

3.2 - Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section of the Recirculated Draft EIR describes agricultural and forestry resources in relation to the project site, and discusses the potential impacts to these resources that would occur with implementation of the proposed project. The following documents were used in the analysis:

- County of Riverside, County of Riverside General Plan 2003
- County of Riverside, County of Riverside General Plan 2015

3.2.1 - Existing Conditions

According to the Land Use Element of the County of Riverside General Plan, in terms of historic character and economic strength, one of Riverside County's most important land uses is its widespread and diverse agricultural lands. Within the County of Riverside, one of the largest industries (in terms of dollar value) is agriculture production. According to Table LU-1 in the Land Use Element of the 2015 General Plan, Unincorporated Western Riverside County—where the project is located—contains approximately 23,106 acres of agricultural land.

The unincorporated county area to the north of the project site is zoned Residential Agriculture, one acre minimum lot size (R-A-1) and Controlled Development Area (W-2), which typically allows for single-family residential, light agriculture, aviaries, apiaries, grazing of farm animals and animal husbandry. Areas to the east and south are also zoned R-A-1 and W-2. The areas directly adjacent to the west of the project site are located within the City of Calimesa; these areas are zoned and designated by the General Plan as Residential Low (2 to 4 dwellings per acre) and Residential Low Medium (4 to 7 dwellings per acre). However, the area further to the west, near Cherry Valley Boulevard is designated Commercial Regional. The area within the City of Calimesa that lies to the north and northwest of the project site is zoned/designated as Rural Residential (RR) (0 to 2 dwellings per acre).

Based on a site visit conducted in late 2014, none of the area surrounding the project site is currently used for agriculture (i.e., crop farming). Land to the east of the project site is currently used for grazing and land to the west, and to the southwest is a small horse ranch. Existing land uses surrounding the project site include rural residential land uses located north, east, and west of the project site. The land located south of the project site contains an abandoned egg farm and is an approved residential development site.

Grazing and past active agriculture have disturbed much of the site, which is currently grazed by sheep and goats. Although none of the area within the project site is currently used for traditional agriculture practices (such as crop farming), as shown in Exhibit 3.2-1, the project is categorized as Farmland of Local Importance (approximately 147.64 acres) and Other Land (approximately 97.67 acres) under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), discussed below in Section 3.2.2, Regulatory Setting. The project site is bounded by undeveloped but moderately disturbed vacant land, except for residential uses to the north, west, and east. In addition, Exhibit 3.2-2 shows Williamson Act-designated land located approximately 1.0 mile east of the project site and 2.0 miles southwest of the project site; however, the project site is not under a Williamson Act contract.

Exhibit 3.2-3 depicts a soils map showing the six different types of soils on the project site. The majority of the project site, approximately 117 acres, contains Hanford coarse sandy loam. As detailed in the Updated Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the project, the aerial photographs of the project site indicate the site was used for agricultural purposes from 1938 (if not earlier, as this is the earliest aerial photograph that was taken) to approximately 1967, when fallow agricultural land was observed on-site.

