

## 5.5 LAND RESOURCES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential impacts to agricultural, forest, and mineral resources from implementation of the Project.

### 5.5.1 INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning Environmental Checklist Form, which has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), requires that agricultural, forest, and mineral resource issues be evaluated as part of the environmental documentation process. The impacts of the proposed development on the Project site are analyzed at a project-level of detail; direct and indirect impacts are addressed for each threshold criterion for both the on-site and off-site Project features. Growth-inducing impacts and cumulative impacts are described in Sections 6.0 and 7.0, respectively.

#### **Summary**

The Project will result in the conversion of approximately 642 acres of on-site Prime Farmland. The Project site is identified as being within the West Economic Opportunity Area (EOA), one of three EOAs established by the Antelope Valley Area Plan (AVAP). The EIR for the AVAP considered the impacts of converting a total of 6,169 acres of Important Farmland and concluded that the conversion would be a significant and unavoidable impact (DRP 2014). Although the Project is consistent with the AVAP's land use policy, the Project would not result in any new impacts to agricultural lands, and the Project would allow for continued grazing activity and small-scale agriculture and agriculture-related uses (PDF 5-1), because the Project is directly facilitating the conversion of 642 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural uses, it is considered a significant impact of the Project. For the same reasons as described in the AVAP EIR, there is no feasible mitigation to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, and therefore would be a significant unavoidable impact of the Project.

The adoption of the Project will require a discretionary zone change to be made by the County that is consistent with, and would help implement, the AVAP—specifically the Rural Preservation Strategy and associated Policy LU 1.1—as it applies to the Project site. Also, there are no Williamson Act contracts onsite, or within Los Angeles County (outside of Catalina Island). Therefore, there would be no conflict with applicable agricultural land use policies if the County adopts the Project.

As discussed above, the only agricultural zoning on the Project site is the A-1-2: Light Agriculture zone located on the lands to the east of 300<sup>th</sup> Street West. This zoning allows tree crops as a permitted use. Although the remainder of the Project site is not zoned for agricultural uses under the AVAP, an approximate 13-acre area in the northwestern corner of the site is identified as containing montane hardwood resources and approximately 883 acres in the southwestern and southeastern portions of the site are identified as containing primarily mixed chaparral (approximately 553 acres) as well as blue oak woodland, blue oak-foothill pine, juniper, and pinyon-juniper resources (approximately 330 acres) on maps

prepared by the California Department of Fire and Forestry Protection's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP 2006). It is noted that the statewide mapping of forest and timber resources as part of the FRAP is separate from the vegetation mapping performed for the Project site, and is used herein solely for the determination of potential forest and timber resources. Finally, no part of the Project site is zoned as a Timberland Production Zone.

As discussed further in Section 5.7, Biological Resources, the proposed development areas of the Project site have been used for open cattle grazing for over 150 years and, as a result the majority of the on-site acreage consists of grasslands that do not support a large number of tree species. While the existing zoning in the easternmost portion of the site allows for tree crop production, these lands have never been managed for forest resources including for timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, or for other public benefits. Further, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regulations (Section 895.1) define commercial species of trees for each forest district. The Project site does not contain any trees listed as a "commercial species" for the applicable Southern Forest District as defined in the applicable regulations. Project implementation would not conflict with zoning for forest land or timberland as the Project site is not used for forest land or timberland resources and is not considered forest land or timberland by the County or the State. The Project will not conflict with zoning for timberland or a Timberland Production Zone, as the site has not been designated as such. There would be no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required

Project implementation would not result in impacts related to the loss of known mineral resources because there are no known mineral resources on the Project site or the off-site Project features.

## Section Format

As described in Section 5.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation, and in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Article 9 (Contents of Environmental Impact Reports), each topical environmental analysis includes a description of the existing setting; identification of thresholds of significance; analysis of potential Project effects and identification of significant impacts; identification of mitigation measures, if required, to reduce significant impacts; and level of significance after mitigation, if any. This information is presented in the following format (please refer to Section 2.0, Introduction, and Section 5.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation, for descriptions of each of these topics):

- Introduction
  - Purpose
  - Summary
  - Section Format
  - References
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
  - Relevant Plans, Policies, and Regulations
  - Environmental Setting
  - Project Design Features

- Threshold Criteria
- Environmental Impacts—A separate analysis is provided for each of the following categories of potential impacts:
  - On-Site Impacts
  - Off-Site Impacts
- Mitigation Measures
- Level of Significance after Mitigation
- Mineral Resources
  - Relevant Plans, Policies, and Regulations
  - Environmental Setting
  - Project Design Features
  - Threshold Criteria
  - Environmental Impacts—A separate analysis is provided for each of the following categories of potential impacts:
    - On-Site Impacts
    - Off-Site Impacts
  - Mitigation Measures
  - Level of Significance After Mitigation
- References

## References

All references cited for preparation of this analysis are listed in Section 5.5.4.

## 5.5.2 AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

### Relevant Plans, Policies, and Regulations

#### *Federal*

There are no applicable federal plans, policies, or regulations regarding agricultural or forest resources.

#### *State*

##### Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) is a non-regulatory program that provides a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. The FMMP provides land use conversion information for decision makers to use in their planning for present and future use of California's agricultural resources. As part of the nationwide agricultural land use mapping effort, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS, formerly Soil Conservation Service [SCS]) developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classify the land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability includes both the physical and chemical characteristics

of soils and actual land use. Important Farmland Maps have been derived from the NRCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria.

Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the NRCS in completing its mapping of the state. The FMMP was created by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) to carry out the mapping activity on a continuing basis and with a greater level of detail, which they did by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California. The California LIM criteria utilize the NRCS and Storie Index Rating systems,<sup>1</sup> and also consider other physical conditions such as the following: water moisture regimes, available water capacity, and developed irrigation water supply; soil temperature range; acid-alkali balance; water table; soil sodium content; flooding (uncontrolled runoff from natural precipitation); erodibility; permeability rate; rock fragment content; and soil rooting depth. The following farmland classifications are based on information from the Department of Conservation Division of Land Resources Protection's, *A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program* (DOC 2004):

- **Prime Farmland (P).** Prime Farmland is land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the long-term production of agricultural crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed (including water management) according to current farming methods. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two previous cycles prior to the mapping date.<sup>2</sup> It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy that prevents agricultural use.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance (F).** Farmland of Statewide Importance is land other than Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two previous cycles prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy that prevents agricultural use.
- **Unique Farmland (U).** Unique Farmland is land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. It must be currently used for the production of specific high-economic value crops (as listed in the last three years of *California Agriculture* produced by the California Department of Food and Agriculture). It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or a high yield of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers. 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 cycles prior to the mapping date.

