
3.2 - Agricultural Resources

3.2.1 - Introduction

This section describes the existing agricultural resources and potential effects from Project implementation on the site and its surrounding area. Section 15125 of the State CEQA Guidelines requires EIRs to include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the area of a project that exist at the time that the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is circulated. These environmental conditions normally constitute the baseline physical conditions relative to which the CEQA lead agency evaluates the change in conditions that would result from project implementation. The NOP for this Draft EIR was issued on February 27, 2009. Therefore, environmental conditions as of February 2009 represent the baseline for CEQA purposes. To evaluate the footprint impacts of the Proposed Action (e.g., effects on agricultural resources), the conditions in 2009 are considered to be the baseline. Buildout of the Project is then added to existing conditions in order to determine whether Project implementation would substantially remove or impact the resources, thereby resulting in a significant impact on the environment. Data used to determine the baseline for agricultural resources were derived from the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) developed by the California Department of Conservation (CDC 1997). Therefore, data used to derive baseline conditions is based on existing conditions at the time of NOP issuance (February 27, 2009 through March 31, 2009) and are appropriate to use within the following analysis.

3.2.2 - Environmental Setting

Historical Agricultural Practices

According to the City of Redlands General Plan, citrus farming was Redlands' original economic base and remains a small, but not insignificant component of the economy. Despite a two-thirds decline in acreage during the previous 30 years, approximately 30 percent of the existing citrus is within the East Valley Corridor Area (EVCSP). The Specific Plan for this area (EVSP) calls for conversion of agricultural land for commercial and industrial development over a 40-year period. Citrus groves currently owned by the City which are proposed to remain in citrus include the Prospect Park Grove (24 acres) located approximately 2.62 miles southeast of the Project site; Judson Grove (6 acres) located approximately 2.3 miles east; Fifth Avenue Grove (13 acres) located approximately 3.79 miles southeast; I-10/California Grove (5 acres) located approximately 1.5 miles southwest; Texas Webster Grove (13 acres) located approximately 0.5 mile north; Palmetto/Nevada Grove (16.7 acres) located approximately 1.5 miles southeast; Olive Avenue Grove (3.75 acres) located approximately 1.5 miles north and San Bernardino/Wabash Grove (10 acres) located approximately 3.2 miles east of the Project site.

Other agriculture located within the City of Redlands (other orchard crops, row crops, livestock, dairies, and Christmas tree farms) occupies 918 acres. With relatively low cost water supplied by mutual water companies, good productivity, and 90 percent of the fruit commanding premium prices for export to Asia, the Redlands citrus industry stabilized during the 1980s.

State Farmland Mapping Program

According to the 1998 Farmland Designation, the Project site contains prime farmland (9.70 acres), farmland of statewide importance (0.15 acre), grazing land (35.68 acres), and urban built-up land (0.10 acre), as shown in Exhibit 3.2-1. According to the City of Redlands General Plan, the Project site is not located in an agricultural preserve. A definition of each farmland designation is described below:

Prime Farmland (P):

Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Statewide Importance (S):

Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Grazing Land (G)

Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.

Urban and Built-up Land (D)

Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

Agricultural land uses within the City are concentrated in five areas, North-West Redlands (East Valley Corridor Specific Plan Area), West Redlands, San Timoteo Canyon, North Redlands (Redlands Municipal Airport Area), and North Mentone. The Project site is within the EVCSP. Any site within an area under "Agricultural Preserve" is subject to maintain and preserve the agricultural industry. Within Redlands, there are two levels of this concept, the Agricultural Preserve designation between the City and property owner, whereby the City provides agricultural protection through zoning regulations using agricultural preserves and the more formal Williamson Act program. The lands under Williamson Act contract were originally designated in 1970. As of May 1995, 24 parcels within the City totaling approximately 177 acres were under Williamson Act Contract (see Exhibit 3.2-2 for the most recent Williamson Act contracts within the City). No parcels within the Project site are currently under Williamson Act contract.



Source: San Bernardino County NAIP, 2009.

