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TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607] (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203] (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4] (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4] (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

ARTICLE 1. General Provisions [51200 - 51207] (Article 1 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

51200. This chapter shall be known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 or as the Williamson Act. (Amended by Stats. 1967, Ch. 1371.)

51201. As used in this chapter, unless otherwise apparent from the context, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Agricultural commodity" means any and all plant and animal products produced in this state for commercial purposes, including, but not limited to, plant products used for producing biofuels, and industrial hemp cultivated in accordance with Division 24 (commencing with Section 81000) of the Food and Agricultural Code.

(b) "Agricultural use" means use of land, including but not limited to greenhouses, for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity for commercial purposes.

(c) "Prime agricultural land" means any of the following:

(1) All land that qualifies for rating as class I or class II in the Natural Resource Conservation Service land use capability classifications.

(2) Land which qualifies for rating 80 through 100 in the Storie Index Rating.

(3) Land which supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and which has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture.

(4) Land planted with fruit- or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops which have a nonbearing period of less than five years and which will normally return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) per acre.

(5) Land which has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant products an annual gross value of not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) per acre for three of the previous five years.

(d) "Agricultural preserve" means an area devoted to either agricultural use, as defined in subdivision (b), recreational use as defined in subdivision (n), or open-space use as defined in subdivision (o), or any combination of those uses and which is established in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(e) "Compatible use" is any use determined by the county or city administering the preserve pursuant to Section 51231, 51238, or 51238.1 or by this act to be compatible with the agricultural, recreational, or open-space use of land within the preserve and subject to contract. "Compatible use" includes agricultural use, recreational use or open-space use unless the board or council finds after notice and hearing that the use is not compatible with the agricultural, recreational or open-space use to which the land is restricted by contract pursuant to this chapter.

(f) "Board" means the board of supervisors of a county which establishes or proposes to establish an agricultural preserve or which enters or proposes to enter into a contract on land within an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter.

(g) "Council" means the city council of a city which establishes or proposes to establish an agricultural preserve or which enters or proposes to enter into a contract on land within an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter.

(h) Except where it is otherwise apparent from the context, "county" or "city" means the county or city having jurisdiction over the land.

(i) A "scenic highway corridor" is an area adjacent to, and within view of, the right-of-way of:

(1) An existing or proposed state scenic highway in the state scenic highway system established by the Legislature pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division 1 of the Streets and Highways Code and which has been officially designated by the Department of Transportation as an official state scenic highway; or

(2) A county scenic highway established pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division 1 of the Streets and Highways Code, if each of the following conditions have been met:

(A) The scenic highway is included in an adopted general plan of the county or city; and

(B) The scenic highway corridor is included in an adopted specific plan of the county or city; and

(C) Specific proposals for implementing the plan, including regulation of land use, have been approved by the Advisory Committee on a Master Plan for Scenic Highways, and the county or city highway has been officially designated by the Department of Transportation as an official county scenic highway.

(j) A "wildlife habitat area" is a land or water area designated by a board or council, after consulting with and considering the recommendation of the Department of Fish and Game, as an area of importance for the protection or enhancement of the wildlife resources of the state.

(k) A "saltpond" is an area which, for at least three consecutive years immediately prior to being placed within an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter, has been used for the solar evaporation of seawater in the course of salt production for commercial purposes.

(l) A "managed wetland area" is an area, which may be an area diked off from the ocean or any bay, river or stream to which water is occasionally admitted, and which, for at least three consecutive years immediately prior to being placed within an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter, was used and maintained as a waterfowl hunting preserve or game refuge or for agricultural purposes.

(m) A "submerged area" is any land determined by the board or council to be submerged or subject to tidal action and found by the board or council to be of great value to the state as open space.

(n) "Recreational use" is the use of land in its agricultural or natural state by the public, with or without charge, for any of the following: walking, hiking, picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, or other outdoor games or sports for which facilities are provided for public participation. Any fee charged for the recreational use of land as defined in this subdivision shall be in a reasonable amount and shall not have the effect of unduly limiting its use by the public. Any ancillary structures necessary for a recreational use shall comply with the provisions of Section 51238.1.

(o) "Open-space use" is the use or maintenance of land in a manner that preserves its natural characteristics, beauty, or openness for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, to provide habitat for wildlife, or for the solar evaporation of seawater in the course of salt production for commercial purposes, if the land is within:

(1) A scenic highway corridor, as defined in subdivision (i).

(2) A wildlife habitat area, as defined in subdivision (j).

(3) A saltpond, as defined in subdivision (k).

(4) A managed wetland area, as defined in subdivision (l).

(5) A submerged area, as defined in subdivision (m).

(6) An area enrolled in the United States Department of Agriculture Conservation Reserve Program or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

(p) "Development" means, as used in Section 51223, the construction of buildings or the use of the restricted property if the buildings or use are unrelated to the agricultural use, the open-space use, or uses compatible with either agricultural or open-space uses of the property, or substantially impair the agricultural, open-space, or a combination of the agricultural and open-space uses of the property. Agricultural use, open-space use, uses compatible with either agricultural or open-space uses, or the acquisition of land or an interest in land are not development.

(Amended by Stats. 2019, Ch. 273, Sec. 1. (SB 527) Effective January 1, 2020.)

51205. Notwithstanding any provisions of this chapter to the contrary, land devoted to recreational use or land within a scenic highway corridor, a wildlife habitat area, a saltpond, a managed wetland area, or a submerged area may be included within an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter. When such land is included within an agricultural preserve, the city or county within which it is situated may contract with the owner for the purpose of restricting the land to recreational or open space use and uses compatible therewith in the same manner as provided in this chapter for land devoted to agricultural use. For purposes of this section, where the term "agricultural land" is used in this chapter, it shall be deemed to include land devoted to recreational use and land within a scenic highway corridor, a wildlife habitat area, a saltpond, a managed wetland area, or a submerged area, and where the term "agricultural use" is used in this chapter, it shall be deemed to include recreational and open space use.

(Amended by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1281.)

51205.1. Notwithstanding any provisions of this chapter to the contrary, land within a scenic highway corridor, as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 51201, shall, upon the request of the owner, be included in an agricultural preserve pursuant to this chapter. When such land is included within an agricultural preserve, the city or county within which it is situated shall contract with the owner for the purpose of restricting the land to agricultural use as defined in subdivision (b), recreational use as defined in subdivision (n), open-space use as defined in subdivision (o), compatible use as defined in subdivision (e), or any combination of such uses.

(Added by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51206. The Department of Conservation may meet with and assist local, regional, state, and federal agencies, organizations, landowners, or any other person or entity in the interpretation of this chapter. The department may research, publish, and disseminate information regarding the policies, purposes, procedures, administration, and implementation of this chapter. This section shall be liberally construed to permit the department to advise any interested person or entity regarding this chapter.

(Added by Stats. 1986, Ch. 607, Sec. 1.)

51207. (a) On or before May 1 of every other year, the Department of Conservation shall post on its internet website the following information:

(b) The information shall contain the number of acres of land under contract and the number of acres of land which were removed from contract through cancellation, eminent domain, or annexation.

(c) The information shall also contain the following specific information relating to cities and counties participating in the Williamson Act program:

(1) The number of tentative certificates of cancellation that were mailed to the Director of Conservation pursuant to Section 51284 which were approved by boards or councils during the prior two years or for which final certificates of cancellation are pending approval by boards or councils.

(2) The amount of cancellation fees payable to the county treasurer and which are required to be transmitted to the Controller pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 51283 which have not been collected or which remain unpaid.

(3) The total number of acres covered by certificates of cancellation of contracts during the previous two years.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 2. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

Code: Section: [Up^](#) [Add To My Favorites](#)**GOVERNMENT CODE - GOV****TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607]** (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203]** (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4]** (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4]** (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)**ARTICLE 2. Declaration [51220 - 51223]** (Article 2 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)**51220.** The Legislature finds:

- (a) That the preservation of a maximum amount of the limited supply of agricultural land is necessary to the conservation of the state's economic resources, and is necessary not only to the maintenance of the agricultural economy of the state, but also for the assurance of adequate, healthful and nutritious food for future residents of this state and nation.
- (b) That the agricultural work force is vital to sustaining agricultural productivity; that this work force has the lowest average income of any occupational group in this state; that there exists a need to house this work force of crisis proportions which requires including among agricultural uses the housing of agricultural laborers; and that such use of agricultural land is in the public interest and in conformity with the state's Farmworker Housing Assistance Plan.
- (c) That the discouragement of premature and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to urban uses is a matter of public interest and will be of benefit to urban dwellers themselves in that it will discourage discontinuous urban development patterns which unnecessarily increase the costs of community services to community residents.
- (d) That in a rapidly urbanizing society agricultural lands have a definite public value as open space, and the preservation in agricultural production of such lands, the use of which may be limited under the provisions of this chapter, constitutes an important physical, social, esthetic and economic asset to existing or pending urban or metropolitan developments.
- (e) That land within a scenic highway corridor or wildlife habitat area as defined in this chapter has a value to the state because of its scenic beauty and its location adjacent to or within view of a state scenic highway or because it is of great importance as habitat for wildlife and contributes to the preservation or enhancement thereof.
- (f) For these reasons, this chapter is necessary for the promotion of the general welfare and the protection of the public interest in agricultural land.

(Amended by Stats. 1980, Ch. 1219.)

51220.5. The Legislature finds and declares that agricultural operations are often hindered or impaired by uses which increase the density of the permanent or temporary human population of the agricultural area. For this reason, cities and counties shall determine the types of uses to be deemed "compatible uses" in a manner which recognizes that a permanent or temporary population increase often hinders or impairs agricultural operations.

(Added by Stats. 1986, Ch. 607, Sec. 3.)

51221. The Legislature further declares that the expenditure of public funds under the provisions of this chapter is in the public interest and is necessary to the accomplishment of the purposes herein set forth.

(Added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

51222. The Legislature further declares that it is in the public interest for local officials and landowners to retain agricultural lands which are subject to contracts entered into pursuant to this act in parcels large enough to sustain agricultural uses permitted under the contracts. For purposes of this section, agricultural land shall be presumed to be in parcels large enough to sustain their agricultural use if the land is (1) at least 10 acres in size in the case of prime agricultural land, or (2) at least 40 acres in size in the case of land which is not prime agricultural land.

(Amended by Stats. 1990, Ch. 841, Sec. 3.)

51223. (a) A city council or board of supervisors, as the case may be, shall, prior to rescinding a contract for the purpose of restricting the same land by an open-space contract pursuant to Section 51254 or by entering to an open-space agreement pursuant to Section 51255, determine that the parcel or parcels are large enough to provide open-space benefits, by providing habitat for wildlife, or preserving its natural characteristics, beauty, or openness for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

(b) Uses or development permitted on land subject to an open-space contract, or subject to an open-space easement agreement pursuant to Section 51255, shall satisfy one or both of the following:

(1) Comply with the provisions of Section 51238.1 or 51238.2.

(2) Consist of, cause, facilitate, or benefit one or more open-space uses on the land.

(c) If an open-space contract is executed pursuant to Section 51205, or if a contract is rescinded for the purpose of restricting the same land by an open-space contract pursuant to Section 51254, or an open-space easement agreement pursuant to Section 51255, either of the following shall apply:

(1) The resulting open-space contract shall not permit new development during the period the contract is in effect, except that uses compatible with or related to the open-space uses would be permitted.

(2) The resulting open-space easement agreement shall not permit new development during the time equal to the time remaining on the contract at the time of its rescission, except that uses compatible with, or related to, the open-space uses would be permitted.

(d) For the purposes of this section, agriculture and uses compatible with agriculture are compatible with open-space uses, unless otherwise provided by local rules or ordinances.

(e) A board or council shall not accept or approve a petition for rescission pursuant to Sections 51254 or 51255 if the city or county, within which the land for which the rescission is sought is located, has discovered or received notice of a likely material breach on the land pursuant to the process specified in Section 51250, unless the rescission is a part of the process specified in Section 51250.

(Added by Stats. 2008, Ch. 503, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2009.)



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ARTICLE 2.5. Agricultural Preserves [51230 - 51239] (Article 2.5 added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51230. Beginning January 1, 1971, any county or city having a general plan, and until December 31, 1970, any county or city, by resolution, and after a public hearing may establish an agricultural preserve. Notice of the hearing shall be published pursuant to Section 6061, and shall include a legal description, or the assessor's parcel number, of the land which is proposed to be included within the preserve. The preserves shall be established for the purpose of defining the boundaries of those areas within which the city or county will be willing to enter into contracts pursuant to this act. An agricultural preserve shall consist of no less than 100 acres; provided, that in order to meet this requirement two or more parcels may be combined if they are contiguous or if they are in common ownership; and further provided, that in order to meet this requirement land zoned as timberland production pursuant to Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 51100) may be taken into account.

