

*Dec. 10, 2025***Subject: Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program Round 10 Capacity and Project Development Grant Award Recommendations**

Reporting Period: October 2025 – December 2025

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

Recommended Action

Approve the staff recommendation to award \$2,051,490 to support the identified 14 capacity grants identified in this report through Round 10 of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC).

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.

SGC approved staff's recommendations to award 48 acquisition projects and 4 planning grants at its October 8th Council meeting.

Staff received 20 applications for capacity grants. Of the \$3,044,000 reserved for capacity and project development grants at the October meeting, staff recommend awarding \$2,051,490 to support 14 capacity projects. The recommended capacity grants span 25 counties, including one identified as Statewide.

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.

Agricultural Conservation Capacity and Project Development Grants

Up to 5% of SALC funding is available for the capacity and project development grants to build organizational and financial capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects; assist eligible applicants to develop agricultural conservation easement and fee acquisition projects for future rounds; and provide funds to cover associated costs to help close agricultural conservation acquisition projects where the cost of the acquisition is covered by an alternate source of funding.

There are two available funding tiers:

1. Tier 1: Grants of up to \$100,000. These grants are available to applicants to build organizational and financial capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects.
2. Tier 2: Grants of up to \$250,000. These grants are available to applicants to expand existing organizational capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects and develop agricultural acquisition projects. These grants are available to applicants who can demonstrate the organizational and fiscal capacity to complete the work outlined in their work plan.

SALC received 20 capacity and project development applications in Round 10, of which, one application was incomplete, and one was deemed ineligible. Of the 18 eligible applications, 12 applications were for Tier 1 funding, and 6 applications were for Tier 2 funding.

Staff recommend funding 14 capacity projects totaling \$2,051,490 in award, nine Tier 1 projects and five Tier 2 projects. Nine of the recommended applicants have never applied for a SALC acquisition grant. Six applications were received from tribes or tribal non-profits.

All Tier 1 applicants have the ability to request up to an additional \$150,000 as part of their current grant to facilitate eligible project development work if they meet specific capacity objectives outlined in the Round 10 Guidelines during their grant term, with Executive Director approval.

Four projects are not being recommended for funding due to low scores.

Capacity Projects Recommended for Funding

Applicant	County	Tier	Recommended Award Amount
San Diego Food System Alliance	San Diego	1	\$100,000
Central Coast Indigenous Tribes	Monterey	1	\$100,000
San Joaquin Services Collective	San Joaquin	1	\$100,000
Sheba Farms Foundation	Sacramento	1	\$100,000
Kings River Conservancy	Fresno	1	\$94,000
Sierra Resource Conservation District	Fresno	1	\$99,990
Wukchumni Tribe	Tulare	1	\$100,000
Tamien Nation	Santa Clara	1	\$100,000
Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)	Fresno	1	\$100,000
Eastern Sierra Land Trust	Inyo, Mono, & Alpine	2	\$157,500
Shasta Land Trust	Shasta	2	\$250,000
40 Acre Conservation League	Statewide	2	\$250,000
Trinidad Rancheria	Humboldt	2	\$250,000
Muwekma Ohlone Tribe	Various (9 counties)	2	\$250,000
		Totals	\$2,051,490

Program Achievements to Date

To date, SGC has awarded \$613 million in SALC grants to:

- 245 easement projects
- 15 fee acquisition projects
- 42 planning projects
- 39 capacity projects

The amount awarded includes the total funds appropriated in Rounds 1-10 as well as any funds that became available as projects withdrew or closed under budget. To date, from the 39 capacity grants awarded, 60 acquisition projects have been developed for SALC acquisition applications. Of those developed, 46 have been awarded acquisition funding to protect approximately 41,837 acres.

Next Steps

CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC
GROWTH COUNCIL

Staff will work with Round 10 Capacity awardees on entering into grant agreement by February/March 2026.

Council Recommendation

Approve the staff recommendation to award \$2,051,490 in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to support the identified 14 capacity grants identified in this report through Round 10 of the SALC Program. 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: Capacity Presentation Summaries

Attachment B: List of all Project Applications Received

