JUNE 2025

MULTIBENEFIT LAND REPURPOSING PROGRAM GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

This glossary provides the acronyms and definitions of commonly-used land repurposing terms. Interested parties can use this glossary to increase their understanding of these terms and their participation in the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP).

Key Terms and Definitions

Program Roles and Deliverables

Department of Conservation (DOC)	A California state agency that administers the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP). The Department of Conservation (DOC) supports sustainable land use, conservation of natural resources, and the development of effective regional strategies through grantmaking, technical assistance, and coordination with other state and federal agencies.
Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP)	A Department of Conservation (DOC) program that funds regional efforts to help identify new uses for farmland in areas where too much groundwater is being used. The goal of the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) is to reduce reliance on groundwater and provide additional benefits like habitat restoration, community health, climate resilience, and economic well-being.
Block grantee	Eligible funding recipients (e.g., Groundwater Sustainability Agency, tribe, public agency, nonprofit) and their partners that receive Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) funding to manage land repurposing at a regional or basin scale. Block grantees lead the planning, coordination, project development, and implementation processes.
Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP)	A document or website developed by block grantees that explains how land will be repurposed to help protect groundwater supplies and align with local Groundwater Sustainability Plans, while also prioritizing local goals like habitat restoration, community health improvements, and climate resilience.

Statewide Support Entity (SSE)

A nonprofit or academic institution providing technical assistance, training, monitoring support, and facilitating communication and learning among Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) block grantees. The Statewide Support Entity (SSE) is co-led by Self-Help Enterprises and Environmental Defense Fund with support from Environmental Incentives. The SSE receives support from its Implementation Partners, contracted organizations providing technical assistance to block grantees, as well as the SSE Advisory Committee, a group of representatives from organizations focused on environmental conservation, working lands, disadvantaged communities, socially-disadvantaged and small farmers, and Tribes.

Figure 1. Structure of organizations, grant types, and deliverables within the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program.

Other Key Terms

Buffer zone

A designated area between agricultural land and residential or sensitive zones, like schools, designed to reduce exposure to pesticides, dust, and other pollutants while offering opportunities for habitat or recreational use (Fernández-Bou et al 2022).

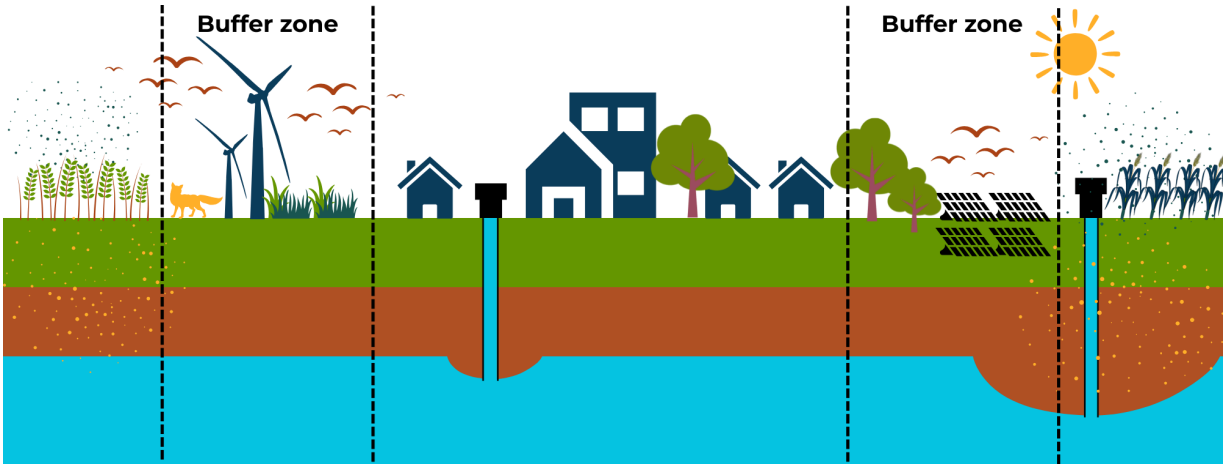


Figure 2. Buffer zones between a community and agricultural fields and orchards.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires state and local agencies to identify what harm their actions could do to the environment and find ways to avoid or reduce that harm if possible. Under CEQA, the potential environmental effects must be evaluated and disclosed to the public before a project can proceed.

