

5.11 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes the agricultural resources in the area and the policies pertaining to these resources. Sources used to assess impacts of the project include the Land Use Element and Conservation and Air Quality Element of the General Plan (City of Elk Grove, 2005), the City of Elk Grove General Plan EIR (2003), the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Reports, the California Department of Conservation Important Farmlands Map, and the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (1993).

5.11.1 SETTING

FARMLAND CLASSIFICATIONS

The two systems used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine a soil's agricultural productivity include the Soil Capability Classification and the Storie Index Rating System. The "prime" soil classifications of both systems indicate the absence of soil limitations, which if present, would require the application of management techniques (e.g., drainage, leveling, special fertilizing practices) to enhance production.

Soil Capability Classification

The Soil Capability Classification System takes into consideration soil limitations, the risk of damage when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment. Capability classes range from Class I soils, which have few limitations for agriculture, to Class VIII soils, which are unsuitable for agriculture. Generally, as the ratings of the capability classification system increase, the yields and profits are more difficult to obtain. A general description of soil classification, as defined by the NRCS, is provided in **Table 5.11-1**.

**TABLE 5.11-1
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

| Class | Definition |
|-------|--|
| I | Soils have few limitations that restrict their use. |
| II | Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices. |
| III | Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both. |
| IV | Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both. |
| V | Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations; impractical to remove that limit their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat. |
| VI | Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat. |
| VII | Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat. |
| VIII | Soils and landforms have limitation that preclude their use for commercial plant production and restrict their use to recreation, wildlife habitat, or water supply, or to aesthetic purposes. |

Source: NRCS, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.

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Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating system ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture from Grade 1 soils (80 to 100 rating), which have few or no limitations for agricultural production to Grade 6 soils (less than 10), which are not suitable for agriculture. Under this system, soils deemed less than prime can function as prime soils when limitations such as poor drainage, slopes, or soil nutrient deficiencies are partially or entirely removed. The six grades, ranges in index rating, and definition of the grades, as defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), are provided below in **Table 5.11-2**.

**TABLE 5.11-2
STORIE INDEX RATING SYSTEM**

| Grade | INDEX RATING | Definition |
|---------------------|----------------|--|
| 1 – Excellent | 80 through 100 | Soils are well suited to intensive use for growing irrigated crops that are climatically suited to the region. |
| 2 – Good | 60 through 79 | Soils are good agricultural soils, although they may not be so desirable as Grade 1 because of moderately coarse, coarse, or gravelly surface soil texture; somewhat less permeable subsoil; lower plant available water holding capacity, fair fertility; less well drained conditions, or slight to moderate flood hazards, all acting separately or in combination. |
| 3 – Fair | 40 through 59 | Soils are only fairly well suited to general agricultural use and are limited in their use because of moderate slopes; moderate soil depths; less permeable subsoil; fine, moderately fine or gravelly surface soil textures; poor drainage; moderate flood hazards; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination. |
| 4 – Poor | 20 through 39 | Soils are poorly suited. They are severely limited in their agricultural potential because of shallow soil depths; less permeable subsoil; steeper slope; or more clayey or gravelly surface soil textures than Grade 3 soils, as well as poor drainage; greater flood hazards; hummocky micro-relief; salinity; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination. |
| 5 – Very Poor | 10 through 19 | Soils are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland. |
| 6 – Nonagricultural | Less than 10 | Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization. |

Source: NRCS, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (USDA-SCS). The intent of the USDA-SCS was to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. As part of the nationwide agricultural land use mapping effort, the USDA-SCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classified the land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability included both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and the actual land use. Important Farmland Maps are derived from the USDA-SCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria.

Important Farmland Maps for California are compiled using modified LIM criteria, in order to consider physical conditions such as a dependable water supply for agricultural production, soil temperature range, depth of the ground water table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth, as well as current land use information. Important Farmland Maps identify five agriculture-related categories: prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, farmland of local importance, and grazing land. Each is briefly summarized below, based on *A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program* (1994), prepared by the California Department of Conservation (DOC).

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is considered land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain the long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. The land must have been producing irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles (a cycle is equivalent to 2 years) prior to the mapping date of 2000 (or since 1996).

Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of statewide importance is considered land similar to prime farmland, but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or with less ability to hold and store moisture. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date (or since 1996).