A county or city may establish agricultural preserves of less than 100 acres if it finds that smaller preserves are necessary due to the unique characteristics of the agricultural enterprises in the area and that the establishment of preserves of less than 100 acres is consistent with the general plan of the county or city.

An agricultural preserve may contain land other than agricultural land, but the use of any land within the preserve and not under contract shall within two years of the effective date of any contract on land within the preserve be restricted by zoning, including appropriate minimum parcel sizes that are at a minimum consistent with this chapter, in such a way as not to be incompatible with the agricultural use of the land, the use of which is limited by contract in accordance with this chapter.

Failure on the part of the board or council to restrict the use of land within a preserve but not subject to contract shall not be sufficient reason to cancel or otherwise invalidate a contract.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 3. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51230.1. (a) Nothing contained in this chapter shall prevent the transfer of ownership from one immediate family member to another of a portion of land which is currently designated as an agricultural preserve in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The parcel to be transferred is at least 10 acres in size in the case of prime agricultural land or at least 40 acres in size in the case of land which is not prime agricultural land, and otherwise meets the requirements of Section 51222.

(2) The parcel to be transferred conforms to the applicable local zoning and land division ordinances and any applicable local coastal program certified pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 30500) of Division 20 of the Public Resources Code.

(3) The parcel to be transferred complies with all applicable requirements relating to agricultural income and permanent agricultural improvements which are imposed by the county or city as a condition of a contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240) covering the land of which the parcel to be transferred is a portion. For purposes of this paragraph, if the contracted land already complies with these requirements, the portion of that land to be transferred shall be deemed to comply with these requirements.

(4) There exists a written agreement between the immediate family members who are parties to the proposed transfer that the land which is subject to a contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240) and the portion of that land which is to be transferred will be operated under the joint management of the parties subject to the terms and conditions and for the duration of the contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240).

(b) A transfer of ownership described in subdivision (a) shall have no effect on any contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240) covering the land of which a portion was the subject of that transfer. The portion so transferred shall remain subject to that contract.

(c) For purposes of this section, "immediate family" means the spouse of the landowner, the natural or adopted children of the landowner, the parents of the landowner, or the siblings of the landowner.

(Amended by Stats. 1987, Ch. 232, Sec. 1.)

51230.2. (a) Except as provided in Section 51238, and notwithstanding Section 51222 or 66474.4, a landowner may subdivide land that is currently designated as an agricultural preserve if all of the following apply:

(1) The parcel to be sold or leased is no more than five acres.

(2) The parcel shall be sold or leased to a nonprofit organization, a city, a county, a housing authority, or a state agency. A lessee that is a nonprofit organization shall not sublease that parcel without the written consent of the landowner.

(3) The parcel to be sold or leased shall be subject to a deed restriction that limits the use of the parcel to agricultural laborer housing facilities for not less than 30 years. That deed restriction shall also require that parcel to be merged with the parcel from which it was subdivided when the parcel ceases to be used for agricultural laborer housing.

(4) There is a written agreement between the parties to the sale or lease and their successors to operate the parcel to be sold or leased under joint management of the parties, subject to the terms and conditions and for the duration of the contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240).

(5) The parcel to be sold or leased is (A) within a city or (B) in an unincorporated territory or sphere of influence that is contiguous to one or more parcels that are already zoned residential, commercial, or industrial and developed with existing residential, commercial, or industrial uses.

(b) The agricultural labor housing project shall be designed to abate, to the extent practicable, impacts on adjacent landowners' agricultural husbandry practices. The final plan for the housing shall include an addendum that explains what features will be included to meet this goal.

(c) A subdivision of land pursuant to this section shall not affect any contract executed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240). The parcel to be sold or leased shall remain subject to that contract.

(Added by Stats. 1999, Ch. 967, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51231. (a) For the purposes of this chapter, the board or council, by resolution, shall adopt rules governing the administration of agricultural preserves, including procedures for initiating, filing, and processing requests to establish agricultural preserves. Rules related to compatible uses shall be consistent with the provisions of Section 51238.1. Those rules shall be applied uniformly throughout the preserve. The board or council may require the payment of a reasonable application fee. The same procedure that is required to establish an agricultural preserve shall be used to disestablish or to enlarge or diminish the size of an agricultural preserve. In adopting rules related to compatible uses, the board or council may enumerate those uses, including agricultural laborer housing, that are to be considered to be compatible uses on contracted lands separately from those uses that are to be considered to be compatible uses on lands not under contract within the agricultural preserve.

(b) The rules adopted pursuant to this section may provide that commercial cultivation of cannabis in accordance with Division 10 (commencing with Section 26000) of the Business and Professions Code may constitute a compatible use on contracted or noncontracted lands.

(Amended by Stats. 2019, Ch. 273, Sec. 2. (SB 527) Effective January 1, 2020.)

51232. In the event any proposal to disestablish or to alter the boundary of an agricultural preserve will remove land under contract from such a preserve, notice of the proposed alteration or disestablishment and the date of the

hearing shall be furnished by the board or council to the owner of the land by certified mail directed to him at his latest address known to the board or council. Such notice shall also be published pursuant to Section 6061 and shall be furnished by first-class mail to each owner of land under contract, any portion of which is situated within one mile of the exterior boundary of the land to be removed from the preserve.

(Amended by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51233. When a county proposes to establish, disestablish, or alter the boundary of an agricultural preserve it shall give written notice at least two weeks before the hearing to the local agency formation commission and to every city within the county within one mile of the exterior boundaries of the preserve.

(Amended by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51234. Any proposal to establish an agricultural preserve shall be submitted to the planning department of the county or city having jurisdiction over the land. If the county or city has no planning department, a proposal to establish an agricultural preserve shall be submitted to the planning commission. Within 30 days after receiving such a proposal, the planning department or planning commission shall submit a report thereon to the board or council. However, the board or council may extend the time allowed for an additional period not to exceed 30 days. The report shall include a statement that the preserve is consistent with the general plan, and the board or council shall make a finding to that effect. Final action upon the establishment of an agricultural preserve may not be taken by the board or council until the report required by this section is received from the planning department or planning commission, or until the required 30 days have elapsed and any extension thereof granted by the board or council has elapsed.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 4. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51235. An agricultural preserve shall continue in full effect following annexation, detachment, incorporation or disincorporation of land within the preserve.

Any city or county acquiring jurisdiction over land in a preserve by annexation, detachment, incorporation or disincorporation shall have all the rights and responsibilities specified in this act for cities or counties including the right to enlarge, diminish or disestablish an agricultural preserve within its jurisdiction.

(Amended by Stats. 1984, Ch. 523, Sec. 1. Effective July 17, 1984.)

51236. The effect of removal of land under contract from an agricultural preserve shall be the equivalent of notice of nonrenewal by the city or county removing the land from the agricultural preserve and such city or county shall, at least 60 days prior to the next renewal date following the removal, serve a notice of nonrenewal as provided in Section 51245. Such notice of nonrenewal shall be recorded as provided in Section 51248.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51237. Whenever an agricultural preserve is established, and so long as it shall be in effect, a map of such agricultural preserve and the resolution under which the preserve was established shall be filed and kept current by the city or county with the county recorder.

(Amended by Stats. 1971, Ch. 925.)

51237.5. On or before January 30 of each year, each city or county in which any agricultural preserve is located shall provide the Department with geographical information system (GIS) data files of all agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracted land in existence at the end of the preceding year.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 3. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51238. (a) (1) Notwithstanding any determination of compatible uses by the county or city pursuant to this article, unless the board or council after notice and hearing makes a finding to the contrary, the erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electric, water, communication, or agricultural laborer housing facilities are hereby determined to be compatible uses within any agricultural preserve.

(2) No land occupied by gas, electric, water, communication, or agricultural laborer housing facilities shall be excluded from an agricultural preserve by reason of that use.

(b) The board of supervisors may impose conditions on lands or land uses to be placed within preserves to permit and encourage compatible uses in conformity with Section 51238.1, particularly public outdoor recreational uses.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 967, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51238.1. (a) Uses approved on contracted lands shall be consistent with all of the following principles of compatibility:

(1) The use will not significantly compromise the long-term productive agricultural capability of the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves.

(2) The use will not significantly displace or impair current or reasonably foreseeable agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves. Uses that significantly displace agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels may be deemed compatible if they relate directly to the production of commercial agricultural products on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or neighboring lands, including activities such as harvesting, processing, or shipping.

(3) The use will not result in the significant removal of adjacent contracted land from agricultural or open-space use.

In evaluating compatibility a board or council shall consider the impacts on noncontracted lands in the agricultural preserve or preserves.

(b) A board or council may include in its compatible use rules or ordinance conditional uses which, without conditions or mitigations, would not be in compliance with this section. These conditional uses shall conform to the principles of compatibility set forth in subdivision (a) or, for nonprime lands only, satisfy the requirements of subdivision (c).

(c) In applying the criteria pursuant to subdivision (a), the board or council may approve a use on nonprime land which, because of onsite or offsite impacts, would not be in compliance with paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (a), provided the use is approved pursuant to a conditional use permit that shall set forth findings, based on substantial evidence in the record, demonstrating the following:

(1) Conditions have been required for, or incorporated into, the use that mitigate or avoid those onsite and offsite impacts so as to make the use consistent with the principles set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (a) to the greatest extent possible while maintaining the purpose of the use.

(2) The productive capability of the subject land has been considered as well as the extent to which the use may displace or impair agricultural operations.

(3) The use is consistent with the purposes of this chapter to preserve agricultural and open-space land or supports the continuation of agricultural uses, as defined in Section 51205, or the use or conservation of natural resources, on the subject parcel or on other parcels in the agricultural preserve. The use of mineral resources shall comply with Section 51238.2.

(4) The use does not include a residential subdivision.

For the purposes of this section, a board or council may define nonprime land as land not defined as "prime agricultural land" pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 51201 or as land not classified as "agricultural land" pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 21060.1 of the Public Resources Code.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to overrule, rescind, or modify the requirements contained in Sections 51230 and 51238 related to noncontracted lands within agricultural preserves.

(Added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 1251, Sec. 5. Effective January 1, 1995.)

51238.2. Mineral extraction that is unable to meet the principles of Section 51238.1 may nevertheless be approved as compatible use if the board or council is able to document that (a) the underlying contractual commitment to preserve prime agricultural land, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 51201, or (b) the underlying contractual commitment to preserve land that is not prime agricultural land for open-space use, as defined in subdivision (o) of Section 51201, will not be significantly impaired.

Conditions imposed on mineral extraction as a compatible use of contracted land shall include compliance with the reclamation standards adopted by the Mining and Geology Board pursuant to Section 2773 of the Public Resources Code, including the applicable performance standards for prime agricultural land and other agricultural land, and no exception to these standards may be permitted.

For purposes of this section, "contracted land" means all land under a single contract for which an applicant seeks a compatible use permit.

(Amended by Stats. 2004, Ch. 118, Sec. 17. Effective January 1, 2005.)

51238.3. (a) The requirements of Sections 51238.1 and 51238.2 shall not apply to compatible uses for which an application was submitted to the city or county prior to June 7, 1994, provided that the use constituted a "compatible use" as that term was defined by this chapter either at the time the application was submitted, or at the time the Williamson Act contract was signed with respect to the subject contract lands, whichever is later.

(b) Neither shall the requirements of Sections 51238.1 and 51238.2 apply to land uses of contracted lands in place prior to June 7, 1994, that constituted a "compatible use" as the term "compatible use" was defined by this chapter either at the time the use was initiated, or at the time the Williamson Act contract was signed with respect to the subject contract lands, whichever is later.

(c) (1) Neither shall the requirements of Sections 51238.1 and 51238.2 apply to uses that are expressly specified within the contract itself prior to June 7, 1994, and that constituted a "compatible use" as the term "compatible use" was defined by this chapter at the time that Williamson Act contract was signed with respect to the subject contract lands, or at the time the contract was amended to include the uses, whichever is later. For purposes of this subdivision, the requirements of Sections 51238.1 and 51238.2, effective January 1, 1995, shall apply to contracts for which contract nonrenewal was initiated and was withdrawn after January 1, 1995.