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<sup>1</sup> The Storie Index provides a numeric rating (based upon a 100 point scale) of the relative degree of suitability or value of a given soil for intensive agriculture. The rating is based on four soil characteristics that represent the inherent characteristics and qualities of the soil, which are considered in the index rating. The four factors are profile characteristics, texture of the surface layer, slope, and other factors (e.g., drainage, salinity) (DOC 1997).

<sup>2</sup> A cycle is approximately two years.

- **Farmland of Local Importance (L).** Farmland of Local Importance is of importance to the local agricultural economy and is determined by each County’s Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. According to the DOC, Farmland of Local Importance in Los Angeles County includes producing lands that would meet the standard criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but which are not irrigated (DOC 2004).
- **Grazing Land (G).** Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for livestock grazing. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land (D).** Urban and Built-Up Land is occupied with structures that have a building density of at least one unit to one-half acre or approximately six structures to a ten-acre parcel.<sup>3</sup>
- **Other Land (X).** This category is for land that is not included in any other mapping categories. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines; borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land that is surrounded on all sides by urban development and is greater than 40 acres is mapped as “Other Land”.

For CEQA purposes, Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance are collectively defined as “Important Farmland”. Grazing Land is also considered a farmland category, but is not included in the “Important Farmland” definition.

### California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act (LCA), also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 to encourage the preservation of the state’s agricultural lands and to prevent their premature conversion to urban uses. In order to preserve these agricultural uses, the Williamson Act established an agricultural preserve contract procedure by which any California County or City can tax landowners at a lower rate, using a scale based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted (i.e., “fair”) market value. In return, landowners guarantee that their properties will remain under agricultural production for at least a ten-year period. The contract is renewed annually for an additional year automatically unless the owner files a notice of non-renewal. In this manner, each agricultural preserve contract (at any given date) is always operable at least nine years into the future. The only lands in Los Angeles County under Williamson Act Contract are located on Catalina Island (DOC 2016b). As such, no part of the Project site is under Williamson Act Contract.

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<sup>3</sup> A “unit” is defined as a structure or foundation on which uses associated with development are placed. Uses may include and are not limited to residential, industrial, 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.

## Right-to-Farm Ordinances

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 associated with normal, day-to-day farming activities (e.g., odor, noise, dust). Los Angeles County does not have a Right-to-Farm Ordinance.

### *County*

#### Los Angeles County General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan

The *Los Angeles County General Plan* and the *Antelope Valley Area Plan (AVAP)*, part of the County General Plan, includes goals and policies that address agricultural issues in the unincorporated County. As discussed further below, the Project site is identified in the AVAP as within the West EOA, one of three EOAs established by the AVAP where increased residential, commercial, and industrial uses are encouraged while preserving the rural character and ecological resources of the surrounding areas, including agricultural activity. The AVAP goal and policy applicable to the analysis of agriculture resources with Project implementation are listed below. Section 5.8, Land Use, Entitlements, and Planning, presents a more in-depth analysis of the Project's consistency with relevant plans, policies and regulations.

**Goal LU 1:** A land use pattern that maintains and enhances the rural character of the unincorporated Antelope Valley.

**Policy LU 1.1:** Direct the majority of the unincorporated Antelope Valley's future growth to rural town center areas and identified economic opportunity areas, through appropriate land use designations, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.

## **Environmental Setting**

### ***Agriculture Resource Planning in the Antelope Valley***

Development of the Antelope Valley started in 1876 and the developing communities were dependent upon stock raising, dry farming, and fruit orchards. While the years during and after World War II saw military investments come to prominence, this type of development declined, and the final decades of the 20th century saw the Antelope Valley emerge with major new housing opportunities as vast acreages were subdivided for affordable tract homes. Farming regained its status as a productive employer, but the area continued to develop without balancing the growth in housing with a corresponding growth in jobs and investment in infrastructure.

The AVAP was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on June 16, 2015, which updates and supersedes the previous Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan adopted in 1986 (DRP 2015c). The AVAP is centered on the Rural Preservation Strategy, developed to reflect the community's desire to maintain the rural attributes of the Antelope Valley while acknowledging the "growing populations need for additional housing and employment opportunities. . ." per the AVAP's vision statement (DRP 2015a). As discussed in the AVAP,

the Rural Preservation Strategy is based on four types of environments—Rural Town Center Areas, Rural Town Areas, Rural Preserve Areas, Economic Opportunity Areas—that serve different purposes. Collectively, these environments preserve the rural character of the region, conserve environmental resources, and protect residents from potential hazards while allowing for additional growth and development (DRP 2015a). [SEP]

In Rural Town Center Areas and Rural Town Areas, the amount of potential development allowed by the AVAP will be equal to, or greater than, the amount of potential development allowed by the previous Area Plan. Therefore, those areas are likely to benefit from increased property tax revenues and developer fees, which can help fund additional infrastructure. EOAs are defined clusters of land along the routes of two new proposed major infrastructure projects in the Antelope Valley (i.e. the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project), which are expected to indirectly generate growth and development. The EOAs maximize the investment of State and regional agencies in public infrastructure while achieving the general goal of rural preservation in the Antelope Valley. Any development induced by these two infrastructure projects is intended be guided to EOAs in order for surrounding areas to be preserved and maintained at low density or agricultural uses ( DRP 2015a). The Project site is in the West EOA.

### ***Contribution of Agriculture to the Los Angeles County Economy***

According to the most recent data from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the County of Los Angeles is ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> in the state for agricultural production market value, with 2013–2014 gross revenues of approximately \$230,068,000. The leading commodity crops included woody ornamental and other nursery plants, vegetables, fruits and nuts, and hay (CDFA 2015).

