

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
LOCAL AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
(LARA) MODEL RESULTS
For
HIGHLAND TRAILS, RAMONA
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
3200-21176 (TPM)

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tentative Parcel Map shows a four-lot subdivision that would contain lots that are around ten acres in size. The project is located at the intersection of Highland Trails Drive and Highland Valley Road, in the Ramona Community Plan Area. The lots will be served by the Ramona Municipal Water District (RMWD) and individual septic systems. The site currently supports avocados, and the majority of avocado trees were burned during the 2007 County Firestorm.

Based on the results of the Local Agricultural Resources Assessment (LARA) Model, the site is not considered an important agricultural resource. The site received a low rating for soil quality. The site received a high rating for climate and a moderate rating for water resources. To be considered an important agricultural resource under the LARA Model, the three required factors (soils/water resources/climate) must rate either high or moderate. If one factor rates low, the property is not considered an important agricultural resource. Therefore, the site's low soil quality rating means that the site is not an important agricultural resource. The results of each LARA Model factor ratings that contribute to this determination are detailed below.

2.0 LOCAL AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT (LARA) MODEL

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, the CEQA Guidelines references the California Agricultural LESA Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation (DOC), as an optional methodology that may be used to assess the relative value of agriculture and farmland. In the past, the LESA Model has been applied to various agricultural properties throughout the County of San Diego to assess agricultural importance in association with proposed discretionary land use permits. After several years of practical experience with application of the LESA Model in San Diego County, the inadequacy of the model in capturing the unique and varied character of San Diego agriculture has become apparent. An alternative approach, referred to as the Local Agricultural Resource Assessment (LARA) Model has been developed to assess the relative value of agricultural resources in San Diego County. Specific documentation of the LARA Model can be found in the Guidelines for Determining Significance for Agricultural Resources at:

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/Resource/3~procguid/3~procguid.html#agr>.

The LARA model takes into account the following factors in determining the importance of an agricultural resource:

Required Factors:

- Water
- Climate
- Soil Quality

Complementary Factors:

- Surrounding Land Uses
- Land Use Consistency
- Topography

The following subsections detail the rating assigned to the project site for each of the above factors.

2.1 Water

The water rating is primarily based the site's County Water Authority (CWA) service status; however, if the project does not already have imported water service, the underlying groundwater aquifer type and the presence of a groundwater well is also considered (Table 1).

The project is located inside the CWA boundaries and the Ramona Municipal Water District has a water line that passes the property. No water meter serves the property and the site contains active and operational wells. The groundwater aquifer type is Fractured Crystalline Rock.

Based on Table 1, below, these conditions present a water resources rating of moderate.

Table 1. Water Rating ¹

County Water Authority (CWA) Service Status	Groundwater Aquifer Type and Well Presence	Rating
Inside CWA service area with infrastructure connections to the site, but no meter has been installed	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer <i>and</i> has an existing well	High
	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer, but has no existing well	Moderate
	<i>The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock and has an existing well</i>	<i>Moderate</i>
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock, but has no existing well	Low

¹ If more than one underlying groundwater aquifer type exists at a site, usually the aquifer type that could produce the most water should be used to obtain the water rating. If it would be more reasonable to apply the rating based on the aquifer that would produce less water, a clear justification and reason for doing so must be provided.

2.2 Climate

Sunset Zones are used as a standard measure of climate suitability due to the variability of microclimate conditions that the Sunset zones take into account. Recognizing that the Sunset Zones were not developed as a tool to determine the suitability for commercial agricultural production, their use is not intended to determine suitability for specific crops, rather they are a measure of overall climate suitability for the typical agricultural commodities produced in San Diego County. The project site is located within Sunset Zone 20, which has a rating of high.

Climate (Sunset Zone) Description	Rating
Zone 20 is a cold air basin that may be dominated by coastal influence for a day, week or month and then may be dominated for similar time periods, by continental air. Over a 20 year period, winter lows in Zone 20 ranged from 28 to 23 degrees F.	High

2.3 Soil Quality

The project's soil quality rating is based, on the presence of soils that meet the quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), and which are available for agricultural use. Additionally, these soils have been previously used for agriculture.

The majority of the property has been used for avocado production; however, a significant proportion of the property's avocado grove was burned in the 2007 County Firestorm. No soils on the property qualify as State FMMP Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance Farmland categories. The soils are either acidic or those found on steep slopes. Therefore, the soils quality matrix score is zero, and the rating is low, as depicted below, in Table 2.

The following Figure 1, Soil Types shows the site's soil categories.

