



Section 4.5 Agricultural and Forestry Resources

4.5.1 Introduction

Riverside County's agricultural industry plays a vital role in the local economy and consistently ranks among the most profitable in California. The wide variety of climates and soil types within the county allows a diverse array of crops to be grown. The industry provides a large number of jobs associated with the growing, harvesting, processing, packing and shipping of produce. In terms of dollar value, agriculture is today the largest industry in Riverside County, providing employment for a notable portion of Riverside County's population. This industry creates revenues over triple the base gross value of the products grown and raised here in Riverside County. Currently, agriculture faces continuing pressure from urbanization, water availability, foreign competition and rising production costs. Despite these pressures, the areas which remain in agricultural production represent a significant open space and economic resource for Riverside County.

The Riverside County General Plan defines productive agricultural lands as those "involved in a long-term, substantial investment to agricultural use and with long-term economic viability for agricultural use." Factors affecting the economic viability of these areas include weather, water prices, crop selection, management techniques, commodity prices, new technology tax structure and proximity of developed lands.

Riverside County's forestry resources also play a vital role in establishing the character of Riverside County; the Cleveland National Forest frames southwestern Riverside County and the San Bernardino National Forest frames edges of eastern Riverside County. Both the Cleveland National Forest and the San Bernardino National Forest are part of the Sierran montane range. Montane forests can be found all over the world; however, the montane forest is the most complex bio-region in North America and is home to many animal species. The County of Riverside aims to preserve its forest resources within the Cleveland and San Bernardino National Forests through careful management of the forest ecosystem, protection of forest resources and discouraging and limiting the development of land uses that conflict with valuable forest lands.

4.5.2 Existing Environmental Setting - Agricultural and Forestry Resources

A. Agricultural Production in Riverside County

Agricultural resources include lands cultivated for crops for both human and animal use, providing livestock forage or as a source of fiber or other raw materials. Commercial agricultural activities also include non-cultivation (ranch) activities, such as the raising of livestock for production of meat, milk and dairy products, as

well as fiber and other non-edible products (wool, leather, etc.). Also in this category are aquaculture (fish farms) and the poultry industry, which produces poultry meat, eggs, chicks and other products. In total, the Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner tracks nine categories of agricultural production: citrus; tree and vine crops; vegetables, melons and miscellaneous crops; field and seed crops; livestock and poultry; livestock and poultry products; nursery stock production (i.e., ornamental plants, cut flowers, Christmas trees, etc.); aquaculture and apiculture (bee keeping). There is no commercial forestry or timber production industry within Riverside County other than Christmas tree farms of nursery stock production (that is, cultivated, rather than wild-harvested).

Farms within Riverside County produce over 50 different varieties of crops, from bell peppers to broccoli, dates to potatoes and many others. Livestock raised commercially in Riverside County includes everything from ducks to crayfish, in addition to cattle, sheep and chickens. Agricultural products grown in Riverside County are exported to over 60 countries around the world, ranging from Angola to Vietnam. In 2009, the top five countries importing Riverside County produce were Japan, China, Mexico, South Korea and Canada.

After record-breaking production peak of \$1.25 billion in 2006, values have continued to decrease as water availability and general economic issues “catch up with” the agricultural industry, according to the Agricultural Commissioner. According to the 2009 Agricultural Production Report issued by the Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, in 2009 the County of Riverside’s total gross agricultural valuation was roughly \$1 billion (\$1,015,755,300). This was a decrease of \$252.8 million (19.9%) from the 2008 total, the second straight year of declining values. The 2009 gross value for crops was \$801.0 million, a 15.5% decrease. Livestock was \$214.7 million, a 33.1% decrease from the prior year.

According to the Agricultural Commissioner, for the sixth year in a row, nursery stock ranked as the top valued crop in Riverside County, even though its production values fell by 10% from the prior year. Milk, table grapes, eggs and bell peppers rounded out the top crops in 2009. Table 4.5-A (Cultivated Crop Production Statistics) shows the valuations and amounts of acreage in production for key crops within Riverside County. Despite a reported decrease of nearly 22% in the amount of land in agricultural cultivation between 2003 and 2007, the value of Riverside County’s agricultural products went up over 14% during that same period. Other non-crop agricultural products, as shown in Table 4.5-B (Other Agricultural Product Valuation Data), rose by over \$111 million (nearly 22%) as well. Statewide, Riverside County ranked thirteenth in the value of its agricultural production in 2009.

Agricultural statistics are maintained by the County of Riverside for four districts: Riverside/Corona, San Jacinto/Temecula Valley, Coachella Valley and Palo Verde Valley. Per Table 4.5-C (Crop Valuation by Agricultural District), in 2009 the Coachella Valley District recorded the highest valuation for non-livestock related agricultural production.

