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**TIERRA MIGUEL FOUNDATION, FALLBROOK LAND CONSERVANCY
 PROTECT PAUMA VALLEY FARMLAND WITH STATE, FEDERAL HELP**

PAUMA VALLEY – The Tierra Miguel Foundation and the Fallbrook Land Conservancy, with state and federal funding totaling \$1.9 million, are creating a first-of-its-kind agricultural conservation easement in northern San Diego County.

“We’re very happy to be able to permanently preserve this beautiful Pauma Valley land for agriculture,” said Charlene Orszag, president of the not-for-profit Tierra Miguel Foundation. “This project is a great example of how local organizations can work with the state and federal government to make a difference.”

The Tierra Miguel Foundation (TMF) farm is an educational demonstration farm that offers a hands-on opportunity for youngsters and other interested parties to learn about sustainable organic agriculture. The farm supplies boxes of farm produce for classroom learning programs and distributes its seasonal products to 300 Community Supported Agriculture participants in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties.

Community Supported Agriculture is a way the public can directly support a small, local farm while getting a weekly supply of fresh products. TMF also offers numerous educational outreach and research programs to promote sustainable agriculture.

The 85-acre farm has prime soils, a reliable water source, and is located in an agricultural area that is faced with increasing development pressure from the high demand for residential estate homes in the Pauma Valley. Under the terms of the easement, no non-agricultural development may take place on the farm, which currently is owned by Pauma Valley Ranch, LLC.

This is the first grant project funded by both the state and federal programs in the state south of Santa Barbara County.

Through the California Farmland Conservancy program, the Department of Conservation will temporarily grant \$1.4 million to TMF to purchase title to the property and approximately \$240,000 to place a conservation easement on the farm, which the Foundation leases. TMF will seek donations and grants to help raise the \$1.4 million to repay the state, and will continue to own and manage the agricultural operations.

“Agriculture probably isn’t the first thing people think of when San Diego County is mentioned, but it’s one of the most productive counties in the state,” DOC Director Darryl Young noted. “We hope this project encourages more efforts to protect the county’s farmland.”

The USDA, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, has agreed to fund approximately \$240,000 towards the purchase of the agricultural conservation easement.

“As California’s population grows by nearly 15 million over the next 20 years, preserving farmland will become a major challenge,” said NRCS State Conservationist Chuck Bell. “Farmland is a vital and irreplaceable natural resource.”

California’s agricultural production totaled more than \$29.8 billion in 2001; San Diego County’s production was nearly \$1.3 billion, eighth among the state’s 58 counties. But thousands of acres of farmland are being developed each year.

“The Fallbrook Land Conservancy and the Tierra Miguel Foundation are committed to the preservation of these important working lands in San Diego County,” said Conservancy Chairman Wallace Tucker.

The California Farmland Conservancy Program, administered by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection, is designed to



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ensure that the state's most valuable farmland will not be developed. Through the program, local governments and non-profit organizations can receive grants to purchase development rights from willing landowners, thus creating permanent conservation easements. CFCP funds remain for new grant proposals. Landowners and trusts are encouraged to contact the Department of Conservation/Division of Land Resource Protection for information on the program and potential grant funding. The division's Web address is www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp.

DOC also offers programs – the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zones -- that provide financial incentives to keep land in agricultural use for periods of 10 and 20 years.

The NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, NRCS partners with state, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. NRCS provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value.

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