To get funding for a Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) project, it must first meet the requirements of the CEQA. Projects need to show one of the following:

- They are not a "project" as defined by CEQA.
- They qualify for a Notice of Exemption under CEQA guidelines.
- They have completed or plan to complete a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration (for projects with minor environmental impacts).
- They have completed or plan to complete a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) if significant impacts are anticipated.

Cover crop

Non-income-generating plants (like mustard and rye) planted between growing seasons to improve soil health, enhance infiltration, reduce runoff, suppress weeds, and provide habitat. Cover crops are also evaluated for their impacts to water use or storage (Borum et al 2024).

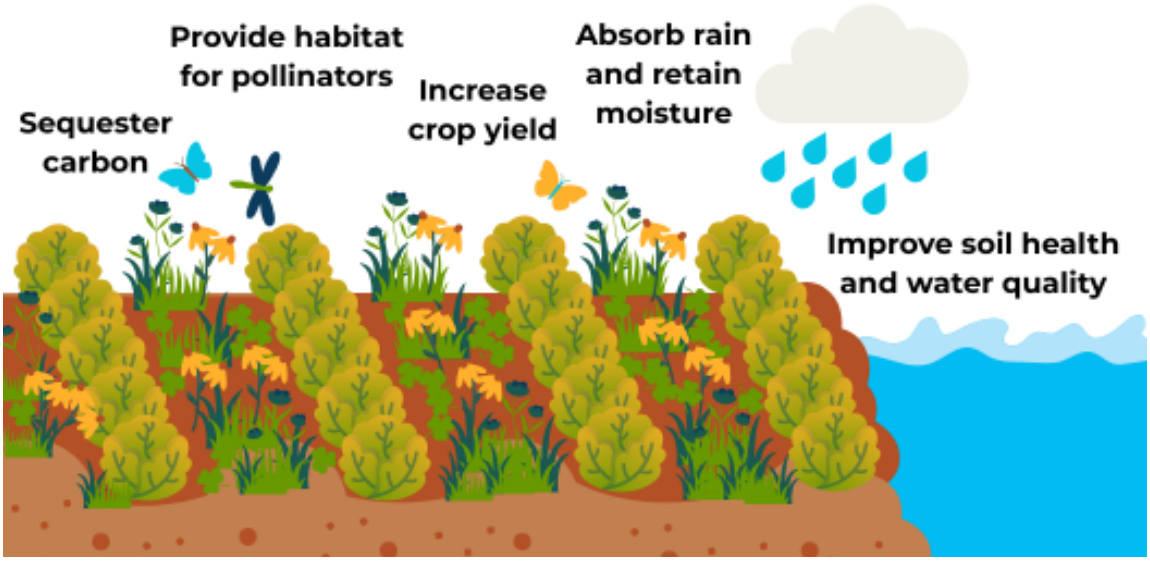


Figure 3. Examples and benefits of cover crops, including pollinator habitat.

Disadvantaged community	Defined in the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) guidelines as a community with a median household income less than 80% of the statewide average. Benefits from MLRP projects to disadvantaged communities may include improved air quality, access to clean water, and recreational space. MLRP legislation and guidelines require prioritizing disadvantaged community benefits.
Dryland crops	Crops that are grown using primarily rainfall and mostly do not need additional watering from irrigation. They are grown to help cut down on the use of water.
Ecosystem benefits	Environmental improvements such as habitat creation, biodiversity support, carbon sequestration, and improved water or soil quality (Borum et al 2024).
Grazing land	Land used for the feeding of livestock on natural or cultivated vegetation with little to no watering needed.
Green infrastructure	A type of system designed to manage water in a sustainable way using natural processes. This includes features like bioswales, wetlands, recharge basins, and permeable surfaces that offer benefits to the environment and help communities build climate resilience (Borum et al 2024).
Groundwater quality	The chemical and biological condition of groundwater, including levels of nitrates, salts, pesticides, and other pollutants that affect human and ecological health (CWA 2022).