Table 4.5-A: Cultivated Crop Production Statistics

CROP	Stat.	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Citrus	Acreage	23,500	20,900	20,700	18,600	19,400	17,200	16,800
	Valuation	\$84.9M	\$123.6M	\$138.2M	\$107.9M	\$121.4M	\$135.8M	\$101.7M
Trees and Vines	Acreage	25,200	28,400	28,600	27,500	28,400	24,500	23,000
	Valuation	\$215.6M	\$211.9M	\$188.6M	\$191.3M	\$181.8M	\$173.7M	\$191.7M
Vegetables, Melons, Misc.	Acreage	35,200	26,100	35,600	34,100	37,300	38,100	30,900
	Valuation	\$179.0M	\$174.9M	\$261.0M	\$213.6M	\$234.9M	\$266.4M	\$221.3M
Field and Seed Crops	Acreage	176,600	152,900	138,900	125,300	118,400	153,900	117,100
	Valuation	\$73.7M	\$75.2M	\$77.7M	\$68.6M	\$94.5M	\$123.5M	\$69.7M
COUNTY TOTALS	Acreage	260,400	228,200	223,800	205,400	203,500	233,700	187,800
	Valuation	\$554.2M	\$585.6M	\$665.5M	\$581.5M	\$632.5M	\$699.4M	\$584.4M

Source: Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner, 2009 Agriculture Production Report, 2009.

Table 4.5-B: Other Agricultural Product Valuation Data

PRODUCT	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Nursery Stock	\$205.8M	\$211.3M	\$229.2M	\$271.0M	\$272.3M	\$230.4M	\$206.5M
Apiculture	\$3.5M	\$3.0M	\$2.7M	\$3.6M	\$3.9M	\$5.6M	\$5.0M
Aquaculture	\$15.9M	\$15.6M	\$13.4M	\$11.5M	\$9.8M	\$12.1M	\$5.2M
Livestock and Poultry	\$287.9M	\$316.2M	\$257.9M	\$234.9M	\$338.9M	\$321.1M	\$214.7M
COUNTY TOTALS	\$513.2M	\$546.0M	\$503.2M	\$521.0M	\$625.0M	\$569.2M	\$431.4M

Source: Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner, 2009 Agriculture Production Report, 2009.

Table 4.5-C: Crop Valuation by Agricultural District

Agricultural District*	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Riverside / Corona	\$97.4M	\$104.0M	\$114.8M	\$97.3M	\$118.9M	\$100.4M	\$82.6M
San Jacinto / Temecula Valley	\$164.9M	\$182.0M	\$174.6M	\$184.5M	\$194.1M	\$165.0M	\$130.2M
Coachella Valley	\$405.6M	\$416.4M	\$503.5M	\$483.2M	\$486.9M	\$503.8M	\$484.4M
Palo Verde Valley	\$92.0M	\$96.5M	\$99.4M	\$90.5M	\$113.0M	\$165.9M	\$92.8M
COUNTY TOTALS	\$759.9M	\$798.9M	\$892.3M	\$856.1M	\$912.9M	\$935.1M	\$790.3M

* Totals do not include livestock and poultry values.

Source: Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner, 2009 Agriculture Production Report, 2009.

B. Farmland Resources

The California Department of Conservation runs the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) to produce maps and statistical data on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural lands within each county are rated on their production value according to soil quality and irrigation status to produce maps that are updated every two years. The maps also incorporate soils data issued by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Most recently, in September 2009, the FMMP released a set of three maps of 2008 data for western, central and eastern Riverside County, see Figure 4.5.1 (Agricultural Resources Map). The relationship of this new data to the project and existing General Plan is described further, below.

The farmland and other land categories used by the FMMP are described briefly below. Additional information on these can be found on the Department of Conservation's website.

Table 4.5-D: State-Designated Farmland Data for Riverside County

LAND CATEGORY	County Total 2006	County Total 2008* (Unincorp. Portion)	Change Between 2006-2008*
Prime Farmland	128,510 ac	122,940 ac (105,390 ac)	-5,570 ac (-4.3%)
Farmlands of Statewide Importance	46,920 ac	44,650 ac (36,660 ac)	-2,270 ac (-4.8%)
Unique Farmlands	37,950 ac	37,140 ac (32,360 ac)	-810 ac (-2.1%)
Farmlands of Local Importance	231,090 ac	229,160 ac (162,410 ac)	-2,050 ac (-0.8%)
Grazing Lands	111,700 ac	111,220 ac (96,620 ac)	-480 ac (-0.4%)
Water	62,350 ac	62,350 ac (58,110 ac)	0 ac (0%)
Urban and Built-Up Lands	300,540 ac	315,680 ac (78,830 ac)	+15,140 ac (+5.0%)
Other Lands	1,015,580 ac	1,021,340 ac (832,370 ac)	+5,760 ac (+3.5%)
COUNTY TOTALS	1,934,620 ac	1,944,470 ac (1,402,750 ac)	- 11,180 ac agric. lands lost

* Most recent year for which data was available (released in 2010; includes cities). All data rounded to the nearest 10 acres. Totals across years due not sum exactly due to changes in county boundaries (increase) during this period.

Source: California Dept. of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 2008 Data, released 2010.

