

4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES

This section analyzes impacts to agricultural resources based on a review of existing publications, regulations, and current aerial photographs of the City.

4.2.1 RELEVANT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) administers the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) pursuant to Section 65570 of the *California Government Code*. The FMMP identifies farmlands in the State based on (1) current land use information and (2) soil survey data on soil characteristics that best supports crop production as compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The following farmland classifications are based on information from the Department of Conservation Division of Land Resources Protection's, *A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (2004 Edition)* (LRP 2004).

- ***Prime Farmland.*** Prime Farmland is land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the long-term production of agricultural crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed (including water management) according to current farming methods. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two previous cycles prior to the mapping date.¹ It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy that prevents agricultural use.
- ***Farmland of Statewide Importance.*** Farmland of Statewide Importance is land other than Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two previous cycles prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy that prevents agricultural use.
- ***Unique Farmland.*** Unique Farmland is land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. It must be currently used for the production of specific high-economic value crops (as listed in the last three years of *California Agriculture* produced by the California Department of Food and Agriculture). It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or a high yield of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as found in some climatic zones in California. The land must have been cultivated at some time during the two cycles prior to the mapping date.
- ***Farmland of Local Importance.*** Farmland of Local Importance is of importance to the local agricultural economy and is determined by each County's Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. According to the DOC, Farmland of Local Importance in

¹ A cycle is approximately two years.

Los Angeles County includes producing lands that would meet the standard criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but which are not irrigated (LRP 2004).

These four categories make up the Important Farmland designation. Other designations include:

- **Grazing Land.** Grazing land is land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for livestock grazing. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.
- **Urban and Built-up Land.** Urban and built-up land is occupied with structures that have a building density of at least one unit to ½ acre or approximately six structures to a ten-acre parcel.²
- **Other Land.** This category is for land that is not included in any other mapping categories. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines; borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land that is surrounded on all sides by urban development and is greater than 40 acres is mapped as “Other Land”.
- **Water** includes perennial water bodies of at least 40 acres.

The program has designated approximately 25,326 acres of Important Farmland in the County of San Bernardino in 2008. Of that, 14,089 acres are designated as Prime Farmland, 6,747 acres are designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance, 2,661 acres are Unique Farmland, and 1,829 acres are designated as Farmland of Local Importance. In addition, there are 901,666 acres of Grazing Land in the County (LRP 2009a).

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for preserving agricultural land or related open space uses. In return, landowners receive a lower property tax assessment based on farming and open space uses, as opposed to full market value. Local governments used to receive an annual partial replacement of property tax revenues lost as a result of a Williamson Act Contract from the State via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971. However, State budget cuts have suspended these subvention payments (LRP 2007). In turn, the contract prevents the development of the land for urban uses for the next ten years. A filing for non-renewal is needed if the property is planned for development after ten years, or cancellation of the contract with payment of fees would be required.

As of 2007 (the most recent data), approximately 2,247 acres of Prime Farmland in San Bernardino County were under Williamson Act contracts and another 2,402 acres of non-Prime Farmland were also under Williamson Act contracts for a total of 4,649 acres under contracts (LRP 2008).

² A “unit” is defined as a structure or foundation on which uses associated with development are placed. Uses may include and are not limited to residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration purposes, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment plants, water-control structures, and other development purposes. Highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities are mapped as part of this unit if they are part of a surrounding urban area.

Local

Special Use Regulations for Residential Development Districts

Section 17.08.30 of City's Development Code (Title 17 of the Ranch Cucamonga Municipal Code) identifies allowable agriculture-related land uses in the City's residential zones. The regulations allow the following on lots of 2.5 acres or more:

1. Farms for orchards, trees, field crops, truck gardening, flowering gardening, and other similar enterprises carried on in the general field of agriculture.
2. Raising, grazing, breeding, boarding or training of large or small animals: except concentrated lot feeding and commercial poultry and rabbit raising enterprises.
3. Aviaries (limited to 50 birds per acre).
4. Apiaries, provided that all hives or boxes housing bees shall be placed at least 400 feet from any street, road, highway, public school, park, property boundary, or from any dwelling or place of human habitation other than that occupied by the owner or caretaker of the apiary. Additionally, a water source shall be provided on site.
5. Retail sale of products raised on property, excluding retail nursery and sale of animals for commercial purposes.

