3.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section evaluates direct impacts associated with converting existing agricultural and vacant land located within the project site to urban uses under the Proposed Action and alternatives. Potential indirect impacts from the development of the Proposed Action and alternatives on nearby agricultural areas are also addressed. The following sources were used to prepare this section:

- Placer County Agricultural Crop Report (Placer County 2010);
- Farmland conversion reports prepared by the State Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program;
- Important Farmland Map for Placer County prepared by the State Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP 2008);
- Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil survey;
- Agricultural preservation policies maintained by the Placer County Local Agency Formation Commission (Placer County LAFCO 2010);
- Agricultural policies listed in the Placer County General Plan (Placer County 1994);
- Placer County Right-to-Farm Ordinance (Placer County 1999); and
- Placer Vineyards Specific Plan EIR prepared by Placer County (Placer County 2006).

3.2.2 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.2.2.1 Regional Setting

The project site is located in western Placer County. Compared to other Central Valley counties where agriculture is a major sector of the economy, agricultural income and employment form a smaller portion of the economy of Placer County. Agricultural production largely occurs in the western portion of the County (Placer County General Plan 1994).

As indicated in **Table 3.2-1, Monetary Value of Placer County Agricultural Commodities by Industry 2010**, the majority of agricultural activities in the County, based on the monetary value of the product, are related to field crops (52 percent), and livestock and poultry production and the products associated with them (22 percent). Nursery products comprise about 8 percent of the monetary value of Placer County's agricultural products. Fruit and nut crops comprise about 10 percent while timber products comprise about 7 percent. Overall, gross revenues from the sales of agricultural commodities (including timber) in the County were approximately $65.7 million in 2010 (Placer County 2010).

As shown in **Table 3.2-2, Top Crops in Placer County 2010**, the top five crops in the County based on monetary value are rice, cattle and calves, nursery stock, timber production, and walnuts (Placer County 2010).

Table 3.2-1
Monetary Value of Placer County Agricultural Commodities by Industry 2010

Industry	Total Value
Fruit & Nut Crops	$6,419,206
Field Crops	$34,213,673
Vegetable Crops	$800,000
Livestock/Poultry	$12,908,482
Livestock/Poultry Products	$1,600,000
Nursery Products	$5,048,712
Apiary Products	$39,601
Subtotal	$61,029,674
Gross Timber Harvest	$4,659,958
Grand Total	**$65,689,632**

Source: Placer County Agricultural Crop Report, 2010

Table 3.2-2
Top Crops in Placer County 2010

Crop	Total Value
Rice	$27,354,363
Cattle and Calves	$8,015,225
Nursery Stock	$5,048,712
Timber Production	$4,659,958
Walnuts	$2,675,195

Source: Placer County Agricultural Crop Report, 2010

3.2.2.2 Storie Index

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has rated the suitability of soils in California for agriculture using the Storie Index. This index consists of six grades ranging from excellent (1) to unsuitable (6). The numerical rating system expresses the relative degree to which soil can support general agriculture. The rating is based on soil characteristics and is obtained by evaluating soil depth, surface texture, subsoil characteristics, drainage, salts and alkali, and relief.

3.2.2.3 Classification of Farmland in California

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts translate soil survey data from the NRCS into maps of "Important Farmland Series" for the state's agricultural counties. The purpose of the DOC's Farmland Mapping and

Monitoring Program (FMMP), which updates the maps biennially, is to provide land use conversion information to decision makers to use in the planning for the present and future of California's agricultural land resources. Thus, these classifications focus only on those lands that have been recently farmed. Land not recently farmed does not show up on the FMMP maps. The DOC waits two mapping cycles (four years) before removing unfarmed land from the maps.

The Important Farmland maps and the advisory guidelines for the FMMP identify five agriculture-related categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. The mapping also includes "Other Land," which designates land that does not fall in any of the above categories. Each FMMP category is described below.

Prime Farmland

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

Farmland of Statewide Importance

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

Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is farmland 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. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

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. Also, it includes farmlands that produce crops that are not listed under Unique Farmland but are important to the economy of the County or City.

Grazing Land

Grazing land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for this category is 40 acres (16 hectares).

Other Land

This is land not included in any of the other mapping categories listed above, for example, low density rural development, brush and timber, wetlands and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing,

confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities, strip mines and borrow pits, and water bodies smaller than 40 acres (16 hectares). Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres (16 hectares) is mapped as Other Land.

