3.5 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section describes the existing agricultural resources within the City's Planning Area and analyzes the potential impacts of the proposed General Plan goals, policies, and objectives on agricultural resources within the City and the adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI). The City's Planning Area consists of its incorporated boundaries and adopted SOI. The County's Planning Area consists of unincorporated land within the One Valley One Vision (OVOV) Planning Area boundaries that is outside the City's boundaries and adopted SOI. Together the City and the County Planning Areas comprise the OVOV Planning Area. Implementation of the Land Use Policy Map would have a significant impact on agricultural land because it would convert some of the Important Farmland under the California Department of Conservation (CDC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, to urbanized land uses. This potential conversion of Important Farmlands to urbanized land uses is considered significant under the *California Environmental Quality Act* (*CEQA) Guidelines*.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Agricultural resources are classified by soil categories as defined by the federal government and farmland mapping categories as defined by the state. Soil categories are determined by the US Soil Conservation Service and classified by agricultural potential. Farmland mapping categories are determined by the CDC.

Federal Soil Categories

The US Soil Conservation Service groups soils into eight classes based on agricultural potential. This classification is dependent on slope, organic matter, flooding, and erosion hazards. Class I and II soils, often referred to as prime soils, are best for agricultural production. Such soils are deep, generally well drained, and easily worked. The western portion of the OVOV Planning Area contains small areas of soils determined to be soil Classes I and II which are considered Prime Farmland. The vast portion of the western OVOV Planning Area is grazing land, whose soils are determined to be Class III to Class VIII. The remainder of the OVOV Planning Area contains soils less suitable for agriculture, ranging from Class III to Class VIII.

State Farmland Mapping Categories

The CDC and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts translate soil survey data into an "Important Farmland Series" of maps for the state's agricultural counties by using Soil Conservation Service soil classifications. These classifications of the CDC's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program focus only on those lands that have been recently farmed. Land not recently farmed is not shown on the Important Farmland Series of maps.[1]

The Important Farmland Maps and the Advisory Guidelines for the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program identify five agriculture-related categories, as shown in **Figure 3.5-1, Farmland Designations within the OVOV Planning Area**:

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Grazing Land

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

Farmland of Statewide Importance: This farmland is similar to Prime Farmland but has minor shortcomings such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. In order to have the Farmland of Statewide Importance designation, the land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Unique Farmland: This farmland is of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. In order to have the Unique Farmland designation, the land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

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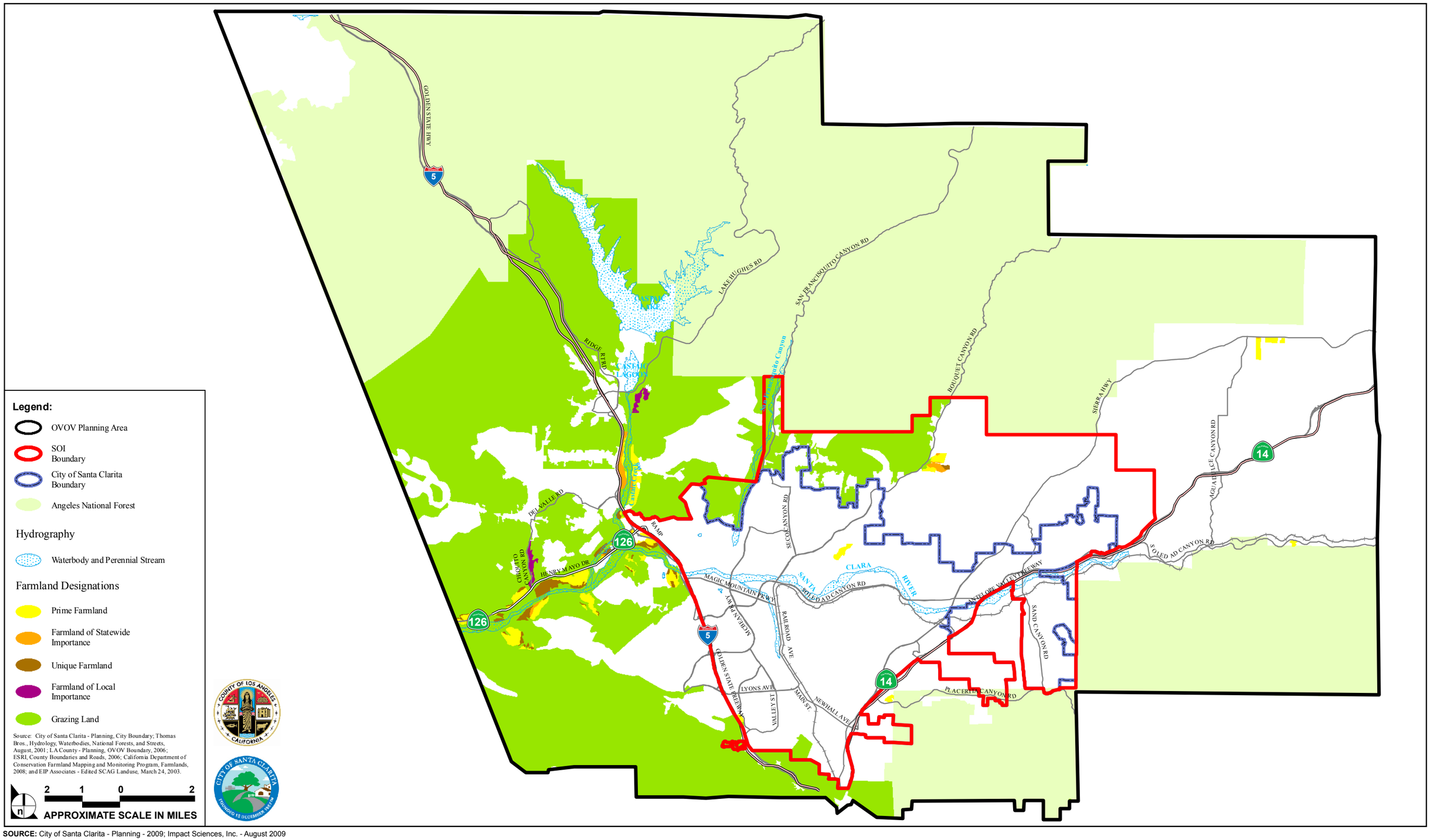
1 The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Maps are updated on a biennial basis.