Unique Farmland

Unique farmland is land 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. The land must have been cultivated at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date (or since 1996).

Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of local importance is land of importance to the local agricultural economy, as determined by each County's Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. Farmland of local importance in Sacramento County includes lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique, but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or non-irrigated crops; lands that would meet the Prime or Statewide designation and have been improved for irrigation, but are now idle; and lands that currently support confined livestock, poultry operations and aquaculture.

Grazing Land

Grazing land is considered land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suited to the grazing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for this category is 40 acres.

Urban and Built-Up Land

Urban and built-up land is considered land occupied with structures with a building density of at least one unit to one-half acre. Uses may include, but are not limited to, residential, industrial,

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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.

Other Land

Other land is considered land that is not included in any other mapping categories. The following uses are generally included: rural development, brush, timber, government land, strip mines, borrow pits, and a variety of other rural land uses.

CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY ECONOMY

Sacramento County ranked twenty-seventh in total value of production out of fifty-eight counties in the state, with gross revenues from the sales of agricultural commodities of \$274.5 million in 2003 (California Agricultural Statistics Service, 2003). The leading crops included wine grapes, nursery products, Bartlett pears and poultry. Revenue generated from agricultural activities in the County employed approximately 3,600 individuals with jobs ranging from crop production to processing, shipping, and other related industries. In comparison, there were approximately 764,000 total jobs in the Sacramento Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (El Dorado, Placer and Sacramento Counties) in December, 2004 (California Employment Development Department, 2005).

SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARMLAND CONVERSION

One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion says that the proximity of agricultural land to urban uses increases the value of the agricultural land either directly through formal purchase offers, or indirectly through recent sales in the vicinity, and through the extension of utilities and other urban infrastructure into productive agricultural areas. The conversion of Important Farmlands in Sacramento County from 1994 to 2002 is presented in **Table 5.11-3**.

In Sacramento County, there has been an increase in the acreage of both Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance. These increases are explained by several factors: the redistribution of categories in 1994 and 2002, the conversion of fallow land to irrigated cropland after a long drought, conversion due to land left idle for three or more update cycles, and new vineyards and corn production in the southeastern portion of the County. Nevertheless, as presented in **Table 5.11-3**, the total amount of agricultural land in the County decreased by approximately 5.3 percent during the eight-year period from 1994 to 2002. This decrease equates to an average loss of approximately 1,574 acres of Important Farmlands annually, which includes land both in and out of production. A portion of this farmland is being lost due to economic incentives to convert land to developed uses (City of Elk Grove, 2003).

TABLE 5.11-3
ACRES OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS - SACRAMENTO COUNTY (1994 TO 2002)

| Year | Acres Present by Type | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Prime Farmland | Farmland of Statewide Importance | Unique Farmland | Farmland of Local Importance | Total Important Farmlands |
| 1994 | 123,245 | 76,239 | 11,311 | 28,259 | 239,054 |
| 1996 | 123,104 | 74,276 | 11,369 | 28,426 | 237,175 |
| 1998 | 121,974 | 67,713 | 13,521 | 33,732 | 236,940 |
| 2000 | 115,389 | 63,536 | 15,476 | 33,530 | 227,931 |
| 2002 | 111,984 | 60,773 | 15,834 | 37,885 | 226,476 |
| 8 Year Difference | -11,261 | -15,466 | +4,523 | +9,626 | -12,588 |
| Annual Average Difference | -1,423 | -1,933 | +565 | +1,203 | -1,574 |
| 6 Year Percent Difference | -9.1 % | -20.3 % | +28.2 % | +25.4 % | -5.3 % |

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Conversion Reports 1992 to 1994, and 1996 to 1998, 1998 to 2000 and 2000 to 2002. http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/pubs/stats_reports/farmland_conv_reports.htm.

PROJECT SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Project Area Lands Characteristics

The land bordering Franklin Road does not currently contain any Prime Farmland or Unique Farmland (refer to **Figure 5.11-1**). Land bordering the project site on the west side of Franklin Boulevard and south side of Elk Grove Boulevard, in the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (SLNWR), is zoned for Permanent Agriculture (AG-80) and used for cattle grazing practices. The land is classified as Grazing Land under the DOC Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (2002).

Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance are located along the east side of Franklin Boulevard (FMMP, 2002). Adjacent properties on the east side of Franklin Boulevard are designated and zoned for residential, commercial/office, public schools and parks. In addition, existing easements owned by the CSD and SRCSD are located on the east side of Franklin Boulevard. One is a landscaping easement granted to CSD for landscaping around the sidewalk immediately adjacent to the roadway. This easement has been landscaped with grass, shrubs, and small trees and is not used as agricultural land. Another easement approximately 90 feet in width between the CSD easement and the residential housing developments as a SRCSD sewer easement for a sewer interceptor to be installed in approximately 2010. This 90-foot strip of land extending from just south of Laguna South Channel to Poppy Ridge Road is undeveloped ruderal grasslands that are not used for agricultural purposes. This easement is no longer viable agricultural land because of its proximity to urban land uses, and its future designated use as a sewer easement that will require excavation for pipe installation and periodic maintenance.

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Williamson Act Contracts

There are no parcels in the project area under Williamson Act contract.

Production and Soil Conditions

Soils on the project site consist of three soil types: San Joaquin silt loam, Clear Lake clay, and San Joaquin-Galt complex. Project site soils are classified as Class III and IV soil capability. The Class III soil capability indicates that soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both. The Class IV soil capability indicates that soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both. All project site soils have a Storie Index Grade of Poor, which indicates that the soils are poorly suited for general agriculture use. The soil capability classification, Storie Index rating and grade, and farmland designation is presented for each of these soils is shown in **Table 5.11-4**.

TABLE 5.11-4
ON-SITE SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION AND STORIE INDEX RATING

| Soil Map Symbol and Name | Soil Capability Classification | Storie Index Rating | Storie Index Grade |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 114 Clear Lake clay, partially drained, 0-2% slopes, frequently flooded | IVw-2 | 22 | 4 - Poor |
| 214 San Joaquin silt loam, 0-3% slopes | IIIs-3 | 28 | 4 - Poor |
| 218 San Joaquin Galt complex, 0-3% slopes | IIIs-5 | 22 | 4 - Poor |

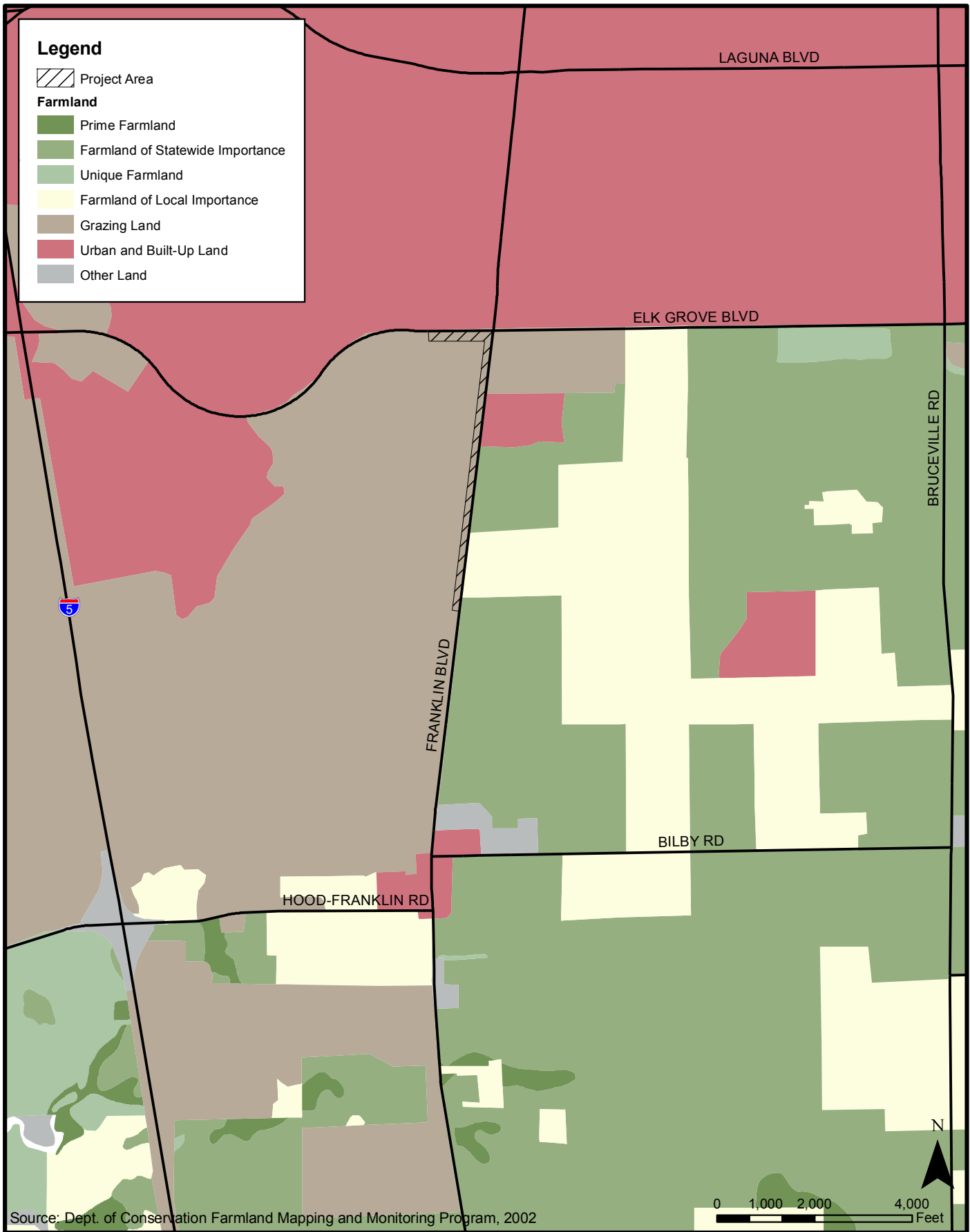
Source: Soil Name/Classification/Storie Index/Grade, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, Soil Conservation Service, 1993.