Prime Farmland: Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics (soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, etc.) for the long-term production of crops in high yields. These lands must

have also been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the update cycle.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: Farmland other than Prime with a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics, but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store moisture. The land must also have been under irrigated production during the prior four-year cycle. Per the Riverside County General Plan, this category can include forest land, in addition to crop land, pastureland, rangeland and other lands that are not urban or water.

Unique Farmland: Lands other than the above categories that are currently used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, avocados, vegetables, etc. These lands may be of lesser quality soils, but still have the combination of traits needed to produce high quality or high yields of specific crops. This category may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as well as citrus, olives, avocados, grapes, etc. The land must also have been cropped at some time during the prior four-year cycle.

Farmland of Local Importance: Farmland in this category generally does not qualify for any of the above categories, but has been deemed locally important by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. This land may also have been suitable for “Prime” or “Statewide Importance” designation, but for the lack of available irrigation water. They can include lands in production of major, but not unique, crops, as well as dairy lands, agricultural zones (including contract lands and those in jojoba production).

Grazing Land: This includes lands on which the existing vegetation is suited to grazing livestock.

Urban and Built-Up Land: These are defined as lands occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit per 1.5 acres or approximately six structures per 10-acre parcel. Agricultural lands surrounded by urban areas must exceed 40 acres minimum in size in order to be mapped as farmlands.

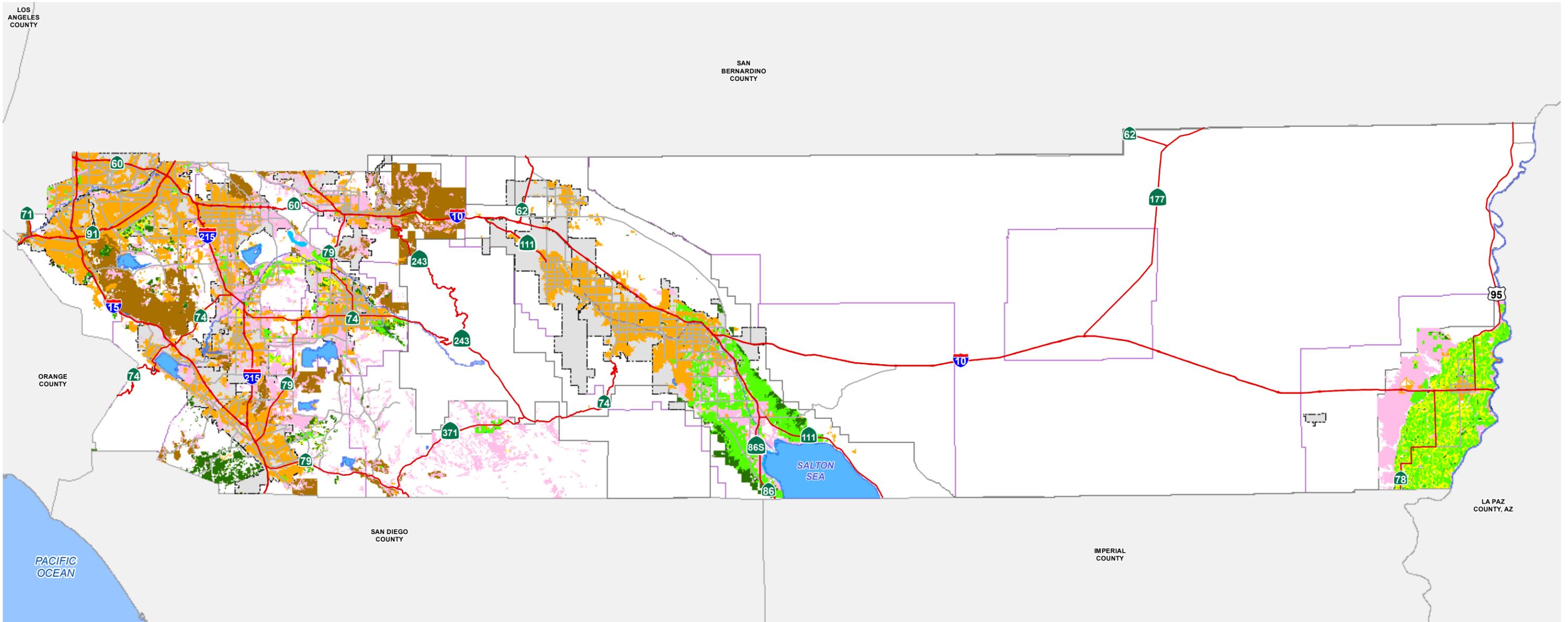
Water: This category covers perennial water bodies measuring at least 40 acres in size and larger. Those less than 40 acres are included under “Other Land.”

Other Land: This refers to land not included in any other category. Commonly, this includes low-density rural developments (with five sub-categories); brush and timberlands; wetlands and riparian areas, confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines; etc. Also included are water bodies less than 40 acres in size and agricultural lands of less than 40 acres in size when surrounded by urban uses.