SOURCE: City of Santa Clarita - Planning - 2009; Impact Sciences, Inc. - August 2009

FIGURE **3.5-1**

Farmland Designations within the OVOV Planning Area

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Farmland of Local Importance: This designation consists of soils of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. Los Angeles County defines farmland of local importance as producing lands that would meet the standard criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance but are not irrigated.

Grazing Land: Grazing Land consists of existing vegetation that is suited to the grazing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.

State of California Agricultural Lands

As documented by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) the state's Important Farmlands and grazing lands decreased by nearly 170,982 acres (267 square miles) between 2002 and 2004.[2] The highest-quality agricultural soils, known as Prime Farmland, comprised 46 percent of the loss (78,575 acres). Accelerated urban development in the San Joaquin Valley and other inland locations contributed to a 10 percent increase (101,825 acres) in statewide urbanization in the 2002–2004 period relative to the 2000–2002 period. Both higher urbanization rates and a larger share of new urban lands for inland counties characterized development patterns during the 2004 mapping cycle. Ten counties accounted for 65 percent of all urbanization, led by Riverside and San Bernardino at 23 percent of the statewide total.[3]

Housing was the largest component of new urban acreage, with developments ranging from small infill sites to planned community units of 600 acres or more. Commercial uses (shopping, offices) and community facilities (schools, parks) were constructed in conjunction with the residential developments. Large site-specific developments included warehouse distribution facilities.

Commodity markets and other factors affect land management decisions, causing shifts both in and out of irrigated agricultural use. Conversion from grasslands to orchards, vineyards, and specialty crops were frequent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but slowed significantly between the 2002 and 2004 updates (from 173,523 to 80,598 acres).[4]

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2 California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, *California Farmland Conversion Report 2002–2004*, December 2006.

3 California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, *California Farmland Conversion Report 2002–2004*, December 2006. p. 1.

4 California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, *California Farmland Conversion Report 2002–2004*, December 2006, p. 2.

Land was removed from irrigated categories to uses aside from urban at almost the same rate as the prior update (189,980 acres in 2000–2002 and 188,109 acres in 2002–2004).[5] This includes land idling, non-irrigated cropping, conversion to wildlife areas, low-density residential uses, mining, or confined animal agriculture facilities.