### ***Farmland Conversion Trends in Los Angeles County***

Agricultural land conversion has a long history in Los Angeles County; the extent of this conversion is reflected in Table 5.5-1, Los Angeles County Agricultural Acres per Crop 1970–2014.

**TABLE 5.5-1  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ACRES PER CROP 1970–2013**

| Crop   | Acreage |        |       |                   |        |                   | 1970-2014 % Change <sup>c</sup> |
|--|---------|--------|-------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | 1970    | 1980   | 1990  | 2002 <sup>a</sup> | 2010   | 2014 <sup>b</sup> |                                 |
| Fruit and Nut Crops  | 7,829   | 3,032  | 1,889 | 1,692             | 1,913  | 764               | (90)                            |
| Vegetable Crops  | 6,592   | 6,446  | 2,926 | 12,934            | 4,472  | 6,765             | 3                               |
| Nursery Products   | 1,972   | 2,280  | 2,160 | 2,240             | 2,071  | 1,530             | (22)                            |
| Flowers and Foliage  | 656     | 490    | 235   | 72                | 81     | 88                | (87)                            |
| Field Crops  | 57,890  | 42,298 | 8,683 | 8,458             | 15,985 | 11,147            | (81)                            |
| <b>Average Change:</b>   |         |        |       |                   |        |                   | <b>(57)</b>                     |
| <sup>a</sup> Current at time the NOP was released in 2004.<br><sup>b</sup> Most current information available in January 2017.<br><sup>c</sup> Numbers in parentheses denote negative numbers.<br>Sources: LACFB 2014, 2010; LACAC 2000, 1990, 1980, 1970. |         |        |       |                   |        |                   |                                 |

As shown in Table 5.5-1, the total acreage in production for all crop types has varied over time, with an approximate average net reduction in acreage of 57 percent of these crops since 1970 as shown in the last column. The 2014 value of agricultural commodities in Los Angeles County was \$229,686,760, which includes all the crop types listed above as well as livestock production, forest products, and apiary that are not measured in acreages (LACFB 2014). However, according to the AVAP Draft EIR, agricultural production has increased in the Antelope Valley since the mid-1990s due to the increase in production of vegetable crops (mainly onions and carrots) and fruit crops (mainly peaches)—28 percent and 15 percent, respectively (DRP 2014).

In addition to considering agricultural production, the following discussion considers the coverage of FMMP-designated farmlands, which does not account for the type or amount of crops on that land. Table 5.5-2, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Resources in Los Angeles County 2000–2014, provides an overview of the amount of FMMP-designated lands present in the County and the percent change in each category over that period. The 2012–2014 period is the most recent FMMP data published by the California Department of Conservation.



**TABLE 5.5-2  
FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM RESOURCES  
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY 2000-2014**

| Category                           | Acreage           |                |                |                   | 2002-2014<br>% Change <sup>c</sup> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
|                                    | 2002 <sup>a</sup> | 2006           | 2012           | 2014 <sup>b</sup> |                                    |
| Prime Farmland                     | 32,187            | 32,611         | 27,733         | 25,427            | (21)                               |
| Farmland of Statewide Importance   | 939               | 1,024          | 841            | 826               | (12)                               |
| Unique Farmland                    | 1,155             | 1,024          | 1,088          | 1,066             | (8)                                |
| Farmland of Local Importance       | 8,171             | 8,975          | 5,671          | 3,964             | (51)                               |
| <i>Subtotal Important Farmland</i> | <i>42,452</i>     | <i>43,634</i>  | <i>35,333</i>  | <i>31,283</i>     | <i>(26)</i>                        |
| Grazing Land                       | 233,399           | 228,729        | 235,829        | 237,069           | 2                                  |
| <b>Total FMMP Lands</b>            | <b>275,851</b>    | <b>272,363</b> | <b>271,162</b> | <b>268,352</b>    | <b>(3)</b>                         |

FMMP: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program; NOP: Notice of Preparation

<sup>a</sup> Current at time the NOP was released in 2004. Acreage was calculated in 2002 using the rectified imagery, which resulted in significant boundary adjustments, particularly in areas with terrain. A large reclassification from Farmland of Local Importance to Grazing Land is due to these factors and an analysis of the long-term idling of dryland farming areas.

<sup>b</sup> Most current information available in January 2017.

<sup>c</sup> Numbers in parentheses denote negative numbers.

Source: DOC 2017.

As shown in Table 5.5-2, the acreage of Important Farmland collectively decreased approximately 26 percent and Grazing Land remained stable (approximate 2 percent increase). For additional context, historic land use conversion data for Los Angeles County available for the past 20 years, from 1984 through 2014, shows a decrease in Important Farmland of 29,594 acres (49 percent) and an increase in Grazing Land of 7,306 acres (3 percent) over this period (DOC 2017). The AVAP Draft EIR identifies a total of 24,443 acres of Important Farmland within the AVAP planning area, which includes only unincorporated portions of the Antelope Valley (LACDRP 2014).

The FMMP also tracks the acres of “Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use” as an optional category and is defined as existing farmland, grazing land, and vacant areas that have a permanent commitment for development. Table 5.5-3, Lands Committed to Non-Agricultural Use in Los Angeles County 2002-2010, summarizes the lands placed in this category in each two-year mapping cycle. The land committed to non-agricultural use is not reported in the 2010-2012 or 2012-2014 data, the most recent FMMP data.

**TABLE 5.5-3  
AGRICULTURAL LANDS COMMITTED TO NON-AGRICULTURAL USE  
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY 2002-2010**

| FMMP Category  | Acreage      |              |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | 2002-2004    | 2004-2006    | 2006-2008    | 2008-2010    |
| Prime Farmland   | 46           | 46           | 46           | 44           |
| Farmland of Statewide Importance                                   | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
| Unique Farmland  | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
| Farmland of Local Importance                                       | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
| <i>Subtotal Important Farmland</i>                                 | 46           | 46           | 46           | 44           |
| Grazing Land   | 2,278        | 2,258        | 2,246        | 2,212        |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>2,324</b> | <b>2,304</b> | <b>2,292</b> | <b>2,256</b> |
| FMMP: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program<br>Source: DOC 2017. |              |              |              |              |

As shown in Table 5.5-3, in 2010, 44 acres of Prime Farmland and slightly more than 2,200 acres of Grazing Land were developed as non-agricultural uses in Los Angeles County, which is a slight reduction when compared to previous 2-year mapping periods.