3.2.2.4 Conversion of Farmland in Placer County

The amount of agricultural land converted to other uses has been monitored in California since 1984 by the DOC based on information reported by the County Agricultural Commissioners. Placer County has typically not been among the highest-ranking counties for conversion of agricultural land to urban uses. However, increased urban growth is anticipated to occur in the Sacramento Valley, among other areas of the state. FMMP data from 1992 through the most recent DOC farmland report is presented below in **Table 3.2-3, 1992–2008 Placer County Land Use Summary (in acres)**.

Based on FMMP data, the total amount of agricultural land within Placer County declined approximately 1 percent during the 16-year period from 1992 to 2008. During this time, about 2,625 acres (1,062 hectares) of Prime Farmland, about 725 acres (293 hectares) of Farmland of Statewide Importance, about 3,800 acres (1,538 hectares) of Unique Farmland and about 12,450 acres (5,038 hectares) of Farmland of Local Importance were converted to other uses. Overall, approximately 31,450 acres (12,727 hectares) of farmland were converted, with about one third of this acreage involving grazing lands. The annual rate of farmland conversion during this period was about 1,975 acres (799 hectares) each year (California Department of Conservation 1998 through 2008).

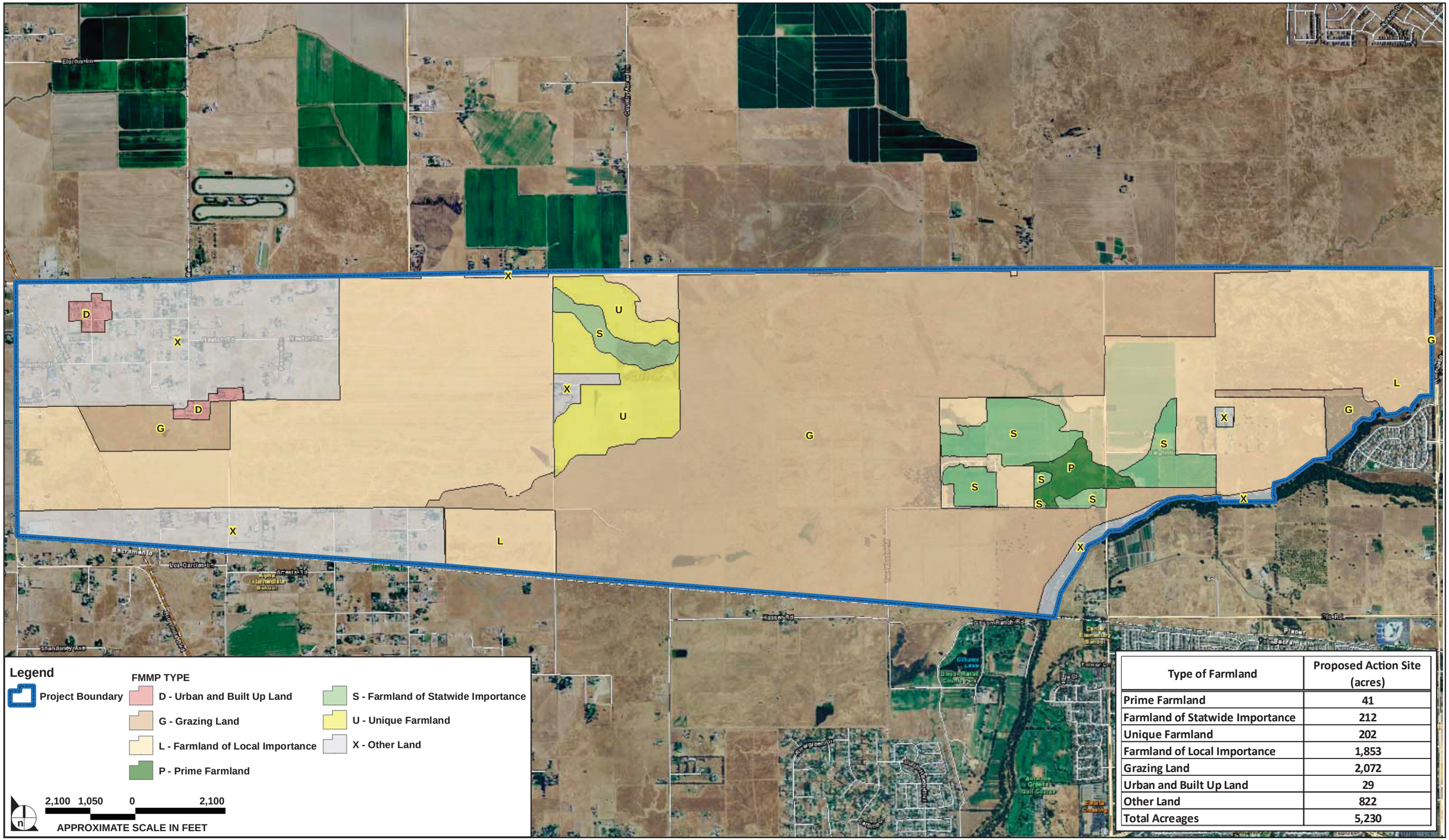
3.2.2.5 Existing Agricultural Uses on the Project Site and in its Vicinity