5.11.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

STATE

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 in order to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands and to prevent their premature conversion to urban uses. In order to preserve these uses, the Act established an agricultural preserve contract procedure by which any county or city within the state taxes landowners at a lower rate, based on the agricultural use of the land, as opposed to its market value. In return for the lower tax rate, the owners guarantee agricultural production on the land for a ten-year period. Prime farmland under the Williamson Act includes land that qualifies as Class I and II in the SCS classification and land that qualifies for rating 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating.



REGIONAL

SLNWR Conservation Easement

Laguna Stonelake, LLC, a division of AKT Development Corporation, the owner of the 89-acre, triangular parcel (APN 132-0020-003), adjacent to the west side of Franklin Boulevard and south side of Elk Grove Boulevard, granted a Perpetual Conservation Easement Grant on this property to the Habitat Management Foundation on September 24, 1999. The Habitat Management Foundation transferred this conservation easement to USFWS on May 10, 2004 in an assignment of easement deed.

The SLNWR conservation easement encompasses a total of 1,395 acres of land, including APN 132-0020-003 and a 1,306-acre parcel of land west of the UPRR railroad tracks. The purpose of the conservation easement is to assure that the protected property will be retained forever in a natural and open space condition and to prevent any use of the property that will impair or interfere with the conservation values of the protected property. Prohibited uses listed in the conservation easement include, but are not limited to:

- Excavating, dredging, or removing of loam, gravel, soil, rock, sand or other material, except as may be allowed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the issuance of a Clean Water Act Permit and the USFWS through the issuance of a Biological Opinion.
- Legally subdividing the protected property, recording of a subdivision plan, partition, or any other division of the protected property into two or more parcels, and
- Paving or otherwise covering of the protected property with concrete, asphalt, or any other impervious paving material.

LOCAL

City of Elk Grove General Plan

Agricultural preservation and conversion issues are addressed in the Land Use Element and Conservation and Air Quality Element of the Elk Grove General Plan. **Table 5.11-5** identifies the General Plan agricultural policies that are directly applicable to the proposed project, and presents an evaluation of the consistency of the project with these statements as required by CEQA. While the EIR analyzes the project's consistency with the General Plan, the final authority for interpretation of these policy statements, and determination of the project's consistency, rests with the Elk Grove City Council.

