

CHAPTER 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

Effects found not to be significant during the EIR preparation process are Agricultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems, and Climate Change. These topics are analyzed in this Chapter.

3.1 Agricultural Resources

The following section provides an analysis of the potential significant impacts to agricultural resources that may result from implementation of the proposed Project. The Otay Ranch PEIR, adopted in 1993, provided a program-level analysis of the existing conditions and potential impacts related to agricultural resources for the entire Otay Ranch area, including the Project site. The Otay Ranch PEIR identified significant direct and cumulative impacts on agricultural resources. As a result, the PEIR included mitigation measures to reduce the significant impacts, including a mitigation measure requiring the preparation of an Agricultural Plan for future Specific Plans affecting on-site agricultural resources. The proposed Project's compliance with the mitigation measure is discussed below. The Otay Ranch PEIR determined that, even with implementation of the mitigation measures, the permanent loss of agricultural land was a significant and unavoidable impact within the Otay Ranch area. The Otay Ranch PEIR is incorporated by reference into this EIR, and is available for public inspection and review at the County of San Diego, PDS, 5510 Overland Ave., San Diego, California.

This agricultural analysis is different than the PEIR, as it specifically considers the proposed Project site. This section references and uses information provided in the PEIR; however, the analysis and conclusions are based specifically on the agricultural resources associated with the Project site and vicinity and the potential impact the proposed Project might have on those resources.

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

3.1.1.1 *On-Site Agricultural Uses*

Much of the historical agricultural information in this section is based on the Otay Ranch Resort Village Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I), included as **Appendix C-9** to this EIR, and the Otay Ranch Resort Village Phase I Environmental Site Assessment West Residential Area Parcels A and B, included as **Appendix C-10** to this EIR. Historically, the Project site was primarily used for cattle ranching. Ranching operations are estimated to have begun in the 1930s and continued intermittently over the next few decades. In 1989, a cattle feed and water shed was constructed on-site and long-horn cattle were grazed on the land until 1999. Cattle grazing has not occurred on the Project site since 1999; however, the Project site is designated "Grazing Land," pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), as described below.

A small portion of the Project site also was used for dry farming. Throughout portions of the 1930s and 1940s, lima beans, hay, and grain were known to have been grown on-site. In 1960, approximately 200 acres in the southwest portion of the Project site were tilled and used for dry farming. Dry farming of this area is estimated to have lasted only a few years, and was terminated by 1963. Crop production was limited to hay and grains due to limited water availability.

3.1.1.2 Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation (CDC) established the FMMP in 1982 to carry on the “Important Farmland” mapping efforts initiated in 1975 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The intent of the USDA was to map and categorize the nation’s farmlands. The FMMP is a nonregulatory program providing a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. Pursuant to the FMMP, agricultural resources are separated into the following categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. The FMMP also includes Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land, and Water, which are not considered agricultural resources. The Project site contains no land that has been designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Urban or Built-up Land, Other Land, or Water.

Grazing Land

Grazing Land is 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 grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres. The entire Project site is designated as Grazing Land.

Figure 3.1-1 depicts the 2010 FMMP mapping data for the Project site and surrounding area using the categories described above. As shown, the Project site consists of land designated as Grazing Land, with a small triangle of MSCP Cornerstone land associated with Lower Otay Lake shown as “Water.” Based on existing conditions within the Project site, this “Water” designation is not appropriate, as no portion of a perennial water body extends into the Project site. Although shown as “Water,” this area is similar to the rest of the Project site, which is designated by the FMMP as Grazing Land. Neither the Grazing Land nor Water designations are considered agricultural resources by the FMMP.

3.1.1.3 Surrounding Agricultural Resources

The Project site is surrounded primarily by open space areas or areas recently developed with urban uses. Agricultural operations do not occur in the area immediately surrounding the Project site.

The area surrounding the Project site is designated as Grazing Land by the FMMP. Farmland of Local Importance and Urban and Built-up Land exists approximately 0.5 mile to the west of the Project site, beyond adjacent Grazing Land and across Lower Otay Lake. A small area of Other

Land designates the John Nichols Field airfield that exists south of the southeastern portion of the Project site.