C. Changes in State-Mapped ‘Important Farmlands’

Since the adoption of the 2003 RCIP General Plan, additional FMMP data was issued by the State Department of Conservation. In response, the County of Riverside is updating its General Plan map to reflect the new information from the State of California. These proposed changes are reflected in General Plan Figure OS-2 (Agricultural Resources). The same data is also reflected in the baseline conditions for this EIR, as shown in Figure 4.5.1.

Since preparation of the 1999 Existing Settings Report, and subsequently EIR No. 441 for the 2003 General Plan, additional information on environmental conditions related to farmland resources in Riverside County have been released. Under the FMMP, the California Department of Conservation produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California’s agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. The maps are updated every two years through a combination of computer mapping, aerial imagery, public review and field reconnaissance. In January 2011, the



Data Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (2009)

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- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of State Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Grazing Land
- Urban Built-up Land
- Water
- Not Mapped
- Highways
- Area Plan Boundary
- City Boundary
- Waterbodies

Figure 4.5.1

December 16, 2013

0 10 20 Miles

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AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

FMMP released a report on additional farmland data, entitled “California Farmland Conversion Report, 2006-2008.”

The State of California’s report affects Riverside County’s known farmland resources and is reflected in both the revised baseline conditions for this EIR (Figure 4.5.1) and the resultant updated General Plan Figure OS-2, which is based on Figure 4.5.1. The revised maps reflect changes in farmland resources resulting from conversion of irrigated farmland, dryland or idle farmland and other uses to urban. Information on these changes is developed from air photos, local comments and field reconnaissance by FMMP staff.

According to the FMMP Report for 2006-2008, approximately 19,400 acres of irrigated farmland were removed from agriculture use in Riverside County (including cities) in the State of California’s 2006-2008 mapping cycle. Meanwhile, Riverside County as a whole gained just over 15,100 acres of urban land, well above the biennial average of 12,400 acres between 1984 and 2006. Homes, golf courses, commercial and community facilities constituted much of the new urban uses. Land idling continued to be common in Riverside County; nearly 5,500 acres were removed from irrigated agricultural categories to grazing uses. The State of California had pinpointed the lack of water availability and agricultural market conditions as driving the trend towards agricultural lands being fallowed (fallowing is typically seen in agricultural areas as an “interim” use in the transition of an area from active agricultural production to eventual urban, non-agricultural uses).

D. Agricultural Preserves in Riverside County

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, was enacted by the State of California in 1965 to encourage property owners to continue to farm their land and to prevent the premature conversion of farmland to urban uses. It is a voluntary program that allows property owners to have their property assessed on the basis of its agricultural production rather than at the current market value. In this way, the State of California creates a financial incentive for lands to remain in agricultural production.

Participation requires that the area consist of at least 100 contiguous acres of agricultural land under one or more ownerships. Once established, the land within the preserve is restricted to agricultural and compatible uses for 10 years, with one-year renewals unless cancelled. County of Riverside Ordinance No. 509 establishes uniform rules which apply to agricultural preserves. Riverside County lands encompass a number of Williamson Act contracts and thousands of acres lie within agricultural preserves within the county.

E. Forestry Industry

In 1982, the California Timberland Productivity Act (California Government Code [CGC] Section 51100 *et seq.*) was passed because, per the Act, “The state’s increasing population threatens to erode the timberland base and diminish forest resource productivity through pressures to divert timberland to urban and other uses and through pressures to restrict or prohibit timber operations when viewed as being in conflict with non-timberland uses.” The Act was designed to establish policy to “fully realize the productive potential of the forest resources and timberlands of the state.” Among other things, Section 51104 of the Act includes the following definitions:

- **Timber:** Means trees of any species maintained for eventual harvest for forest products purposes, whether planted or of natural growth, standing or down, on privately or publicly owned land, including Christmas trees, but does not mean nursery stock.

- **Timberland Production Zone:** Means an area which has been zoned pursuant to [CGC] Section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses.

Other pertinent terms and definitions used in this chapter, as referenced by Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, include:

- **Forest Land:** As per Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 12220(g), this is defined as land that can support 10% 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.
- **Timberland:** Per PRC Section 4526, timberland means land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the [California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection] 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 species are determined by the Board on a district basis after consultation with the district committees and others.

Lastly, Riverside County Ordinance No. 559, “Regulating the Removal of Trees,” includes the following definitions:

- **Native Tree:** Means both any woody plant which is indigenous to Riverside County, and all smog-resistant species introduced as part of a reforestation program, which have one well-defined stem that at maturity normally attains a height of at least 15 feet and which is not less than 6 inches in diameter measured four feet about the ground.
- **Tree Removal:** Means any activity by which the death of a tree is caused within a reasonably short period of time. Such activities include, but shall not be limited to, cutting down, falling, pushing over, digging up, burning, poisoning or severely pruning a tree to the extent that the tree cannot survive.
- **Woody Biomass:** Trees and woody plants that are grown in a forest or woodland and are the by-products of dead forest trees, including, but not limited to, limbs, tops, needles and leaves are considered woody biomass. These forest byproducts are collected (harvested) and can then be used as fuel to produce bio-energy or as the raw materials to produce other products.