Conditional Use Permits are required for:

1. Wholesale distributor and processor of nursery-plant stock. Retail nursery where incidental and contiguous to propagation of nursery stock and/or wholesale distributor. Outdoor storage and display is prohibited except for nursery-plant stock.
2. Dog kennels, dog training schools, small animal shelters, and dog breeding establishments with outside runs.
3. The raising of chinchilla, nutria, hamsters, guinea pigs, cavy, and similar small animals.
4. Frog farms.
5. Worm farms.

Additionally, subsection E contains Special Use Regulations that permit or conditionally permit agricultural uses prior to the development of lots that are at least 2.5 acres or more.

4.2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

While the City of Rancho Cucamonga is largely developed, there are pockets of agricultural land in the form of vineyards and orchards that are remnants of its historic agricultural past. These consist of 3- to 30-acre parcels and are located at the following general locations:

- A vineyard located at the northeastern corner of Haven Avenue and 4th Street;
- A vineyard located north of Arrow Highway and east of the I-15 Freeway;
- A plant nursery under transmission lines south of Foothill Boulevard and west of Day Creek Channel;
- Orchards on both sides of Etiwanda Avenue, north of SR-210 Freeway;
- A vineyard south of Foothill Boulevard and west of Deer Creek;
- A vineyard southeast of the I-15 Freeway at Etiwanda Avenue;
- A vineyard south of Victoria Street and west of East Avenue;
- An orchard on the northwest corner of Banyan Street and Hellman Avenue; and

- An orchard at the corner of Church Street and Ramona Avenue.

Each of these agricultural areas is surrounded by urban development. In addition to these smaller isolated areas, larger vineyards are also located just outside the City and east of the I-15 and SR-210 freeway interchange.

These existing agricultural uses are designated “Farmland” under the FMMP, as shown in Exhibit 4.2-1, Farmland Resources. Most of the undeveloped vacant land at the base of the San Gabriel Mountain foothills, within the City’s SOI is designated as Grazing Land. Table 4.2-1 provides the acreage breakdown of Farmland in the study area.

**TABLE 4.2-1
EXISTING FARMLAND RESOURCES**

Farmland Designation	2010 General Plan Update Study Area (acres)	Percent	County of San Bernardino (acres)	Percent
Prime Farmland	16.17	0.08%	14,089	0.97%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	17.04	0.08%	6,747	0.47%
Unique Farmland	156.84	0.76%	2,661	0.18%
Farmland of Local Importance	18.71	0.09%	1,829	0.13%
Grazing Land	1,761.83	8.51%	901,666	62.20%
Other Designations (Urban land, Other Land and Water)	18,736.41	90.48%	522,555	36.05%
Total	20,707.00	100.00%	1,449,547	100.00%
Source: LRP 2009a; LRP 2009b.				

In addition to the 208.76 acres of Important Farmland (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance) and 1,761.83 acres of Grazing Land within the City boundaries, another 5,676 acres (95.8% of the SOI) are designated as Grazing Land in the SOI.

There are no lands under Williamson Act contracts in the City.