Nearly 40 percent of conversions out of agricultural uses statewide were to Other Land in the most recent update, an indicator that agricultural land-use dynamics in California are more complex than urbanization alone. The summary statistics for the conversion of land from agricultural use to non-agricultural use is described further in **Table 3.5-1, California Agricultural Land Conversion 2002-2004.**[6]

State of California Land Use Conversion

California experienced record agricultural land decreases between 2002 and 2004, as overall urbanization increased by 10 percent over the 2000–2002 period (101,825 and 92,750 acres, respectively). Yet urbanization alone did not account for the 78,575-acre net loss in Prime Farmland, 40,465-acre net loss of Farmland of Statewide Importance and the 13,984-acre net loss of Unique Farmland between 2002 and 2004. Land idling, ecological restoration projects, and other conversions contributed to a net loss of 138,644 acres of irrigated land statewide (the total net acreage change of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Irrigated Farmland from 2002 to 2004).

The conversion of grazing and pasture areas to vineyards, orchards and specialty crops is one trend that had helped offset agricultural land losses over time.[7] However, in the last decade this trend has declined. Agricultural upgrades of this kind totaled 80,598 acres between 2002 and 2004, less than half of the 2000–2002 acreage.

Table 3.5-2, Top Counties with Irrigated Land Converted to Urban Land, shows the top 10 counties in the State of California that converted irrigated land to urbanized land. Los Angeles County was not one of the top 10 counties with irrigated land that was converted to urban land in the last two cycle periods.

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5 California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, *California Farmland Conversion Report 2002–2004*, December 2006, p. 2.

6 California Department of Conservation, "Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program," Land Resource Protection, October 31, 2008. The latest data available for the California Agricultural Land Conversion is from the 2002 to 2004 conversion report. Data for the 2004-2006 is being compiled at this time.

7 California Department of Conservation, California Farmland Conversion Report 2002-2004, (2006), p. 11.

Table 3.5-1
California Agricultural Land Conversion 2002–2004

PART I
Summary and Change by Land Use Category

LAND USE CATEGORY	Total Acreage Inventoried 2002	Total Acreage Inventoried 2004	2002–2004 Acreage Changes: Acres Lost (-)	Acres Gained (+)	Total Acreage Changed	Net Acreage Changed
Prime Farmland	5,154,782	5,076,207	108,028	29,453	137,481	-78,575
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2,731,723	2,691,258	56,850	16,385	73,235	-40,465
Unique Farmland	1,289,076	1,275,092	49,024	35,040	84,064	-13,984
Irrigated Farmland	542,422	536,802	9,120	3,500	12,620	-5,620
Non-irrigated Farmland	9,076	7,461	1,721	106	1,827	-1,615
Farmland of Local Importance	2,848,040	2,854,727	92,452	99,139	191,591	6,687
Important Farmland Subtotal	**12,575,119**	**12,441,547**	**317,195**	**183,623**	**500,818**	**-133,572**
Grazing Land	16,390,842	16,353,432	107,900	70,490	178,390	-37,410
Agricultural Land Subtotal	**28,965,961**	**28,794,979**	**425,095**	**254,113**	**679,208**	**-170,982**
Urban and Built-up Land	3,277,833	3,379,658	8,665	110,490	119,155	101,825
Other Land	12,902,121	12,969,764	79,139	146,782	225,921	67,643
Water Area	704,435	705,949	195	1,709	1,904	1,514
Total Area Inventoried	**45,850,350**	**48,850,350**	**513,094**	**513,094**	**1,026,188**	**0**

PART II
Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use

LAND USE CATEGORY	Total Acreage 2004
Prime Farmland	19,319
Farmland of Statewide Importance	3,469
Unique Farmland	6,058
Irrigated Farmland	7
Non-irrigated Farmland	0
Farmland of Local Importance	29,389
IMPORTANT FARMLAND SUBTOTAL	**58,242**
Grazing Land	56,023
AGRICULTURAL LAND SUBTOTAL	**114,265**
Urban and Built-up Land	0
Other Land	45,898
Water Area	0
TOTAL ACREAGE REPORTED	**160,163**