Figure 1. Soil Types

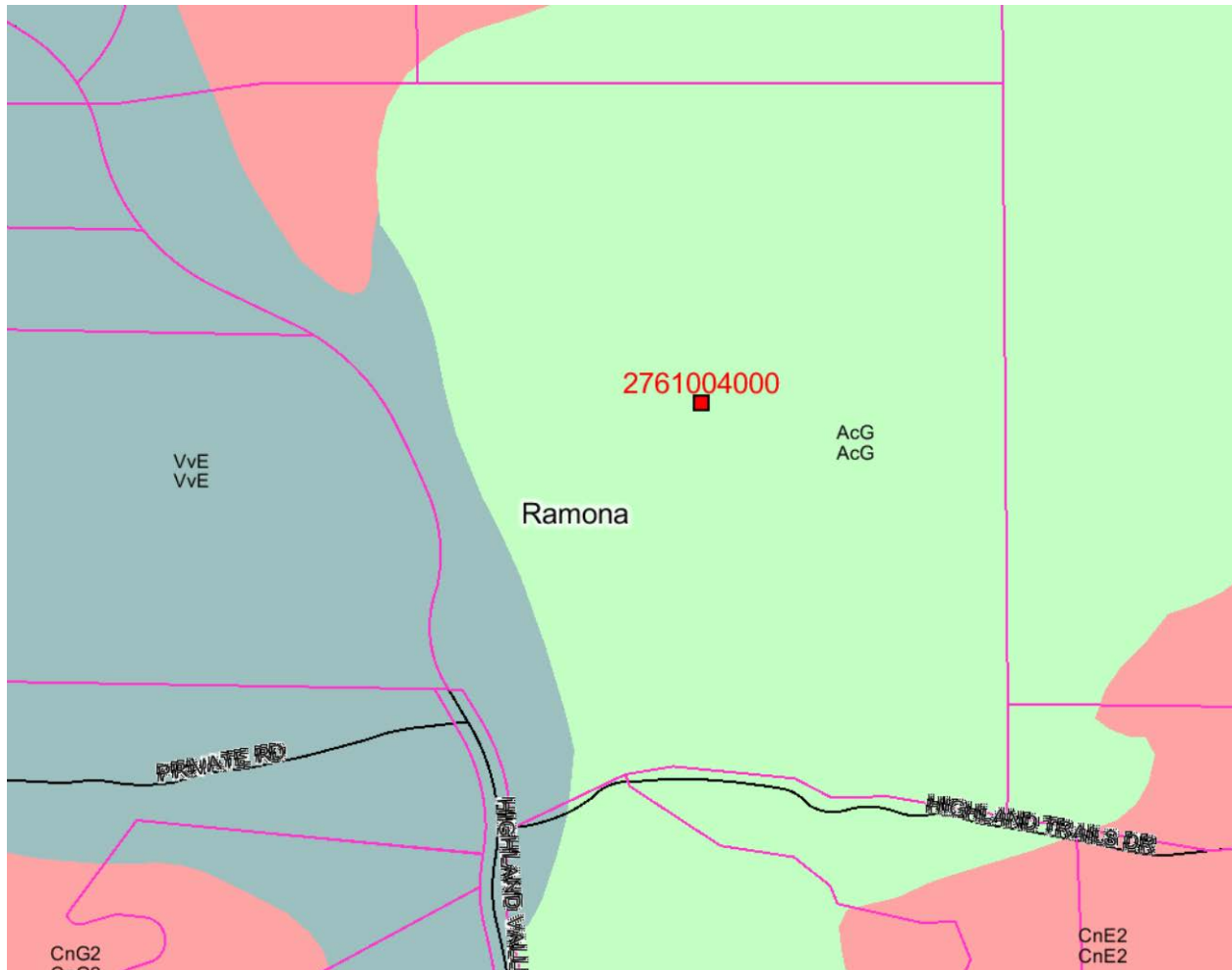


Table 2. Soil Quality Matrix Interpretation

Soil Quality Matrix Score	Soil Quality Rating
The site has a Soil Quality Matrix score less than 0.33 and does not have 10 acres or more of contiguous Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance Soils	Low

NO FURTHER ANALYSIS IS NECESSARY, AS THE SITE SCORED LOW, IN THE REQUIRED SOILS FACTOR.

3.0 LARA MODEL RESULTS

The ratings for each LARA model factor for the project site are as follows:

Required Factors

Water = Moderate

Climate = High

Soil Quality = Low

Complimentary Factors

Surrounding land use = N/A

Land use consistency rating = N/A

Slope = N/A

Table 7. Interpretation of LARA Model Results

LARA Model Results			LARA Model Interpretation
Possible Scenarios	Required Factors	Complementary Factors	
Scenario 1	All three factors rated high	At least one factor rated high or moderate	The site is an important agricultural resource
Scenario 2	Two factors rated high, one factor rated moderate	At least two factors rated high or moderate	
Scenario 3	One factor rated high, two factors rated moderate	At least two factors rated high	
Scenario 4	All factors rated moderate	All factors rated high	
Scenario 5	At least one factor rated low importance	N/A	The site is <i>not</i> an important agricultural resource
Scenario 6	All other model results		

Based on the site conditions, the project's LARA Model scoring falls under Scenario Five (5), indicating that the site is not an important agricultural resource.