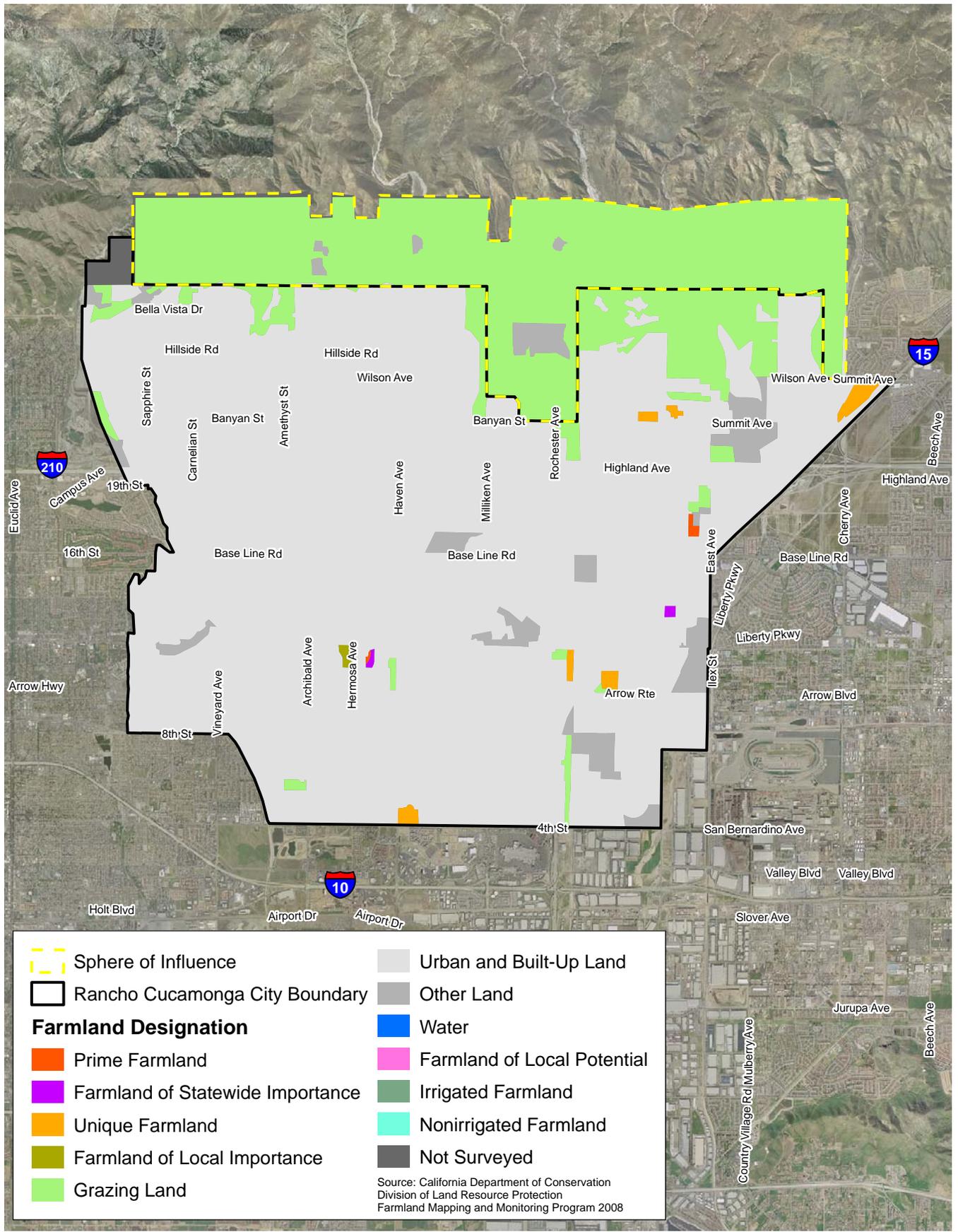
4.2.3 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following significance criteria are derived from Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. A project would result in a significant adverse impact on agricultural resources if it would:

Threshold 4.2a: Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;

Threshold 4.2b: Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;

Threshold 4.2c: Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104[g]);

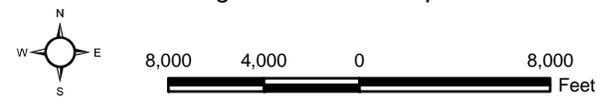


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Farmland Resources

Rancho Cucamonga General Plan Update

Exhibit 4.2-1



Threshold 4.2d Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; and/or

Threshold 4.2e: Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

4.2.4 GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The proposed 2010 General Plan Update recognizes the presence of farmland in the City. Applicable goals and related policies are identified below in italics. Each policy is followed by an implementation action which identifies the programs and procedures that will be used to put 2010 General Plan Update goals and policies into action.

GOAL RC-1: Encourage stewardship of natural open space areas, environmentally sensitive lands, and agricultural resources.