#### ***On-Site Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Designations and Agricultural Production***

Table 5.5-4 below summarizes the acres of FMMP-designated lands on the Project site, based on the most recent FMMP data publicly available. The Centennial Project site contains approximately 642 acres of land designated as Prime Farmland, with the majority of the site (approximately 11,616 acres) designated as Grazing Land (2016a). These acreages represent approximately 2.5 percent of the Prime Farmland and approximately 4.9 percent of the Grazing Land, respectively, designated under the FMMP in the County of Los Angeles in 2014 (DOC 2017). The Project site includes no lands that are designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. The on-site Prime Farmland represents approximately 10.4 percent of the Important Farmland in the AVAP planning area (6,169 acres).

**TABLE 5.5-4  
FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM DESIGNATIONS  
AND ACREAGES ON THE CENTENNIAL PROJECT SITE**

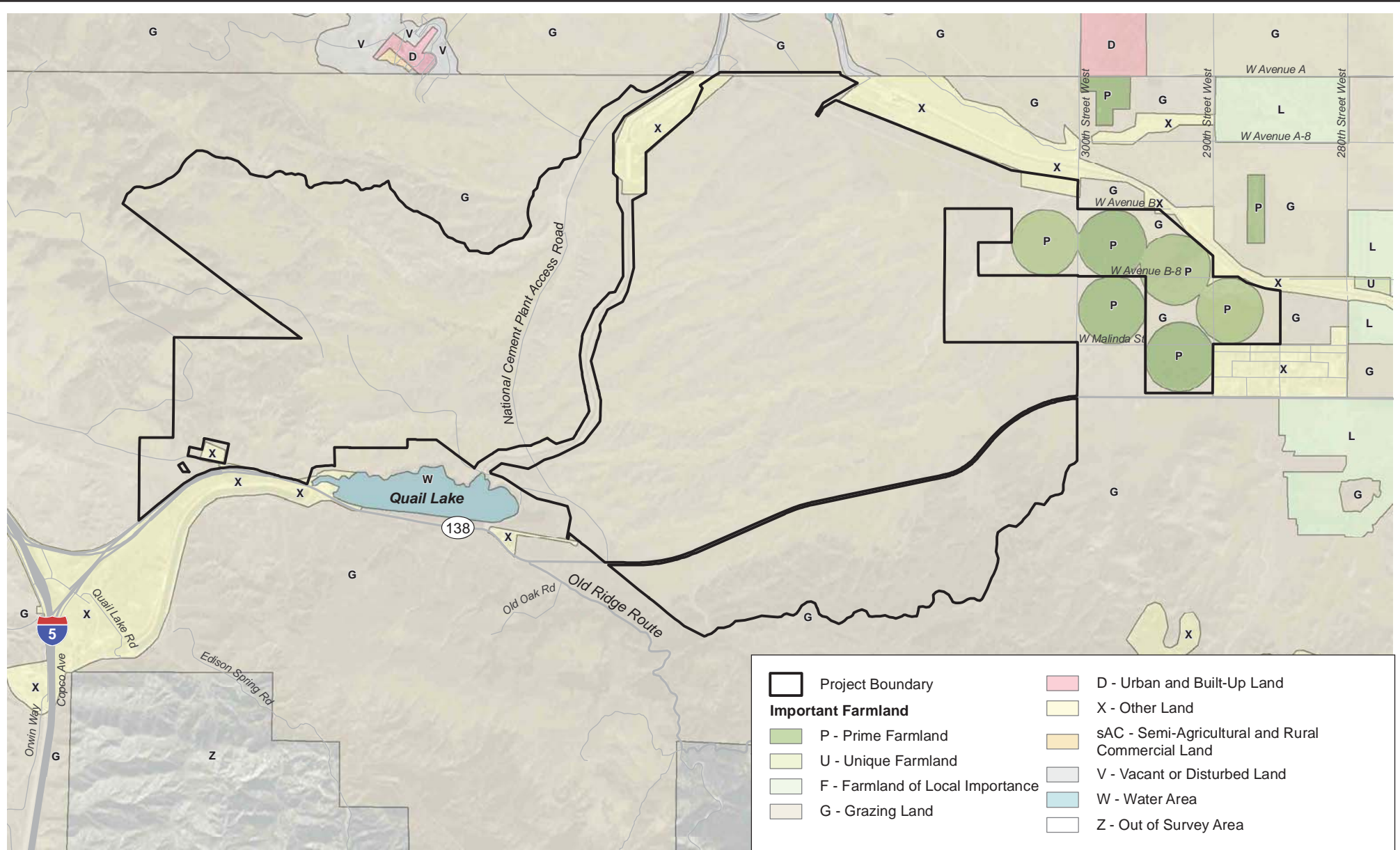
| FMMP Category                                 | Acreage       |
|---|---------------|
| Prime Farmland                                | 642           |
| Grazing Land                                  | 11,616        |
| Other Land, and<br>Vacant and Disturbed Land  | 65            |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>12,323</b> |
| FMMP: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program |               |
| Source: DOC 2016a.                            |               |

The distribution of classified farmland on the Project site is illustrated on Exhibit 5.5-1, Important Farmland (FMMP Designations). As shown, the majority of the surrounding lands are designated as Grazing Land, and there are two small, discrete areas of Prime Farmland located off site to the northeast of the site.

