

5. Environmental Analysis

5.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section of the DEIR describes the impacts—or lack thereof—of the proposed Project on existing agriculture and forestry resources. The information in this section is based on details of the proposed Project (see Chapter 3, *Project Description*) in this DEIR, existing conditions in the Project area (see Chapter 4, *Environmental Setting*), and review of state farmland maps.

5.2.1 Environmental Setting

5.2.1.1 REGULATORY SETTING

Regulations and plans applicable to the proposed Project are summarized below.

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The goal of the state Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California’s agricultural land resources. FMMP produces “Important Farmland” maps, which are a hybrid of resource quality (soils) and land use information. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. The maps are updated every two years with the use of a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance. Data is also released in statistical formats—principally the biennial “California Farmland Conversion Report.”

California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

The Williamson Act provides tax incentives to retain prime agricultural land and open space in agricultural use, which subsequently slows its conversion to urban development. The Williamson Act requires a 10-year contract between the applicable city or county and landowners who enter into contracts for long-term use restrictions on qualifying agricultural and open space land. In accordance with the contract, the land must be taxed based on its agricultural use rather than its full market value. The overall purpose of the Williamson Act is to protect agricultural lands and open space.

California Land Evaluation Site Assessment Model

The California Land Evaluation Site Assessment Model (LESA) was developed by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service to assist state and local officials with making sound decisions regarding land use. LESA was subsequently adapted by the California Department of Conservation for use in California. LESA analyzes soil resource quality, project size, water resource availability, surrounding protected resource lands, and surrounding agricultural lands; the model

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output is a numerical rating. LESA includes a numeric threshold for determining significance under CEQA of impacts on conversion of mapped farmland to nonagricultural uses.

Farmland Classifications

The California Department of Conservation, through the FMMP, classifies agricultural lands as follows:

Prime Farmland: Prime Farmland consists of land that has the best combination of physical and chemical features capable of sustaining long-term production of agricultural crops. This land possesses optimal soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply required to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated crop production four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: Similar to Prime Farmland, this land has a good combination of physical and chemical features capable of sustaining long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has minor shortcomings, such as a decreased ability to store soil moisture and greater slopes in comparison to Prime Farmland. Land must have been used for irrigated crop production four years prior to the mapping date.

Unique Farmland: This land tends to have decreased quality soils used for production of the state's leading agricultural crops. It is generally irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. This land is used for specific, high-economic-value crop production, such as oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, or cut flowers. Land must have been used for crop production four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Local Importance: Each county's board of supervisors, with additional assistance from a local advisory committee, determines important land to the local agricultural economy. The county board of supervisors has designated producing lands that would meet the standard criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but are not irrigated, as being of "Local Importance."

Grazing Land: This land consists of existing vegetation that is suitable for livestock grazing. This particular category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.

Urban and Built-Up Land: The land is generally occupied by structures consisting of a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. Common examples include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, and sewage treatment and water control structures.

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Other Land: This category includes land that is excluded from other mapping categories. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas unsuitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines or borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land greater than 40 acres and surrounded on all sides by urban development is mapped as Other Land.

Land Committed to Non-agricultural Use: This optional designation is an overlay to the standard farmland categories described above. It represents existing farmland and grazing land, and vacant areas with a permanent commitment for development. Examples of this category include an area undergoing permanent infrastructure installation or for which bonds or assessments have been issued for public utilities. Such lands represent planning areas where there are commitments for future nonagricultural development that are not reversible by a city council or board of supervisors' majority vote.

Local

Long Beach General Plan

Because Long Beach is a heavily urbanized community, the City's adopted general plan does not focus on issues related to agriculture or forestry resources. There are no provisions related to such resources in the adopted conservation element, and the general plan land use map does not include designated parcels for either agricultural or forest land.

Long Beach Municipal Code

There are no zoning designations in Long Beach that are specifically designed to permit or encourage the development of agricultural uses. Furthermore, except for provisions of the code related to community gardens, the Long Beach Municipal Code does not establish restrictions or regulations related to the operation of agricultural uses.

5.2.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Agricultural Uses

Long Beach is a heavily urbanized community that is almost entirely built out. The only existing agricultural operations in the City are small-scale commercial nurseries and community gardens. As shown in Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, the Project area, like the rest of Long Beach, is highly urbanized. The area's existing wetlands and waterways are surrounded by a number of buildings, structures, and other hardscape and landscape improvements. The Project area contains no existing agricultural uses.

Forestry Resources

There are no forests in the Project area or elsewhere in Long Beach.

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5.2.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- 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.
- AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- 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)).
- AG-4 Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- 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 or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

The Initial Study, included as Appendix A to this DEIR, substantiates that no impacts associated with thresholds AG-1 through AG-5 would occur from implementation of the proposed Project. However, due to input received from members of the public, this DEIR has been prepared as a “full scope” EIR, where every environmental topic listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is evaluated. Therefore, all the above thresholds are addressed in the following analysis.

5.2.3 Environmental Impacts

The following impact analysis addresses adopted thresholds of significance related to agriculture and forestry resources. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.2-1: Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would not convert farmland to nonfarmland uses. [Thresholds AG-1 and AG-5]

Impact Analysis: As shown in Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, the Project area is in a highly urbanized portion of Los Angeles County. The existing wetlands and waterways are surrounded by a number of buildings, structures, and other hardscape and landscape improvements. According to the California Department of Conservation “California Important Farmland Finder,” the Project area is not designated Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance (DOC 2014). Thus, implementation of the proposed Project would not convert

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mapped farmland to nonagricultural use. No impacts to farmland would occur and no mitigation is necessary.

Impact 5.2-2: Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would not conflict with zoning for agricultural uses or conflict with an existing Williamson contract. [Threshold AG-2]

Impact Analysis: The California Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection does not show any land within Long Beach as being subject to a Williamson Act contract (DOC 2013). In addition, per Chapter 21.30 of the City's municipal code, the City does not have any land zoned for agricultural use (Long Beach 2014b). Therefore, no impact would occur, and no mitigation is necessary.

Impact 5.2-3: Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would not conflict with existing zoning for forest land or otherwise result in the loss or conversion of forest land. [Thresholds AG-3, AG-4, and AG-5]

Impact Analysis: The City of Long Beach does not have any land zoned for forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production (Long Beach 2015). Furthermore, there are no existing forests in the Project area. Buildout of the proposed Specific Plan would have no impact on forestland and no mitigation is necessary.

5.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

As discussed above, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in any adverse impacts to agriculture or forestry resources. Therefore, when combined with other growth and development in the area, the Project could not contribute to a cumulative impact related to those resources.

5.2.5 Existing Regulations

No regulations related to agriculture and forestry resources apply.

5.2.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements and standard conditions of approval, Impacts 5.2-1 through 5.2-3 would be less than significant.

5.2.7 Mitigation Measures

No significant adverse impacts related to agriculture and forestry resources were identified, and no mitigation is necessary.

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5.2.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

No significant adverse impacts related to agriculture and forestry resources were identified.

5.2.9 References

California Department of Conservation (DOC). 2014. California Important Farmland Finder.
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