3.2.2 - Regulatory Setting

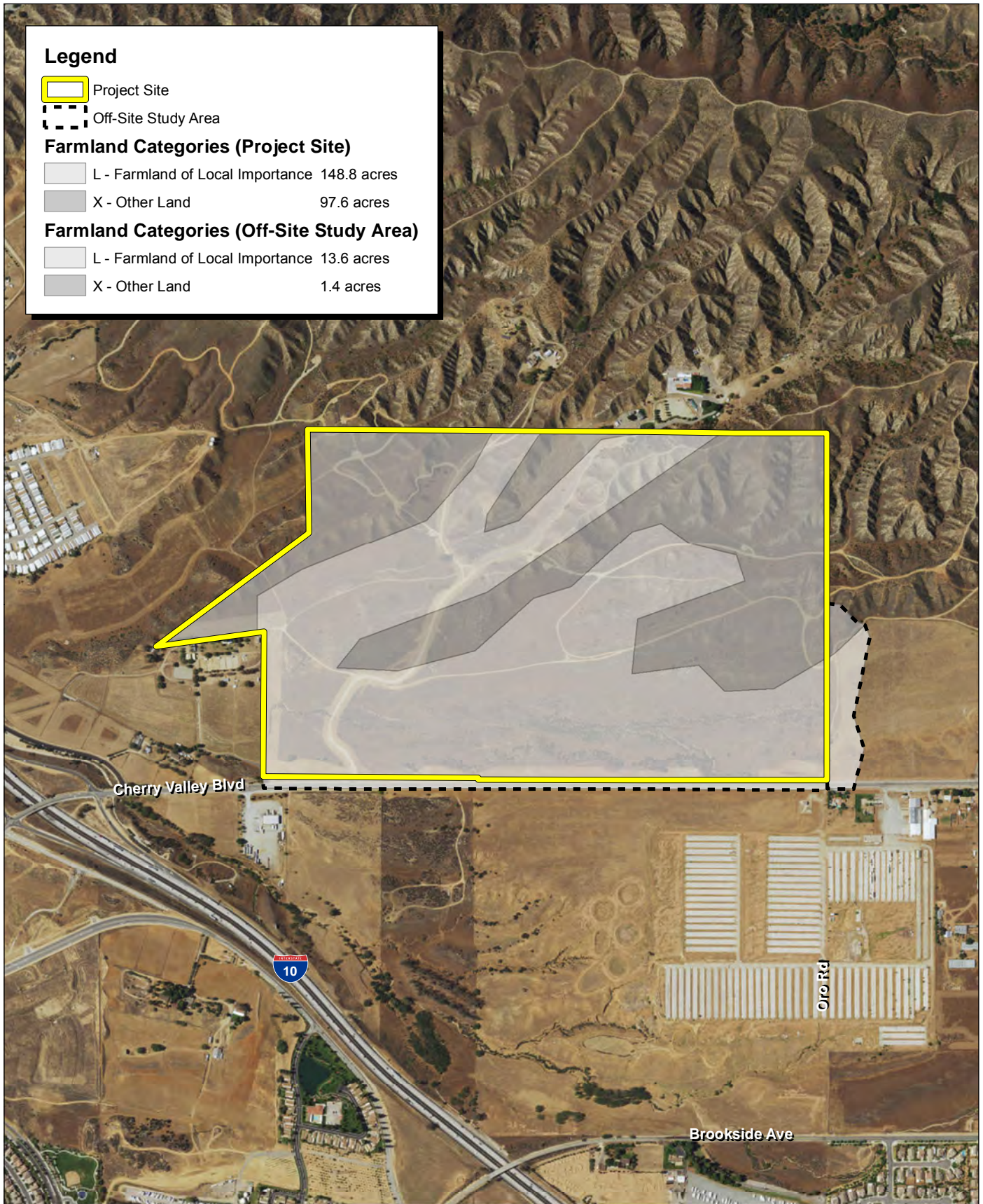
State Regulations

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation established the FMMP in 1982. The 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 produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. The maps are updated every 2 years with the use of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and field reconnaissance. The program rates agricultural lands according to physical characteristics and other factors such as irrigation status. The best-quality farmland is land that contains a combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production, and is classified as Prime Farmland. Additional classifications include Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance (Table 3.2-1).

The FMMP also inventories and maps a variety of other land use categories. For purposes of determining a project's significance under CEQA, only Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance are used to determine impacts. Conversion to non-agricultural uses of lands falling under any of these classifications is considered a potentially significant impact under CEQA.

Table 3.2-1 provides a description of the various farmland classifications, from the United States Department of Agriculture.



Source: ESRI Aerial Imagery. FMMP Riverside County, 2010.