Land in agricultural production is defined as either being farmed for crop production or as being used for rangeland cattle grazing. Exhibit 5.5-2, Current On-Site Agricultural Uses, shows the current agricultural uses on the Project site. The Project site has been used for open grazing for over 150 years. The Tejon Ranch Company currently leases the Project site to an independent company for grazing and agricultural uses. Approximately 10,950 acres (89 percent) of the Project site are currently used for grazing. This is somewhat less than the area designated as Grazing Land, pursuant to the FMMP, as described in Table 5.5-4. The grazing area is spread almost entirely across the site, and grazing occurs in the spring. The total area of grazing acreage on the Project site represents approximately 5 percent of the 237,069 acres of grazing land in Los Angeles County in the year 2014. To date, the grazing on site is not managed for biological resources. Cattle can graze on any portion of the site regardless of sensitive habitats or plant species that may be present.

In addition to grazing, the Tejon Ranch Company owns and cultivates approximately 1,000 acres in the eastern portion of the Project site as pivot fields.<sup>4</sup> These 1,000 acres include 5 separate pivot fields that correlate with the approximate 642 acres of Prime Farmland on the site (see Table 5.5-4 and Exhibit 5.5-1). Each pivot field is a circle within a square parcel. Therefore, each pivot field has adjacent lands in each parcel that are indirectly involved in the production activities (e.g., equipment access, water infrastructure) but do not directly produce crops. These “edge” lands outside the pivot circles comprise the difference between the 642 acres of Prime Farmland and the total of approximately 1,000 acres of land (i.e., approximately 348 acres) under cultivation Tejon Ranch Company. The pivot fields are managed for the production of either alfalfa or a three-way forage mix (e.g., barley, oats, sedan grass). The total 1,000-acre area has been cultivated by the Tejon Ranch Company since 1998. Prior to 1998, the land was used primarily for grazing.

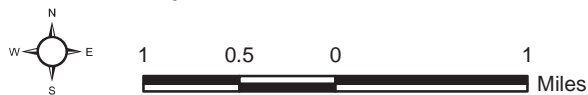
<sup>4</sup> A “pivot field” is a circular agricultural field with a centralized “pivot” irrigation system.



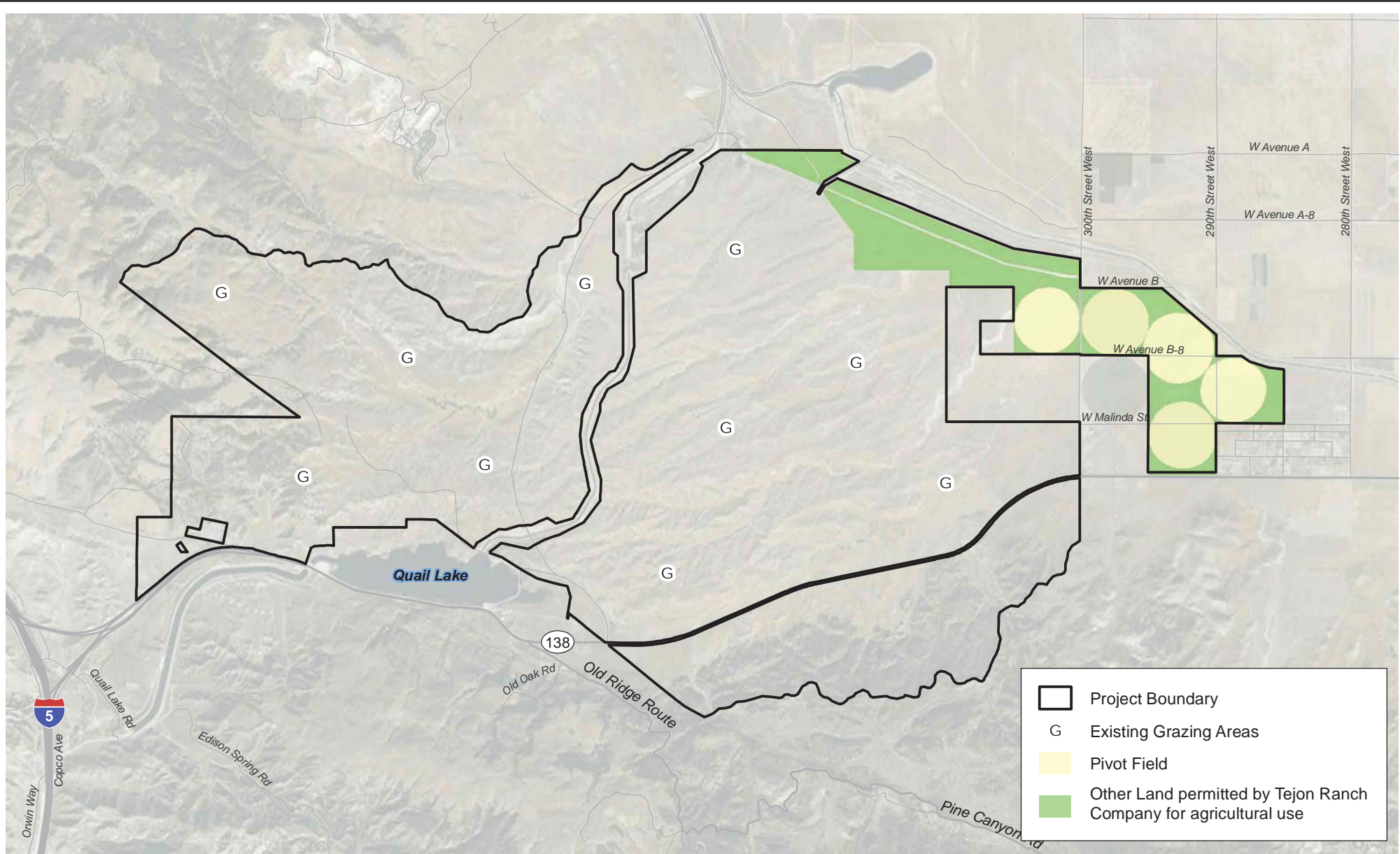
# Important Farmland (Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Designations)

# Exhibit 5.5-1

Centennial Project



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# Current On-Site Agricultural Uses

# Exhibit 5.5-2

Centennial Project



### ***Agricultural Pesticide Use***

Various pesticides, some herbicides, and nitrogen fertilizers are currently used and stored on the Project site. These materials are used in the pivot fields in the eastern portion of the Project site. As agricultural activities on the site are phased out, the use of these chemicals would decline. For a more detailed discussion of current and historical on-site pesticide use, please refer to Section 5.3, Hazards and Fire Safety.

