



California  
**Department of  
Conservation**  
Division of Land Resource  
Protection

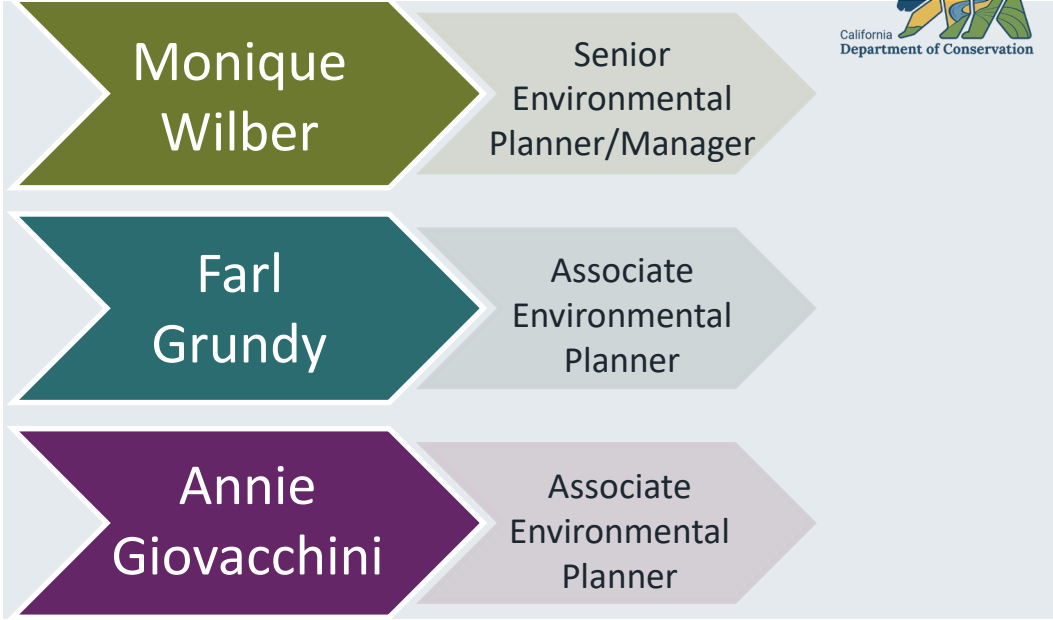
# Williamson Act

Land Conservation Act of 1965

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# Williamson Act & CEQA Program



# Team WA/CEQA!





## Land Conservation Act of 1965 “Williamson Act”

- Voluntary program/contracts
- Local rules and regulations
- Restricts land usage
- 10-20 year contracts
- Contract renew annually
- Contract runs with the land



# Intent of the Williamson Act

- Preservation of ag land
- Conservation of open space
- Discourage conversion of ag land to urban uses



# What is DOC Role?

- Provide technical assistance and advice ([GC § 51206](#))
- Detailed review of WA processes
- Data/records retention, annual WA enrollment reports
- CEQA / WA review and commenting ([CEQA appendix G](#))



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## What's in it for the Landowner?

- Taxed on generated income vs. potential market value
- [Revenue & Taxation Code Section 421-431](#)
- ~ 20-70% property tax reduction
- Tax savings can be reinvested



# What's in it for the Community?



- Ensures locally produced food and fiber
- Creates stability for support industries
- Provides buffers (planning tool)
- Mitigation



## Contract removal:

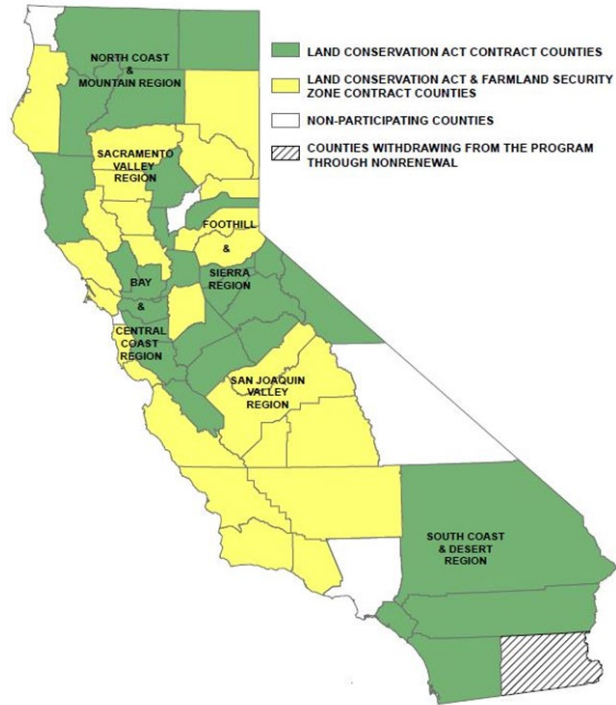
- Nonrenewal, most common
- Cancellation, 12 ½ - 25% fee
- Easement Exchange
- Solar Use Easement
- Public Acquisition
- Annexation