3.1.1.4 Soil Suitability for Agriculture

CDC publishes a list of soils that meet the soil-quality criteria for Prime Farmland soils and soils of Statewide Importance that are unique to each county. In San Diego County, 44 local soils qualify for the Prime Farmland designation and 65 soils qualify for the Farmland of Statewide Importance designation. The Project site contains six soil types:

- Diablo-Olivenhain complex; 9 to 30 percent slopes (DoE)
- Friant rocky fine sandy loam; 9 to 30 percent slopes (FxE)
- Friant rocky fine sandy loam; 30 to 70 percent slopes (FxG)
- Olivenhain cobbly loam; 9 to 30 percent slopes (OhE)
- Redding Cobbly loam; 9 to 30 percent slopes (ReE)
- San Miguel-Exchequer rock silts loams; 9 to 70 percent slopes (SnG)

None of the soil types found on the Project site qualifies for either the Prime Farmland or the Farmland of Statewide Importance designation (County of San Diego 2007).

3.1.1.5 Regulatory Setting

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act (Government Code section 51200 et seq.), was adopted as an incentive program to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands. The Williamson Act allows local governments to contract with private landowners to limit the use of agricultural land for agricultural purposes. Pursuant to the Williamson Act, the parties may enter into a land conservation contract whereby a county or city agrees to stabilize the property taxes on qualifying lands in return for the landowner's guarantee to use the land for agricultural purposes or related open space use for a 10-year period. Unless a notice of nonrenewal is filed, the 10-year period of the contract is automatically renewed each year. The Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts.

Compliance with Otay Ranch PEIR Mitigation

As mentioned above, the Otay Ranch PEIR included a mitigation measure requiring the preparation of an Agricultural Plan prior to the approval of any Specific Plan affecting on-site agricultural resources. Elements of the plan would include the type of agricultural activity allowed as an interim use, and buffering guidelines designed to prevent potential land use interface impacts related to noise, odors, dust, insects, rodents, and chemicals that may accompany agricultural activities and operations. Because the proposed Project site does not include agricultural resources or ongoing active agricultural operations, nor does the Project propose any activity or use that affects agricultural resources, the Agricultural Plan contained in the Specific Plan is simplified, stating that grazing or other agricultural activities do not occur on the Project site or adjacent property.

3.1.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

The following discussion analyzes potential impacts related to implementing the proposed Project and makes determinations regarding the significance of the proposed Project's agricultural resource impacts. A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project due to the following:

- The Project site has important agricultural resources as defined by the County's Local Agricultural Resource Assessment (LARA) Model; and the Project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP; and, as a result, the Project would substantially impair the ongoing viability of the site for agricultural use.
- The Project proposes a non-agricultural land use within one-quarter mile of an active agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or Williamson Act contract land and the proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- The Project proposes a school, church, day care, or other use that involves a concentration of people at certain times within 1 mile of an agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the proposed Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or a Williamson Act contract land and the proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- The Project would involve other changes to the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or could adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Williamson Act Contract.
- The Project conflicts with a Williamson Act contract or the provisions of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act).

3.1.2.1 Impacts to Important On-Site Agricultural Resources

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project due to the following:

- The Project site has important agricultural resources as defined by the County's Local Agricultural Resource Assessment (LARA) Model; and the Project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP; and, as a result, the Project would substantially impair the ongoing viability of the site for agricultural use.

Rationale for Selection of Guidelines

The significance threshold for important on-site agricultural resources is based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007). This guideline requires evaluation of the Project site per the County LARA Model, as well as consideration of site-specific soil criteria to determine if there are any on-site agricultural resources that could be impaired if the Project were to be implemented.

Analysis

The LARA Model was developed to evaluate the importance of agricultural resources based on the unique and varied characteristics specific to San Diego County. The LARA Model considers three primary factors: water, climate, and soil quality. Three complementary factors also are considered: surrounding land uses, land use consistency, and topography.

The County's LARA Model was completed for the proposed Project. Based on all the Project-specific information, the LARA Model found that the site is not an important agricultural resource. The primary factors of climate ranked high, water ranked moderate, and soils ranked low. The complementary factors of surrounding land use ranked high, land use consistency ranked low, and topography ranked moderate. Because the primary soil factor ranked low, the Project site is not considered an important agricultural resource pursuant to the LARA Model.

As described above, the soil types found on the Project site do not meet the soil-quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance as defined by the FMMP.

While development of the Project would impair the viability of the site for future agricultural use, the site is not considered an important agricultural resource per the LARA Model, and the site does not contain soils of high agricultural quality. Thus, pursuant to the above guidelines for the determination of significance, the Project impact to important agricultural resources is considered *less than significant*.

3.1.2.2 Indirect Impacts to Agricultural Resources

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project due to the following:

- The Project proposes a non-agricultural land use within one-quarter mile of an active agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or Williamson Act contract land and the proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- The Project proposes a school, church, day care, or other use that involves a concentration of people at certain times within 1 mile of an agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the proposed Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or a Williamson Act contract land and the

proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.