Exhibit 3.2-1 Important Farmland Map

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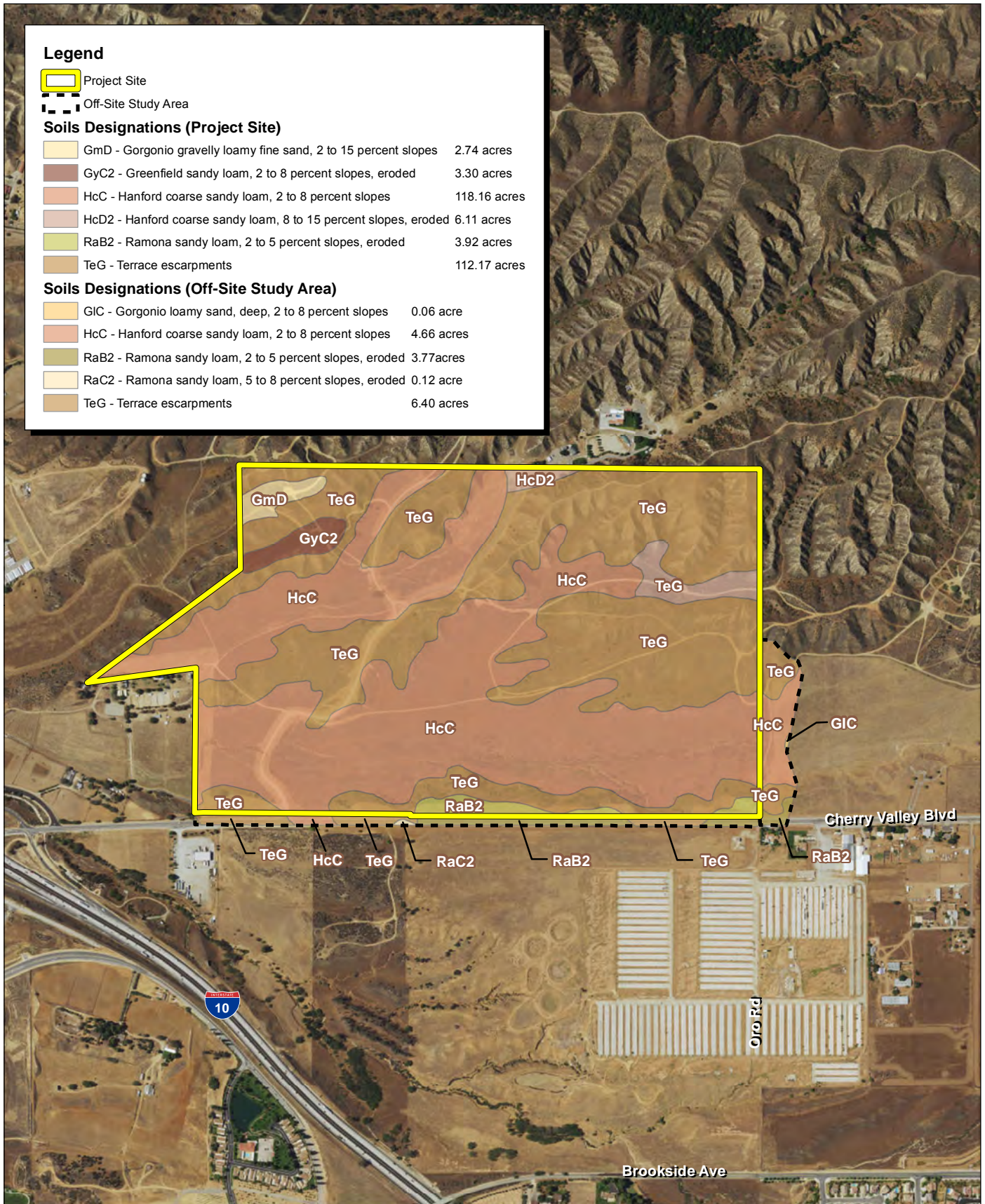


Source: ESRI Aerial Imagery. Williamson Act Contract Data for Riverside County, 2008.



Exhibit 3.2-2 Williamson Act Map

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Source: ESRI Aerial Imagery. USDA Riverside County Soils Data.

