

Dates of Activity: April 2008 through June 2008
Seed Grant: Farmland Conservation Model Program/Uniform Farmland Database
Grantee Organization: Council of Fresno County Governments
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Description of Quarter’s Activity/Impact on Partnership

A Strategic Farmland Map for Fresno County was completed. The final map was accepted by the Model Farmland Conservation Program Advisory Committee. The American Farmland Trust, the consultant, solicited and received feedback from different stakeholders in developing the Strategic Farmland Map. Feedback has been incorporated.

Below is the impact of Farmland Conservation Model Program upon the Partnership:

- Produces information and data that could be used on other projects such as the Fresno County component of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint.
- Creates a process or methodology to define and identify strategic farmlands throughout the rest of the San Joaquin Valley that could be used in future Partnership studies.

Planned Activities for next 3-6 months

It is our goal to complete the Farmland Conservation Model Program within six months. The Strategic Farmland Map has been accepted by the Farmland Conservation Model Program Advisory Committee; development of the “toolkit” is in process with input from many participating stakeholders. The “toolkit” is a guide of best practices and processes intended for elected officials and decision-makers that addresses agricultural conservation principles within the context of Fresno County. In addition to the Strategic Farmlands Map and the “toolkit,” a complete report also will be produced describing the Farmland Conservation Model Program development process. Once this entire process has been completed, there will be an outreach process to decision-makers, stakeholders and interested parties in Fresno County.

Challenges/Problems/Bottlenecks/Feedback

The key challenge for the Farmland Conservation Model Program has not changed since the beginning of the year. We still face the challenge of finding a way to increase participation by members of the Farmland Conservation Model Program Advisory Committee. Though public participation by key stakeholders has improved over time, it is not what we need it to be.

If you have coordinated any outreach, please describe briefly.

Coordinated outreach has been an important part of the Farmland Conservation Model Program. Extensive outreach started in January with several meetings involving the community and agricultural stakeholders. Much of the feedback from this process has been incorporated into the Farmland Conservation Model Program. Ongoing outreach has been conducted with one-to-one meetings between decision-makers and elected officials throughout Fresno County. Regular monthly updates also are provided to the three boards—Transportation Technical Committee, Policy Advisory Committee, and Policy Board—overseeing Council of Fresno County Government. Once the Farmland Conservation Model Program has been completed, there will be another round of coordinated outreach to decision-makers and stakeholders to inform and educate.