# Williamson Act Today



- 52/58 counties participate
- 2004 enrollment ~16.6 million acres
- 2021 enrollment ~10 million acres
- 2022 enrollment ~15.1 million acres
- Imperial County: only county to exit the program
- Moratorium on new contracts
- 2017 Yolo County: new contracts



# Trends and Challenges Compatible Use

- Use must be compatible
- [Government Code Section 51238.1](#)
- Solar
- Agritourism







# Trends and Challenges Compatible Use





# Trends and Challenges Compatible Use



- No compatibility findings = Cancellation
- Size, scale, scope



# Trends and Challenges Compatible Use

- Agritourism ≠ Compatible use
- Agritourism definition
- Roadside fruit stand
- Tasting Rooms
- Wedding / Event Centers
- Bed and Breakfast
- Where to draw the line



# Trends and Challenges Compatible Use



- Farm Tours
- Farm Stays
- Farm / Event Center
- Where to draw the line
- Size, scale, scope





# Conclusion



- Program continues to be offered
- Williamson Act continues to preserve agricultural and open space land



# THANK YOU

Questions?

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# CEQA

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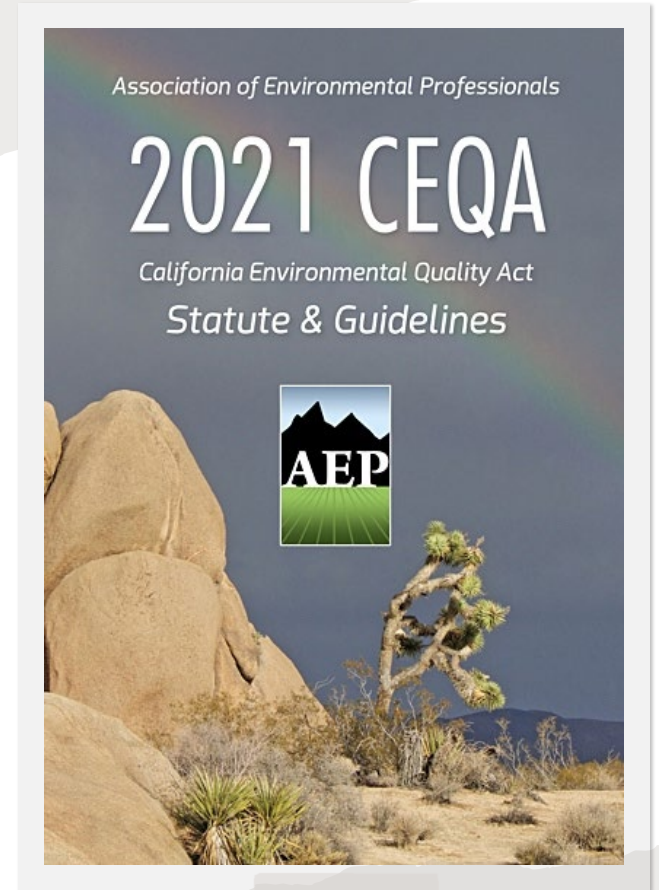
# History and Purpose of CEQA

- Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment
- Encourage public participation
- Foster informed public decision making
- Ensure transparency in governmental decision-making process



# DLRP's Role

- Review and comment per [Public Resources Code Section 614\(a\)&\(b\)](#)
- Review environmental documents related to the Department's areas of responsibility and expertise
- CEQA (Appendix G II. Agricultural Resources)
- FMMP mapping data
- WA enrollment data
- LESA model





# Division thresholds for comment

- Williamson Act contracted land
- State/Department funded easements
- Prime Farmland > 10 acres
- Statewide or Unique Farmland > 40 acres





# Possible Review Documents



## CEQA related:

- Early Consultation
- Public Scoping Hearing
- Initial Study
- Notice of Exemption
- Notice of Preparation
- Negative Declaration
- Mitigated Negative Declaration
- DEIR/EIR/SEIR/FEIR

## Williamson Act related:

- Ag Preserve Boundary Adjustment
- Solar Use Permit
- Cancellation
- Public Acquisition
- Annexation
- Easement Exchange
- Contract Non-renewal
- Enrollment reporting

## County and City related:

- Lot Line Adjustments
- Subdivision Applications
- Tentative Subdivision Maps
- Rezone/Prezone Applications
- Coastal Zone Permit Applications
- General Plan Updates/Amendments
- Ordinance Amendments
- Site Plan Application
- Minor Use Permit
- Conditional Use Permit
- Special Use Permit
- Excavation Application
- Commission Hearings
- LAFCo Hearings

Year	Projects reviewed	Comment letters written
2021	1103	47
2022	975	36
2023	1275	38



## Typical DOC Comments

- Compliance with WA Government Code
- Compliance with City/County GP
- Compliance with Easement guidelines
- Mitigation for impact to farmland
- 1:1 Ag easements
- In-lieu of fees



# THANK YOU

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