### **Project Design Features**

**PDF 5-1** Project development would allow for continued grazing operations on portions of the Open Space preserve areas as a management tool for grassland conservation, subject to the specifications of the Native Perennial Grassland and Wildflower Field Mitigation Plan to be prepared as part of the Project implementation. Additionally, the Project would accommodate a total of 50 acres of small-scale agriculture and agriculture-related uses (e.g., community gardens, farmers markets/fresh fruit and vegetable stands, growing and sales of nursery stock, commercial greenhouses).

### **Threshold Criteria**

The following significance threshold criteria are derived from the County of Los Angeles Environmental Checklist that was in place when the Notice of Preparation (NOP) was released. The Project will result in a significant impact if it would:

- Threshold 5-1** 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.
- Threshold 5-2** Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, with a designated Agricultural Opportunity Area, or with a Williamson Act contract.
- Threshold 5-3** Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code, Section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code, Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code, Section 51104[g]).
- Threshold 5-4** Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- Threshold 5-5** Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest land use.

## Environmental Impacts

**Threshold 5-1**      **Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?**

### *On-Site Impacts*

As shown on Exhibit 5.5-1, the lands designated as Prime Farmland are located in the easternmost portion of the site. As shown on Exhibit 4-1, Centennial Project – Conceptual Land Use Plan, this land is proposed to be developed as residential, commercial, and business park uses. Therefore, Project implementation would result in the conversion of approximately 642 acres of Prime Farmland to urban and other land uses, which is a significant impact under CEQA. Lands that the California Department of Conservation has designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland are not present on the Project site. Conversion of Other Land or Grazing Land to non-agricultural uses is not considered a significant impact under CEQA. As described in PDF 5-1, the Project would allow for continued grazing operations on selected open space areas as a management tool for grassland conservation. While to date, grazing has not been specifically managed throughout the site for habitat or biological resources, once the Project is approved, all future grazing activities would be managed in an effort to protect sensitive species present on the site while providing a beneficial impact to native grassland and wildflower fields, as described in PDF 5-1.

Also, the Project would accommodate a total of 50 acres of small-scale agriculture and agriculture-related uses, including, but not limited to community gardens, farmers markets/fresh fruit and vegetable stands, growing and sales of nursery stock, and commercial greenhouses (PDF 5-1). However, these activities may or may not occur within the 642 acres of the site currently designated as Prime Farmland. In addition, Tejon Ranch will put an agricultural preservation easement of not less than 489 acres of Prime and Unique farmland outside of the Project site, but on the Tejon Ranch property.

The AVAP EIR considered the impacts of converting a total of 6,169 acres of Important Farmland based on the proposed land use designations considered incompatible with continued agricultural use, and maintaining 17,855 acres (or approximately 74 percent of the AVAP planning area), in land use designations considered compatible with agricultural use. By focusing future urban development in the EOAs and, to a lesser extent, the Rural Town Center Areas and Rural Town Areas, the AVAP EIR concluded that the overall rural character and agricultural uses within Antelope Valley would be preserved. However, the AVAP EIR concluded that the conversion of 6,169 acres of Important Farmland within the Antelope Valley was a significant and unavoidable impact, with no feasible mitigation measures available to reduce the impact based on current court decisions regarding agricultural mitigation as well as limited availability of land outside the AVAP planning area suitable for cultivation as Farmland in Los Angeles County (DRP 2014a).

The Project is consistent with the intent of the AVAP's land use policy that anticipates conversion of Farmland on and proximate to the site, among other areas, and the Project would not result in any new impacts to agricultural lands not previously considered in the AVAP EIR. However, Project implementation would result in the conversion of 642 acres of Prime Farmland, which is considered a direct, significant impact of the Project. Potential mitigation in the form of establishing 642 acres of new farming areas on Tejon Ranch has been investigated and determined to be infeasible with implementation of the Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement and other existing and proposed development on Tejon Ranch due to insufficient available land that could be cultivated to meet Prime Farmland standards.

For the same reasons as described in the AVAP EIR as well as lack of available land within Tejon Ranch that would equate to 642 acres of Prime Farmland, there is no feasible mitigation to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this would remain a significant unavoidable impact of the Project.

### ***Off-Site Impacts***

With the exception of isolated parcels of designated Prime Farmland areas to the northeast of the site (see Exhibit 5.5-1), all surrounding lands have been designated by the FMMP as Grazing Land and Other Land, which are both designations indicating that the land is unsuitable for agricultural cultivation. A significant impact due to conversion of Important Farmland would occur only if off-site features were to encroach on these Prime Farmland areas and convert them to non-agricultural uses. There are no lands designated as Important Farmland within any off-site Project feature sites. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

***Impact Summary:*** The Project will result in the conversion of approximately 642 acres of on-site Prime Farmland, for which there is no feasible mitigation to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this would be significant and unavoidable impact related to conversion of farmland.

**Threshold 5-2      Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, with a designated Agricultural Opportunity Area, or with a Williamson Act contract?**

### ***On-Site Impacts***

The AVAP land use designations on the Project site include: H5: Residential 5 (0-5 dwelling units [du]/gross acre); OS-C: Open Space Conservation; CR: Rural Commercial; RL1: Rural Land 1 (1 du/1 gross acre); IL: Light Industrial; and RL2: Rural Land 2 (1 du/2 gross acres). The AVAP zoning on the Project site includes A-1-2: Light Agriculture; OS: Open Space; RPD: Residential Planned Development; CPD-DP: Commercial Planned Development; and MPD-DP: Manufacturing industrial planned development. The A-1-2 zone is located on the lands to the east of 300<sup>th</sup> Street West. The Project site is designated on the AVAP zoning map as within the West EOA (DRP 2015a).



In its Resolution approving the AVAP, the County Board of Supervisors directed staff to prepare amendments to the Zoning Code that were consistent with, and implement, the AVAP. The AVAP also removed the Agricultural Resource Area designations on the Project site. The Zoning designations for the Project site were amended to be consistent with the AVAP as part of the routine Zoning Code update process for the AVAP.