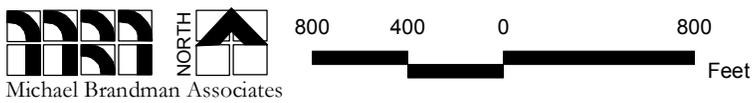
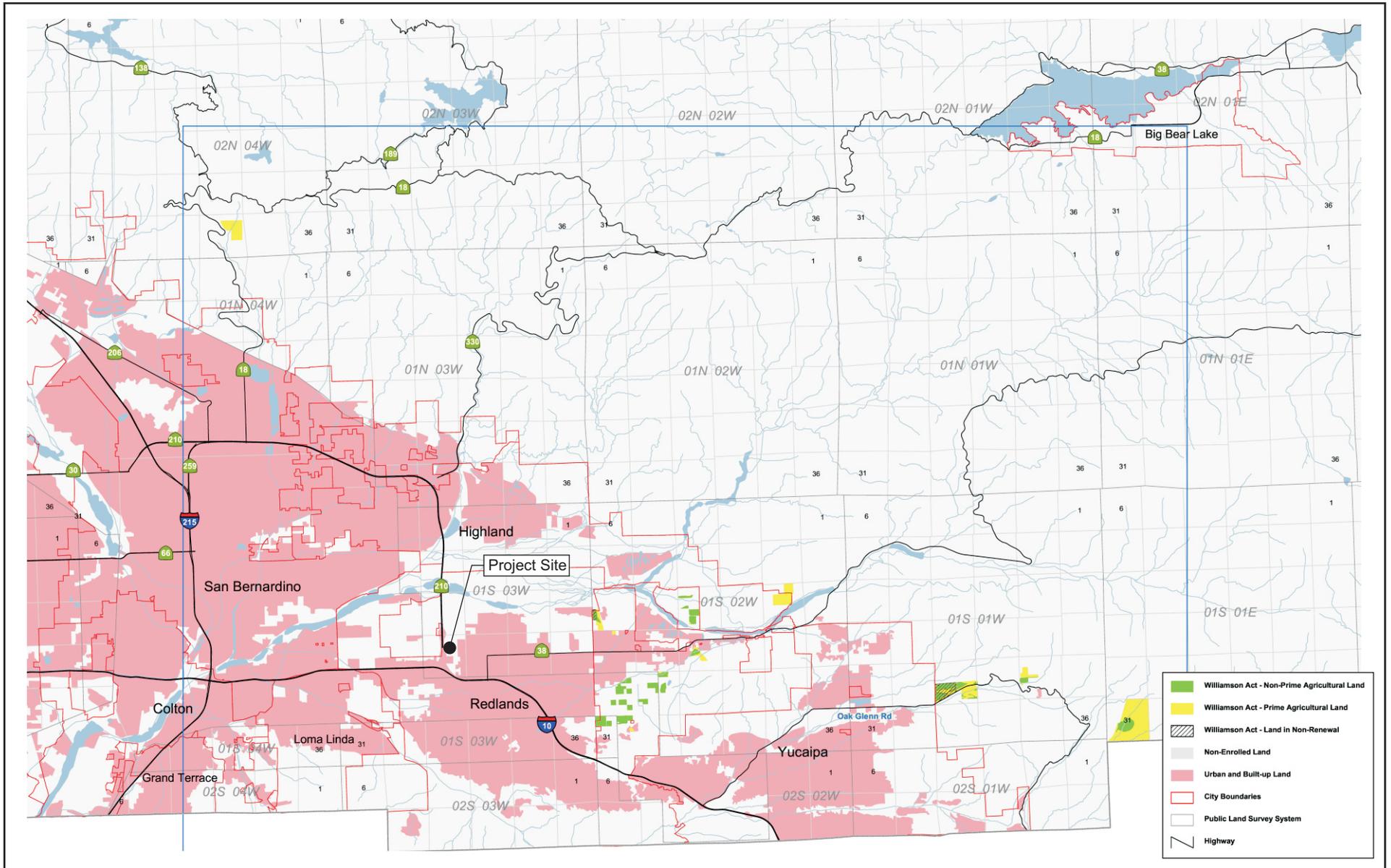


Exhibit 3.2-1 Farmland Map



Source: San Bernardino Williamson Act Lands 2004. Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection.



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Exhibit 3.2-2 Williamson Act Contracts

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3.2.3 - Regulatory Framework

State Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The CDC established the FMMP in 1982. The FMMP is a non-regulatory program and provides a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. The FMMP produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called prime farmland with additional categories including farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland and farmland of local importance. The maps are updated every two years with the use of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and field reconnaissance.