- The Project would involve other changes to the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or could adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Williamson Act Contract.

Rationale for Selection of Guidelines

The significance thresholds for indirect impacts to agricultural resources are based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007). These guidelines specifically address the potential for a non-agricultural project to influence surrounding land uses and possibly result in the conversion of agricultural land to a non-agricultural use. The first guideline requires consideration of land use conflicts due to the proximity of a non-agricultural project to agricultural operations or Williamson Act contract lands, which could result in the conversion of that land. The second guideline addresses potential land use conflicts between agricultural operations and public gathering locations, which could result in conversion of the agricultural land. The third guideline requires evaluation of a project's potential to adversely influence surrounding agricultural resources or impair the ongoing viability of surrounding agriculture use.

Analysis

The Project site is not bounded by active agricultural operations. There are no Williamson Act contract lands within one-quarter mile of the Project site. Land uses surrounding the site generally include urban development to the west; the Otay Valley Regional Park, Lower Otay Lake, and a water and recreation reservoir to the south; and an ultra-light gliding and parachuting airstrip, an inactive quarry, and large parcels of open space to the east. Because the Project site is surrounded with developed areas or open space not used for farming, the development of non-agricultural uses on the Project site would not result in land use conflicts with agricultural operations or the conversion of agricultural resources to non-agricultural uses, and ***no significant impact*** would result.

The Project proposes uses that involve a concentration of people, including a school, parks, and resort facilities. However, these uses would not be located within one mile of an active agricultural operation or Williamson Act contract land, as there are no such lands located within the immediate Project vicinity. Therefore, no land use conflicts or resulting conversion of agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses would result due to the Project's proposed facilities, and ***no significant impact*** would result.

The Project proposes the development of urban uses on the Project site. The Project site is generally surrounded by large areas of natural open space, with existing residential development to the west of the Project site. Historically, grazing and dry farming occurred on the Project site and surrounding area. However, currently, there are no active agricultural operations in the immediate vicinity of the Project that could be impacted by development of the Project site or that would be influenced to convert to a non-agricultural use. Due to the lack of active

agricultural operations on the Project site or in its immediate vicinity, the potential to cause the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Williamson Act contract is considered *less than significant*.

3.1.2.3 *Conflicts with Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts*

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project due to the following:

- The Project conflicts with a Williamson Act contract or the provisions of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act).

Rationale for Selection of Guidelines

The significance threshold for zoning and Williamson Act contract lands is based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007). This guideline requires that any Williamson Act contract lands in the area surrounding a project be identified, and addresses the project's potential impact on those lands or the applicable provisions of the Williamson Act.

Analysis

The Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts and there are no Williamson Act contract lands in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. Although grazing activities occurred on the Project site, it does not lie within an "agricultural preserve," as designated by County Policy I-38. Additionally, the Project site is zoned by the County as S88 Specific Plan and S80 Open Space, which are not agricultural zones. Therefore, the Project would have *no impact* related to Williamson Act contracts or agricultural zoning.

3.1.3 **Cumulative Impact Analysis**

The Project site and vicinity are within a coastal area climate zone, which is one of the few areas in California and the United States where off-season crops are grown. This climate zone has been subject to continued conversion of agricultural lands to urban development, and will continue to be subject to such pressures in the foreseeable future. As described in the previously certified Otay Ranch PEIR, there continues to be significant permanent loss of agricultural land within the Otay Ranch area. A variety of urban development projects, including the Otay Ranch Project, have resulted in the conversion of land available for agricultural operations to non-agricultural uses.

However, as discussed in the agricultural analysis above, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in impacts to agricultural resources. There are no significant agricultural soils on the Project site, the Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts nor is the site adjacent to lands under a Williamson Act contract, and the Project site was found not to be a

significant agricultural resource by the LARA Model. In addition, the Project site is not currently in agricultural production, nor is any of the land immediately surrounding the site. Because the proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts to agricultural resources or convert other land currently in agricultural use, it would not have a considerable contribution to cumulative agricultural resources impacts that may accrue from other projects in the region. Therefore, implementation of the *proposed Project would not result in a significant cumulative impact* to agricultural resources.