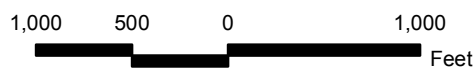


Exhibit 3.2-3 Soils Map

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Table 3.2-1: Description of Farmland Classifications

Farmland Category	Description
Prime (P)	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.
Statewide Importance (S)	Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with 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 (U)	Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated 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.
Local (L)	Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county’s board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. In some counties, Confined Animal Agriculture facilities are part of Farmland of Local Importance, but they are shown separately.
Grazing (G)	Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen’s Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.
Urban & Built Up Land (U)	Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
Other (X)	Land not included in any other mapping category. 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 forty acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.
Water (W)	Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.
Source: California Department of Conservation, 2007b.	

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, was enacted by the State Legislature in 1965 to encourage the preservation of agricultural lands. Under the provisions of the act, landowners agreeing to keep their lands under agricultural production for a minimum of 10 years receive property tax adjustments. Williamson Act contracts limit the use of the properties to agricultural, open space, and other compatible uses. Williamson Act lands are assessed based on their agricultural value, rather than their potential market value under nonagricultural uses.

Local Regulations

County of Riverside Ordinance No. 509. This ordinance establishes uniform rules that apply to agricultural preserves.¹

County of Riverside Ordinance No. 625. This ordinance (cited as the Riverside County Right-To-Farm Ordinance) intends to reduce the County's loss of its agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed to constitute a nuisance.²

The Pass Area Plan

Agriculture is an important component of land use in The Pass Area. The Pass Area Plan is an extension of the County of Riverside General Plan and Vision and it provides customized direction specifically for this planning area. In addition to the economic importance of providing food and fiber, agricultural lands provide visual variety and community separators. The following policy is from The Pass Area Plan:

- **PAP 7.1:** Protect farmland and agricultural resources within the Pass planning area through adherence to the Agricultural Resources section of the General Plan Multipurpose Open Space Element and the Agriculture Land Use Designation Policies section of the General Plan Land Use Element.

This policy would not apply to the project because the site is not designated for agricultural use (i.e., crop farming) by the General Plan, and agricultural use of the project site ceased in 1967.

3.2.3 - Thresholds of Significance

The County of Riverside utilizes Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines as its thresholds of significance for CEQA analysis. Further, the County provides a number of additional environmental considerations as part of the County's Environmental Assessment Checklist.

Would the project:

- b) Conflict with existing agricultural zoning, agricultural use or with land subject to a Williamson Act contract or land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve?
- c) Cause development of non-agricultural uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property (Ordinance No. 625 "Right-to-Farm")?
- d) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?
- g) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

¹ Website: <http://www.rivcocob.org/ords/500/509.2.pdf>. Accessed May 2015.

² Website: <http://www.rivcocob.org/ords/600/625.1.pdf>. Accessed May 2015.

According to the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds, to determine whether impacts to agriculture and forestry resources are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated.

Would the project:

- a) 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?
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?
- c) 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))?
- d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?
- e) 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 use?

3.2.4 - Project Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses potential impacts associated with the project and provides mitigation measures where necessary.

Convert Farmland to Non-Agricultural Use

Impact AG-1: **The project would not 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.**

Impact Analysis

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) agricultural land designations on-site are as follows: The project site contains lands classified as Farmland of Local Importance (approximately 137 acres), even though it is not currently used for agriculture, and other land (approximately 92 acres). Therefore, the project will not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use. According to the California Department of Conservation, the farmland map category Farmland of Local Importance is considered land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. The County of Riverside defines Farmland of Local Importance as:

Soils that would be classified as Prime and Statewide but lack available irrigation water. Lands planted to dryland crops of barley, oats, and wheat.

Lands producing major crops for Riverside County but that are not listed as Unique crops. These crops are identified as returning one million or more dollars on the 1980 Riverside County Agriculture Crop Report. Crops identified are permanent pasture (irrigated), summer squash, okra, eggplant, radishes, and watermelons.

Dairylands, including corrals, pasture, milking facilities, hay and manure storage areas if accompanied with permanent pasture or hayland of 10 acres or more.