Because the Project site is not currently zoned to support development of the specific uses proposed in the Project, a zone change is required upon adoption of the Project. The *California Government Code* establishes the authority for Cities and Counties to adopt specific plans either by resolution as policy, or by ordinance as regulation. The *Centennial Specific Plan* is a regulatory plan that would be considered for adoption by ordinance by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors.

The purpose of this EIR is to assess the environmental effects from implementing the proposed land uses if the Project were adopted. As such, the adoption of the *Centennial Specific Plan* would require a discretionary zone change to be made by the County that is consistent with, and would help implement, the AVAP—specifically the Rural Preservation Strategy and associated Policy LU 1.1—as it applies to the Project site. Specifically, implementation of the Project would focus residential, employment-generating, and civic land uses (e.g., library, post office, schools) within a designated Economic Opportunity Area, thereby facilitating preservation of agricultural and other rural development. Project consistency with the AVAP and zoning code is addressed in greater detail in Section 5.8, Land Use, Planning, and Entitlements.

Also, there are no Williamson Act contracts on site, or within Los Angeles County (outside of Catalina Island). Therefore, there would be no conflict with applicable agricultural land use policies if the County adopts the Project. There would be a less than significant impact and no mitigation is required.

### ***Off-Site Impacts***

There are no lands zoned as, or being used for, agriculture, nor are there any Williamson Act contracts within any off-site Project features (intersections with SR-138, utility connections, water wells, and California Aqueduct crossings). Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

***Impact Summary:*** The adoption of the Project will be a discretionary zone change to be made by the County that is consistent with, and would help implement, the AVAP—specifically the Rural Preservation Strategy and associated Policy LU 1.1—as it applies to the Project site. The Project is consistent with the AVAP, and would not conflict with any local land use plans, policies, or zoning designations for agricultural use. The Project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract. There would be a less than significant impact, and no mitigation is required.

**Threshold 5-3**      **Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code, Section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources**

**Code, Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code, Section 51104[g])?**

***On-Site Impacts***

According to the *California Public Resources Code* (Section 12220[g]), “forest land” is defined as “land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits”.

The *California Public Resources Code* (Section 4526) defines “timberland” as follows:

land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board<sup>5</sup> as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial tree species shall be determined by the board on a district basis after consultation with the district committees and others.

The *California Government Code* (Section 51104[g]) defines “Timberland Production Zone” as an area that “is zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses”. As discussed above, the only agricultural zoning on the Project site is the A-1-2: Light Agriculture zone located on the lands to the east of 300<sup>th</sup> Street West. This zoning allows tree crops as a permitted use. Although the remainder of the Project site is not zoned for agricultural uses under the AVAP, an approximate 13-acre area in the northwestern corner of the site is identified as containing montane hardwood resources, and approximately 883 acres in the southwestern and southeastern portions of the site are identified as containing primarily mixed chaparral (approximately 553 acres) as well as blue oak woodland, blue oak-foothill pine, juniper, and pinyon-juniper resources (approximately 330 acres) on maps prepared by the California Department of Fire and Forestry Protection’s Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP 2006). It is noted that the statewide mapping of forest and timber resources as part of the FRAP is separate from the vegetation mapping performed for the Project site, and is used herein solely for the determination of potential forest and timber resources. Finally, no part of the Project site is zoned as a Timberland Production Zone.

As discussed further in Section 5.7, Biological Resources, the proposed development areas of Project site have been used for open grazing for over 150 years and, as a result the majority of the on-site acreage consists of grasslands that do not support a large number of tree species. While the existing zoning in the easternmost portion of the site allows for tree crop production, these lands have never been managed for forest resources including for timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, or for other public benefits. Further, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regulations (Section 895.1) define commercial species of trees for each forest district. The Project site does not contain

<sup>5</sup> “Board” is further defined as the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.

any trees listed as a “commercial species” for the applicable Southern Forest District as defined in the applicable regulations.

While the Project will not allow for tree crop production as a permitted use as in the existing condition, it would allow some agricultural uses (including growth and sale of nursery stock as well as crop production for crops such as Christmas trees) as interim uses. Regardless, implementation of the Project would not conflict with zoning for forest land or timberland as the Project site is not used for forest land or timberland resources and is not considered forest land or timberland by the County or the State. Finally, the Project will not conflict with zoning for timberland or a Timberland Production Zone, as the site has not been designated as such. There would be no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required.

### ***Off-Site Impacts***

Like the Project site, the locations of off-site Project features (intersections with SR-138, utility connections, water wells, and California Aqueduct crossings) have never been managed for forest land or timberland resources. The off-site Project features are not zoned for forest, timberland, or as a Timberland Production Zone. There would be no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required.

***Impact Summary:*** While the Project will not allow for tree crop production as a permitted use as in the existing condition, it would allow some agricultural uses (including growth and sale of nursery stock as well as crop production for crops such as Christmas trees) as interim uses. Regardless, implementation of the Project would not conflict with zoning for forest land or timberland as the Project site is not used for forest land or timberland resources and is not considered forest land or timberland by the County or the State. Finally, the Project will not conflict with zoning for timberland or a Timberland Production Zone, as the site has not been designated as such. There would be no impact and no mitigation is required.

**Threshold 5-4      Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?**

### ***On-Site Impacts***

As discussed above under Threshold 5-3, the Project site is not used for forest land or timberland resources, and it is not considered forest land or timberland by the County or the State. There is no forest land on or near the site that would be directly or indirectly converted as a result of the Project. There would be no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required.

While there are no forest lands, there are trees and woodland areas on the Project site and the impacts to these are addressed in Section 5.7, Biological Resources. Further information on carbon sequestration and how it relates to impacts to vegetation is discussed in Section 5.21, Climate Change.

### ***Off-Site Impacts***

Like the Project site, the off-site Project features (intersections with SR 138, utility connections, water wells, and California Aqueduct crossings) are not considered forest land or timberland. There would be no impact and no mitigation is required.

***Impact Summary:*** There is no forest land or timberland on or near the site that would be directly or indirectly converted as a result of the Project. There would be no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required.