3.1.4 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

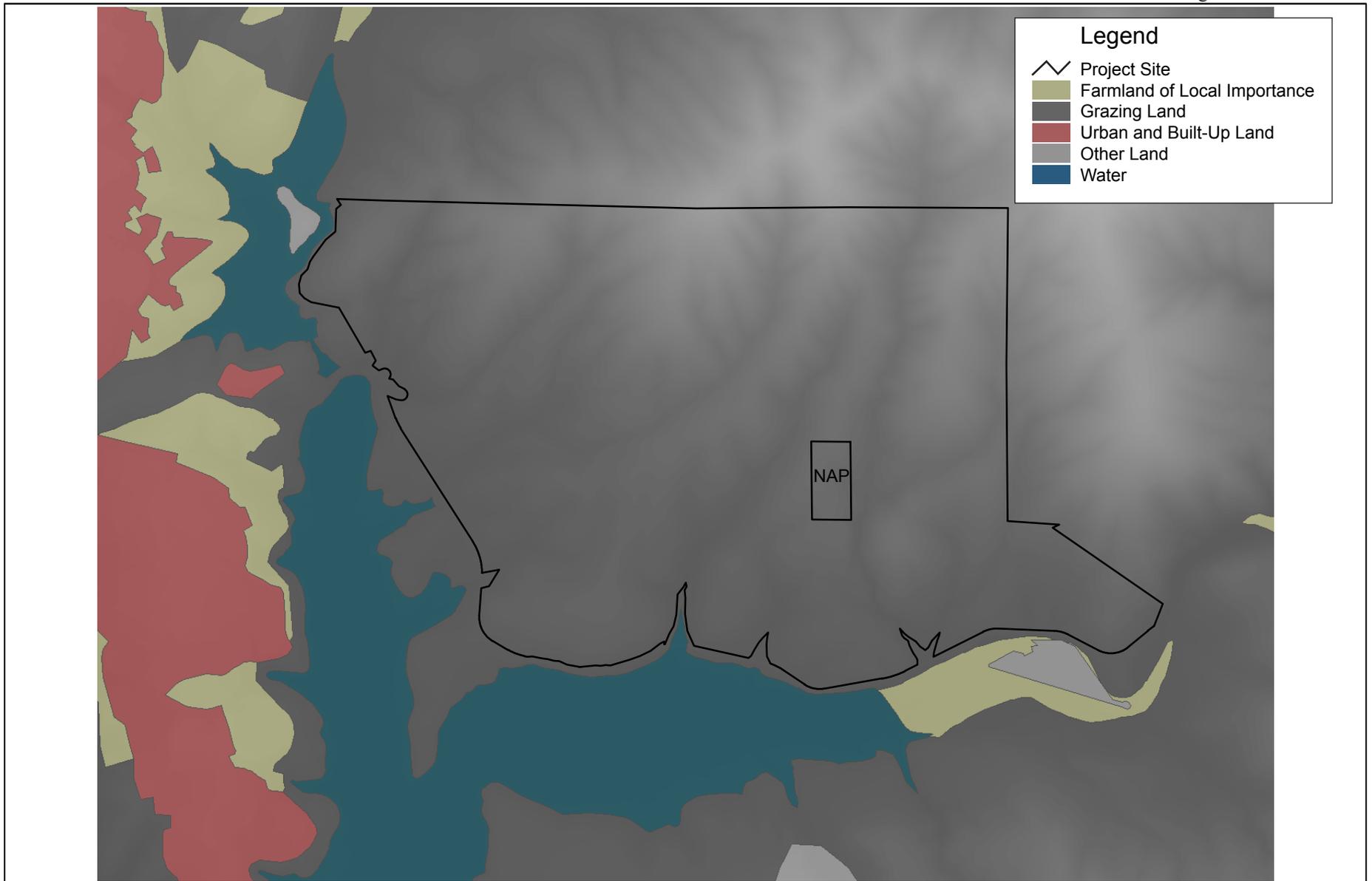
Based on the above analysis, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to agricultural resources.

3.1.5 Mitigation

As discussed above, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts to agricultural resources. Therefore, no mitigation is required.

3.1.6 Conclusion

As described above, the Project site was found not to be a significant agricultural resource pursuant to the LARA Model. There are no on-site soils that meet the designation for Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance soils. The Project site and immediate surrounding vicinity are not subject to any Williamson Act contracts. In addition, the Project site is not zoned for agricultural uses. No agricultural operations currently occur on-site or in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would *not result in any significant impacts* to agricultural resources.



SOURCE: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 2002

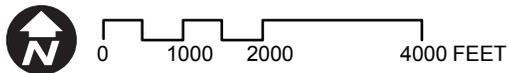


Figure 3.1-1
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories

This page intentionally left blank.