_PP83_MNT	Monterey	747	\$5,770,800
Ag Land Trust	SALC23_PP84_MNT	Monterey	177	\$1,730,400
City of Davis	SALC23_PP85_YOL	Yolo	79	\$420,000
American Farmland Trust	SALC23_PP88_MAD	Madera	273	\$2,668,750
California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project	SALC23_PP91_NEV	Yuba	420	\$3,220,000
Trinidad Rancheria	SALC23_PP95_HUM	Humboldt	34	\$2,245,000
El Rio De Los Reyes En Reedley Conservation Trust, DBA: Kings River Land Trust	SALC23_PP102_FRE	Fresno	54	\$693,274



Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area	SALC23_PP103_SCL	Santa Clara	154	\$4,470,000
		Totals	40,244	\$118,198,339

Acquisition Projects Recommended Contingent on Available Funding

	Application Number	County	Total Acres	Recommended Award Amount
Tataviam Land Conservancy	SALC23_PP29_LOS	Los Angeles	220	\$7,810,000

Planning Grants

Staff recommend awarding \$2,000,000 to fund all four planning grant applications received in this round. Each of the recommended projects is consistent with the SALC guidelines and the AHSC legislative mandate to support the implementation of a Sustainable Community Strategy or other transportation plan aimed at reducing vehicle emissions. Each supports the protection of agricultural resources, infill development, and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Planning Grants Recommended for Funding

Applicant	Project Number	County	Recommended Award Amount
Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)	SALC23_PG01_SBA	Santa Barbara	\$500,000
Lake County Community Development Department)	SALC23_PG04_LAK	Lake	\$500,000
Humboldt County (Resource Management Agency)	SALC23_PG06_HUM	Humboldt	\$500,000
Alameda Resource Conservation District and Alameda LAFCO	SALC23_PG07_ALA	Alameda	\$500,000
		Totals	\$2,000,000



Santa Barbara LAFCO Project Spotlight

Santa Barbara County has seen a significant decline of working lands over the last decade, with the number of acres of land in farms decreasing by 13% from 2017 to 2022. In order to meet the state's housing mandates, many cities in the County will look to adjacent agricultural lands to meet their housing requirements. Santa Barbara LAFCO proposes developing a model framework to guide decision-making around Spheres of Influence (SOIs) and future development. The framework will clarify jurisdictional roles, establish consistent development standards and zoning guidelines, and promote smart growth strategies that protect critical agricultural lands, maintain open space, and meet regional housing needs.

To support this process, the LAFCO will perform a participatory spatial analysis and extensive mapping as well as host community meetings and outreach efforts to engage the public, particularly priority populations.

Investment Targets

The Round 10 SALC Guidelines establish a 20% investment target for projects that:

- provide secure land tenure for a period of no less than 10 years to a beginning or Veteran farmer or rancher, a California Native American Tribe, a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Federally recognized or non-Federally recognized California Native American Tribe on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission.
- provide meaningful benefits to a priority population, as defined in the SALC Guidelines.

The Guidelines also establish a 5% investment target for projects where a Federally recognized or non-Federally recognized California Native American Tribe on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission, or a Tribal non-profit with 501(c)3 status is either the applicant or a co-applicant on the project.

Acquisitions

Seven of the acquisition projects recommended for award will result in the return of 11,096 acres of land to California Native American Tribes or ownership of land by a Tribal non-profit for the benefit of multiple Tribes. The additional recommended contingent award will add 221 acres for a total of 11,317 acres. Tribes were the lead applicant on all seven recommended projects, as well as the contingent recommendation. The seven recommended projects reflect an investment of \$25.36 million (or 19.9% of total available funding) in projects that will result in secure land tenure for tribes and their members.

Three conservation easement projects recommended for award provide secure land tenure to military Veterans, and four projects that secure land tenure to landowners/lessees who self-identified as living in a low-income household or a disadvantaged/low-income community.

These seven projects represent \$8,903,133 in investments or approximately 7.3% of the total available funding.

Combined, recommended acquisition projects that meet one or more investment targets represent 27.1% of total funds available this round.

Program Achievements to Date

In prior rounds, SGC has awarded \$489 million in SALC grants to:

- 206 easement projects
- six fee acquisition projects
- 38 planning projects
- 39 capacity projects

The amount awarded includes the total funds appropriated in Rounds 1-9 as well as any funds that became available as projects withdrew or closed under budget. To date, SALC has conserved 170,310 acres of agricultural land and is working to conserve approximately 68,400 additional acres. If the Council approves staff's recommendations for Round 10, the total acres in the process of being protected through SALC grants would be approximately 108,644 acres, and the total protected or in process would be approximately 278,954 acres.

Next Steps

- Staff will work with Round 10 Acquisition and Planning awardees on entering into grant agreement by December/January 2026;
- Staff recommendations for Capacity grants will be provided for Council award at the December 2025 meeting;

Staff will roll out a new process for Conservation Acquisitions project applications beginning in Round 11:

- Preproposals will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning Oct. 15, 2025;
- Acquisition applications will be due January 2026 and July 2026
- Recommendations for award will occur in April and October of 2026

There are no changes proposed to the Planning grants program for Round 11.

- Planning applications will be due July 2026.

Staff do not intend to make significant changes to the guidelines in Round 11.

Council Recommendation



Approve the staff recommendation to award \$120,198,339 in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to support the identified 39 agricultural conservation easement acquisitions, eight fee title acquisitions, and four planning grants identified in this report through Round 10 of the SALC Program. Approve the staff recommendation to award \$3,837,678 in remaining acquisition funds to one additional fee acquisition project contingent on additional funds becoming available to cover the full request amount by Nov. 26, 2025. Continue awards for up to \$3,044,000 in capacity grants to the December 2025 SGC meeting. Should the Council agree with Staff's recommendation, the following motion language is suggested:

"I move that the Council approve the recommended awards for Round 10 of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program."

Attachments

Attachment A: Acquisition Presentation Summaries

Attachment B: Planning Presentation Summaries

Attachment C: Statewide Project Map

Attachment D: List of all Project Applications Received