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, the landowners receive property tax assessments based on farming and open space uses, as opposed to full market value, thus resulting in a lower tax burden. These contracts are for 10 years at a time, and roll into the next year unless the owner files a "notice of non-renewal." The purpose of the Williamson Act is to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion to urban uses. The minimum preserve size is 100 acres. The landowner can petition to cancel a contract; however, the jurisdiction must make a finding based on substantial evidence that supports the cancellation of the contract. Upon approval, the landowner must pay a fee equal to 12.5 percent of the unrestricted, current fair market valuation of the property.

LESA Model

According to Appendix G of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural LESA Model (1997) prepared by the CDC as an "optional model" to assess impacts on agriculture and farmland.

The LESA Model has two components, Land Evaluation (LE) and Site Assessment (SA), each with individual scoring thresholds and a combined total Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model score with a third scoring threshold. Utilizing the LESA Model, the criterion shown in Table 3.2-1 assists in determining whether a project's impacts to agricultural resources are significant or not.

Table 3.2-1: California LESA Model Scoring Thresholds

| Total LESA Score | Scoring Decision |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 to 39 points | Not considered significant. |
| 40 to 59 points | Considered significant only if LE and SA sub-scores are each greater than or equal to 20 points. |
| 60 to 79 points | Considered significant unless either LE or SA sub-scores are each less than to 20 points. |
| 80 to 100 points | Considered significant. |
| Source: CDC, 1997. | |

However, in determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, the City will use the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) prepared by the CDC as an option in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland verses using the LESA Model.

East Valley Corridor Specific Plan (EVCSP)

The Project is within the EVCSP, which serves as the principal land use planning document-guiding development within the East Valley Corridor planning area of the City of Redlands. The Specific Plan includes the following standard for agricultural lands.

EV2.0205(a)4: Preserve existing viable agricultural activities in the EVC as long as feasible while the area transitions to more intensive uses.

City of Redlands Measure U

According to the City of Redlands Measure U Referendum (December 12, 1997), the purpose and intent of this initiative measure is to establish comprehensive and inviolable principles of managed development for the City of Redlands that will preserve, enhance, and maintain the special quality of life valued by this community. The principles of managed development established by this initiative measure assure that future development within the City of Redlands occurs in a way that promotes the social and economic well-being of the entire community.

This initiative measure is consonant with and furthers the purpose and intent of Proposition R, approved by the voters in 1978, and Measure N, approved by the voters in 1987 with regard to the preservation of agricultural land. In addition, it furthers the explicit policy of the State of California set forth in California Government Code Section 51220, which reads in relevant part as follows:

. . . [T]he 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.

. . . [I]n 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.

3.2.4 - Thresholds of Significance

According to the CEQA Guidelines' Appendix G Environmental Checklist, to determine whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated:

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the CDC as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.

Would the Project:

- a) 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?
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?
- c) 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))?
- d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?
- e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?

3.2.5 - Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses potential impacts associated with the development of the Project and provides mitigation measures where appropriate.

Convert Farmland to Non-Agricultural Use

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact AG-1 | 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? [CEQA Agricultural Resources Threshold 2(a)] |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Impact Analysis

Historically, the Project site has been utilized primarily for agricultural purposes as an orchard from approximately 1938 until approximately 2002 (KA 2006). Three single-family residential structures

occupied the northeast corners of Parcels 01 and 02 and the northern boundary of Parcel 04 from at least 1938 until the demolition of the dwellings on Parcels 01 and 04 in the early 1990s. Currently, the Project site is primarily vacant, occupied by a fallow orchard on Parcel 02 located in the west-central portion of the Project site. Since the 1970s, the general vicinity of the Project site has been increasingly developed with residential and commercial uses.

According to the City of Redlands General Plan, the Project site is not located in an agricultural preserve or currently used for agricultural production. However, according to the State’s FMMP, the Project site is classified as having approximately 9.70 acres of prime farmland, 0.15 acre of farmland of statewide importance, 35.68 acres of grazing land, and 0.10 acre of urban built-up land. However, the FMMP requires that the land be irrigated and used for agricultural production within the past four (4) years to be considered prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance. The Project site has not been irrigated or in agricultural production for over nine (9) years. Consequently, the Project does not fall within prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as per FMMP requirements.