**TABLE 5.11-5
PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH GENERAL PLAN AGRICULTURAL POLICIES**

| General Plan Policies | Consistency with General Plan | Analysis |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <p>Policy CAQ-2: The loss of agricultural productivity on lands designated for urban uses within the city limits as of January 2004 is accepted as a consequence of the development of Elk Grove. As discussed</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>The proposed project would develop land used for agricultural purposes (cattle grazing) as anticipated by this policy. However, cattle grazing would continue on the remaining lands and would not be affected by the conversion of approximately 1.22 acres proposed by the</p> |

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| General Plan Policies | Consistency with General Plan | Analysis |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| in the Land Use Element, the City's land use concept for the planning area outside the 2004 city limits anticipates the retention of significant areas of agricultural production outside the current city limits. | | project. The project would not result in loss of agricultural production outside of the City's limits. Therefore, the project is consistent with this policy. |
| <p>Policy CAQ-3:</p> <p>The City of Elk Grove considers the only mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to consist of the new agricultural land in the Sacramento region equal in area, productivity, and other characteristics to the area, which would be lost due to development. The production of <i>existing</i> agricultural land through the purchase of fee title or easements is not considered by the City to provide mitigation, since programs of this type result in a net loss of farmland.</p> | Yes | The project area contains agricultural land zoned AG-80 (used for cattle grazing only) that would be acquired for the project from Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (SNLWR) and convert to urban use (road widening). No agricultural uses would be lost as a result of the project and the cattle grazing practices would continue unaffected by the project on the remaining SLNWR land. The project would not result in loss of agricultural production outside of the City's limits and is part of the City's Circulation Element. Therefore, the project is consistent with this policy. |
| <p>Policy CAQ-4:</p> <p>While agricultural uses are anticipated to be phased out within the city limits, the City recognizes the right of these uses to continue as long as individual owners/farmers desire. The City shall not require buffers between farmland and urban uses, relying instead on the following actions to address the impacts of farming on urban uses.</p> | Yes | The proposed project would acquire approximately 1.22 acres of grazing land for widening of an existing roadway. The project would not remove the potential for agricultural uses on the remainder of those lands, would not impact the "Right to Farm" ordinance, and would not negate the rights of owners on nearby parcels to continue farming, if they so desire. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with this policy. |
| <p>Policy LU-7:</p> <p>The City encourages disclosure of potential land use compatibility issues such as noise, dust, odors, etc., in order to provide potential purchasers with complete information to make informed decisions about purchasing property.</p> | Yes | The proposed project consists of the widening of an existing roadway located next to land zoned for agricultural and residential uses. The project would not result in incompatibility issues with adjacent land uses. Mitigation measures would be implemented to address temporary construction noise (refer to Section 5.5 of this Draft EIR). SMAQMD Rule 403 regarding fugitive dust and Rule 453 regarding asphalt paving would reduce impacts associated with construction emission. The proposed project is consistent with this policy. |

5.11.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The impact analysis provided below is based on the following State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance:

- 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.
- 2) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract; or
- 3) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of potential agricultural impacts of the proposed project was based on review of the City of Elk Grove General Plan (2005), City of Elk Grove General Plan EIR (2003), Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations (2003), the City of Elk Grove Zoning Ordinance, and field review of the project and surrounding area. The agricultural analysis is based on information gathered from the City of Elk Grove Land Use and Conservation and Air Quality Elements of the General Plan, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Reports, 1994 to 1996, 1996 to 1998, 1998 to 2000, and 2000 to 2002, the California Department of Conservation Important Farmlands Map, and the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (USDA SCS, April 1993). The proposed project was also compared to the existing conditions to determine the impacts due to loss of agricultural resources.

Impact 5.11.1 Conversion of Agricultural Land/Loss of Farmland

PP, AB, AC, AD Implementation of the proposed project would result in the conversion of approximately 1.22 acres of land zoned for agricultural use, and considered grazing land under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Under the different project alternatives, the amount of grazing land converted to urban uses (specifically roadway use) ranges from 0.95 acre to a maximum of 3.021 acres. The land is part of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and is used for cattle grazing. This impact is considered to be **less than significant**.

AA Under the No Project alternative, there would be **no impact** to agricultural lands and no loss of grazing land because there would be no construction within the SLNWR-managed parcel.