PART III Land Use Conversion from 2002 to 2004

LAND USE CATEGORY		Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Interim Categories	Subtotal Important Farmland	Grazing Land	Total Agricultural Land	Urban and Built-up Land	Other Land	Total Converted To Another Use
Prime Farmland[1]	to:	--	84	1,968	40,702	--	42,754	15,785	58,539	20,771	28,718	108,028
Farmland of Statewide Importance	to:	103	--	411	28,657	--	29,171	4,644	33,815	7,055	15,980	56,850
Unique Farmland	to:	1,031	183	--	13,722	--	14,936	18,089	33,025	2,972	13,027	49,024
Irrigated Farmland	to:	--	--	--	--	18	18	5,246	5,264	335	3,521	9,120
Non-irrigated Farmland	to:	--	--	--	--	338	338	1,186	1,524	0	197	1,721
Farmland of Local Importance	to:	13,284	8,348	14,701	--	--	36,333	11,646	47,979	18,621	25,852	92,452
Important Farmland Subtotal		**14,418**	**8,615**	**17,080**	**83,081**	**356**	**123,550**	**56,596**	**180,146**	**49,754**	**87,295**	**317,195**
Grazing Land	to:	6,292	3,394	12,844	6,859	1,403	30,792	--	30,792	20,671	56,437	107,900
Agricultural Land Subtotal		**20,710**	**12,009**	**29,924**	**89,940**	**1,759**	**154,342**	**56,596**	**210,938**	**70,425**	**143,732**	**425,095**
Urban and Built-up Land	to:	990	463	345	988	65	2,851	1,055	3,906	--	4,759	8,665
Other Land	to:	7,753	3,913	4,771	8,211	1,782	26,430	12,839	39,269	40,065	--	79,334
Total Acreage Converted	**to:**	**29,453**	**16,385**	**35,040**	**99,139**	**3,606**	**183,623**	**70,490**	**254,113**	**110,490**	**148,491**	**513,094**

Source: California Department of Conservation, Department of Land Resource Protection, Farm Land Management Program, 2000-2002 Agricultural Land Conversion Report, Table A-42, accessed at: website: http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/stats_reports/farmland_conv_reports.htm.

[1] *Conversion to Unique Farmland due to delineation of potted plant nurseries throughout the County.*

[2] *The 2002-2004 Land Use Conversion was the most current data at time of publication according to the California Department of Conservation – Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, May 12, 2008. http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/products/Pages/ReportsStatistics.aspx.*

Table 3.5-2
Top Counties with Irrigated Land Converted to Urban Land

2000–2002 Period		2002–2004 Period	
County	Acres of Urban Land	County	Acres of Urban Land
San Joaquin	4,518	Kern	4,275
Riverside	2,488	Stanislaus	3,460
San Bernardino	2,195	Riverside	2,485
Tulare	1,861	San Joaquin	2,239
Stanislaus	1,778	Fresno	2,081
Orange	1,547	Sacramento	1,431
Kern	1,212	Tulare	1,377
Fresno	1,147	San Bernardino	1,243
Yolo	960	Merced	1,058
Santa Clara	858	Imperial	1,047

Source: California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Farmland Conversion Report 2002–2004, May 2008.

Net Land Use Changes in the State of California

Urban land in California expanded by 101,825 acres (159 square miles) between 2002 and 2004, a 10 percent increase compared to the 2000 to 2002 period. Prime Farmland accounted for 19 percent of the urbanization, and 9 percent occurred on other irrigated classes.

The new irrigated farmland loss, 138,644 acres was more than twice as large as it has been during the prior update (53,963 acres). Prime Farmland loss during the 2002–2004 cycle was the largest in FMMP's history (78,575 acres).

City Planning Area

Farmland Categories

City of Santa Clarita

The acreage of Important Farmlands contained within the incorporated boundaries of the City includes:

- Important Farmlands: 62 acres
  - Prime Farmland: 62 acres

Within the City, Important Farmlands occur in one location, generally on alluvial soils north of the Santa Clara River and Soledad Canyon Road, and east of the intersection of Seco Canyon Road and Bouquet Canyon Road, as shown in above **Figure 3.5-1**. The largest category of designated farmland within the incorporated boundaries of the City is Grazing Land, which includes 297 acres.

Sphere of Influence

The City's adopted SOI contains small portions of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland which are located in the northeastern portion of the SOI along Bouquet Canyon Road. Grazing Land is the most abundant type of farmland within the SOI and is generally located within the northern, northwestern, and southern portion of the SOI and includes approximately 4,328 acres.

The acreage of Important Farmlands contained within the SOI of the City of Santa Clarita includes:

- Important Farmlands: 192 acres
  - Prime Farmland: 138 acres
  - Farmland of Statewide Importance: 44 acres
  - Unique Farmland: 10 acres