The DOC classifies a majority of the project site as Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Importance, with some parcels of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland (FMMP 2008). **Figure 3.2-1, Project Site Important Farmland** shows the distribution of Important Farmland on the project site.

The majority of the Proposed Action site is classified as Farmland of Local Importance under the FMMP as shown in **Table 3.2-4, Project Site Farmland**. A majority of the land classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland is located in the central and eastern portions of the site between Palladay Road and Watt Ave north of Dyer Lane.

Based on the Storie Index ratings, a majority of the project site (75 percent) contains soils rated as Grade 4 which are soils that are poorly suited for agriculture. Approximately 20 percent of the project site contains soils rated as Grade 1 which are soils that are excellent for agriculture. Based on the land capability classification system, most of the soils on the project site are Class III and IV soils, which have properties that severely limit agricultural production. However, soils in small portions of the site are Class I and Class II, which have properties that place slight to moderate limitations on agricultural production (NRCS 2010).

Because of the limitation of the site soils, a majority of the Proposed Action site is almost entirely used for cattle grazing. Crops grown on the project site include rice, permanent pasture, strawberries, grapes, corn, and alfalfa, along with various varieties of berries and fruit.



Type of Farmland	Proposed Action Site (acres)
Prime Farmland	41
Farmland of Statwide Importance	212
Unique Farmland	202
Farmland of Local Importance	1,853
Grazing Land	2,072
Urban and Built Up Land	29
Other Land	822
Total Acreages	5,230

SOURCE: State of California Department of Conservation 2008, Placer County, and ESRI Maps and Data 2011

FIGURE **3.2-1**

Project Site Important Farmland

Table 3.2-3
1992–2008 Placer County Land Use Summary (in acres)

Year	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing	Subtotal Agriculture	Urban and Built-Up Land	Other Land	Water Area	Total Area
1992	10,523	5,546	23,975	113,464	36,297	189,805	31,462	185,067	5,292	411,626
1994	10,458	5,608	23,848	113,505	35,853	189,272	32,563	184,577	5,118	411,530
1996	9,867	5,546	23,301	114,270	33,694	186,678	35,002	184,804	5,047	411,531
1998	9,750	5,195	22,727	114,452	31,695	183,819	37,608	185,057	5,047	411,531
2000	9,768	6,089	22,686	102,658	39,208	180,409	41,446	184,648	5,027	411,530
2002	9,538	5,493	22,105	87,832	50,478	175,446	46,853	184,202	5,027	411,528
2004	9,236	5,510	23,283	86,235	46,000	170,264	52,183	184,058	5,027	411,532
2006	8,524	5,021	22,793	101,846	28,692	166,876	55,770	183,874	5,011	411,531
2008	7,894	4,822	20,194	101,012	24,448	158,370	58,623	189,456	5,011	411,460
Net Acreage Changed	-2,629	-724	-3,781	-12,452	-11,849	-31,435	27,161	4,389	-281	-166
Annual Avg.	-164	-45	-236	-778	-740	-1,965	1,698	274	-18	-10

Source: Department of Conservation, Farmland Conversion Report, 1992–2008.

Table 3.2-4
Project Site Farmland

Type of Farmland	Project site (acres)
Prime Farmland	41
Farmland of Statewide Importance	212
Unique Farmland	202
Farmland of Local Importance	1,853
Grazing Land	2,072
Urban and Built-Up Land	28
Other Land	822
Total	**5,230**

Source: California Department of Conservation, 2008

Agricultural lands with scattered residences are located to the north of the project site. This land is generally mapped by the DOC as Farmland of Local Importance. Land to the east of the proposed project site on the other side of Dry Creek consists of low-density residential housing and is urbanized. Land to the southeast of the proposed project site on the other side of Dry Creek is in agricultural use and is mostly mapped as grazing land with small pockets of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance associated with field crops and orchards. Land to the south, located in Sacramento County, can be characterized (moving west to east) as rural residential, agriculture, open space (Gibson Ranch Park), and low-density residential (community of Antelope). This land is generally mapped as grazing land. Lands to the west, located in Sutter County, are predominantly rural residential and are mapped by the DOC as Other Land.