**Threshold 5-5**      **Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest land?**

### ***On-Site and Off-Site Impacts***

Threshold 5-5 refers to the potential for Farmland or forest land to be converted as an indirect impact (i.e., either in another location/off-site or in the future) due to implementation of the Project. As such, both on-site and off-site impacts are addressed together. Indirect conversion of agricultural uses or forest land can occur where a Project provides infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities) or another change in land use that provides incentive for other agricultural or forest land landowners to convert their lands to non-agricultural or non-forest land uses. All physical direct and indirect impacts of Project implementation, both on-site and off-site, are addressed under Thresholds 5-1 and 5-4 above. There would be no other changes in the environment not addressed under Thresholds 5-1 and 5-4 that would indirectly result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest land use. The potential growth-inducing impacts of the Project are discussed in Section 6.0, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

***Impact Summary:*** There would be no other changes in the environment not addressed under Thresholds 5-1 and 5-4 that would indirectly result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest land use. The potential growth-inducing impacts of the Project are discussed in Section 6.0, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

### **Mitigation Measures**

There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce significant impacts from the direct conversion of 642 acres of Prime Farmland. Potential mitigation in the form of establishing 642 acres of new farming areas on Tejon Ranch has been investigated and determined to be infeasible due to insufficient available land that could be cultivated to meet Prime Farmland standards with limitations imposed by the implementation of the Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement and other existing and proposed development on Tejon Ranch, as previously discussed. Therefore the conversion of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

## Level of Significance after Mitigation

The conversion of 642 acres of on-site Prime Farmland to urban uses would remain a significant and unavoidable impact.

### 5.5.3 MINERAL RESOURCES

#### Relevant Plans, Policies, and Regulations

##### *Federal*

There are no applicable federal plans, policies or regulations regarding mineral resources.

##### *State*

##### Mineral Resources and Mineral Hazards Mapping Program

The California Geological Survey (CGS) provides geologic expertise and information about California's diverse non-fuel mineral resources. As required by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975, the State Geologist classifies these resources in an effort to locate economically significant mineral deposits and potential areas of deposits based on scientific data. Information relating to California's non-fuel resources, naturally occurring mineral hazards, and active and historic mining activities are collected to classify land under the Mineral Resources and Mineral Hazards Mapping Program. To date, the CGS has completed 97 mineral land classification studies that cover about 34 percent of the state. Of these, only 32 classification studies (covering approximately 25 percent of the state) include the resource areas that provide construction aggregate to over 90 percent of California's population. Construction aggregate is California's primary mineral resource (CGS 2015a).

The CGS defines several geographic areas that collectively cover a single mineral classification study as "Production-Consumption Regions" (P-C Regions). The CGS identifies Mineral Resource Zones for each P-C Region, mine/quarry, or other geographic area included in a mineral classification study. Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) are areas classified by the presence or absence of significant sand, gravel, or stone deposits that are suitable as sources of aggregate, as described below.

- **MRZ-1:** Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present or likely to be present.
- **MRZ-2:** Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that several mineral deposits are present or that there is a high likelihood of their presence so development should be controlled.
- **MRZ-3:** Mineral Resource Zone where the significance of mineral deposits cannot be determined from the available data.
- **MRZ-4:** Mineral Resource Zone where there is insufficient data to assign any other MRZ designation.

Lands not addressed by the CGS regarding their mineral content, either within a P-C Region or outside a mineral classification area, are defined as “unclassified”.

### **County**

#### Los Angeles County General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan

The *Los Angeles County General Plan* and the AVAP, part of the County General Plan, address mineral resource issues that affect the County. There are no goals and policies related to mineral resources applicable to the Project, as there are no County- or State-designated mineral resource areas on or near the site, as discussed further below.

### **Environmental Setting**

The Project site is not known to contain mineral deposits of any economic importance or any otherwise “classified” mineral deposits. It is known that the National Cement Plant, located in Kern County approximately one mile north of the Project site, quarries aggregate on site as part of their operations. However, there are no records or other evidence of aggregate being located on the Project site.

According to the CGS, the Project site is within an “unclassified” area of both the Saugus-Newhall and Palmdale Production-Consumption Regions (CGS 2015b). The County General Plan and the AVAP do not identify “Mineral Resource Zones” within or near the Project site. Moreover, these documents do not identify mineral resources of interest anywhere in the northwestern quadrant of Los Angeles County. For additional information on potential oil and gas wells on site please refer to Section 5.3, Hazards and Fire Safety.

### **Project Design Features**

There are no PDFs identified for mineral resources.

### **Threshold Criteria**

The following significance threshold criteria are derived from the County of Los Angeles Environmental Checklist that was in place when the NOP was released. The Project will result in a significant impact if it would:

**Threshold 5-6** Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

**Threshold 5-7** Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

### **Environmental Impacts**

**Threshold 5-6** **Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?**

**Threshold 5-7**      **Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?**

***On-Site Impacts***

As discussed above, based on consultation with CGS regarding MRZ in the Project vicinity and review of the County General Plan and AVAP, the Project site is not known to contain mineral deposits of any economic importance or any otherwise “classified” mineral deposits. As discussed above, while it is known that the Cement Plant, located north of the Project site, quarries aggregate, there is no evidence of aggregate or other mineral resources being located on the Project site itself. Therefore, Project implementation would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and residents of the State, nor would it create the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site. Therefore, there would be no impact.

***Off-Site Impacts***

Because there are no known mineral resources on or in the vicinity of the Project site where off-site Project features would be located, implementation of off-site Project features would not result in an impact related to loss of availability of a mineral resource of State or local value. Additionally, because there are no known mineral resources on or in the vicinity of the Project site within Caltrans right-of-way, the Project will not result in an impact related to loss of availability of a mineral resource of State or local value.

***Impact Summary:*** The Project will not result in impacts related to the loss of known mineral resources because there are no known mineral resources on the Project site.

**Mitigation Measures**

There would be no impacts to mineral resources; therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

**Level of Significance After Mitigation**

Due to the lack of identified mineral resources on the Project site, implementation of the proposed development would not result in impacts to mineral resources.

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