F. Forest Resources Riverside County

Riverside County includes parts of two major forests of the Sierran montane range: the Cleveland and San Bernardino National Forests, both managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). These forests occupy the higher mountain ranges of the Pacific Coast region, which stretches from southern to northern Baja California, in Mexico. They are generally characterized by winter snows and summer fires, large conifers (pine and fir trees) and a great diversity of animal species. At lower elevations (generally below 5,000 feet), these forests commonly border mixed evergreen forest, oak woodland and chaparral.

As shown in Figure 4.5.2 (High Elevation Forestry Resources – Western Riverside County), portions of the Cleveland National Forest occur in the southwestern most corner of Riverside County and cover roughly 90,750

acres. The edge of the San Bernardino National Forest falls within northwestern Riverside County and covers roughly 241,600 acres.

The Riverside County portions of the Cleveland National Forest only reach elevations of about 2,000 to 3,000 feet and generally do not support large expanses of mature conifers. Stands of mixed hardwood and other trees species in these areas are generally not subject to intensive fixed site timber operations due to their sparseness, species and locations. Portions of the San Bernardino National Forest (nearly 250,000 acres) fall within Riverside County and provide elevations and climates sufficient to support old growth forests and other forest resources.

The largest Riverside County portion of the San Bernardino National Forest is the Santa Rosa/San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, located in the central mountains that separate western and eastern Riverside County. This area contains the largest expanse of mountainous lands above 5,000 feet in which conifer forest-type vegetation occurs within Riverside County. The National Monument encompasses roughly 150,000 acres of federal lands, including the U.S. Forest Service's Santa Rosa Wilderness and San Jacinto Wilderness Ranger Districts and BLM lands, as well as roughly 120,000 acres owned or controlled by a variety of other public and quasi-public entities including the State of California, various tribes and educational institutions, plus private owners. The San Jacinto Mountains area features montane coniferous forest at the highest elevations and mixed forests (hardwoods and conifers) at lower elevations. The lands in and around the Monument provide the largest single extent of mature coniferous forests in Riverside County.

Lastly, Riverside County also includes portions of the Joshua Tree National Park, located northeast of the Coachella Valley in the Mojave Desert bioregion. This BLM-managed National Park encompasses a total of approximately 1,017,750 acres spanning Riverside and San Bernardino counties, with approximately 794,000 of those acres in Riverside County. Although much of this National Park is located above 4,000 feet in elevation, it does not offer extensive stands of forests of the types generally suitable for timber industry. The dryness, temperature extremes, slow growth rates and sparseness of the vegetation make commercial timber uses generally unlikely.

G. Forest Production in Riverside County

Within the State of California, there are roughly 85 million acres classified as wildlands. Of these, nearly 17 million are commercial forest land. According to the State, California's forests grow roughly 3.8 billion board feet annually. Each year approximately 2 billion board feet of timber, valued at over \$1 billion, is harvested. Since the early 1990s the amount of timberland production in the state has declined. It is rare to find commercial timber production uses of less than 5,000 acres because the "increasing cost of regulation" generally makes smaller production levels economically infeasible (Cal Fire, "Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans in California," 2003).

In total, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) estimates commercial timberland area in the state covers 16.6 million acres, including federal, state and private lands (Cal Fire, "Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans in California," 2003). Of these, private timberland areas total 7.4 million acres (45%). Within the privately held timberlands, roughly 41% (3.2 million acres) belong to private, non-industrial owners and are generally of less than 5,000 acres and not used for commercial forestry purposes. The remainder is held by industrial forest landowners. Figures released by the State of California indicate that no "California forest land" ownership, either public or private, is mapped for Riverside County.

Any time timber is harvested for commercial purposes in the state, an approved Timber Harvest Plan (THP) or exemption must be obtained from the State of California pursuant to the Forest Practice Act and rules. The exemptions generally allow for activities such as harvesting Christmas trees, clearing dead, dying or diseased trees,

establishing a right-of-way, or removing fire hazard trees within 150 feet of a structure. Cal Fire also provides for a one-time exemption for the conversion of 3 acres of timberland to a non-timber use. These exemptions from THPs have been authorized under the Forest Practice Act because they were found to be of a size and scale that would not significantly affect forest resources. THPs are reviewed and approved by Cal Fire.