3.2.3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK – APPLICABLE LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

This section summarizes relevant federal, state laws, LAFCO policies, County regulations, and policies contained in the Placer County General Plan.

3.2.3.1 Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) was enacted in 1981 to minimize the conversion of the nation's farmland to non-agricultural uses under Federal projects and programs. The FPPA assures that—to the extent possible—Federal programs are administered to be compatible with state, local government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland. The FPPA does not authorize the Federal Government to regulate the use of private or nonfederal land or, in any way, affect the property rights of owners.

For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which is an agency of the US Department of Agriculture, oversees the FPPA and maintains an inventory of farmland in the US. The NRCS

delegates the responsibility for designating farmland to appropriate local and State officials. The California FMMP is a supporting program that maps farmland in the State of California.

3.2.3.2 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 its premature conversion to urban uses. In order to preserve these uses, this act established an agricultural preserve contract procedure by which any county or city within the state taxes landowners at a lower rate using a scale based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted market value. In return, the owners guarantee that these properties would remain under agricultural production for a 10-year period. This contract is renewed automatically unless a notice of non-renewal is filed by the owner. In this manner, each agricultural preserve contract (at any given date) is always operable at least nine years into the future. As part of the Williamson Act, the state provides subventions to local participating governments. Subventions provide fiscal assistance to local governments to take part in the land preservation program. None of the parcels within the project area are restricted to agricultural use under the Williamson Act (Placer County 2006).

3.2.3.3 Placer County Right-to-Farm Ordinance

Right-to-farm ordinances have been adopted by several California counties to protect farmers in established farming areas from legal action that new residents in nearby urban settings may take against nuisances such as odor, noise, and dust associated with normal day-to-day farming activities. Placer County has adopted a right-to-farm ordinance that states that residents moving into areas where there are existing agricultural activities should be prepared to experience discomfort or inconveniences arising from typical agricultural operations which could include dust, smoke, noise, or odors. The right-to-farm ordinance promotes understanding and cooperation between urban residents and agricultural operators (Placer County 1999). Section 5.24.040 of the Placer County Code states the following:

1. No agricultural activity, operation, or facility, or appurtenances thereof, conducted or maintained for commercial purposes, and in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards, as established and followed by similar agricultural operations, shall be or become a nuisance, private or public, due to any changed condition in or about the locality, after the same has been in operation for more than one year if it was not a nuisance at the time it began.
2. Each prospective buyer of property in unincorporated Placer County shall be informed by the seller or his/her authorized agent of the right-to-farm ordinance. The seller or his/her authorized agent will keep on file a disclosure statement signed by the buyer with the escrow process.

3.2.3.4 Placer County General Plan Policies

The following is a list of goals and policies found in the Land Use and Agricultural and Forestry Resources Chapters of the Placer County General Plan relating to agricultural resources.

Agricultural Land Use

Goal 1.H. To designate adequate agricultural land and promote development of agricultural uses to support the continued viability of Placer County's agricultural economy.

Policy 1.H.1. The County shall maintain agriculturally designated areas for agricultural uses and direct urban uses to designated urban growth areas and/or cities.

Policy 1.H.2. The County shall seek to ensure that new development and public works projects do not encourage expansion of urban uses into designated agricultural areas.

Policy 1.H.3. The County will maintain large-parcel agricultural zoning and prohibit the subdivision of agricultural lands into smaller parcels unless such development meets the following conditions:

a. The subdivision is part of a cluster project and such a project is permitted by the applicable zoning;

b. The project will not conflict with adjacent agricultural operations; and

c. The project will not hamper or discourage long-term agricultural operations either on site or on adjacent agricultural lands.

Policy 1.H.4. The County shall allow the conversion of existing agricultural land to urban uses only within community plan areas and within city spheres of influence where designated for urban development on the General Plan Land Use Diagram.

Policy 1.H.5. The County shall require development within or adjacent to designated agricultural areas to incorporate design, construction, and maintenance techniques that protect agriculture and minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural uses, except as may be determined to be necessary or inappropriate within a Specific Plan as part of the Specific Plan approval.

Policy 1.H.6. The County shall require new non-agricultural development immediately adjacent to agricultural lands to be designed to provide a buffer in the form of a setback of sufficient distance to avoid land use conflicts between the agricultural uses and the non-agricultural uses except as may be determined to be necessary or inappropriate within a Specific Plan as part of the Specific Plan approval. Such setback or buffer areas shall be established by recorded easement or other instrument, subject to the approval of

County Counsel. A method and mechanism (e.g., a homeowners association or easement dedication to a non-profit organization or public entity) for guaranteeing the maintenance of this land in a safe and orderly manner shall be also established at the time of development approval.