In addition, the Project site is zoned as CP-4 (Concept Plan - 4) per the EVCSP and has a Land Use Designation of Commercial, which is consistent with the Projects proposed uses. Consequently, the Project site has been planned for urban development as part of the EVCSP. Furthermore, the City of Redlands retains substantial areas of agricultural lands within the City. Specifically, substantial agricultural preserves exist in the City's Canyon areas; concentrated areas of agricultural lands remain in the northern areas of the City; and the City maintains broad areas for Citrus production throughout the City. This is further confirmed by the City's General Plan, which demonstrates that many agricultural lands remain within the City (see Redlands Planning Area MEA Figure 5.2, Agricultural Lands). Implementation of the Project will therefore have a less than significant impact to the conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant.

Conflict with Existing Zoning or Williamson Act Contract

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact AG-2 | Would the Project: Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract? |
| | [CEQA Agricultural Resources Threshold 2(b)] |

Impact Analysis

The Project site’s underlying zoning is EV/SD (Special Development), of the EVSP. Concept Plan No. 4 was thereafter applied to development of the Project site, which is consistent with the Projects

proposed uses. Additionally, according to the City of Redlands General Plan, the Project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

In addition, a growth control zoning ordinance within the City of Redlands known as Proposition R, as amended by Measure N, purports to allow no more than 2800 residential units (excluding congregate and single room occupancy units) to be built within the City and 1,050 units provided with service connections located in the County and later to be annexed into the City. The Project does not propose to develop residential uses within the Project site. Therefore, the City's Proposition R and Measure N are not applicable to this Project.

Therefore, the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, nor would it affect any Williamson Act contract. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant.

Conflicts with Forest Zoning

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact AG-3 | 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))? [CEQA Agricultural Resources Threshold 2(c)] |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Impact Analysis

While the Project will remove the existing Eucalyptus trees located along the northern property boundary, just south of San Bernardino Avenue, the Project site does not contain any forestland or timberland as defined within Threshold 2(c). In addition, according to Public Resources Code sections 12220(g) and 4526, "Forest land" is land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. The Project site is regularly disked and is highly disturbed from past agricultural and human activities, and non-native ruderal forbs and grasses dominate the site. In addition, the Project site does not contain flowing water or standing pools, nor does the site support any vegetation or resources that serves as a habitat for the migratory fish or wildlife. Therefore, land use and development activities contemplated by the proposed Project are not considered a forest resource and would not impact these resources. No impacts would occur.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

No impact.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

No impact.

Conversion of Forest Land to Non-Forest Use

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact AG-4 | Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? [CEQA Agricultural Resources Threshold 2(d)] |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Impact Analysis

The Project site is designated as EV/SD (East Valley Specific Plan/ Special Development) District according to the City of Redlands Zoning Map, which is a non-forest zoning designation. In addition, according to Public Resources Code sections 12220(g) and 4526, “Forest land” is land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. The Project site is regularly disked and is highly disturbed from past agricultural and human activities, and non-native ruderal forbs and grasses dominate the site. In addition, the Project site does not contain flowing water or standing pools, nor does the site support any vegetation or resources that serves as a habitat for the migratory fish or wildlife. Therefore, land use and development activities contemplated by the proposed Project are not considered a forest resource and would not impact these resources. This condition precludes the possibility of the proposed Project conflicting with a forest zoning designation. No impacts would occur.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

No impact.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

No impact.

Other Changes Resulting in Farmland Conversion to Non-Agricultural Use

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact AG-5 | Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use? [CEQA Agricultural Resources Threshold 2(e)] |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Impact Analysis

Previous uses of the Project site include agricultural production. Some of the land in the surrounding area has been farmed in the recent past, and some surrounding parcels are used on an infrequent basis for agriculture. It is possible that development of the Project site as a commercial use will incrementally increase pressure on surrounding agricultural land to convert to non-agricultural use. However, according to the City's General Plan land use map, the immediate area of the Project site allows for commercial uses similar to the Project site and low density residential uses similar to the existing residential uses along Karon Street located to the southeast of the Project site. Implementation of the Project would not interfere with such uses. Therefore, the impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant.