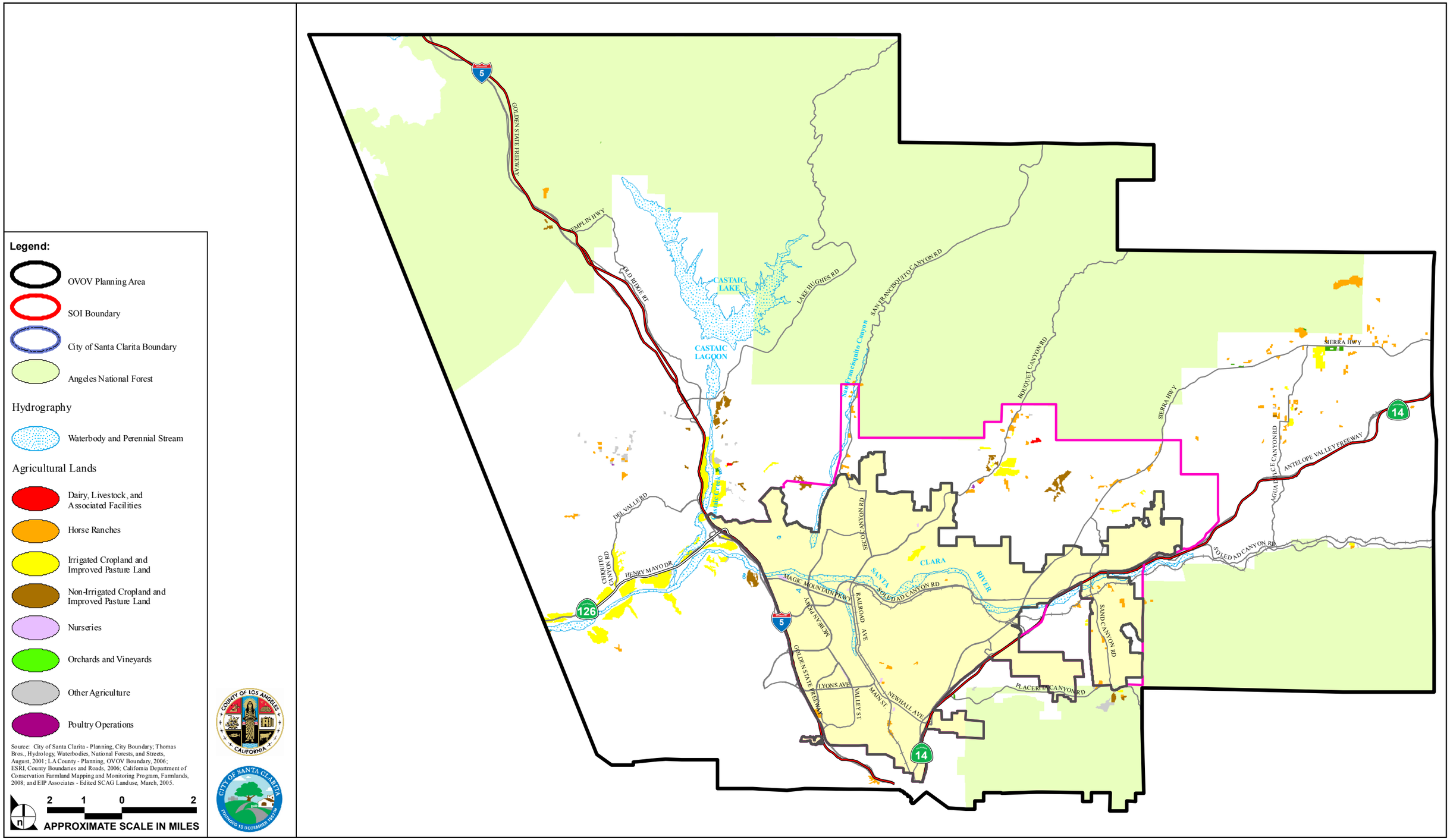
Existing Agricultural Uses in the City's Planning Area

City of Santa Clarita

Approximately 225 acres of existing agricultural uses are located within the existing City boundaries, **Figure 3.5-2, Agricultural Production within the City's Planning Area.** These include the following uses:

- 127 acres of Horse Ranches
- 50 acres of Irrigated Cropland and Improved Pasture Land
- 48 acres of Nurseries
- 0.03 acres of Other Agriculture

There are horse ranches located east of Railroad Avenue in Placerita Canyon, along Sand Canyon Road, and along Pine Street in the City boundaries. Nurseries are located along Magic Mountain Parkway, Bouquet Canyon Road, and Newhall Avenue. Irrigated Cropland and Improved Pasture Land is located north of the Santa Clara River and east of Bouquet Canyon Road.