Land Use Conflicts

Goal 7.B. To minimize existing and future conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses in agriculturally designated areas.

Policy 7.B.1. The County shall identify and maintain clear boundaries between urban/suburban and agricultural areas and require land use buffers between such uses where feasible, except as may be determined to be necessary or inappropriate within a Specific Plan as part of the Specific Plan approval. These buffers shall occur on the parcel for which the development permit is sought and shall favor protection of the maximum amount of farmland.

Policy 7.B.3. The County shall consider fencing subdivided lands adjoining agricultural uses as a potential mitigation measure to reduce conflicts between residential and agricultural uses. Factors to be considered in implementing such a measure include:

a. The type of agricultural operation (i.e., livestock, orchard, timber, row crops);

b. The size of the lots to be created;

c. The presence or lack of fences in the area;

d. Existing natural barriers that prevent trespass; and

e. Passage of wildlife.

Policy 7.B.4. The County shall continue to enforce the provisions of its Right-of-Farm Ordinance and of the existing state nuisance law.

Policy 7.B.5. The County shall encourage educational programs to inform Placer County residents of the importance of protecting farmland.

Agricultural/Timberland Buffers

In addition to the goals and policies outlined above, the General Plan requires the use of buffer zones in several types of developments. Land use buffer zones are to be reserved in perpetuity through land use acquisition, purchase of development rights, conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar mechanisms, with adjacent proposed development projects providing the necessary funding. The exact dimensions of the buffer zones and specific uses allowed in buffer zones are determined through the specific

plan, land use permit, and/or subdivision review process. However, buffer zones must conform to the following standards:

1. **Agriculture/Timberland Buffers**. These buffer zones are required to separate urban uses (particularly residential) from lands designated Agriculture or Timberland on the Land Use Diagram, where noise from machinery, dust, the use of fertilizers and chemical sprays, and other related agricultural/timber harvesting activities would create problems for nearby residential and other sensitive land uses. These buffers also serve to minimize disturbance of agricultural operations from nearby urban or suburban uses, including trespassing by nearby residents and domestic animals.

   a. **Buffer Dimensions**: Timber harvesting and agricultural practices associated with crop production can contribute to land use conflicts when development occurs adjacent to agricultural and timberland areas. Since production practices vary considerably by crop type, buffer distances may vary accordingly. The separations shown in the table below are required between areas designated Agriculture or Timberland and residential uses, commercial/office uses, business park uses, and some types of recreational uses; no buffers are required for other uses. The buffer widths are expressed as ranges because of the possible influences of site or project-specific characteristics.

   b. **Uses Allowed in Buffer**: Low-density residential uses on parcels of one to 20 acres or open space uses are permitted within the buffer, although the placement of residential structures is subject to the minimum "residential exclusion areas" shown in the table below. Non-habitable accessory structures and uses may be located in the exclusion area, and may include barns, stables, garages, and corrals.

Table 3.2-5
Minimum Agriculture/Timberland Buffer Zone Width

Agriculture/Timberland Use	Buffer Zone Width	
	Residential Exclusion Area[1]	Buffer Range Width[2]
Field Crops	100 feet	100 to 400 feet
Irrigated Orchards	300 feet	300 to 800 feet
Irrigated Vegetables, Rice	400 feet	200 to 800 feet
Rangeland/Pasture	50 feet	50 to 200 feet
Timberland	100 feet	100 to 400 feet
Vineyard	400 feet	400 to 800 feet

[1] *Residential structures prohibited; non-habitable accessory structures permitted.*
[2] *Required buffer dependent on-site or project-specific characteristics as determined through County's specific plan, land use permit, and/or subdivision review process.*

3.2.4 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS AND ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

3.2.4.1 Significance Thresholds

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidance requires an evaluation of a proposed action's effect on the human environment. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has determined that the Proposed Action or its alternatives would result in significant adverse effects related to agricultural resources if the Proposed Action or an alternative would:

- result in the conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses; or
- place incompatible uses adjacent to existing agricultural uses.

Important Farmland is defined as land that is designated as prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance under the FMMP.

3.2.4.2 Analysis Methodology

Impacts were assessed based on information contained in a variety of sources. Farmland status of the project site was obtained from the California DOC's FMMP. Although development of the project site with urban uses is anticipated to occur over a period of time under the Proposed Action and alternatives, this analysis assumes that ultimately all agricultural land within the project site would be eventually converted to non-agricultural uses.