(2) For purposes of this chapter, a compatible use is considered to be expressly specified within the contract only if it is specifically enumerated within the four corners of the Williamson Act contract either without the benefit of referenced documents, or with respect to Williamson Act contracts signed on or before June 7, 1997, with the benefit of referenced documents as those documents existed at the time the Williamson Act contract was initially signed. This subdivision shall be narrowly construed to be consistent with the purposes of this chapter.

(Amended by Stats. 2000, Ch. 889, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51238.5. (a) If an owner of land agrees to permit the use of his or her land for free public recreation, the board or council may agree to indemnify the owner against all claims arising from that public use. The owner's agreement that the land be used for free, public recreation shall not be construed as an implied dedication to that use.

(b) If an owner of land agrees to permit the use of his or her land for agricultural laborer housing facilities authorized pursuant to Section 51238, the city, county, housing authority, state agency, or nonprofit organization may indemnify the owner against all claims arising from that use.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 967, Sec. 3. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51239. The board or council may appoint an advisory board, the members of which shall serve at the pleasure of the board or council and may be paid their expenses. They shall advise the board or council on the administration of the agricultural preserves in the county or city and on any matters relating to contracts entered into pursuant to this chapter.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

Code: Section: [Up^](#) [Add To My Favorites](#)**GOVERNMENT CODE - GOV****TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607]** (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203]** (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4]** (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4]** (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)**ARTICLE 3. Contracts [51240 - 51257.5]** (Article 3 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

51240. Any city or county may by contract limit the use of agricultural land for the purpose of preserving such land pursuant and subject to the conditions set forth in the contract and in this chapter. A contract may provide for restrictions, terms, and conditions, including payments and fees, more restrictive than or in addition to those required by this chapter.

(Amended by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51241. If such a contract is made with any landowner, the city or county shall offer such a contract under similar terms to every other owner of agricultural land within the agricultural preserve in question.

However, except as required by other provisions of this chapter, the provisions of this section shall not be construed as requiring that all contracts affecting land within a preserve be identical, so long as such differences as exist are related to differences in location and characteristics of the land and are pursuant to uniform rules adopted by the county or city.

(Amended by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51242. No city or county may contract with respect to any land pursuant to this chapter unless the land:

(a) Is devoted to agricultural use.

(b) Is located within an area designated by a city or county as an agricultural preserve.

(Amended by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51243. Every contract shall do both of the following:

(a) Provide for the exclusion of uses other than agricultural, and other than those compatible with agricultural uses, for the duration of the contract.

(b) Be binding upon, and inure to the benefit of, all successors in interest of the owner. Whenever land under a contract is divided, the owner of any parcel may exercise, independent of any other owner of a portion of the divided land, any of the rights of the owner in the original contract, including the right to give notice of nonrenewal and to petition for cancellation. The effect of any such action by the owner of a parcel created by the division of land under contract shall not be imputed to the owners of the remaining parcels and shall have no effect on the contract as it applies to the remaining parcels of the divided land. Except as provided in Section 51243.5, on and after the effective date of the annexation by a city of any land under contract with a county, the city shall succeed to all rights, duties, and powers of the county under the contract.

(Amended by Stats. 1998, Ch. 690, Sec. 1.5. Effective January 1, 1999.)

51243.5. (a) This section shall apply only to land that was within one mile of a city boundary when a contract was executed pursuant to this article and for which the contract was executed prior to January 1, 1991.

(b) For any proposal that would result in the annexation to a city of any land that is subject to a contract under this chapter, the local agency formation commission shall determine whether the city may exercise its option to not succeed to the rights, duties, and powers of the county under the contract.

(c) In making the determination required by subdivision (b), pursuant to Section 51206, the local agency formation commission may request, and the Department of Conservation shall provide, advice and assistance in interpreting the requirements of this section. If the department has concerns about an action proposed to be taken by a local agency formation commission pursuant to this section or Section 51243.6, the department shall advise the commission of its concerns, whether or not the commission has requested it to do so. The commission shall address the department's concerns in any hearing to consider the proposed annexation or a city's determination whether to exercise its option not to succeed to a contract, and shall specifically find that substantial evidence exists to show that the city has the present option under this section to decline to succeed to the contract.

(d) A city may exercise its option to not succeed to the rights, duties, and powers of the county under the contract if both of the following had occurred prior to December 8, 1971:

(1) The land being annexed was within one mile of the city's boundary when the contract was executed.

(2) The city had filed with the county board of supervisors a resolution protesting the execution of the contract.

(e) A city may exercise its option to not succeed to the rights, duties, and powers of the county under the contract if each of the following had occurred prior to January 1, 1991:

(1) The land being annexed was within one mile of the city's boundary when the contract was executed.

(2) The city had filed with the local agency formation commission a resolution protesting the execution of the contract.

(3) The local agency formation commission had held a hearing to consider the city's protest to the contract.

(4) The local agency formation commission had found that the contract would be inconsistent with the publicly desirable future use and control of the land.

(5) The local agency formation commission had approved the city's protest.

(f) It shall be conclusively presumed that no protest was filed by the city unless there is a record of the filing of the protest and the protest identifies the affected contract and the subject parcel. It shall be conclusively presumed that required notice was given before the execution of the contract.

(g) The option of a city to not succeed to a contract shall extend only to that part of the land that was within one mile of the city's boundary when the contract was executed.

(h) If the city exercises its option to not succeed to a contract, then the city shall record a certificate of contract termination with the county recorder at the same time as the executive officer of the local agency formation commission files the certificate of completion pursuant to Section 57203. The certificate of contract termination shall include a legal description of the land for which the city terminates the contract.

(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch. 188, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2003.)

51243.6. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) The enforceability of contracts entered into pursuant to this article is necessary to permit the preferential taxation provided to the owners of land under contract, pursuant to Section 8 of Article XIII of the California Constitution.

(b) The option granted to a city pursuant to Section 51243.5 to elect not to succeed to a contract may be held only by the city.

(c) No contracting landowner has a reasonable expectation that a contract can be terminated immediately pursuant to this article without penalty.

(Added by Stats. 2002, Ch. 188, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2003.)

51244. (a) Each contract shall be for an initial term of no less than 10 years. Each contract shall provide that on the anniversary date of the contract or such other annual date as specified by the contract a year shall be added automatically to the initial term unless notice of nonrenewal is given as provided in Section 51245.

(b) (1) If the county makes a determination pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 16142 or subdivision (d) of Section 16142.1, contracts shall be for a term of no less than 9 years for contracts currently 10 years in length or

18 years for contracts currently 20 years in length, as the case may be. For new contracts entered into during a year in which this subdivision is in effect, the initial contract length shall be either 9 or 18 years. Each contract shall provide, except in the initial year of the determination, that on the anniversary date of the contract or such other annual date as specified by the contract, a year shall be added automatically to the initial term unless notice of nonrenewal is given as provided in Section 51245.

In any subsequent year during the reduced term of contract in which increased revenue is not realized by the county pursuant to Section 51244.3, 2 or 3 additional years shall be added to the contract on the next anniversary date, as necessary, to restore the contract to its full 10-year or 20-year contract length.

(2) In any year in which this subdivision is implemented, the county shall record a notice that states the affected parcel number or numbers and current owner's names, or, alternatively, the same information for those parcels that are not affected.

(3) An addition to the assessed value shall be conveyed to the auditor, consistent with the 10-percent reduction in the length of the restriction, equal to 10 percent of the difference between the valuation pursuant to Section 423, 423.3, 423.4, or 423.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, as applicable, and the valuation under subdivision (b) of Section 51 or Section 110.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, whichever is lower. If the valuation under subdivision (b) of Section 51 or Section 110.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is lower, the addition to the assessed value shall be zero. The increased amount of tax revenue that results from the decrease in restriction shall be separately displayed on the taxpayer's annual bill.

(4) A landowner may elect to serve notice of nonrenewal instead of accepting a 9-year or 18-year contract, as the case may be. In that case, the additional assessed value shall not be added to the property as provided for in paragraph (3).

For purposes of this subdivision, a landowner may serve notice of nonrenewal at any time. However, a landowner who withdraws that notice prior to the effective date shall be subject to term modification and additional assessed value. Once served and effective, a landowner nonrenewal notice may not be withdrawn except for cause and with the consent of the county. A county may adopt amendments to its uniform rules to facilitate implementation of this subdivision during the 2011-12 fiscal year, and thereafter as necessary.

(5) In addition to any other notice requirements, a county shall provide a landowner under contract with timely written notice of all of the following:

(A) Any initial hearing by the county on a proposal to adopt or rescind the implementation of this subdivision.

(B) Any final decision regarding the adoption or rescission of implementation of this subdivision.

(C) The landowner's right to prevent the reduction in the term of his or her contract pursuant to this subdivision by serving notice of nonrenewal as specified by Section 51245. This notice may be combined with the county's notice in subparagraph (B).

(6) A county shall not modify or revalue a landowner's contract pursuant to this subdivision unless the landowner is given at least 90 days' notice of the opportunity to prevent the modification and revaluation by serving notice of nonrenewal and the landowner fails to serve notice of nonrenewal. The county may use the primary owner of record from the assessment roll to identify landowners entitled to receive notice under this subdivision. A landowner shall be advised of the landowner's right to avoid continued imposition of this subdivision in any future year and thereafter by serving a notice of nonrenewal for that contract year. Failure of the landowner to serve timely notice of nonrenewal in any year shall be considered implied consent to the implementation of this subdivision for that year.

The 90-day notice requirement may be reduced to 60 days if the county adopts a procedure to allow landowners to serve a notice of nonrenewal until February 1, 2012.

(7) This subdivision shall not apply to any of the following:

(A) Contracts that have been nonrenewed.

(B) Contracts with cities.

(C) Open-space or agricultural easements.

(D) Scenic restrictions.

(E) Wildlife habitat contracts.

(F) Atypical term contracts, including, but not limited to, 20-year initial term contracts declining to 10 years, or reencumbrances pursuant to Section 51295, if the county's board of supervisors determines the application of this subdivision to them would be inequitable or administratively infeasible.

(Amended (as amended by Stats. 2011, Ch. 90, Sec. 5) by Stats. 2014, Ch. 322, Sec. 5. (SB 1353) Effective January 1, 2015.)

51244.3. (a) This section shall apply to properties under a 9-year or 18-year contract, as the case may be, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51244. Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, increased revenues generated by those properties shall be allocated exclusively to the respective counties in which those properties are located.

(b) This section shall only apply if the county makes a determination pursuant to either Section 16142 or 16142.1.

(Amended by Stats. 2014, Ch. 322, Sec. 7. (SB 1353) Effective January 1, 2015.)

51244.5. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 51244, if the initial term of the contract is for more than 10 years, the contract may provide that on the anniversary date of the contract or such other annual date as specified by the contract beginning with the anniversary date on which the contract will have an unexpired term of nine years, a year shall be added automatically to the initial term unless notice of nonrenewal is given as provided in Section 51245.

(Amended by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51245. If either the landowner or the city or county desires in any year not to renew the contract, that party shall serve written notice of nonrenewal of the contract upon the other party in advance of the annual renewal date of the contract. Unless such written notice is served by the landowner at least 90 days prior to the renewal date or by the city or county at least 60 days prior to the renewal date, the contract shall be considered renewed as provided in Section 51244 or Section 51244.5.

Upon receipt by the owner of a notice from the county or city of nonrenewal, the owner may make a written protest of the notice of nonrenewal. The county or city may, at any time prior to the renewal date, withdraw the notice of nonrenewal. Upon request by the owner, the board or council may authorize the owner to serve a notice of nonrenewal on a portion of the land under a contract.

No later than 20 days after a city or county receives a notice of nonrenewal from a landowner, serves a notice of nonrenewal upon a landowner, or withdraws a notice of nonrenewal, the clerk of the board or council, as the case may be, shall record with the county recorder a copy of the notice of nonrenewal or notice of withdrawal of nonrenewal.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 4. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51246. (a) If the county or city or the landowner serves notice of intent in any year not to renew the contract, the existing contract shall remain in effect for the balance of the period remaining since the original execution or the last renewal of the contract, as the case may be.

(b) No city or county shall enter into a new contract or shall renew an existing contract on or after February 28, 1977, with respect to timberland zoned as timberland production. The city or county shall serve notice of its intent not to renew the contract as provided in this section.

(c) In order to meet the minimum acreage requirement of an agricultural preserve pursuant to Section 51230, land formerly within the agricultural preserve which is zoned as timberland production pursuant to Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 51100) may be taken into account.