SOURCE: City of Santa Clarita Planning - 2009; Impact Sciences, Inc. - August 2009

FIGURE **3.5-2**

Agriculture Production within the City's Planning Area

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Sphere of Influence

Approximately 626 acres of existing agricultural uses are located within the City's SOI (**Figure 3.5-2**). Irrigated croplands within the SOI are located along the eastern and western sides of Bouquet Canyon Road; and in the northeast corner of the SOI, southeast of Sierra Highway. Non-irrigated cropland is located in between Bouquet Canyon Road and Sierra Highway in the SOI. Dairy and intensive livestock areas, and poultry operations, are located in the northern portion of the SOI on the eastern side of Bouquet Canyon Road. Other agricultural uses are located in the northern part of the City's SOI along the eastern side of Bouquet Canyon Road. Horse ranches are located on the western and eastern side of San Francisquito Canyon Road, on the eastern side of Bouquet Canyon Road, and on the western side of Sierra Highway. The existing amount of acres of agricultural uses within the existing City's SOI are:

- 18 acres of Dairy, Livestock and Associated Facilities
- 268 acres of Horse Ranches
- 171 acres of Irrigated Cropland and Improved Pasture Land
- 160 acres of Non-Irrigated Crops Land and Improved Pasture Land
- 5 acres of other agricultural uses
- 4 acres of Poultry Operations

Agricultural Preserves within the City Planning Area

There are no existing agricultural preserve areas under Williamson Act contracts or Farmland Security Zones within the City or the adopted SOI. Los Angeles County is one of the few counties within the State of California that does not participate in Williamson Act Contracts. Additionally, there are no right-to-farm ordinances established within the City's Planning Area.

Agricultural Water

The active agricultural land that is within the incorporated boundaries uses water to produce viable crops. The amount of agricultural water that is used on these active agricultural lands within the City is further discussed in **Section 3.13, Water Services,** of this environmental impact report (EIR). Additionally, discussions regarding agricultural water quality aiming to identify and reduce Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) to no greater than 1200 milligrams per liter within the City boundary are located in **Section 3.12, Hydrology and Water Quality,** of this EIR.

Agricultural Pests and Diseases

The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines[8] present criteria for determining whether a proposed use may have a significant adverse impact on agriculture by the introduction of or increased potential for agricultural pests and/or diseases.[9] The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines define this issue as: "Pests/diseases mean the direct or indirect introduction of biological organisms that may be harmful to agricultural production. Indirect introduction can occur when a use will cause a decrease in beneficial organisms or natural or man-made protection against harmful biological organisms." Any proposed non-agricultural land use/development located on or within 0.25 mile of property currently in or suitable for, agricultural production may have an impact.

The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines use the following definitions:

Disease – An abnormal condition of an organism or part, especially as a consequence of infection, weakness, or environmental stress, that impairs normal physiological functioning.

Biological Organism – A living entity, a plant, animal, bacterium, virus, or other entity that lives and is capable of reproduction.

Pest – Any plant, animal or living organism that is harmful to agricultural production.

Within the City, existing non-agricultural land uses are located within 0.25 mile of existing active agricultural areas. These non-agricultural land uses occur at a tree nursery north of Magic Mountain Parkway and east of Interstate 5, and where there is irrigated cropland south of Bouquet Canyon Road and north of Soledad Canyon Road. Within the SOI, portions of existing active agricultural areas are within 0.25 mile of non-agricultural lands along Bouquet Canyon Road and Sierra Highway.

The County of Los Angeles Agriculture Commissioner monitors all aspects of the agricultural production in the County and has the duty to exercise the powers and duties of that office to protect the environment, as it relates to agricultural activities, from adverse effects of biological organisms released into the environment and to protect beneficial biological organisms in the County. The Agricultural Commissioner is authorized to import, collect, release, destroy, and propagate beneficial organisms when

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8 The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines is being used in this document as a response to the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office comment to the NOP regarding the possibility of pests impacting development that is proposed adjacent to agricultural lands within the City's Planning Area.

9 Ventura County, Initial Study Assessment Guidelines, February 2006, p. 42.

such action is deemed to be in the best interest of agricultural activities in the County and its environment.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

In order to assist in determining whether a project will have a significant effect on the environment, the *State CEQA Guidelines*, Appendix G, identify criteria for conditions that may be deemed to constitute a substantial or potentially adverse change in physical conditions. Significant agricultural resources impacts will result if:

- The proposed project were to include the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources agency, to non-agricultural use; and,
- The proposed project were to expose future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations or expose farms to nuisances associated with urban uses.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

This impact analysis section evaluates the potential effects of the proposed General Plan goals, objectives, and policies on agricultural resources and the *State CEQA Guidelines* thresholds of significance criteria.