3.2.5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact AG-1 Conversion of Important Farmland

No Action Alt. The No Action Alternative would result in the conversion of approximately 2,300 acres of Important Farmland, which would be a **significant** effect. **PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a** would be implemented but the effect would remain **significant and unavoidable**. The No Action Alternative would develop 3,294 acres (1,333 hectares) on the project site with urban uses and preserve 1,937 acres (784 hectares) as open space. Of the land that would be developed, about 1,091 acres (442 hectares) are Important Farmland. Once developed, these lands would no longer be available for agricultural uses. Even land that is preserved as open space would be unlikely to be farmed, because it would be comprised primarily of natural areas and drainages surrounded by urban development, although it would likely continue to be grazed. Therefore, development of the project site at buildout would result in the conversion of approximately 1,091 acres (442 hectares) of Important Farmland, and the loss of all active agricultural production within the project site. The loss of Important Farmland would be a **significant** effect.

PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a would address this effect. This measure requires the applicant to compensate for converting agricultural land to urban uses by placing conservation easements at a 1:1 ratio on lands that are (1) in agricultural production, (2) are undeveloped and have an NRCS soils classification of the same or greater value than lands being affected within the property at issue, or (3) are undeveloped and have the same or

higher value DOC categorization as lands being affected within the property at issue. The USACE assumes that Placer County would impose the same mitigation measures on the No Action Alternative to address this effect. The Placer Vineyards Specific Plan EIR found that this measure would substantially lessen the significant effect relating to the loss of agricultural land, including Important Farmland, but not to a less than significant level (Placer County 2007). The USACE also finds that the mitigation measures described above would not fully mitigate the effect of the No Action Alternative, and this effect would remain **significant**.

Proposed Action (Base Plan and Blueprint Scenarios)

The Proposed Action would develop 4,522 acres (1,830 hectares) of land on the site with urban uses and preserve about 709 acres (287 hectares) in open space. Land development would result in the conversion of about 2,300 acres (931 hectares) of Important Farmland. Based on the significance criteria listed above and for the same reasons presented for the No Action Alternative, the conversion of about 2,300 acres (931 hectares) of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses under the Proposed Action would be a **significant** effect. **PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a** would address this effect.

This measure was adopted by Placer County at the time of project approval and will be enforced by the County. The Placer Vineyards Specific Plan EIR found that this measure would substantially lessen the significant effect relating to the loss of agricultural land, including Important Farmland, but not to a less than significant level. Therefore, the effect would remain significant. The USACE agrees with the conclusion in the Placer Vineyards Specific Plan EIR and also finds that the effect would remain **significant** after mitigation.

Alts. 1 through 5

Alternatives 1 through 5 place varying amounts of acreages in open space, ranging from a minimum of 1 additional acre (0.4 hectare) greater than the Proposed Action under Alternative D up to a maximum of 47 additional acres (19 hectares) under Alternative 3. Therefore none of the alternatives would appreciably reduce the amount of Important Farmland that would be converted to urban uses on the project site. Development of Alternatives 1 through 5 combined would develop 4,431 acres (1,793 hectares) on the project site with urban uses and preserve 799 acres (323 hectares) as open space (compared to 709 acres [287 hectares] of open space under the Proposed Action). Therefore, Alternatives 1 through 5 (singly or combined) would also result in the conversion of about 2,300 acres (931 hectares) of Important Farmland.

Based on the significance criteria listed above and for the same reasons presented for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action, the conversion of approximately 2,300 acres (931 hectares) of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses would be a **significant** effect. **PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a** would address this effect. The USACE assumes that Placer County would impose the same mitigation measure on Alternatives 1 through 5 (singly or combined) to address this effect. However, for the same reasons presented above, the effect would remain **significant**.

PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a: Open Space/Agricultural Land Mitigation
(Applicability – Proposed Action and Alternatives)

PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a *requires the Applicants to compensate for converting agricultural land to urban uses by placing conservation easements at a 1:1 ratio on lands that are (1) in agricultural production, (2) are undeveloped and have an NRCS soils classification of the same or greater value than lands being affected within the property at issue, or (3) are undeveloped and have the same or higher value DOC categorization as lands being affected within the property at issue. The full text of the EIR mitigation measure is presented in* ***Appendix 3.0****.*

Impact AG-2 Compatibility with Adjacent Agricultural Uses

No Action Alt. The No Action Alternative would result in **less than significant** effects from developing urban uses near agricultural uses. The No Action Alternative would not conflict with adjacent agricultural uses as land uses on the project site would be adequately buffered from surrounding agricultural uses. In addition, conflicts between new urban uses and continuing agricultural uses on the project site that may occur as the project site is built out would be resolved by adherence to the County's Right to Farm Ordinance and state nuisance laws.