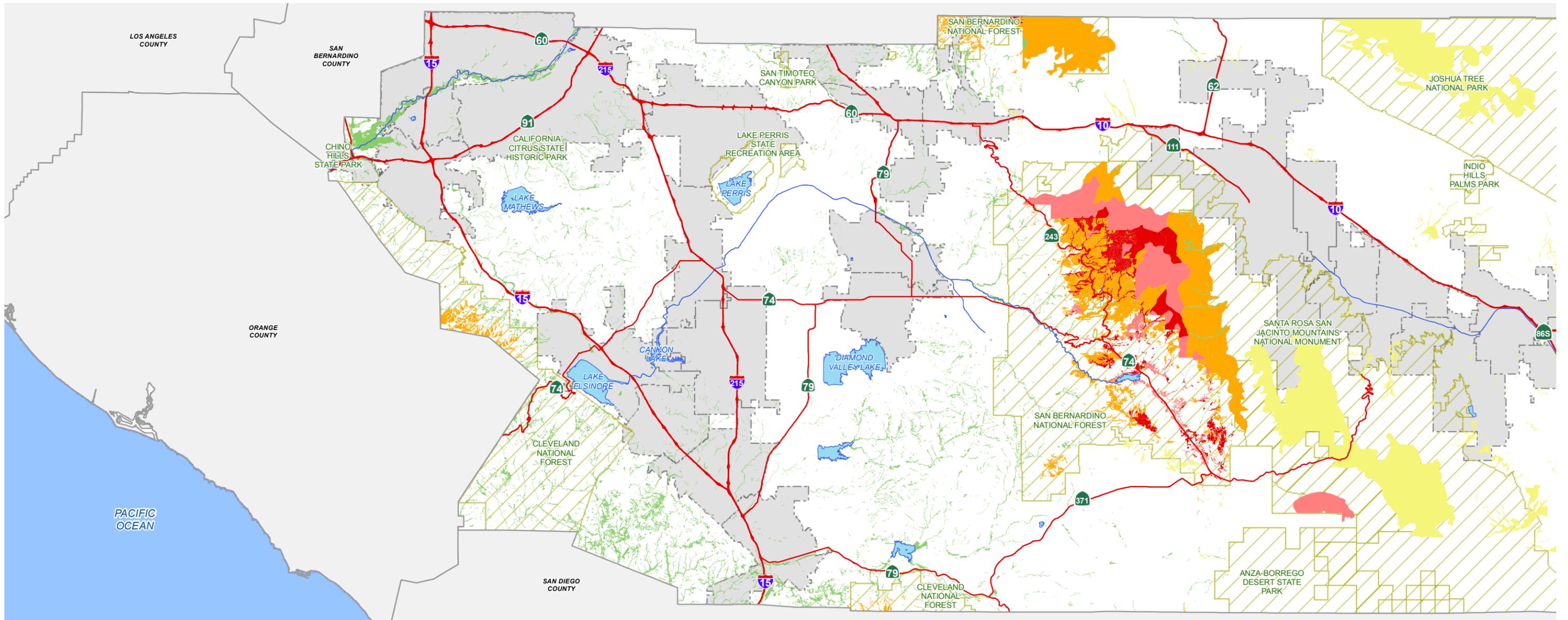
Some coniferous forests occur within Riverside County. As shown in Figure 4.5.2, however, most are located on state or federal lands. There are no State Demonstration Forests located in Riverside County. Forests extensive enough to support large-scale commercial timber operations generally occur at the higher elevations associated with the northern Sierra Nevada Range. According to Cal Fire, there are no fixed commercial timber operations subject to a Timber Harvesting Plan in Riverside County (CalFire, 2003).

There is, however, the utilization of logs and biomass which result in dead tree removal, fuels reduction and thinning projects on private lands in Southern California. Total forest biomass, potentially treated or removed in San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties peaked in 2005 at about 673,000 green tons, and was forecasted to drop to about 127,000 green tons by 2007 (approximately 20% of peak production). Utility companies, primarily Southern California Edison, accounted for approximately 70% of forest biomass tonnage removed or disposed of in 2004, which dropped to 16% in 2005.

As mentioned above, there are no existing land use designations explicitly for timber production zones or other commercial timber activities in Riverside County, although such activities could be conducted under the General Plan's 'AG' land use designation and subject to County of Riverside review and approval. There are no commercial timber operations occurring in Riverside County that rely on existing forestry resources (i.e., existing stands of trees or "old growth"). The only fixed commercial forestry activities in the county, roughly 30 to 60 acres of Christmas tree farms, are conducted as agricultural activities (nursery stock production), since the trees produced are planted onsite and grown from stock, rather than harvested from naturally occurring forest.

Nevertheless, there are existing stands of mature forest trees in several locations in the county that reach appropriate elevations (generally above 5,000 feet). Of these, most such forest resources are located on public or quasi-public lands, including National Forests (under U.S. Department of Forestry) and National Monuments (under federal BLM management) as well as others. The relationship between forestry resources and these public lands are shown in Figure 4.5.2 and Figure 4.5.3 (High Elevation Forestry Resources – Central & Eastern Riverside County).

Though not a commercial timber activity, the County of Riverside does also participate in a "woody biomass utilization program" funded by grants issued by the U.S. Forest Service. The program run by the Riverside County Fire Department (actually, Cal Fire) is designed to utilize dead trees and biomass materials resulting from tree mortality caused by drought and bark beetle infestation in the local mountains. The woody materials are used for "value-added commercial uses," including fuel for steam electricity generation. The program is currently set to continue through to 2013.