Impact 3.5-1 **There will be a potentially significant impact if the proposed project would include the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources agency, to non-agricultural use.**

Implementation of the City's General Plan would result in the conversion of some areas of Important Farmland within the City's SOI boundaries to urban land uses. Under the current Land Use Policy Map areas of Important Farmland within the City's SOI boundaries would not be designated as Open Space or Non-Urban land uses where appropriate, as called for in the City's General Plan per **Policy LU 1.1.7**. These areas include the following locations:

- Areas of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance located east of Bouquet Canyon Road within the City's SOI, which will be designated as Rural Residential Land Uses (NU5/RR5) and Urban Residential Land Uses (UR-1) as shown on the Land Use Policy Map.

Areas of Important Farmland (Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland) within the City's boundaries located south of Bouquet Canyon Road and north of Soledad Canyon Road will be designated as Open Space on the Land Use Policy Map **(Goal LU 1, Objective LU 1.1,** and **Policy LU 1.1.7).**

Implementation of the City's General Plan would not result in the conversion of areas of Important Farmland within the City's boundaries. Under the current Land Use Policy Map, areas of Important Farmland within the City's boundaries will be designated as Open Space or Non-Urban Land uses as called for in the City's General Plan where appropriate **(Goal LU 1, Objective LU 1.1,** and **Policy LU 1.1.7).**

Important Farmland (land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) is being lost to urban expansion near existing cities. For farmers, urban encroachment adversely affects the efficiency of remaining farming operations due to increased air pollution, livestock predation by pets, crops disease resulting from inadequate care of off-farm ornamental plants, restrictions on pesticide use and burning, and requirements to set aside on-farm buffer zones. At the same time, production costs have increased due to rising land values, water scarcity, theft and vandalism of farm equipment, crop pilferage, road congestion, and personal injury liability resulting from trespassing on farms. By reducing the profitability of remaining farming operations, urban encroachment tends to have a spiraling effect, encouraging further losses of farms to urban development.

The proposed **Goal LU 1, Objective LU 1.1,** and **Policy LU 1.1.7**, as described below, will help conserve existing lands designated as Important Farmland within the City's Planning Area. The Open Space designation is intended to identify and reserve land for both natural and active open space uses, including public and private parks, conservancy lands, nature preserves, wildlife habitats, water bodies and adjacent riparian habitat, wetlands areas dedicated to open space use, drainage easements, cemeteries, golf course and other open space areas dedicated for public and private uses. Typical uses would include recreation, horticulture, limited agriculture, animal grazing, and habitat preservation. The Non-Urban/Agricultural land use designation would provide non-urban lands that are used for low-density residential uses on large lots, in areas characterized by rural development interspersed with natural open space. Agricultural lands would be included and would be used for grazing, horticulture, row, field, and tree crops, and limited keeping of livestock, horses, and other large animals.

The identification of these Important Farmlands by the City throughout the Santa Clarita Valley is consistent with **Objective CO 10.1.** Classifying these Important Farmlands as Open Space and Non-Urban land uses where appropriate would preserve these areas in their current state (**Policy LU 1.1.7**). The purpose of **Goal CO 10** and **Objective CO 10.1** is the preservation of open space within the City's

Planning Area. **Policy CO 10.1.9** promotes preservation of open space to provide natural carbon sequestration benefits.

Although the acreage of Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland within the City's Planning Area is small in comparison to the inventoried amount within the State of California, any amount of conversion of Important Farmland is considered significant. This is due to the potential decrease of local and state agricultural economies from conversion of Important Farmlands to urban land uses. Implementation of the Land Use Policy Map would have a significant impact on agricultural land, in that it would convert some of the Important Farmlands within the City's SOI to urban-based land uses.

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal LU 1: An interconnected Valley of Villages providing diverse lifestyles, surrounded by a greenbelt of natural open space.

Objective LU 1.1: Maintain an urban form for the Santa Clarita Valley that preserves an open space greenbelt around the developed portions of the Valley, protects significant resources from development, and directs growth to urbanized areas served with infrastructure.

Policy LU 1.1.7: Preserve and protect important agricultural resources, including farmland and grazing land, through designating these areas as Open Space and Non-Urban on the Land Use Map, where appropriate.

Goal CO 10: Preservation of open space to meet the community's multiple objectives for resource preservation.

Objective CO 10.1: Identify areas throughout the Santa Clarita Valley which should be preserved as open space in order to conserve significant resources for long-term community benefit.