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, commencing with the lien date for the 1977-78 fiscal year all timberland within an existing contract which has been nonrenewed as mandated by this section shall be valued according to Section 423.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, succeeding to and including the lien date for the 1981-82 fiscal year. Commencing with the lien date for the 1982-83 fiscal year and on each lien date thereafter, such timberland shall be valued according to Section 434.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 5. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51247. The landowner shall furnish the city or county with such information as the city or county shall require in order to enable it to determine the eligibility of the land involved.

(Added by renumbering Section 51249 by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51248. No later than 20 days after a city or county enters into a contract with a landowner pursuant to this chapter, the clerk of the board or council, as the case may be, shall record with the county recorder a copy of the contract, which shall describe the land subject thereto, together with a reference to the map showing the location of the agricultural preserve in which the property lies. From and after the time of such recordation such contract shall impart such notice thereof to all persons as is afforded by the recording laws of this state.

(Added by renumbering Section 51250 by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51248.5. Whenever any city or county is required to record any contract by this chapter, it may file a fictitious contract. Thereafter, any of the provisions of such fictitious contract may be included by reference in any contract required to be filed by this chapter. The provisions of Section 2952 of the Civil Code relating to the filing, indexing, and force and effect of fictitious mortgages shall be applicable to such fictitious contracts.

(Added by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51250. (a) The purpose of this section is to identify certain structures that constitute material breaches of contract under this chapter and to provide an alternate remedy to a contract cancellation petition by the landowner. Accordingly, this remedy is in addition to any other available remedies for breach of contract. Except as expressly provided in this section, this section is not intended to change the existing land use decisionmaking and enforcement authority of cities and counties including the authority conferred upon them by this chapter to administer agricultural preserves and contracts.

(b) For purposes of this section, a breach is material if, on a parcel under contract, both of the following conditions are met:

(1) A commercial, industrial, or residential building is constructed that is not allowed by this chapter or the contract, local uniform rules or ordinances consistent with the provisions of this chapter, and that is not related to an agricultural use or compatible use.

(2) The total area of all of the building or buildings likely causing the breach exceeds 2,500 square feet for either of the following:

(A) All property subject to any contract or all contiguous property subject to a contract or contracts owned by the same landowner or landowners on January 1, 2004.

(B) All property subject to a contract entered into after January 1, 2004, covering property not subject to a contract on January 1, 2004.

For purposes of this subdivision any additional parcels not specified in the legal description that accompanied the contract, as it existed prior to January 1, 2003, including any parcel created or recognized within an existing contract by subdivision, deed, partition, or pursuant to Section 66499.35, by certificate of compliance, shall not increase the limitation of this subdivision.

(c) The department shall notify the city or county if the department discovers a possible breach.

(d) The city or county shall, upon notification by the department or upon discovery by the city or county of a possible material breach, determine if there is a valid contract and if it is likely that the breach is material. In its investigation, the city or county shall endeavor to contact the landowner or his or her representative to learn the landowner's explanation of the facts and circumstances related to the possible material breach.

(e) Within 10 days of determining whether it is likely that a material breach exists, the city or county shall notify the landowner and the department by certified mail, return receipt requested. This notice shall include the reasons for the determination and a copy of the contract. If either the landowner or the department objects to the preliminary determination of the city or county, the board or council shall schedule a public hearing as provided in subdivision (g).

(f) Within 60 days of receiving notice that it is likely a material breach, the landowner or his or her representative may notify the city or the county that the landowner intends to eliminate the conditions that resulted in the material breach within 60 days. If the landowner eliminates the conditions that resulted in the material breach within 60 days, the city or county shall take no further action under this section with respect to the building at issue. If the landowner notifies the city or county of the intention to eliminate the conditions but fails to do so, the city or county shall proceed with the hearing required in subdivision (g).

(g) The city or county shall schedule a hearing no more than 120 days after the notice is provided to the landowner and the department, as required in subdivision (e). The city or county shall give notice of the public hearing by

certified mail, return receipt requested to the landowner and the department at least 30 days prior to the hearing. The city or county shall give notice of the public hearing by first-class mail to every owner of land under contract, any portion of which is situated within one mile of the exterior boundary of the contracted parcel on which the likely material breach exists. The city or county shall also give published notice pursuant to Section 6061. The notice shall include the date, time, and place of the public hearing. Not less than five days before the hearing, the department may request that the city or county provide the department, at the department's expense, a recorded transcript of the hearing not more than 30 days after the hearing.

(h) At the public hearing, the city or county shall consider any oral or written testimony and then determine whether a material breach exists. The city or county shall support its determination with findings, made on the record and based on substantial evidence, that the property does or does not meet the conditions specified in subdivision (b).

(i) If the city or county determines that a material breach exists, the city or county shall do one of the following:

- (1) Order the landowner to eliminate the conditions that resulted in the material breach within 60 days.
- (2) Assess the monetary penalty pursuant to subdivision (j) and terminate the contract on that portion of the contracted parcel that has been made incompatible by the material breach.

If the landowner disagrees with the determination, he or she may pursue any other legal remedy that is available.

(j) The monetary penalty shall be 25 percent of the unrestricted fair market value of the land rendered incompatible by the breach, plus 25 percent of the value of the incompatible building and any related improvements on the contracted land. The basis for the valuation of the penalty shall be an independent appraisal of the current unrestricted fair market value of the property that is subject to the contract and affected by the incompatible use or uses, and a valuation of any buildings and any related improvements within the area affected by the incompatible use or uses. If the city or county determines that equity would permit a lesser penalty, the city or county, the landowner, and the department may negotiate a reduction in the penalty based on the factors specified in subdivision (k), but a reduction in the penalty may not exceed one-half of the penalty. If negotiations are to be held, the city or county shall provide the department 15 days' notice before the first negotiation. If the department chooses not to be a negotiator or fails to send a negotiator, the city or county and the landowner may negotiate the penalty.

(k) In determining the amount of a lesser penalty, the negotiators shall consider:

- (1) The nature, circumstances, extent, and gravity of the material breach.
- (2) Whether the landowner's actions were willful, knowing, or negligent with respect to the material breach.
- (3) The landowner's culpability in contributing to the material breach and whether the actions of prior landowners subject to the contract contributed to the material breach.
- (4) Whether the actions of the city or county contributed to the material breach.
- (5) Whether the landowner notified the city or county that the landowner would eliminate the conditions that resulted in the material breach within 30 days, but failed to do so.
- (6) The willingness of the landowner to rapidly resolve the issue of the material breach.
- (7) Any other mitigating or aggravating factors that justice may require.

(l) If the landowner is ordered to eliminate the conditions that resulted in the material breach pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (i) but the landowner fails to do so within the time specified by the city or county, the city or county may abate the material breach as a public nuisance pursuant to any applicable provisions of law.

(m) If the city or county terminates the contract pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (i), the city or county shall record a notice of termination following the procedures of Section 51283.4.

(n) The assessment of a monetary penalty pursuant to subdivision (i) shall be secured by a lien payable to the county treasurer of the county within which the property is located, in the amount assessed pursuant to subdivision (j) or (k). Once properly recorded and indexed, the lien shall have the force, effect, and priority of a judgment lien. The lien document shall provide both of the following:

- (1) The name of the real property owner of record and shall contain either the legal description or the assessor's parcel number of the real property to which the lien attaches.

(2) A direct telephone number and address that interested parties may contact to determine the final amount of any applicable assessments and penalties owing on the lien pursuant to this section.

(o) If the lien is not paid within 60 days of recording, simple interest shall accrue on the unpaid penalty at the rate of 10 percent per year, and shall continue to accrue until the penalty is paid, prior to all other claims except those with superior status under federal or state law.

(p) Upon payment of the lien, the city or county shall record a release of lien and a certificate of contract termination by breach with the county recorder for the land rendered incompatible by the breach.

(q) The city or county may deduct from any funds received pursuant to this chapter the amount of the actual costs of administering this section and shall transmit the balance of the funds by the county treasurer to the Controller for deposit in the Soil Conservation Fund.

(r) (1) The department may carry out the responsibilities of a city or county under this section if any of the following occurs:

(A) The city or county fails to determine whether there is a material breach within 210 days of the discovery of the breach.

(B) The city or county fails to complete the requirements of this section within 180 days of the determination that a material breach exists.

(2) The city or county may request in writing to the department, the department's approval for an extension of time for the city or county to act and the reasons for the extension. Approval may not be unreasonably withheld by the department.

(3) The department shall notify the city or county 30 days prior to its exercise of any responsibility under this subdivision.

(4) This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the Secretary of the Resources Agency under Section 16146 or 16147.

(s) (1) This section does not apply to any of the following:

(A) A building constructed prior to January 1, 2004, or a building for which a permit was issued by a city or county prior to January 1, 2004.

(B) A building that was not a material breach at the time of construction but became a material breach because of a change in law or ordinance.

(C) A building owned by the state.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), this section does not apply when a board or council cancels a contract pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 51280), or a city terminates a contract pursuant to Section 51243.5, or when a public agency, as defined by subdivision (a) of Section 51291, acquires land subject to contract by, or in lieu of, eminent domain pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 51290) unless either of the following occurs:

(A) The action terminating the contract is rescinded.

(B) A court determines that the cancellation or termination was not properly executed pursuant to this chapter, or that the land continues to be subject to the contract.

(3) On the motion of any party with standing to bring an action for breach, any court hearing an action challenging the termination of a contract entered into under this chapter shall consolidate any action for breach, including the remedies for material breach available pursuant to this section.

(4) Paragraph (2) shall not be applicable for a cancellation or termination occurring after January 1, 2004, unless the affected landowner provides to the administering board or council and to the department, within 30 days after the cancellation or termination, a notarized statement, in a form acceptable to the department, signed under penalty of perjury and filed with the county recorder, acknowledging that the breach provisions of this section may apply if any of the following conditions are met:

(A) The action by the local government is rescinded.

(B) A court permanently enjoins, voids, or rescinds the cancellation or termination.

(C) For any other reason, the land continues to be subject to the contract.

(5) Paragraph (2) does not apply for a cancellation or termination occurring before January 1, 2004, unless the landowner provides the statement required in paragraph (4) prior to the approval of a building permit necessary for the construction of a commercial, industrial, or residential building.

(t) It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage cities and counties, in consultation with contracting landowners and the department, to review existing Williamson Act enforcement programs and consider any additions or improvements that would make local enforcement more effective, equitable, or widely acceptable to the affected landowners. Cities and counties are also encouraged to include enforcement provisions within the terms of the contracts, with the consent of contracting landowners.

(u) The department and the city or county may agree to extend any deadline to act under this section, upon the request of the city and county, and the written approval of the director of the department.

(v) In order to promote the reasonable and equitable resolution of a potential material breach, if a potential material breach involves extenuating circumstances, the city or county and the landowner may agree to request that the department meet and confer with them for the purpose of developing a resolution of the potential material breach. If the department agrees to meet and confer with the landowner and city or county, the time requirements specified in this section shall be tolled. The resolution may include remedies authorized by law or not prohibited by law that are agreed to by the landowner, city or county, and department. If the resolution resolves all outstanding issues under this section, the city or county shall terminate all proceedings pursuant to this section upon execution by the landowner, city or county, and department. The agreement executing the resolution shall be recorded in the county in which the affected parcel is located.

(w) A city or county shall not cancel a contract pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 51280) to resolve a material breach except pursuant to this section.

(Amended by Stats. 2008, Ch. 503, Sec. 3. Effective January 1, 2009.)

51251. The county, city, or landowner may bring any action in court necessary to enforce any contract, including, but not limited to, an action to enforce the contract by specific performance or injunction. An owner of land may bring any action in court to enforce a contract on land whose exterior boundary is within one mile of his land. An owner of land under contract may bring any action in court to enforce a contract on land located within the same county or city.

(Amended by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51252. Open-space land under a contract entered into pursuant to this chapter shall be enforceably restricted within the meaning and for the purposes of Section 8 of Article XIII of the State Constitution and shall be enforced and administered by the city or county in such a manner as to accomplish the purposes of that article and of this chapter.

(Amended by Stats. 1974, Ch. 311.)

51253. Any contract or agreement entered into pursuant to this chapter prior to the 61st day following final adjournment of the 1969 Regular Session of the Legislature may be amended to conform with the provisions of this act as amended at that session upon the mutual agreement of all parties. Approval of these amendments to a contract by the Director of Conservation shall not be required.