Policy RC-1.4: Evaluate the conservation of economically viable agriculture on lands that are designated by the State as important farmland.

***Implementation Action:** Investigate issues and formulate a strategy that will best reflect the long-term interests of the community as a whole. Where it is determined that long-term agricultural use is in conflict with community goals, seek the removal of any designated farmlands from the State Department of Conservation mapping program.*

4.2.5 STANDARD CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

There are no existing regulations relating to agricultural resources that would apply to future development or redevelopment in the City of Rancho Cucamonga.

4.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Future development and redevelopment under the 2010 General Plan Update would lead to changes in existing land uses and the conversion of agricultural lands in the City to urban uses.

Farmland Resources

Threshold 4.2a: Would the proposed General Plan Update convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

Threshold 4.2e: Would the proposed General Plan Update involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

While the City of Rancho Cucamonga is largely developed, there remain pockets of agricultural land ranging from 3 to 30 acres in size in the form of vineyards and orchards that are remnants of the City's agricultural heritage. Of the total 208.76 acres of designated farmland in the study area, approximately 16.17 acres of these lands are designated as Prime Farmland, 156.84

acres as Unique Farmland, 17.04 acres as Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 18.71 acres as Farmland of Local Importance under the FMMP.

The proposed Land Use Plan does not include an agricultural designation. The Equestrian/Rural Overlay District in the proposed Land Use Plan would allow the keeping of horses and other farm animals in the northern section of the City, but is not intended to allow agricultural operations. Thus, no agricultural uses are proposed for preservation under the 2010 General Plan Update. Vineyards and orchards designated as Unique Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance are proposed for urban development under various land use designations, including Industrial Park, General Industrial, Very Low Density Residential, Low Medium Density Residential, and Mixed Use. Only the plant nursery, which occupies approximately 12.5 acres beneath the transmission lines and is designated as Flood Control/Utility Corridor, would allow the continued use of the nursery and would not convert its current Unique Farmland designation. Therefore, buildout of the 2010 General Plan Update Study Area would convert 196.26 acres of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Goal RC-1 of the proposed 2010 General Plan Update encourages stewardship of agricultural resources, and Policy RC-1.4 calls for evaluating the conservation of economically viable agriculture on lands that are designated as Important Farmland, since these areas are under increasing pressure from urbanization. However, the proposed Land Use Plan shows that these areas are planned for development with urban uses. To determine the appropriate balance between the competing priorities of urbanization and agricultural land protection, the City will investigate ways to preserve agricultural lands through the use of conservation easements and to formulate a strategy that will best reflect the long-term interests of the City. As the Resource Conservation Chapter states, "where it is determined that long term agricultural use is in conflict with community goals, the City will seek the removal of any designated farmlands from the State Department of Conservation mapping program". Additionally, the City of Rancho Cucamonga supports increasing access to healthy, locally grown foods through various grants and partnerships. Throughout the City, access to these resources is encouraged through community gardens, school gardens, farmers' markets, and edible estates.

The eventual development of these vineyards and orchards with urban land uses would lead to the conversion of farmland to other uses. Despite this long-term expectation, agricultural uses are allowed as an interim use by the City's Development Code; therefore, these vineyards and orchards are expected to remain until individual property owners decide to develop these lands.

Since the existing vineyards are small, scattered operations that do not support any larger-scale agricultural uses and since they represent less than one percent of the total Important Farmland in the County, their conversion to urban land uses is not expected to have a major impact on the County's crop value. However, future development associated with buildout of the proposed 2010 General Plan Update pursuant to the proposed Land Use Plan (refer to Exhibit 3-3 in Section 3.0, Project Description) would result in the conversion of these farmland areas to non-agricultural uses, thus creating a significant impact. There are no feasible mitigation measures to address this impact under the proposed land use plan; therefore, buildout of the proposed 2010 General Plan Update would result in a significant and unavoidable impact related to the conversion of farmland.

Grazing lands include scattered undeveloped lands in the City and the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. The loss of small, scattered undeveloped lands for grazing would not adversely affect Farmlands, nor would it result in a significant impact related to the conversion of farmlands to non-agricultural uses.

