



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Planning and Development

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GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE (WILLIAMSON ACT) PROGRAM IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

GENERAL:

Property owners may request that their land be enrolled under the provisions of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965. Information on the program such as the Uniform Rules is available for purchase at the Resource Management Department front counter.

In order to qualify, the Comprehensive Plan Designation of the parcel must be one of the following:

Agriculture I (A-I)

Agriculture II (A-II)

Mountainous Area (MA)

Other Open Lands - Natural Open Space Preserves only. Natural open space preserves may also be located in the above listed Comprehensive Plan designations.

Recreation Overlay - Recreation Preserves Only

Interested persons with other Comprehensive Plan designations will need to apply for a Comprehensive Plan Change.

The zoning must be one of the following:

Agriculture I (AG-I)

Agriculture II (AG-II)

Interested persons with other zoning will need to apply for a Rezoning to the property.

An agricultural preserve application for enrolling in the program will also be required.

MINIMUM PARCEL SIZE

100 acres for nonprime

40 acres for prime*

Open Space and Recreation Preserves require a minimum parcel size of 100 acres

*There are certain exceptions to this rule, see Uniform Rule #6, Section I.C.1.b.

DEFINITIONS

Agricultural lands to be eligible for coverage under the provisions of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, as amended, need to be classified as prime or nonprime. The Act is found at Government Code Section 51200 and sections following.

Nonprime - Rangeland. Croplands that do not qualify based on crop use for prime status.

Prime - Lands that are classified as Class I or Class II soils as defined by Soil Conservation Service. Croplands that produce an annual gross value of not less than \$200.00 per acre for three of the previous five years.

Superprime - Minimum of 5 acres, croplands that produce an annual gross value of not less than \$5,000.00 for three of the previous five years.

New Contracts - When a landowner wishes to enter the agricultural preserve program. A Comprehensive Plan Change and Rezone may be required in addition to the agricultural preserve application. Deadline to apply for new contracts is prior to the September Agricultural Preserve Advisory Committee meeting.

Assumption of Contract - Agricultural Preserve contracts run with the land. When a change in ownership occurs, the new owner is bound by the provisions in the contract and in the County's Uniform Rules #8. This ensures that the new owner is made aware of the restrictions and benefits of having the property in the agricultural preserve program.

Replacement Contracts - Create new preserve lines within existing preserves and no change is made to its exterior boundary. Also when a parcel(s) of an existing agricultural preserve is sold both parties are required to apply for replacement contracts. Deadline to apply for replacement contracts is prior to the October Agricultural Preserve Advisory Committee meeting.

Farmland Security Zones - Farmland security zone contracts run for twenty years, twice as long as the standard Williamson Act contract term of ten years. Property within a farmland security zone is taxed at 65% of its agricultural value or 35% less than the tax rate of a standard Williamson Act contract. Cancellation is not allowed. Non-renewal is the only way to terminate a farmland security zone contract. Once the contract is non-renewed, it takes twenty years to expire.

Non-Renewal of Contracts - Removing land from the Agricultural Preserve program. This process can be initiated by either the landowner or the County. Deadline to apply for non-renewal of contracts is prior to September 30th. After non-renewal is filed, the Agricultural Preserve contract expires after nine additional years.

Cancellation - An owner may petition the Board of Supervisors for cancellation of his Land Conservation Contract only under very limited circumstances. See Government Code Sections 51280 et. seq.. Cancellation may occur only if the County consents. The existence of an opportunity for another use of the land involved or the uneconomic character of an existing agricultural use shall not be sufficient reason for the cancellation of a contract.