Lands identified by city or county ordinance as Agricultural Zones or Contracts, which includes Riverside City "Proposition R" lands. Lands planted to jojoba which are under cultivation and are of producing age.

The project site was previously used for farming. Based on the Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment prepared for the project site, the flatter parts of the project site were plowed and cleared of native vegetation in the 1920s or 1930s for the purposes of dryland farming. Dryland farming is defined as the agricultural techniques for non-irrigated cultivation of crops. According to the Phase I ESA prepared for the project, the site was used for agricultural purposes dating back to the early 1930s. From 1980 to present, however, the site has consisted of cleared/developed land. Thus, the site has not been used for farming (including dry farming) since the 1980s, and does not contain lands planted to dryland crops of barley, oats, or wheat. Additionally, the project site has not produced 1 million or more dollars in agricultural income for at least 36 years. Furthermore, the site does not contain dairy lands or associated uses. Lastly, the project site does not contain lands identified by the County as agricultural zones or contracts, such as Proposition R Lands or lands planted to jojoba. Therefore, the project does not meet the County of Riverside's definition of Farmland of Local Importance.

The loss of potential farmland of local importance on-site is not significant because the site has not been used for farming for more than 30 years, and there is not a sufficient supply of irrigation water to serve such an intensive type of agricultural use on-site.

Furthermore, although the site is considered Farmland of Local Importance, the project site is currently zoned W2 (Controlled Development Area). Allowed uses for this zoning designation include: One-family dwellings, light agriculture, aviaries, apiaries, grazing of farm animals, and animal husbandry. Significant agriculture uses are not permitted within the W2 zone. The fact that the County has not designated the project site under any of the zoning designations that would allow for larger-scale agricultural use—such as C/V (Citrus Vineyard) A-P (Light Agriculture with Poultry), A-D (Agriculture-Dairy), A-2 (Heavy Agriculture) or A-1 (Light Agriculture)—is indicative of the County's policy decision that the site would not be suitable for the types of use that would meet the County's definition of Farmland of Local Importance.

Additionally, the project site is designated as Very Low Density Residential (VLDR), Rural Mountainous (RL), and Residential Low (RL) by the County of Riverside General Plan, rather than the Agriculture (AG) designation. According to the Land Use Element of the County of Riverside General Plan, the Very Low Density Residential land use designation provides for the development of detached single-family residential dwelling units and ancillary structures. The Rural Mountainous land use

designation allows single-family residential uses and limited animal-keeping and agricultural uses, with a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 10 acres.

Although the current zoning and land use designation allow for small-scale agricultural activities such as grazing, the site has not been used for agricultural purposes in more than 30 years. Potential future use of the site for small-scale agriculture would not provide any of the benefits currently proposed by the project, and would likely not be a financially viable endeavor given the size of the project site. Lastly, the site is not considered suitable for agricultural uses from a water-usage standpoint given the significant irrigation demand associated with such uses, and a zone change and General Plan Amendment would be required to allow for larger-scale agricultural uses on the site.

Additionally, the greater project area is anticipated to undergo development in the future. For example, the Sunny Cal Egg Ranch Specific Plan that includes the construction of 497 single-family homes was approved by the nearby City of Beaumont. The Holbert Ranch (TTM 3054) project would also establish 131 single-family homes adjacent to the project site. Additionally, the City of Calimesa General Plan designates land adjacent to the project site to the west as Commercial Retail. As shown in Exhibit 3.2-1, there are 43 projects in the vicinity of the project, including three high-cube warehouse projects: Rolling Hills Ranch Industrial Prologis, World Logistics Center, and the Dowling Orchard Business Park. Thus, project impacts would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Conflict with Existing Zoning or Williamson Act Contract

Impact AG-2: **The project would not conflict with existing agricultural zoning, agricultural use or with land subject to a Williamson Act contract.**

Impact Analysis

The site is designated as having farmland of local importance and other land, as referenced in the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database and project materials (such as a GIS map prepared with data from the FMMP); however, the project site is vacant and is not currently being used for agricultural land uses. In addition, neither the project site or project vicinity is under a Williamson Act contract; the nearest property under Williamson Act contract is located approximately 3,000 feet to the east of the project site.