As discussed in Section 4.3, Biological Resources, the 2010 General Plan Update Study Area does not include any lands that qualify as forest land of timberland. Therefore, no impacts would occur related to the loss or conversion of forest land to a non-forest use.

Impact 4.2a and 4.2e: Future development under the proposed Land Use Plan would lead to the conversion of 196.26 acres of Important Farmland into non-agricultural uses. No mitigation is available under the proposed land use plan; therefore, this loss of farmland would result in a significant and unavoidable impact.

Agricultural Zoning

Threshold 4.2b: Would the proposed General Plan Update conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

According to the proposed Land Use Plan (refer to Exhibit 3-3 of Section 3.0, Project Description), the lots that are currently vineyards and orchards would be converted into urban uses as part of future, anticipated development.

The City does not have an agricultural land use designation in its existing Land Use Plan or the proposed Land Use Plan. The City's Development Code also does not have an agricultural zone, although agricultural uses are allowed as an interim use on lots 2.5 acres or more in size within the Residential Development Districts. Thus, existing vineyards and orchards are expected to remain without conflict with the City's Development Code, and no impact would occur.

Additionally, there are no lands within the City that are under a Williamson Act contract; therefore, no impacts related to Williamson Act contracts would occur, and no mitigation is necessary.

Impact 4.2b: Future development under the proposed Land Use Plan would lead to the conversion of vineyards and orchards to urban uses, but this will not create any conflict with the existing zoning, which allows agricultural uses as an interim use. Also, no conflict with Williamson Act contracts would occur. No impacts would occur.

Forest Lands and Timberlands

Threshold 4.2c: Would the proposed General Plan Update conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104[g])?

Threshold 4.2d: Would the proposed General Plan Update result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

As discussed in Section 4.3, Biological Resources, the 2010 General Plan Update Study Area does not include any lands that qualify as forest land of timberland. Therefore, no impacts would occur related to the loss or conversion of forest land to a non-forest use. Further, there are no areas within the 2010 General Plan Update Study Area that are zoned as forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production. No impacts would occur; no mitigation is required.

Impact 4.2c The proposed 2010 General Plan Update Study Area does not contain and 4.2d: any forest land or timberland, nor is it zoned as such. No impact would occur.

4.2.7 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative impacts on agricultural resources are based on the evaluation of impacts throughout the County of San Bernardino.

San Bernardino County has approximately 25,326 acres of Important Farmland that produced over \$547.4 million of crop value in 2008. The majority of these agricultural lands are located in the southern sections of the cities of Ontario and Chino where dairies and field crops are grown; along the San Timoteo Canyon; south of Zanja Creek in Redlands as orchards; south of the Santa Ana River in San Bernardino as crop lands; along the Mojave River; and in the area east of Barstow. The major agricultural products in the County include milk, eggs, cattle and replacement heifers, trees/shrubs, alfalfa, bokchoi, oranges, indoor decorative, and ground cover (County of San Bernardino, Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures 2008).

Future development in the City of Rancho Cucamonga and the rest of San Bernardino County is expected to lead to the cumulative decrease in Important Farmland acreage and crop production value over time, as has been experienced by the County since 1980. The crop value in 1980 was over \$1.0 billion but decreased to \$873.6 million in 1990 and is now only \$547.4 million. This trend is expected to continue as vacant land becomes more valuable for urban land uses and as the cost of agricultural production increases (due to decreases in water supply and increases in operating costs), thus making agricultural operations less financially feasible (County of San Bernardino, Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures 2008).

The decreasing area of Important Farmland and agricultural crop production value is considered a significant adverse impact and the contribution to a cumulative impact due to the conversion of vineyards and orchards in the City of Rancho Cucamonga represents a significant and unavoidable, cumulative impact.

4.2.8 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are available to reduce the identified impacts to agricultural resources.

4.2.9 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Farmland Resources

Significant and Unavoidable.

Agricultural Zoning

No Impact.

Forest Land and Timberlands

No Impact.

Cumulative Impacts

Significant and Unavoidable.