Data Source: California Native Plant Society (2008) and Riverside County (2013)

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- High Coniferous Forests
- Coniferous Forests
- Montane Forests
- Lowland Forests/Woodlands
- Desert Woodlands
- National Forests and Parks
- Highways
- Cities
- Waterbodies

Figure 4.5.2

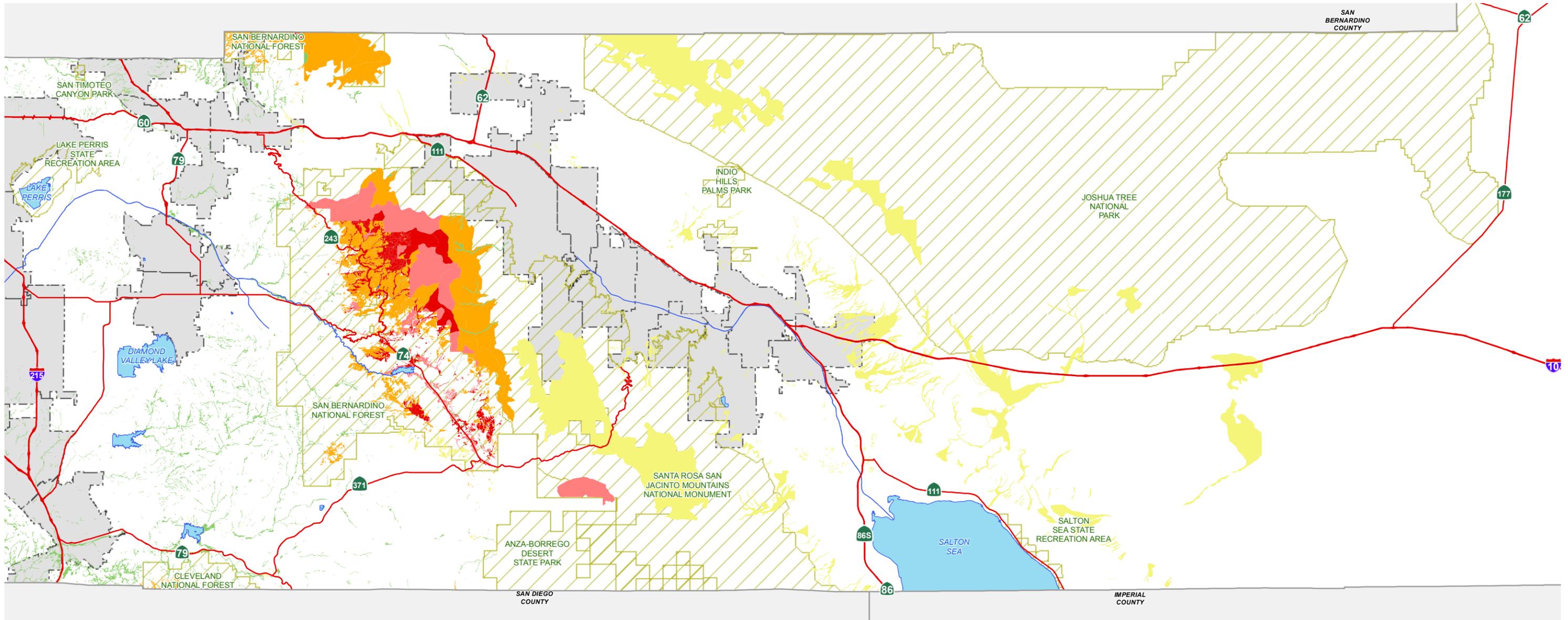
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Miles

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FORESTRY RESOURCES WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Data Source: California Native Plant Society (2008) and Riverside County (2013)

- High Coniferous Forests
- Coniferous Forests
- Montane Forests
- Lowland Forests/Woodlands
- Desert Woodlands
- National Forests and Parks
- Highways
- Cities
- Waterbodies

Figure 4.5.3

December 16, 2013

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**FORESTRY RESOURCES
EASTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

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H. Baseline Data Sources

Pursuant to CEQA, the description of the physical environmental conditions provided in this EIR is as they exist at the time the issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP), that is, April 13, 2009. This environmental setting will constitute the baseline physical conditions by which the County of Riverside, as Lead Agency under CEQA, determines whether an impact to agricultural and forest resources is significant. Because of the countywide scope and nature of this project and its programmatic EIR, much of the data presented herein cannot all be said to represent a single point in time (i.e., April 13, 2009). In such cases, the data set that is best supported by substantial evidence will be used. For the agricultural and forestry baseline data presented and used herein, the following sources were determined to be the best-supported substantial evidence available and were used for the reasons stated. Land use data and other environmental data sets are described in their respective chapters elsewhere.