(Amended by Stats. 1984, Ch. 851, Sec. 3.)

51254. Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the parties may upon their mutual agreement rescind a contract in order simultaneously to enter into a new contract pursuant to this chapter, which new contract would enforceably restrict the same property for an initial term at least as long as the unexpired term of the contract being so rescinded but not less than 10 years. Such action may be taken notwithstanding the prior serving of a notice of nonrenewal relative to the former contract.

(Added by Stats. 1977, Ch. 495.)

51255. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the parties may upon their mutual agreement rescind a contract in order simultaneously to enter into an open-space easement agreement pursuant to the Open-Space Easement Act of 1974 (Chapter 6.6 (commencing with Section 51070)), provided that the easement is consistent with the Williamson Act (this chapter) for the duration of the original Williamson Act contract. The easement would enforceably restrict the same property for an initial term of not less than 10 years and would not

be subject to the provisions of Article 4 (commencing with Section 51090) of Chapter 6.6. This action may be taken notwithstanding the prior serving of a notice of nonrenewal, and the land subject to the contract shall be assessed pursuant to Section 423 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(b) This section shall not apply to any agreement entered into on or before August 12, 1998.

(Amended by Stats. 1998, Ch. 690, Sec. 3. Effective January 1, 1999.)

51255.1. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the parties may, upon their mutual agreement, rescind a contract for a parcel or parcels of land that, upon review and approval, are determined by the Department of Conservation to be eligible to be placed into a solar-use easement pursuant to Section 51191 in order to simultaneously enter into a solar-use easement pursuant to Chapter 6.9 (commencing with Section 51190). This action may be taken notwithstanding the prior serving of a notice of nonrenewal.

(b) Nothing in this section limits the ability of the parties to a contract to seek nonrenewal or to petition for cancellation or termination of a contract pursuant to this chapter. This section is provided in addition to, not in replacement of, other methods for contract termination, Williamson Act compliance, or a county finding that a solar facility is a compatible use pursuant to this chapter.

(c) (1) Prior to the board or council agreeing to mutually rescind a contract pursuant to this section, the county assessor of the county in which the land is located shall determine the current fair market value of the land as though it were free of the contractual restriction. The assessor shall certify to the board or council the fair market valuation of the land for the purpose of determining the rescission fee. At the same time, the assessor shall send a notice to the landowner and the Department of Conservation indicating the current fair market value of the land as though it were free of the contractual restriction and advise the parties that, upon their request, the assessor shall provide all information relevant to the valuation, excluding third-party information. If any information is confidential or otherwise protected from release, the department and the landowner shall hold it as confidential and return or destroy any protected information upon termination of all actions relating to valuation or rescission of the contract on the property. The notice shall also advise the landowner and the department of the opportunity to request formal review from the assessor.

(2) Prior to agreeing to mutually rescind a contract pursuant to this section, the board or council shall determine and certify to the county auditor the amount of the rescission fee that the landowner shall pay the county treasurer upon rescission. That fee shall be an amount equal to 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ percent of the fair market valuation of the property if the land was held under a contract pursuant to Section 51240, and 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ percent if the land was held in a contract designating the property as a farmland security zone.

(3) When rescission fees required by this subdivision are collected, they shall be transmitted by the county treasurer to the Controller and deposited in the General Fund, except as provided in subdivision (d) of Section 51283. The funds collected by the county treasurer with respect to each rescission of a contract shall be transmitted to the Controller within 30 days of the execution of the mutual rescission of the contract by the parties.

(4) It is the intent of the Legislature that fees paid to rescind a contract do not constitute taxes, but are payments that, when made, provide a private benefit that tends to increase the value of the property.

(Added by Stats. 2022, Ch. 427, Sec. 11. (SB 1489) Effective January 1, 2023.)

51256. Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a city or county, upon petition by a landowner, may enter into an agreement with the landowner to rescind a contract in accordance with the contract cancellation provisions of Section 51282 in order to simultaneously place other land within that city, the county, or the county where the contract is rescinded under an agricultural conservation easement, consistent with the purposes and, except as provided in subdivision (b), the requirements of the California Farmland Conservancy pursuant to Division 10.2 (commencing with Section 10200) of the Public Resources Code, provided that the board or council makes all of the following findings:

(a) The proposed agricultural conservation easement is consistent with the criteria set forth in Section 10251 of the Public Resources Code.

(b) The proposed agricultural conservation easement is evaluated pursuant to the selection criteria in Section 10252 of the Public Resources Code, and particularly subdivisions (a), (c), (e), (f), and (h), and the board or council makes a finding that the proposed easement will make a beneficial contribution to the conservation of agricultural land in its area.

(c) The land proposed to be placed under an agricultural conservation easement is of equal size or larger than the land subject to the contract to be rescinded, and is equally or more suitable for agricultural use than the land subject to the contract to be rescinded. In determining the suitability of the land for agricultural use, the city or county shall consider the soil quality and water availability of the land, adjacent land uses, and any agricultural support infrastructure.

(d) The value of the proposed agricultural conservation easement, as determined pursuant to Section 10260 of the Public Resources Code, is equal to or greater than either of the following:

(1) Twelve and one-half percent of the cancellation valuation of the land subject to the contract to be rescinded, pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 51283.

(2) Twenty-five percent of the cancellation valuation of the land subject to the contract to be rescinded pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 51297, if the contract was entered into pursuant to Article 7 (commencing with Section 51296).

(e) The easement value and the cancellation valuation shall be determined within 90 days before the approval of the city or county of an agreement pursuant to this section.

(Amended by Stats. 2008, Ch. 503, Sec. 4. Effective January 1, 2009.)

51256.1. No agreement entered into pursuant to Section 51256 shall take effect until it is approved by the Secretary of Resources. The secretary may approve the agreement if he or she finds that the findings of the board or council, as required by Sections 51256 and 51282, are supported by substantial evidence, and that the proposed agricultural conservation easement is consistent with the eligibility criteria set forth in Section 10251 of the Public Resources Code and will make a beneficial contribution to the conservation of agricultural land in its area. The secretary shall not approve the agreement if an agricultural conservation easement has been purchased with funds from the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program Fund, established pursuant to Section 10230 of the Public Resources Code, on the same land proposed to be placed under an agricultural conservation easement pursuant to this section.

(Added by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 6. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51256.2. (a) One or more cities or counties may adopt a plan for implementing the provisions of Section 51256 with respect to multiple transactions within one or more specific areas, and submit the plan to the director for his or her approval. The plan may be approved only upon a determination by the director that it is consistent with the provisions of Section 51256. Thereafter individual transactions shall be approved if they are consistent with the approved plan.

(b) Notwithstanding Section 51256, this section shall apply only to lands under contract located in the Counties of San Bernardino and Riverside, within the area bounded by Interstate 10 on the north, State Route 71 on the west, State Route 91 on the south, and a line two miles east of Interstate 15 on the east, and to easements within that area or within 10 miles of its exterior boundaries and within either Riverside County or San Bernardino County. For the purpose of this section, easements located within the described area may be related to contract rescissions in either county.

(c) The Legislature finds and declares that, because of the unique factors applicable only to the Chino Basin, a statute of general applicability cannot be enacted within the meaning of subdivision (b) of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution. Those unique circumstances are that the Chino agricultural preserve is undergoing transition from agricultural to nonagricultural uses and the affected areas comprise more than a single jurisdiction. Therefore, a multijurisdictional approach is necessary.

(Amended by Stats. 2000, Ch. 431, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51256.3. For the purposes of facilitating long-term agricultural land conservation in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, an agricultural conservation easement located within the primary or secondary zone of the delta, as defined in Sections 29728 and 29731 of the Public Resources Code, may be related to contract rescissions in any other portion of the secondary zone without respect to county boundary limitations contained in an agricultural conservation easement agreement pursuant to Section 51256.

(Added by Stats. 2006, Ch. 547, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2007.)

51257. (a) To facilitate a lot line adjustment, pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 66412, and notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the parties may mutually agree to rescind the contract or contracts and

simultaneously enter into a new contract or contracts pursuant to this chapter, provided that the board or council finds all of the following:

(1) The new contract or contracts would enforceably restrict the adjusted boundaries of the parcel for an initial term for at least as long as the unexpired term of the rescinded contract or contracts, but for not less than 10 years.

(2) There is no net decrease in the amount of the acreage restricted. In cases where two parcels involved in a lot line adjustment are both subject to contracts rescinded pursuant to this section, this finding will be satisfied if the aggregate acreage of the land restricted by the new contracts is at least as great as the aggregate acreage restricted by the rescinded contracts.

(3) At least 90 percent of the land under the former contract or contracts remains under the new contract or contracts.

(4) After the lot line adjustment, the parcels of land subject to contract will be large enough to sustain their agricultural use, as defined in Section 51222.

(5) The lot line adjustment would not compromise the long-term agricultural productivity of the parcel or other agricultural lands subject to a contract or contracts.

(6) The lot line adjustment is not likely to result in the removal of adjacent land from agricultural use.

(7) The lot line adjustment does not result in a greater number of developable parcels than existed prior to the adjustment, or an adjusted lot that is inconsistent with the general plan.

(b) Nothing in this section shall limit the authority of the board or council to enact additional conditions or restrictions on lot line adjustments.

(c) Only one new contract may be entered into pursuant to this section with respect to a given parcel, prior to January 1, 2004.

(Amended by Stats. 2012, Ch. 128, Sec. 1. (AB 2680) Effective January 1, 2013.)

51257.5. (a) If the state fails to make payments to a city or county pursuant to Section 16142 or 16142.1, or if the state provides a reduced subvention, a city or county may accept contributions from a nonprofit land-trust organization, a nonprofit entity, or a public agency for specific land under a contract within the city or county to supplement foregone property tax revenues pursuant to this section.

(b) (1) A nonprofit land-trust organization, nonprofit entity, or public agency may contract with an owner of land currently under a contract pursuant to this chapter, upon approval of the contract by the city or county, for a period of up to 10 years, to keep the landowner's property under contract with the county pursuant to this chapter, in exchange for the contribution by the nonprofit land-trust organization or nonprofit entity's payment for an equivalent period of years of all or a portion of the foregone property tax revenue to the city or county.

(2) A contract entered into pursuant to this subdivision shall be subject to any limitation in power of a nonprofit land-trust organization, nonprofit entity, or public agency.

(3) A contract entered into pursuant to this subdivision shall not authorize or require the conversion of land subject to the contract into a mitigation bank site.

(c) In implementing this section, a city or county shall not request or require additional conditions or restrictions on the land or the landowner for existing or future contracts.

(d) This section shall not be construed as a limitation on the right of a landowner to engage in other lawful contracts or transactions with respect to their land, including, but not limited to, contracts entered into pursuant to this chapter.

(e) As used in this section, "nonprofit land-trust organization" means a nonprofit land-trust organization as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 5011.7 of the Public Resources Code.

(f) No contract shall be entered into on or after January 1, 2016, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2016, deletes or extends that date.

(Added by Stats. 2011, Ch. 254, Sec. 1. (SB 668) Effective January 1, 2012.)





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TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607] (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203] (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4] (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4] (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

ARTICLE 5. Cancellation [51280 - 51287] (Article 5 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

51280. It is hereby declared that the purpose of this article is to provide relief from the provisions of contracts entered into pursuant to this chapter under the circumstances and conditions provided herein.

(Amended by Stats. 1981, Ch. 1095, Sec. 1.)

51280.1. As used in this chapter, the finding of a board or council that "cancellation and alternative use will not result in discontinuous patterns of urban development" authorizes, but does not require, the board or council to cancel a contract if it finds that the alternative use will be rural in character and that the alternative use will result within the foreseeable future in a contiguous pattern of development within the relevant subregion. The board or council is not required to find that the alternative use will be immediately contiguous to like development. In rendering its finding, the board or council acts in its own discretion to evaluate the proposed alternative use according to existing and projected conditions within its local jurisdiction.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 7. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51281. A contract may not be canceled except pursuant to a request by the landowner, and as provided in this article.

(Amended by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51281.1. The board or council may require the payment of a reasonable application fee to be made at the time a petition for cancellation is filed.

(Added by Stats. 1978, Ch. 1120.)

51282. (a) The landowner may petition the board or council for cancellation of any contract as to all or any part of the subject land. The board or council may grant tentative approval for cancellation of a contract only if it makes one of the following findings:

(1) That the cancellation is consistent with the purposes of this chapter.

(2) That cancellation is in the public interest.