Land to the north of the project site is currently undeveloped dry pastureland with some rural residential uses. In addition, there is an agricultural preserve area associated with rice production north of Baseline Road between County Acres Lane and South Brewer Road. Most of the land to the north east of County Acres Lane is designated for development in the Sierra Vista Specific Plan, which was recently approved by the City of Roseville, and the Curry Creek Community Plan. Land to the west of County Acres Lane designated for agriculture by the Placer County General Plan. In addition, land to the north is separated from the project site by Baseline Road.

The County General Plan requires the establishment of a 50- to 200-foot (15- to 61-meter) buffer between urban uses and grazing or pastureland. The setback provided by the future Baseline Road right-of-way (approximately 100 feet [30 meters]) will satisfy this buffer requirement. Concerning the agricultural preserve to the north of Baseline Road, a buffer of 200 to 800 feet (61 to 244 meters) with a residential exclusion area of 400 feet (122 meters) would be required according to the General Plan. The nearest residential use within the project site would be approximately 1,600 feet (488 meters) away from the preserve while other buildings adjacent to the preserve would be 200 feet (61 meters) away. As a result, the No Action Alternative meets the General Plan requirements for buffers adjacent to rice production.

Single-family residential uses are currently located to the east of the project site and undeveloped grazing and irrigated cropland (field crops and orchard) are currently located to the southeast of the project site. The land to the east is designated for development in the

Dry Creek Community Plan and land to the southeast is designated for development in the Riolo Vineyards Specific Plan. In addition, land to the southeast is separated from the project site by Dry Creek.

The single-family residential uses to the east of the project site do not require a buffer. As discussed above, for grazing or pastureland, the General Plan requires a 50- to 200-foot (15- to 61-meter) buffer. For irrigated field crops, the General Plan require a buffer of 200 to 800 feet (61 to 244 meters) with a residential exclusion area of 400 feet (122 meters) while for irrigated orchards a buffer of 300 to 800 feet (91 to 244 meters) with a residential exclusion area of 300 feet (91 meters) is required. An open space buffer is planned along Dry Creek under the No Action Alternative. Therefore the nearest residential use on the project site would be located approximately 800 to 900 feet (244 to 274 meters) from the grazing and agricultural uses to the southeast. The No Action Alternative meets the General Plan requirements for buffers adjacent to grazing and irrigated crop production.

Land to the south of the project site, located in Sacramento County, can be characterized (moving west to east) as rural residential, agriculture (undeveloped grazing), open space (Gibson Ranch Park), and low-density residential (community of Antelope). The land to the south between Gibson Ranch Park and 1,350 feet (411 meters) west of Palladay Road is designated for development in the Elverta Specific Plan. Land to the west of the Elverta Specific Plan area is designated for agriculture by the Sacramento County General Plan.

As discussed above, for grazing or pastureland, the General Plan requires a 50- to 200-foot (15- to 61-meter) buffer. The No Action Alternative provides for a 200-foot- (61-meter) wide open space buffer along the southern border of the project site to buffer future residential uses from existing rural residential uses, which could contain pasture land, and undeveloped grazing land to the south. This open space area would also provide a buffer between proposed residential uses and proposed rural residential uses in the Elverta Specific Plan area. East of the Elverta Specific Plan area the open space buffer narrows to 50 feet (15 meters) and is generally adjacent to Gibson Ranch Park. There is, however, an area of existing private open space between the project site and Gibson Ranch Park that is approximately 200 feet (61 meters) wide at its western extremity and tapering to a point as it approaches Dry Creek at the east end of the parcel. The parcel does not appear to be used agriculturally and, therefore, the narrower buffer does not present an agricultural land use conflict issue.

Properties to the west, located in Sutter County are characterized predominantly as rural residential and are designated for development by Sutter County (Placer County 2006). As the Special Planning Area borders these lands, no buffers are required.

Concerning the compatibility of adjacent agricultural uses within the project site, the use of agricultural buffers would only apply to lands within the project site that are adjacent to the SPA. The majority of the SPA is used as pasture and therefore would require a 50-foot

(15-meter) residential exclusion area and a 50- to 200-foot (15- to 61-meter) buffer for other uses according to buffer requirements contained in the General Plan. Development under the No Action Alternative would provide for a minimum 50-foot (15-meter) separation between the proposed uses on the project site and the SPA. Therefore, the No Action Alternative meets the General Plan requirements for buffers adjacent to pasture land.