The County of Riverside GIS database shows that the project site is not located within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve.

The project site is currently zoned W2 (Controlled Development Area). Allowed uses for this zoning designation include one-family dwellings, light agriculture, aviaries, apiaries, grazing of farm animals, and animal husbandry.

The land adjacent to the eastern edge of the project site is zoned as R-A-1 (Residential Agriculture, 1-acre minimum) by the County of Riverside. The County's zoning description identifies typical uses as:

- Mobile home on permanent foundations on lots less than 2.5 acres.
- Noncommercial keeping of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats on lots over 20,000 square feet (sq ft) and 100 ft. wide.
- Two such animals on each 20,000 sq ft up to 1 acre.
- Two such animals on each additional acre.
- Some agricultural uses.
- Limited noncommercial animal husbandry.
- 4-H projects.
- Agricultural mobile homes permitted for owner/farm worker for each 10 acres being farmed.
- Mobile home parks with approved conditional use permit.
- Churches with approved public use permit.

Although the project would develop non-agricultural land uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property, the project is anticipated to have a less than significant impact because the land surrounding the project site consists of rural residential land uses and is not used for agricultural purposes (such as crop farming). Land to the east of the project site is currently used for grazing, and land to the west, adjacent to the project site, is currently a horse ranch.

Additionally, while the project site will be used for warehouse purposes, ongoing operations at the site would not impact surrounding agricultural uses, including any future agricultural uses that may occur within 300 feet of the project site. Right to Farm bills are typically created in order to control nuisance claims, often created when higher-end commercial enterprises, retail, or more dense residential developments are placed in proximity to ongoing agricultural operations. This is typically not an issue for warehouse developments, which are able to coexist with nearby agricultural operations.

Therefore, impacts to existing agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract are anticipated to be less than significant because the project will not conflict with existing agricultural zoning, agricultural use, or with land subject to a Williamson Act contract, or land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Existing Zoning-Forest Land

Impact AG-3: The project would not 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)).

Impact Analysis

The project site and surrounding area is not zoned for forestland. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for forest land uses or timberland zoned Timberland Production. The project would not conflict with any existing zoning for forest land or timberland, and no impacts are anticipated to occur.

Thus, impacts would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

No impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

No impact.

Loss or Conversion of Forest Land

Impact AG-4: The project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Impact Analysis

The project will not involve the conversion of forest land because the project site does not contain any forest land. Additionally, the use of the project site for warehouse uses will not cause any conversion of forest land to a non-forest use in another location. The project site will be used for warehouse and shipping activities, neither of which will have any direct or indirect impacts on forest lands. The project site is not used for forest use and is not zoned for forest uses. Therefore, the project will have no impact on forestry resources.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

No impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

No impact.

Other Changes to Farmland or Forestland

Impact AG-5: The project would not 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 use.

Impact Analysis

The land surrounding the project site consists of rural residential land uses and is not being used for agricultural purposes. The project area is anticipated to undergo development in the future. For example, the Sunny Cal Egg Ranch Specific Plan was approved by the City of Beaumont. Additionally, the City of Calimesa General Plan designates land adjacent to the project site to the west as Commercial Retail. In addition, the location and configuration of the project will not cause other changes to existing agricultural operations. It will not impede the current use of such operations in terms of access, or limit the continued use of such properties for agriculture in any other way. Thus, development of the project's warehouse buildings is not anticipated to have a significant impact involving other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

As discussed under Impact AG-4, above, the project will not involve the conversion of forest land because the project site does not contain any forest land. Additionally, the use of the project site for warehouse uses will not cause any conversion of forest land to a non-forest use in another location. The project site will be used for warehouse and shipping activities, neither of which will have any direct or indirect impacts on forest lands. The project site is not used for forest use and is not zoned for forest uses. Therefore, the project will have no impact on forestry resources.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant impact.