(b) For purposes of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) cancellation of a contract shall be consistent with the purposes of this chapter only if the board or council makes all of the following findings:

(1) That the cancellation is for land on which a notice of nonrenewal has been served pursuant to Section 51245.

(2) That cancellation is not likely to result in the removal of adjacent lands from agricultural use.

(3) That cancellation is for an alternative use which is consistent with the applicable provisions of the city or county general plan.

(4) That cancellation will not result in discontinuous patterns of urban development.

(5) That there is no proximate noncontracted land which is both available and suitable for the use to which it is proposed the contracted land be put, or, that development of the contracted land would provide more contiguous patterns of urban development than development of proximate noncontracted land.

As used in this subdivision "proximate, noncontracted land" means land not restricted by contract pursuant to this chapter, which is sufficiently close to land which is so restricted that it can serve as a practical alternative for the use which is proposed for the restricted land.

As used in this subdivision "suitable" for the proposed use means that the salient features of the proposed use can be served by land not restricted by contract pursuant to this chapter. Such nonrestricted land may be a single parcel or may be a combination of contiguous or discontinuous parcels.

(c) For purposes of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) cancellation of a contract shall be in the public interest only if the council or board makes the following findings: (1) that other public concerns substantially outweigh the objectives of this chapter; and (2) that there is no proximate noncontracted land which is both available and suitable for the use to which it is proposed the contracted land be put, or that development of the contracted land would provide more contiguous patterns of urban development than development of proximate noncontracted land.

As used in this subdivision "proximate, noncontracted land" means land not restricted by contract pursuant to this chapter, which is sufficiently close to land which is so restricted that it can serve as a practical alternative for the use which is proposed for the restricted land.

As used in this subdivision "suitable" for the proposed use means that the salient features of the proposed use can be served by land not restricted by contract pursuant to this chapter. Such nonrestricted land may be a single parcel or may be a combination of contiguous or discontinuous parcels.

(d) For purposes of subdivision (a), the uneconomic character of an existing agricultural use shall not by itself be sufficient reason for cancellation of the contract. The uneconomic character of the existing use may be considered only if there is no other reasonable or comparable agricultural use to which the land may be put.

(e) The landowner's petition shall be accompanied by a proposal for a specified alternative use of the land. The proposal for the alternative use shall list those governmental agencies known by the landowner to have permit authority related to the proposed alternative use, and the provisions and requirements of Section 51283.4 shall be fully applicable thereto. The level of specificity required in a proposal for a specified alternate use shall be determined by the board or council as that necessary to permit them to make the findings required.

(f) In approving a cancellation pursuant to this section, the board or council shall not be required to make any findings other than or in addition to those expressly set forth in this section, and, where applicable, in Section 21081 of the Public Resources Code.

(g) A board or council shall not accept or approve a petition for cancellation if the land for which the cancellation is sought is currently subject to the process specified in Section 51250, unless the cancellation is a part of the process specified in Section 51250.

(Amended by Stats. 2008, Ch. 503, Sec. 6. Effective January 1, 2009.)

51282.3. (a) The landowner may petition the board or council, pursuant to Section 51282, for cancellation of any contract or of any portion of a contract if the board or council has determined that agricultural laborer housing is not a compatible use on the contracted lands. The petition, and any subsequent cancellation based thereon, shall (1) particularly describe the acreage to be subject to cancellation; (2) stipulate that the purpose of the cancellation is to allow the land to be used exclusively for agricultural laborer housing facilities; (3) demonstrate that the contracted lands, or portion thereof, for which cancellation is being sought are reasonably necessary for the development and siting of agricultural laborer housing; and (4) certify that the contracted lands, or portion thereof, for which cancellation is being sought, shall not be converted to any other alternative use within the first 10 years immediately following the cancellation.

The petition shall be deemed to be a petition for cancellation for a specified alternative use of the land. The petition shall be acted upon by the board or council in the manner prescribed in Section 51283.4. However, the provisions of Section 51283 pertaining to the payment of cancellation fees shall not be imposed except as provided in subdivision (b).

(b) If the owner of real property is issued a certificate of cancellation of contract based on subdivision (a), there shall be executed and recorded concurrently with the recordation of the certificate of cancellation of contract, a lien in favor of the county, city or city and county in the amount of the fees which would otherwise have been imposed pursuant to Section 51283. Those amounts shall bear interest at the rate of 10 percent per annum. The lien shall

particularly describe the real property subject to the lien, shall be recorded in the county where the real property subject to the lien is located, and shall be indexed by the recorder in the grantor index to the name of the owner of the real property and in the grantee index in the name of the county or city or city and county. From the date of recordation, the lien shall have the force, effect and priority of a judgment lien. The board or council shall execute and record a release of lien if, after a period of 10 years from the date of the recordation of the certificate of cancellation of contract, the real property subject to the lien has not been converted to a use other than agricultural laborer housing. In the event the real property subject to the lien has been converted to a use other than agricultural laborer housing, or the construction of agricultural laborer housing has not commenced within a period of one year from the date of recordation of the certificate of cancellation of contract, then the lien shall only be released upon payment of the fees and interest for which the lien has been imposed. Where construction commences after the one-year period, the amount of the interest shall only be for that period from one year following the date of the recordation of the certificate of cancellation of contract until the actual commencement of construction.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 8. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51282.5. The owner of any land which has been zoned as a timberland production pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113, and that zoning has been recorded as provided in Section 51117, may petition the board or council for cancellation of any contract as to all or part of the land. Upon petition, the board or council shall approve the cancellation of the contract.

The provisions of Section 51283 shall not apply to any cancellation under this section, and no cancellation fee shall be imposed.

(Amended by Stats. 1982, Ch. 1489, Sec. 30.)

51283. (a) Prior to any action by the board or council giving tentative approval to the cancellation of any contract, the county assessor of the county in which the land is located shall determine the current fair market value of the land as though it were free of the contractual restriction. The assessor shall certify to the board or council the cancellation valuation of the land for the purpose of determining the cancellation fee. At the same time, the assessor shall send a notice to the landowner indicating the current fair market value of the land as though it were free of the contractual restriction and advise the parties, that upon their request, the assessor shall provide all information relevant to the valuation, excluding third-party information. If any information is confidential or otherwise protected from release, the department and the landowner shall hold it as confidential and return or destroy any protected information upon termination of all actions relating to valuation or cancellation of the contract on the property. The notice shall also advise the landowner and the department of the opportunity to request formal review from the assessor.

(b) Prior to giving tentative approval to the cancellation of any contract, the board or council shall determine and certify to the county auditor the amount of the cancellation fee that the landowner shall pay the county treasurer upon cancellation. That fee shall be an amount equal to $12\frac{1}{2}$ percent of the cancellation valuation of the property.

(c) If it finds that it is in the public interest to do so, the board or council may waive any payment or any portion of a payment by the landowner, or may extend the time for making the payment or a portion of the payment contingent upon the future use made of the land and its economic return to the landowner for a period of time not to exceed the unexpired period of the contract, had it not been canceled, if all of the following occur:

(1) The cancellation is caused by an involuntary transfer or change in the use which may be made of the land and the land is not immediately suitable, nor will be immediately used, for a purpose which produces a greater economic return to the owner.

(2) The board or council has determined that it is in the best interests of the program to conserve agricultural land use that the payment be either deferred or is not required.

(3) The waiver or extension of time is approved by the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. The secretary shall approve a waiver or extension of time if the secretary finds that the granting of the waiver or extension of time by the board or council is consistent with the policies of this chapter and that the board or council complied with this article. In evaluating a request for a waiver or extension of time, the secretary shall review the findings of the board or council, the evidence in the record of the board or council, and any other evidence the secretary may receive concerning the cancellation, waiver, or extension of time.

(d) The first five million dollars (\$5,000,000) of revenue paid to the Controller pursuant to subdivision (e) in the 2004–05 fiscal year, and any other amount as approved in the final Budget Act for each fiscal year thereafter, shall

be deposited in the Soil Conservation Fund, which is continued in existence. The money in the fund is available, when appropriated by the Legislature, for the support of all of the following:

(1) The cost of the farmlands mapping and monitoring program of the Department of Conservation pursuant to Section 65570.

(2) The soil conservation program identified in Section 614 of the Public Resources Code.

(3) Program support costs of this chapter as administered by the Department of Conservation.

(4) Program support costs incurred by the Department of Conservation in administering the open-space subvention program (Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 16140) of Part 1 of Division 4 of Title 2).

(5) The costs to the Department of Conservation for administering Section 51250.

(6) When available, after funding the duties of the Department of Conservation pursuant to paragraphs (1) through (5), inclusive, program support costs incurred by the department in carrying out the duties of the department pursuant to Sections 65565 and 66565.1.

(e) When cancellation fees required by this section are collected, they shall be transmitted by the county treasurer to the Controller and deposited in the General Fund, except as provided in subdivision (d) of this section and subdivision (b) of Section 51283.1. The funds collected by the county treasurer with respect to each cancellation of a contract shall be transmitted to the Controller within 30 days of the execution of a certificate of cancellation of contract by the board or council, as specified in subdivision (b) of Section 51283.4.

(f) It is the intent of the Legislature that fees paid to cancel a contract do not constitute taxes but are payments that, when made, provide a private benefit that tends to increase the value of the property.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 8. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51283.1. (a) The assessor shall determine the current fair market value of the land as if it were free of the contractual restriction pursuant to Section 51283. The Department of Conservation or the landowner, also referred to in this section as "parties," may provide information to assist the assessor to determine the value. Any information provided to the assessor shall be served on the other party, unless the information was provided at the request of the assessor, and would be confidential under law if required of an assessee.

(b) Within 45 days of receiving the assessor's notice pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 51283 or Section 51283.4, if the Department of Conservation or the landowner believes that the current fair market valuation certified pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51283 or Section 51283.4 is not accurate, the department or the landowner may request formal review from the county assessor in the county considering the petition to cancel the contract. The department or the landowner shall submit to the assessor and the other party the reasons for believing the valuation is not accurate and the additional information the requesting party believes may substantiate a recalculation of the property valuation. The assessor may recover the assessor's reasonable costs of the formal review from the party requesting the review, and may provide an estimate of those costs to the requesting party. The recovery of these costs from the department may be deducted by the city or county from cancellation fees received pursuant to this chapter before transmittal to the Controller for deposit in the Soil Conservation Fund. The assessor may require a deposit from the landowner to cover the contingency that payment of a cancellation fee will not necessarily result from the completion of a formal review. This subdivision shall not be construed as a limitation on the authority provided in Section 51287 for cities or counties to recover their costs in the cancellation process, except that the assessor's costs of conducting a formal review shall not be borne by the nonrequesting party.

(1) If no request is made within 45 days of receiving notice by certified mail of the valuation, the assessor's valuation shall be used to calculate the fee.

(2) Upon receiving a request for formal review, the assessor shall formally review the valuation if, based on the determination of the assessor, the information may have a material effect on valuation of the property. The assessor shall notify the parties that the formal review is being undertaken and that information to aid the assessor's review shall be submitted within 30 days of the date of the notice to the parties. Any information submitted to the assessor shall be served on the other party who shall have 30 days to respond to that information to the assessor. If the response to the assessor contains new information, the party receiving that response shall have 20 days to respond to the assessor as to the new information. All submittals and responses to the assessor shall be served on the other party by personal service or an affidavit of mailing. The assessor shall avoid ex parte contacts during the formal review and shall report any such contacts to the department and

the landowner at the same time the review is complete. The assessor shall complete the review no later than 120 days of receiving the request.

(3) At the conclusion of the formal review, the assessor shall either revise the cancellation valuation or determine that the original cancellation valuation is accurate. The assessor shall send the revised valuation or notice of the determination that the valuation is accurate to the department, the landowner, and the board or council considering the petition to cancel the contract. The assessor shall include a brief narrative of what consideration was given to the items of information and responses directly relating to the cancellation value submitted by the parties. The assessor shall give no consideration to a party's information or response that was not served on the other party. If the assessor denies a formal review, a brief narrative shall be provided to the parties indicating the basis for the denial, if requested.

(c) For purposes of this section, the valuation date of any revised valuation pursuant to formal review or following judicial challenge shall remain the date of the assessor's initial valuation, or the initial recomputation pursuant to Section 51283.4. For purposes of cancellation fee calculation in a tentative cancellation as provided in Section 51283, or in a recomputation for final cancellation as provided in Section 51283.4, a cancellation value shall be considered current for one year after its determination and certification by the assessor.