Finally, because development will occur over a number of years, it is anticipated that some owners of the land within the project site will choose to retain their land in agriculture for a period of time while neighboring parcels may choose to develop. Although the Placer County General Plan contains standards for buffers between agriculture and other uses (see discussion above), the buffers are designed to be retained in perpetuity, depending on their width and size, and would not be workable where landowners have approved entitlements that could be exercised at any time, such as properties within the portion of the project site proposed for urban development. However, adherence to the County's Right to Farm Ordinance and state nuisance laws would ensure that adjacent agricultural and urban uses within areas designated for urban development within the project site would remain compatible.

In summary, land uses on the project site would be adequately buffered from surrounding agricultural uses and would meet buffer requirements for agricultural uses contained in the General Plan. In addition, conflicts between new urban uses and continuing agricultural uses on the project site that may occur as the project site is built out would be resolved by adherence to the County's Right to Farm Ordinance and state nuisance laws. Therefore, the effect would be **less than significant**. No mitigation is required.

Proposed Action (Base Plan and Blueprint Scenarios)

The Proposed Action would also develop residential uses that are adjacent the agricultural preserve to the north of Baseline Road. As with the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action also meets the General Plan requirements for buffers adjacent to rice production. The nearest residential use within the project site would be approximately 700 feet (213 meters) away from the preserve while other buildings adjacent to the preserve would be 200 feet (61 meters) away. An open space buffer is planned along Dry Creek under the Proposed Action. Therefore the nearest residential use on the project site would be located approximately 800 to 900 feet (244 to 274 meters) from the grazing and agricultural uses to the southeast, and Proposed Action meets the General Plan requirements for buffers adjacent to grazing and irrigated crop production. Similarly, the Proposed Action provides for a 200-foot- (61-meter) wide open space buffer along the southern border of the project site to buffer future residential uses from existing rural residential uses, which could contain pasture land, and undeveloped grazing land to the south. Finally, Proposed Action provides for a minimum 50-foot (15-meter) separation between the proposed uses on the project site and the SPA. Therefore, the Proposed Action meets the General Plan requirements for buffers.

With respect to land use incompatibility resulting from the fact that some owners of the

land within the project site will choose to retain their land in agriculture for a period of time while neighboring parcels may choose to develop, as with the No Action Alternative, adherence to the County's Right to Farm Ordinance and state nuisance laws would ensure that adjacent agricultural and urban uses within areas designated for urban development within the project site would remain compatible. Therefore, the effect of the Proposed Action related to incompatibility with agricultural uses would be **less than significant**. No mitigation is required.

Alts. 1 through 5

Development of Alternatives 1 through 5 combined would increase the amount of open space areas in the eastern, southwestern, and western portions of the project site as compared to the Proposed Action. As a result, a portion of the 200-foot (61-meter) open space buffer adjacent to the Sacramento County line would increase (Alternatives 3 and 4). The size of the open space buffer along the remaining boundary with Sacramento County would remain the same. In addition, the minimum 50-foot (15-meter) buffer between proposed land uses and uses in the SPA would remain unchanged with the development of Alternatives 1 through 5 combined. However, as with the Proposed Action, some of the land parcels within the project site under Alternatives 1 through 5 individually or combined may remain in agricultural use while adjacent parcels develop. Overall, less development would be located adjacent to agricultural areas. Based on the significance criteria listed above and for the same reasons presented for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action, the effect related to incompatibility with agricultural uses would be **less than significant**. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-3 Indirect Effects on Agricultural Resources from Off-Site Infrastructure Not Constructed as Part of the Project

No Action Alt., Proposed Action (Base Plan and Blueprint Scenarios), and Alts. 1 through 5

The construction of off-site water pipeline infrastructure by the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) which may be used by the No Action Alternative, Proposed Action, and Alternatives 1 through 5, would result in **less than significant** effects on agricultural resources. Operation of the pipelines would not result in disruption of agricultural land. Therefore, operational impacts would not be significant.

The corridors where the water infrastructure would be constructed are primarily along existing roadways. However, in some locations construction in the utility line corridor would result in temporary loss of use of agricultural land. Because the loss of use would be temporary, the effect would be **less than significant**. Mitigation is not required.

3.2.6 RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

PVSP EIR Mitigation Measure 4.4-1a would reduce Important Farmland conversion impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives. However, even with mitigation this impact would remain **significant** because conservation easements would not replace the acreage that is lost due to development.

3.2.7 REFERENCES

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