Policy CO 10.1.9: Preserve forested areas, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, wetlands, watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and other open space that provides natural carbon sequestration benefits.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

Open space preservation would be protected with implementation of **Goal LU 1, Objective LU 1.1, Policy LU 1.1.7, Goal CO 10, Objective CO 10.1, and Policy CO 10.1.9**. The potential loss of Important Farmland, while small in acreage is not consistent with **Policy CO 10.1.9**, which promotes the preservation of agricultural lands to provide natural carbon sequestration benefits. Implementation of the Land Use Policy Map would have a significant impact on agricultural land because it would convert some of the Important Farmlands within the City's SOI to urban-based land uses.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Buildout conditions under the existing Plan would differ from those under the proposed General Plan. Some agricultural land would be designated as urban land use designations under both Alternative 1 and the proposed General Plan. Since Alternative 1 the existing Plan and the proposed General Plan would designate farmland with similar densities, impacts on agricultural resources under Alternative 1 would be comparable to those associated with the proposed General Plan. The EIR has determined that Agricultural Resources impacts (Loss of Important Farmland) would be significant and unavoidable under the existing Plan and the City's proposed General Plan.

Impact 3.5-2 **There will be a potentially significant impact if the proposed project were to expose future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations or expose farms to nuisances associated with urban uses.**

Implementation of the General Plan would result in urbanized land uses being adjacent to Open Space and Non-Urban/Agricultural land uses that will contain existing agricultural operations. Typically where non-agricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas or exists side by side, agricultural operations often become the subject of nuisance complaints. As a result, some agricultural operations are forced to cease or curtail operations, others are discouraged from making investments in farm improvements, and efficient agricultural production is generally discouraged due to burdensome litigation against farmers.

The implementation of the General Plan could result in nuisance complaints from future residents in regards to the operations of existing agricultural operations. Additionally, nuisance complaints from existing agricultural operators could be voiced in regards to urbanized land uses being in close proximity of the agricultural operations. Nuisance complaints such as pilferage, vandalism, excessive noise, odors, pesticide overspray, and increased rodent/pest populations could result from the existence of agriculturally active operations existing adjacent to urbanized areas. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan could result in a significant impact in regards to exposing future residents to nuisances

associated with agricultural operations or exposing farming activities to nuisances associated with urban uses.

In regards to pest management from agricultural land uses, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office indicates their primary concern regarding the possible transport of pest and disease into agricultural operations adjacent to urban development is through physical transport by vehicular traffic, not through trespass incidents from pedestrians or animals of residential developments.[10] As the proposed project has no direct street access or vehicle route from the developed areas to ongoing agricultural operation, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office indicates that the risk of introduction of pests and/or disease would be low. The Commissioner is authorized to implement or cooperate in management or mitigation programs to be conducted against such plant, environmental, or nuisance pests as can be controlled in an economically, ecologically, and biologically sound manner to protect agriculture. Since the General Plan does not contain any policies that will reduce the impacts associated with possible exposure of future residents and employees to agricultural pests and diseases; impacts would be considered potentially significant.

The General Plan does not include any goals, objectives, or policies that will:

- reduce the impacts associated with possible exposure of future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations,
- reduce the impacts of exposure from currently established farms to nuisances associated with adjacent urban uses, or
- reduce exposure to future residents of agricultural pests and diseases.

The development of individual projects within the City's Planning Area that could be placed adjacent to active agricultural lands is currently unknown. Therefore, any future individual projects that are developed within the City's Planning Area will be required to provide analysis in regards to potential nuisances from agricultural activity and potential mitigation measures to reduce these potential impacts will be developed on a project-by-project basis.

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The proposed General Plan does not include any goals, objectives, or policies that address possible exposure of (1) future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations, or (2) currently

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10 Personal Communication with Ms. Rita Graham, Agricultural Planner, Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Oct. 23, 2007.

established farms from nuisances associated with adjacent urban uses. The potential for development within the City's Planning Area and the possibility that new development would be located next to agriculturally active lands is unknown at this time. Therefore, any future individual projects that are developed within the City's Planning Area shall be analyzed on a project-by-project basis, and mitigation measures would be recommended as needed.

Effectiveness of General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The proposed General Plan does not contain any policies that would reduce the exposure of future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations or expose farms to nuisances from urban uses. Therefore, these impacts could be potentially significant. However, analysis of these potential impacts and implementation of mitigation measures would be required on an individual project-by-project basis, to determine the potential of future residents being exposed to nuisances from agriculturally active land within the City's Planning Area.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Both the existing Plan and the proposed General Plan do not include goals or policies that address the expose of humans to nuisances associated with agricultural operations, thus potential impacts would be the similar in both plans.

MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

Impacts on agricultural land use within the City's Planning Area would be significant because the Land Use Policy Map would convert some of the Important Farmlands within the City's SOI to urban-based land uses.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT WITH MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

Impacts on agricultural land uses would remain a significant impact.