(d) This section represents the exclusive administrative procedure for appealing a cancellation valuation calculated pursuant to this section. The Department of Conservation shall represent the interests of the state in the administrative and judicial remedies for challenging the determination of a cancellation valuation or cancellation fee.

(Added by renumbering Section 51203 by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 1. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51283.4. (a) Upon tentative approval of a petition accompanied by a proposal for a specified alternative use of the land, the clerk of the board or council shall record in the office of the county recorder of the county in which is located the land as to which the contract is applicable a certificate of tentative cancellation, which shall set forth the name of the landowner requesting the cancellation, the fact that a certificate of cancellation of contract will be issued and recorded at the time that specified conditions and contingencies are satisfied, a description of the conditions and contingencies which must be satisfied, and a legal description of the property. Conditions to be satisfied shall include payment in full of the amount of the fee computed under the provisions of Section 51283, together with a statement that unless the fee is paid, or a certificate of cancellation of contract is issued within one year from the date of the valuation certified by the assessor the fee shall be recomputed as of the date of notice described in subdivision (b) or the date the landowner requests a recomputation. A landowner may request a recomputation when the landowner believes the landowner will be able to satisfy the conditions and contingencies of the certificate of cancellation within 180 days. The board or council shall request the assessor to recompute the cancellation valuation. The assessor shall recompute the valuation, certify it to the board or council, and provide notice to the Department of Conservation and landowner as provided in subdivision (a) of Section 51283, and the board or council shall certify the fee to the county auditor. Any provisions related to the waiver of the fee or portion thereof shall be treated in the manner provided for in the certificate of tentative cancellation. Contingencies to be satisfied shall include a requirement that the landowner obtain all permits necessary to commence the project. The board or council may, at the request of the landowner, amend a tentatively approved specified alternative use if it finds that the amendment is consistent with the findings made pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 51282.

(b) The landowner shall notify the board or council when the landowner has satisfied the conditions and contingencies enumerated in the certificate of tentative cancellation. Within 30 days of receipt of the notice, and upon a determination that the conditions and contingencies have been satisfied, the board or council shall execute a certificate of cancellation of contract, cause the certificate to be recorded, and send a copy to the Director of Conservation.

(c) If the landowner has been unable to satisfy the conditions and contingencies enumerated in the certificate of tentative cancellation, the landowner shall notify the board or council of the particular conditions or contingencies the landowner is unable to satisfy. Within 30 days of receipt of the notice, and upon a determination that the landowner is unable to satisfy the conditions and contingencies listed, the board or council shall execute a certificate of withdrawal of tentative approval of a cancellation of contract, cause the same to be recorded, and send a copy to the Director of Conservation. However, the landowner shall not be entitled to the refund of any cancellation fee paid.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 9. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51283.5. (a) The Legislature finds and declares that cancellation fees should be calculated in a timely manner and disputes over cancellation fees should be resolved before a city or county approves a tentative cancellation.

However, the city or county may approve a tentative cancellation notwithstanding an assessor's formal review or judicial challenge to the cancellation value or fee.

(b) If the valuation changes after the approval of a tentative cancellation, the certificate of tentative cancellation shall be amended to reflect the correct valuation and cancellation fee.

(c) If the landowner wishes to pay a cancellation fee when a formal review has been requested, the landowner may pay the fee required in the current certificate of cancellation and provide security for 20 percent of the cancellation fee based on the assessor's valuation. The board or council shall hold the security and release it immediately upon full payment of the cancellation fee determined pursuant to Section 51283.1.

(d) The city or county may approve a final cancellation notwithstanding a pending formal review or judicial challenge to the cancellation valuation or fee. The certificate of final cancellation shall include the following statements:

- (1) That formal review or judicial challenge of the cancellation valuation or fee is pending.
- (2) That the fee may be adjusted, based upon the outcome of the review or challenge.
- (3) The identity of the party who will be responsible for paying any additional fee or will receive any refund.
- (4) The form and amount of security provided by the landowner or other responsible party.

(e) Upon resolution, the landowner or the party identified in the certificate shall either pay the balance owed to the county treasurer, or receive from the county treasurer or the controller any amount of overpayment, and shall also be entitled to the immediate release of any security.

(f) (1) If a party does not receive the notice required pursuant to Section 51283, 51283.1, 51283.4, or 51284, a judicial challenge to the cancellation valuation may be filed within three years of the latest of the applicable following events:

- (A) The board or council certification of the fee pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51283, or for fees recomputed pursuant to Section 51283.4, the execution of a certificate of cancellation under that section.
- (B) The date of the assessor's determination pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) of Section 51283.1.
- (C) The service of notice to the Director of Conservation of the board or council's recorded certificate of final cancellation.

(2) If a party did receive the required notice pursuant to Section 51283.1, 51283.4, or 51284, a judicial challenge to the cancellation valuation may be filed only after the party has exhausted the administrative remedies through the formal review process specified in Section 51283.1 and only within 180 days of the latest of the applicable following events:

- (A) The board or council certification of the fee pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51283 or for fees recomputed pursuant to Section 51283.4, the execution of a certificate of cancellation under that section.
- (B) The date of the assessor's determination pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) of Section 51283.1.
- (C) The service of notice to the Director of Conservation or the board or council's recorded certificate of final cancellation.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 10. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51284. No contract may be canceled until after the city or county has given notice of, and has held, a public hearing on the matter. Notice of the hearing shall be published pursuant to Section 6061 and shall be mailed to every owner of land under contract, any portion of which is situated within one mile of the exterior boundary of the land upon which the contract is proposed to be canceled. Within 30 days of the tentative cancellation of the contract, the city or county shall publish a notice of its decision, including the date, time, and place of the public hearing, a general explanation of the decision, the findings made pursuant to Section 51282, and a general description, in text or by diagram, of the land under contract, as a display advertisement of at least one-eighth page in at least one newspaper of general circulation within the city or county. In addition, within 30 days of the tentative cancellation of the contract, the city or county shall deliver a copy of the published notice of the decision, as described above, to the Director of Conservation. The publication shall be for informational purposes only, and shall create no right, standing, or duty that would otherwise not exist with regard to the cancellation proceedings.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 11. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51284.1. When a landowner petitions a board or council for the tentative cancellation of a contract and when the board or council accepts the application as complete pursuant to Section 65943, the board or council shall send that information to the assessor that is necessary to describe the land subject to the proposed cancellation. The information shall include the name and address of the landowner petitioning the cancellation.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 12. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51285. The owner of any property located in the county or city in which the agricultural preserve is situated may protest such cancellation to the city or county conducting the hearing.

(Amended by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1372.)

51286. (a) Any action or proceeding which, on the grounds of alleged noncompliance with the requirements of this chapter, seeks to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul a decision of a board of supervisors or a city council to cancel a contract shall be brought pursuant to Section 1094.5 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(b) The action or proceeding shall be commenced within 180 days from the date of the council or board order acting on a petition for cancellation filed under this chapter.

(Amended by Stats. 2001, Ch. 176, Sec. 12. Effective January 1, 2002.)

51287. The city or county may impose a fee pursuant to Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 66016) of Division 1 of Title 7 for recovery of costs under this article. The fee shall not exceed an amount necessary to recover the reasonable cost of services provided by the city or county under this article.

(Amended by Stats. 1995, Ch. 686, Sec. 2. Effective October 10, 1995. Operative January 1, 1996, by Sec. 9 of Ch. 686.)

Code: Section: [Up^](#) [Add To My Favorites](#)**GOVERNMENT CODE - GOV****TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607]** (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203]** (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4]** (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)**CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4]** (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)**ARTICLE 6. Eminent Domain or Other Acquisition [51290 - 51295]** (Article 6 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

51290. (a) It is the policy of the state to avoid, whenever practicable, the location of any federal, state, or local public improvements and any improvements of public utilities, and the acquisition of land therefor, in agricultural preserves.

(b) It is further the policy of the state that whenever it is necessary to locate such an improvement within an agricultural preserve, the improvement shall, whenever practicable, be located upon land other than land under a contract pursuant to this chapter.

(c) It is further the policy of the state that any agency or entity proposing to locate such an improvement shall, in considering the relative costs of parcels of land and the development of improvements, give consideration to the value to the public, as indicated in Article 2 (commencing with Section 51220), of land, and particularly prime agricultural land, within an agricultural preserve.

(Amended by Stats. 1998, Ch. 690, Sec. 5. Effective January 1, 1999.)

51290.5. As used in this chapter, "public improvement" means facilities or interests in real property, including easements, rights-of-way, and interests in fee title, owned by a public agency or person, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 51291.

(Amended by Stats. 1998, Ch. 690, Sec. 6. Effective January 1, 1999.)

51291. (a) As used in this section and Sections 51292 and 51295, (1) "public agency" means any department or agency of the United States or the state, and any county, city, school district, or other local public district, agency, or entity, and (2) "person" means any person authorized to acquire property by eminent domain.

(b) Except as provided in Section 51291.5, whenever it appears that land within an agricultural preserve may be required by a public agency or person for a public use, the public agency or person shall advise the local governing body responsible for the administration of the preserve of its intention to consider the location of a public improvement within the preserve. In accordance with Section 51290, the notice shall include an explanation of the preliminary consideration of Section 51292, and give a general description, in text or by diagram, of the agricultural preserve land proposed for acquisition, and a copy of any applicable contract created under this chapter.

Within 30 days thereafter, the local governing body shall forward to the appropriate public agency or person concerned their comments with respect to the effect of the location of the public improvement on the land within the agricultural preserve and those comments shall be considered by the public agency or person. In preparing those comments, shall consider issues related to agricultural land use, including, but not limited to, matters related to the effects of the proposal on the conversion of adjacent or nearby agricultural land to nonagricultural uses shall be considered. The failure by any person or public agency, other than a state agency, to comply with the requirements of this section shall be admissible in evidence in any litigation for the acquisition of that land or involving the allocation of funds or the construction of the public improvement. This subdivision does not apply to the erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electric, piped subterranean water or wastewater, or

communication utility facilities within an agricultural preserve if that preserve was established after the submission of the location of those facilities to the city or county for review or approval.

(c) When land in an agricultural preserve is acquired by a public entity, the public entity shall notify the Director of Conservation within 10 working days. The notice shall include a general explanation of the decision and the findings made pursuant to Section 51292. The notice shall also include a general description, in text or by diagram, of the agricultural preserve land acquired.

(d) If, after giving the notice required under subdivisions (b) and (c) and before the project is completed within an agricultural preserve, the public agency or person proposes any significant change in the public improvement, it shall give notice of the changes to the local governing body responsible for the administration of the preserve. Within 30 days thereafter, the local governing body may forward to the public agency or person their comments with respect to the effect of the change to the public improvement on the land within the preserve and the compliance of the changed public improvements with this article. Those comments shall be considered by the public agency or person, if available within the time limits set by this subdivision.

(e) Any action or proceeding regarding notices or findings required by this article filed by the local governing body administering the agricultural preserve shall be governed by Section 51294.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 13. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51291.5. The notice requirements of subdivision (b) of Section 51291 shall not apply to the acquisition of land for the erection, construction, or alteration of gas, electric, piped subterranean water or wastewater, or communication facilities.

(Added by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 11. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51292. No public agency or person shall locate a public improvement within an agricultural preserve unless the following findings are made:

(a) The location is not based primarily on a consideration of the lower cost of acquiring land in an agricultural preserve.

(b) If the land is agricultural land covered under a contract pursuant to this chapter for any public improvement, that there is no other land within or outside the preserve on which it is reasonably feasible to locate the public improvement.

(Amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 1018, Sec. 12. Effective January 1, 2000.)

51293. Section 51292 shall not apply to:

(a) The location or construction of improvements where the board or council administering the agricultural preserve approves or agrees to the location thereof, except when the acquiring agency and administering agency are the same entity.

(b) The acquisition of easements within a preserve by the board or council administering the preserve.

(c) The location or construction of any public utility improvement which has been approved by the Public Utilities Commission.

(d) The acquisition of either (1) temporary construction easements for public utility improvements, or (2) an interest in real property for underground public utility improvements. This subdivision shall apply only where the surface of the land subject to the acquisition is returned to the condition and use that immediately predated the construction of the public improvement, and when the construction of the public utility improvement will not significantly impair agricultural use of the affected contracted parcel or parcels.

(e) The location or construction of the following types of improvements, which are hereby determined to be compatible with or to enhance land within an agricultural preserve:

(1) Flood control works, including channel rectification and alteration.