Groundwater sustainability

Managing groundwater basins to avoid consequences of overpumping like subsidence (sinking of land), overdraft (occurs when groundwater is pumped out faster than it can be replenished), and contamination (CWA 2022).

Habitat

Natural or restored areas that provide food, water, shelter, and breeding grounds for a variety of plant and animal species. These areas support ecological health, biodiversity, and connectivity across landscapes.

Riparian habitat

Areas of land along water bodies like rivers and lakes that help support wildlife, help prevent erosion, and improve water quality.

Habitat corridors

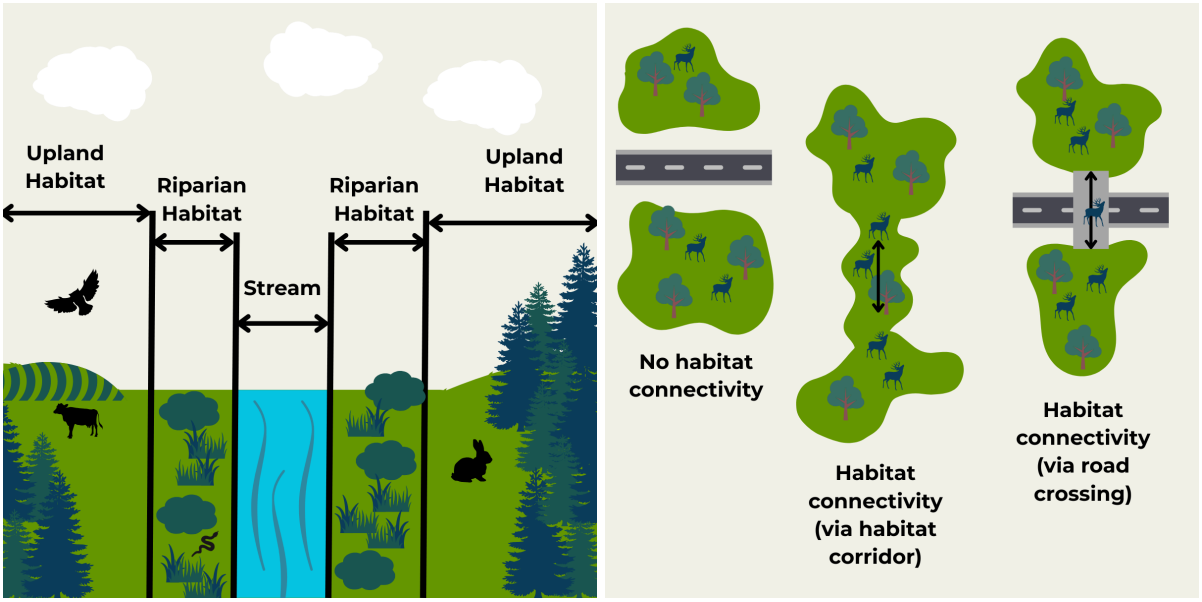
Connections of land with plants and trees between different isolated wildlife areas, allowing animals to travel safely between them.

Upland habitat

Areas that are drier and in higher elevation with plants and animals that thrive in these specific conditions.

Pollinator habitat

Areas planted with plants to support bees, butterflies, and other pollinators with food, shelter, and places to live.



Figures 4a and 4b. Left: Riparian and upland habitat. Right: Levels of habitat connectivity (no connectivity, connectivity with a habitat corridor, and habitat connectivity with a road crossing).

Land fallowing

The intentional removal of agricultural land from production, typically to reduce groundwater usage. Fallowed land can be transitioned to alternative uses that provide environmental or community benefits (CWA 2022).