DISCUSSION

The project site does not include any Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance of Farmland of Local Importance. The land bordering Franklin Boulevard to the east does include Farmland of Statewide Importance and Farmland of Local Importance. The PP would not widen the roadway into these lands, and the proposed alternatives AB, AC, and AD would widen certain sections of the existing roadway to the east into existing easements owned by the CSD and SRCSD. One is a landscaping easement granted to CSD for landscaping around the sidewalk immediately adjacent to the roadway. This easement has been landscaped with grass, shrubs, and small trees and is not used as agricultural land. Another easement approximately 90 feet in width between the CSD easement and the residential housing developments as a SRCSD sewer easement for a sewer interceptor to be installed in approximately 2010. This 90 foot strip of land extending from just south of Laguna South Channel to Poppy Ridge Road is undeveloped ruderal grasslands that are not used for agricultural purposes. This easement is no longer viable agricultural land because of its proximity

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to urban land uses, and its future designated use as a sewer easement that will require excavation for pipe installation and periodic maintenance.

The Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge land that the project would encroach on is considered Grazing Land, is zoned as agricultural land (AG-80), and is used for cattle grazing.

The proposed project's conversion of approximately 1.22 acres of grazing land out of the approximately 89-acre SLNWR-managed parcel would constitute a less than significant impact to cattle grazing practices due to the relatively small size of land conversion being considered. Under Alternatives AB, AC, and AD, a maximum of 3.02 acres of Grazing Land would be converted to urban uses (roadway widening). Cattle grazing practices would not be reduced or otherwise changed as result of the PP or alternatives AB, AC, and AD. Project design would ensure that access to agricultural land along Franklin Boulevard would be maintained so that existing uses could continue. The land that would be converted to a non-agricultural use to accommodate the road widening would not constitute a significant loss of active farmland.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures required.

5.11.4 CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

CUMULATIVE SETTING

The proposed project is located on the border between an area of residential and commercial development and a large undeveloped agricultural and conservation easement parcel in the southwestern portion of the City. Other projects in the area with the potential to urbanize and affect agricultural lands are provided on the City's General Plan Land Use Map, and the proposed and approved development and roadway projects listed in **Tables 6.0-1** and **6.0-2** in Section 6, Cumulative Impacts Summary. Future proposed and planned development would change the intensity of land uses in the City of Elk Grove. The General Plan anticipated increased development in Elk Grove that would provide additional housing, employment, shopping, and recreational opportunities. In addition to these local development projects, there are several urban development projects in Sacramento County and throughout the Central Valley that are contributing to the cumulative loss of agricultural resources in the region.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact 5.11.2 Cumulative Loss of Agricultural Land

PP, AB, AC, AD The project would convert approximately 1.22 acres of Grazing Land to urban uses. The alternatives AB, AC, and AD would convert 0.95 acre to 3.02 acres of Grazing Land to urban uses. This loss would contribute to the cumulative loss of farmland in the region. This would result in a **less than significant** impact.

AA Under the No Project alternative, there would be **no cumulative impact** to or loss of agricultural lands because there would be no widening of the roadway into SLNWR lands.

DISCUSSION

As part of the Circulation Element of the City of Elk Grove General Plan, several roadway improvements were identified as mitigation for the traffic generated from new development in the area. There are no projects under the City's consideration that would further encroach on the lands contained within the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

The City of Elk Grove General Plan Draft EIR (2003) identified agriculture/urban interface impacts as significant and unavoidable. The City adopted Findings of Fact and a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the General Plan (2003) identifying that there are no feasible mitigation measures to minimize, avoid or reduce impacts relative to agricultural land. However, the City determined agriculture/urban interface conflicts to be acceptable when balanced against the economic, legal, social, technological, and other benefits of planned development, including the proposed project. The acquisition of up to 3.02 acres of right-of-way from land designated for farmland and grazing purposes for widening an existing roadway would not be a significant amount and would not remove the potential for agricultural uses on the remainder of those lands, and would not negate the rights of owners on nearby parcels to continue farming, if they so desire. In addition, project design would ensure that access restrictions to the SLNWR along Franklin and Elk Grove Boulevards would be maintained so that existing uses could continue. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to loss of agricultural lands are considered less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

None Required

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REFERENCES

- City of Elk Grove, 2003. City of Elk Grove Municipal Code, Section 14.05. Elk Grove, California. 2003.
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- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2001. *Land Capability Classification, ibid.; Soil Candidate Listing for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, California Department of Conservation, 1993.*