(2) Public works required for fish and wildlife enhancement and preservation.

(3) Improvements for the primary benefit of the lands within the preserve.

(f) Improvements for which the site or route has been specified by the Legislature in a manner that makes it impossible to avoid the acquisition of land under contract.

(g) All state highways on routes as described in Sections 301 to 622, inclusive, of the Streets and Highways Code, as those sections read on October 1, 1965.

(h) All facilities which are part of the State Water Facilities as described in subdivision (d) of Section 12934 of the Water Code, except facilities under paragraph (6) of subdivision (d) of that section.

(i) Land upon which condemnation proceedings have been commenced prior to October 1, 1965.

(j) The acquisition of a fee interest or conservation easement for a term of at least 10 years, in order to restrict the land to agricultural or open space uses as defined by subdivisions (b) and (o) of Section 51201.

(Amended by Stats. 1994, Ch. 1158, Sec. 4. Effective January 1, 1995.)

51293.1. Any public agency or person requiring land in an agricultural preserve for a use which has been determined by a city or county to be a "compatible use" pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 51201 in that agricultural preserve shall not be excused from the provisions of subdivision (b) of Section 51291 if the agricultural preserve was established before the location of the improvement of a public utility was submitted to the city, county, or Public Utilities Commission for agreement or approval and that compatible use shall not come within the provisions of Section 51293 unless the location of the improvement is approved or agreed to pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 51293 or the compatible use is listed in Section 51293.

(Amended by Stats. 1983, Ch. 101, Sec. 71.)

51294. Section 51292 shall be enforceable only by mandamus proceedings by the local governing body administering the agricultural preserve. However, as applied to condemnors whose determination of necessity is not conclusive by statute, evidence as to the compliance of the condemnor with Section 51292 shall be admissible on motion of any of the parties in any action otherwise authorized to be brought by the landowner or in any action against the landowner.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 14. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51294.1. After 30 days have elapsed following its action, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51291, advising the local governing body of a county or city administering an agricultural preserve of its intention to consider the location of a public improvement within such agricultural preserve, a public agency proposing to acquire land within an agricultural preserve for water transmission facilities which will extend into more than one county, may file the proposed route of the facilities with each county or city administering an agricultural preserve into which the facilities will extend and request each county or city to approve or agree to the location of the facilities or the acquisition of the land therefor. Upon approval or agreement, the provisions of Section 51292 shall not apply to the location of the proposed water transmission facility or the acquisition of land therefor in any county or city which has approved or agreed to the location or acquisition.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 15. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51294.2. If any local governing body administering an agricultural preserve within 90 days after receiving a request pursuant to Section 51294.1 has not approved or agreed to the location of water transmission facilities as provided in Section 51294.1 or in subdivision (a) of Section 51293, the public agency making such request may file an action against such local governing body in the superior court of one of the counties within which any such body has failed to approve the location of facilities or the acquisition of land therefor, to determine whether the public agency proposing the location or acquisition has complied with the requirements of Section 51292. If the court should so determine, the provisions of Section 51292 shall not apply to the location of water transmission facilities, nor the acquisition of land therefor, in any of the counties into which they shall extend, and no writ of mandamus shall be issued in relation thereto pursuant to Section 51294. For the purposes of this section, the county selected for commencing such action is the proper county for the trial of such proceedings. In determining whether the public agency has complied with the requirements of Section 51292, the court shall consider the alignment, functioning and operation of the entire transmission facility.

Courts shall give any action brought under the provisions of this section preference over all other civil actions therein, to the end that such actions shall be quickly heard and determined.

(Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 415.)

51295. When any action in eminent domain for the condemnation of the fee title of an entire parcel of land subject to a contract is filed, or when that land is acquired in lieu of eminent domain for a public improvement by a public agency or person, or whenever there is any such action or acquisition by the federal government or any person, instrumentality, or agency acting under the authority or power of the federal government, the contract shall be

deemed null and void as to the land actually being condemned, or so acquired as of the date the action is filed, and for the purposes of establishing the value of the land, the contract shall be deemed never to have existed.

Upon the termination of the proceeding, the contract shall be null and void for all land actually taken or acquired.

When an action to condemn or acquire less than all of a parcel of land subject to a contract is commenced, the contract shall be deemed null and void as to the land actually condemned or acquired and shall be disregarded in the valuation process only as to the land actually being taken, unless the remaining land subject to contract will be adversely affected by the condemnation, in which case the value of that damage shall be computed without regard to the contract.

When an action to condemn or acquire an interest that is less than the fee title of an entire parcel or any portion thereof of land subject to a contract is commenced, the contract shall be deemed null and void as to that interest and, for the purpose of establishing the value of only that interest, shall be deemed never to have existed, unless the remaining interests in any of the land subject to the contract will be adversely affected, in which case the value of that damage shall be computed without regard to the contract.

The land actually taken shall be removed from the contract. Under no circumstances shall land be removed that is not actually taken for a public improvement, except that when only a portion of the land or less than a fee interest in the land is taken or acquired, the contract may be canceled with respect to the remaining portion or interest upon petition of either party and pursuant to the provisions of Article 5 (commencing with Section 51280).

For the purposes of this section, a finding by the board or council that no authorized use may be made of the land if the contract is continued on the remaining portion or interest in the land, may satisfy the requirements of subdivision (a) of Section 51282.

If, after acquisition, the acquiring public agency determines that it will not for any reason actually locate on that land or any part thereof, the public improvement for which the land was acquired, before returning the land to private ownership, the public agency shall give written notice to the local governing body responsible for the administration of the preserve, and the land shall be reenrolled in a new contract or encumbered by an enforceable deed restriction with terms at least as restrictive as those provided by this chapter. The duration of the restriction shall be determined by subtracting the length of time the land was held by the acquiring public agency or person from the number of years that remained on the original contract at the time of acquisition.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 16. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)



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TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607] (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203] (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51299.4] (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

CHAPTER 7. Agricultural Land [51200 - 51297.4] (Chapter 7 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1443.)

ARTICLE 7. Farmland Security Zones [51296 - 51297.4] (Article 7 repealed and added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23.)

51296. The Legislature finds and declares that it is desirable to expand options available to landowners for the preservation of agricultural land. It is therefore the intent of the Legislature in enacting this article to encourage the creation of longer term voluntary enforceable restrictions within agricultural preserves.

(Repealed and added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.1. A landowner or group of landowners may petition the board to rescind a contract or contracts entered into pursuant to this chapter in order to simultaneously place the land subject to that contract or those contracts under a new contract designating the property as a farmland security zone. A landowner or group of landowners may also petition the board to create a farmland security zone for the purpose of entering into farmland security zone contracts pursuant to this section.

(a) Before approving the rescission of a contract or contracts entered into pursuant to this chapter in order to simultaneously place the land under a new farmland security zone contract, the board shall create a farmland security zone, pursuant to the requirements of Section 51230, within an existing agricultural preserve.

(b) No land shall be included in a farmland security zone unless expressly requested by the landowner. Any land located within a city's sphere of influence shall not be included within a farmland security zone, unless the creation of the farmland security zone within the sphere of influence has been expressly approved by resolution by the city with jurisdiction within the sphere of influence.

(c) If more than one landowner requests the creation of a farmland security zone and the parcels are contiguous, the county shall place those parcels in the same farmland security zone.

(d) A contract entered into pursuant to this section shall be for an initial term of no less than 20 years. Each contract shall provide that on the anniversary date of the contract or on another annual date as specified by the contract, a year shall be added automatically to the initial term unless a notice of nonrenewal is given pursuant to Section 51245.

(e) Upon termination of a farmland security zone contract, the farmland security zone designation for that parcel shall simultaneously be terminated.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.2. Both of the following shall apply to land within a designated farmland security zone:

(a) The land shall be eligible for property tax valuation pursuant to Section 423.4 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any special tax approved by the voters for urban-related services on or after January 1, 1999, on the land or any living improvement shall be levied at a reduced rate unless the tax directly benefits the land or the living improvements.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.3. Notwithstanding any provision of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Division 3 (commencing with Section 56000)), a local agency formation commission shall not approve a change of organization or reorganization that would result in the annexation of land within a designated farmland security zone to a city. However, this subdivision shall not apply under any of the following circumstances:

(a) If the farmland security zone is located within a designated, delineated area that has been approved by the voters as a limit for existing and future urban facilities, utilities, and services.

(b) If annexation of a parcel or a portion of a parcel is necessary for the location of a public improvement, as defined in Section 51290.5, except as provided in Section 51296.5 or 51296.6.

(c) If the landowner consents to the annexation.

(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch. 614, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2003.)

51296.4. Notwithstanding any provision of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Division 3 (commencing with Section 56000)), a local agency formation commission shall not approve a change of organization or reorganization that would result in the annexation of land within a designated farmland security zone to a special district that provides or would provide sewers, nonagricultural water, or streets and roads, unless the facilities or services provided by the special district benefit land uses that are allowed under the contract and the landowner consents to the change of organization or reorganization.

(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch. 614, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2003.)

51296.5. Notwithstanding Article 5 (commencing with Section 53090) of Chapter 1 of Division 2 of Title 5, a school district shall not render inapplicable a county zoning ordinance to the use of land by the school district if the land is within a designated farmland security zone.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.6. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school district shall not acquire any land that is within a designated farmland security zone.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.7. The board shall not approve any use of land within a designated farmland security zone based on the compatible use provisions contained in subdivision (c) of Section 51238.1.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.8. Sections 51296 to 51297.4, inclusive, shall only apply to land that is designated on the Important Farmland Series maps, prepared pursuant to Section 65570 as predominantly one or more of the following:

(a) Prime farmland.

(b) Farmland of statewide significance.

(c) Unique farmland.

(d) Farmland of local importance.

If the proposed farmland security zone is in an area that is not designated on the Important Farmland Series maps, the land shall qualify if it is predominantly prime agricultural land, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 51201.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51296.9. Nonrenewal of a farmland security zone contract shall be pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 51240), except as otherwise provided in this article.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51297. A petition for cancellation of a farmland security zone contract created under this article may be filed only by the landowner with the city or county within which the contracted land is located. The city or county may grant a petition only in accordance with the procedures provided for in Article 5 (commencing with Section 51280) and only if all the following requirements are met:

(a) The city or county shall make both of the findings specified in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 51282, based on substantial evidence in the record. Subdivisions (b) to (e), inclusive, of Section 51282 shall apply to the findings made by the city or county.

(b) Prior to issuing tentative approval of the cancellation of the contract, the board or council shall determine and certify to the county auditor the amount of the cancellation fee that the landowner will be required to pay the county treasurer upon cancellation of the contract. The cancellation fee shall be in an amount that equals 25 percent of the cancellation valuation of the property.

(c) In its resolution tentatively approving cancellation of the contract, the city or county shall find all of the following:

(1) That no beneficial public purpose would be served by the continuation of the contract.

(2) That the uneconomic nature of the agricultural use is primarily attributable to circumstances beyond the control of the landowner and the local government.

(3) That the landowner has paid a cancellation fee equal to 25 percent of the cancellation valuation calculated in accordance with subdivision (b).

(d) A finding that no authorized use may be made of a remnant contract parcel of five acres or less left by public acquisition pursuant to Section 51295, may be substituted for the finding in subdivision (a).

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 644, Sec. 17. (SB 574) Effective January 1, 2022.)

51297.1. All of the provisions of Article 6 (commencing with Section 51290) shall apply to farmland security zones created pursuant to this article except as specifically provided in this article.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51297.2. No state agency, as defined in Section 65934, or local agency, as defined in Section 65930, shall require any land to be placed under a farmland security zone contract as a condition of the issuance of any entitlement to use or the approval of a legislative or adjudicative act involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or a change of organization or reorganization, as defined in Section 56021 or 56073. No contract shall be executed as a condition of an entitlement to use issued by an agency of the United States government.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51297.3. Sections 51296.3 and 51296.4 shall not apply during the three-year period preceding the termination of a farmland security zone contract.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)

51297.4. Nothing in Sections 51296 to 51297.4, inclusive, shall be construed to limit the authority of a board to rescind a portion or portions of a Williamson Act contract or contracts for the purpose of immediately enrolling the land in a farmland security zone contract so long as the remaining land is retained in a Williamson Act contract and the board determines that its action would improve the conservation of agricultural land within the county where the rescission occurs. The creation of multiple contracts under this section does not constitute a subdivision of the land.

(Added by Stats. 2000, Ch. 506, Sec. 23. Effective January 1, 2001.)