Least viable agricultural lands	Land that's not practical or profitable for farming because it uses too much water, has bad soil, or is at risk of drought or floods. These lands are targeted for repurposing under the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP).
Meaningful community benefit	Outcomes from projects that address locally-identified needs of disadvantaged communities, such as improved water quality, flood protection, recreational spaces, or economic opportunities.
Multibenefit land repurposing	The practice of converting agricultural land to other uses that provide at least two benefits, such as preserving groundwater levels plus habitat improvement or community well-being.
Natural resource connectivity	The process of connecting different areas of nature, like wetlands, forests, and recharge areas, to support healthy ecosystems and allow animals to move or migrate freely between them.
Recharge	The process of purposely adding water back into underground water supplies, using methods like reconnecting floodplains or creating areas where water can soak down into the ground.
Regenerative agriculture	Farming approach that aims to restore and enhance soil health, water cycles, and biodiversity. Practices include cover cropping, minimal tillage, compost application, and integrated diverse cropping systems. It improves climate resilience, increases carbon sequestration, supports above and belowground biodiversity, and reduces dependence on external inputs like synthetic fertilizers and pesticides (CDFA).
Permitting	The regulatory process for approving projects, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance and water-related permits. Permitting is often required before a project can receive funding to move forward.
Socially-disadvantaged grower	Farmers who identify as groups subject to racial or ethnic prejudice. This includes small-scale farmers, many of whom are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants, or refugees, and who often manage farms under 50 acres or have limited access to resources (CWA 2022).
Solar (Agrivoltaics, Ecovoltaics)	Solar energy infrastructure on former agricultural land or next to agricultural or ecological areas. Agrivoltaics is when land is used for both solar power and farming or ranching. Ecovoltaics combines solar energy with efforts to restore or protect nature, or conservation goals. These systems can provide renewable energy, reduce water that evaporates into the air, create shade that supports certain crops or grazing animals, help create ecosystem services like pollinator habitat, and generate economic benefits (Fernández-Bou et al 2024).

Works Cited

Borum, J., Bruno, E., Castle, S., Chiartas, J., Crowley, R., Decock, C., Delgado, C., DeVincentis, A., Dufour, R., Edwards, A., Flaherty, R., Flynn, M., Grimm, R., Hale, L., Light, S., Little, C., Lowell, K., Minshew, H., Nocco, M., Peterson, C., Roby, M., Roseman, J., Roth, A., Sandoval, S., Silva, S.A., Smet, E., Smither-Kopperl, M., Suvočarev, K., Waterhouse, H.,Wauters, V., Williams, S., and Zaccaria, D. (2024). *Cover Cropping in the SGMA Era: A Comprehensive Overview of Water Impacts, Policy Implications, and Recommendations for California's Water Managers*. The Soil-Water Interface Expert Convening Series: Cover Crop Impacts on Water Budgets, California.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). *Staff draft: State board report on regenerative agriculture* – January revision.

California Department of Conservation. *Round 1 MLRP guidelines: Final solicitation and application for the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program.*

California Department of Conservation. *Round 2 MLRP guidelines: Final solicitation and application for the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program.*

Clean Water Action, 2020. *Underrepresented Farmers and* SGMA 2.0. Clean Water Action. Available at: https://www.cleanwateraction.org/sites/default/files/docs/publications/Underrepresented%20Farmers%20and%20SGMA%202.0.pdf

Fernández-Bou, A., Rodríguez-Flores, J.M., Guzman, A., Ortiz-Partida, J.P., Classen-Rodriguez, L.M., Sánchez-Pérez, P.A., Valero-Fandiño, J., Pells, C., Flores-Landeros, H., Sandoval-Solís, S., Characklis, G.W., Harmon, T.C., McCullough, M., Medellín-Azuara, J., 2023. *Water, environment, and socioeconomic justice in California: A multi-benefit cropland repurposing framework*, *Science of The Total Environment*, 858(3), 159963. DOI: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.159963.

Fernández-Bou, A. and Yang, V., 2024. *Agrivoltaics and Ecovoltaics: Synergies Between Solar Power, Agriculture, and Environmental Health*, UCS: Union of Concerned Scientists. COI: 20.500.12592/5c6kxx4.

Self-Help Enterprises, Environmental Defense Fund, and Environmental Incentives. (2024). *2024 MLRP Annual Report*. California Department of Conservation.