Agricultural production values are aggregates collected by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office and reported on an annual basis, pursuant to the requirements and directives of the California Food and Agriculture Code, Section 2279. The data source used herein, Riverside County 2009 Agricultural Production Report, Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, issued May 2010, represents the most recent data set for countywide agricultural production available. Given the trends of declining agricultural production continuing over time, as documented in said report, it is reasonable and supportable to assume the 2009 available data set represents the physical state of agricultural production in Riverside County as a 'worst case.' That is, if anything, it would over-estimate the amount of productive agricultural lands potentially adversely affected by the proposed project.

The data source of State-designated farmlands used herein is Important Farmland Maps 2008, California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, issued September 2009. This is the most recent data set available from the State of California, which performs biennial farmland mapping updates as directed by state law. For reasons similar to those given above, this data set is also assumed to represent a 'worst case' scenario which, if anything, would over-estimate potential impacts to designated Farmlands. This scenario is used to ensure the analysis affords an abundance of caution in its findings.

The forest resource data in Figure 4.5.2 and Figure 4.5.3 is based on the vegetation and biota data described in Section 4.8 (Biological Resources). See Section 4.8 for additional information, including detailed summaries of the types and locations of the various forest habitats occurring in Riverside County. Details on the status of timber industry in California is based primarily on the 2006 Southern California Forest Products Utilization and Marketing Technical Assistance Activities Interim Report, dated May 2007, prepared for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection by Larry Swan and Jerry Pattison of the USDA Forest Service. This report represents the most recent available data on forestry and timber activities in Southern California. Additional supporting data was also obtained from the 2003 CalFire report, "Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans in California."

4.5.3 Policies and Regulations Addressing Agricultural and Forestry Resources

A. State Regulations

Several key state laws play a role in governance and protection of agricultural lands in Riverside County. The State of California’s FMMP, as mentioned above, operates pursuant to the provisions of CGC Section 65570. The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CGC Section 56377) sets forth the policies under which the Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) operates. These policies include directing LAFCO to consider the impacts on agricultural lands, particularly related to soil quality and irrigation water availability, when evaluating annexation and sphere of influence proposals. Specifically, LAFCO policies direct that development or use of land for other than open space shall be guided away from existing prime agricultural lands, unless detrimental to the orderly, efficient development of an area.

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the ‘Williamson Act,’ is a voluntary program that allows property owners to have their property assessed on the basis of its agricultural production rather than at the current market value. The property owner is thus relieved of having to pay higher property taxes, as long as the land remains in agricultural production. Participation requires that the area consist of at least 100 contiguous acres of agricultural land under one or more ownerships. The purpose of the Act is to encourage property owners to continue to farm their land and to prevent the premature conversion of farmland to urban uses. Upon approval of the Board of Supervisors, an agricultural preserve is established and the land within the preserve is restricted to agricultural and compatible uses for 10 years, with one-year renewals unless cancelled. County of Riverside Ordinance No. 509 establishes uniform rules which apply to agricultural preserves.

In addition to the California Forest Protection Act, mentioned earlier, the State of California has a number of regulations aimed at protecting and preserving both the economic and biological values of the state’s forest resources. Among these is PRC Section 4631 which states that “it is in the interest of the welfare of the people of this state and their industries and other activities involving the use of wood and other forest products that desirable cutover forest lands be made fully productive and that the holding and reforestation of such lands is a necessary measure.” PRC Section 4631.5 provides that the State of California shall retain the existing land base of state forests in timber production for research and demonstration purposes. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), in accordance with plans approved by the Forestry Board, may engage in the management, protection and reforestation of state forests. Per PRC Section 4645, “management” means “the handling of forest crop and forest soil so as to achieve maximum sustained production of high quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, and aesthetic enjoyment.”

To retain and improve California’s productive timberlands, the State of California offers several incentive programs to encourage sustainable forest management. These include:

- For all private timberland owners whose lands qualify, the Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) provides a property tax incentive to manage forest lands for timber production. Such lands must be devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses. Approximately 77% of the 7.4 million acres of private forestlands is zoned TPZ.
- For non-industrial landowners, the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) provides up to a 75% reimbursement for reforestation, soil and water protection and improvement, and wildlife habitat enhancement in concert with development of a forest management plan. The reimbursement may

increase to 90% for rehabilitation work following natural disasters, such as wildfire. The funds for supporting this program come from the Forest Resources Investment Fund (FRIF) derived from sustainable harvesting on the state's demonstration forests.

- The Forest Legacy Program supports use of conservation easements on private Forest lands that are at risk of being converted to non-forest uses. These easements allow the landowner to sell development rights to a government agency while still being able to sustainably manage their forestland. Legacy funds are allocated to the states through the "State and Private Forestry" program of the U.S. Forest Service, and the State of California may match federal distributions with bond funds.
- The Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) allows smaller NIPF timberland owners to prepare a long-term management plan that reduces regulatory time and expense by providing an alternative to filing individual timber harvesting plans (THPs). In exchange, landowners agree to manage their forests through uneven-aged management and long-term sustained yield.

B. Riverside County Regulations

The following existing regulations and policies are intended to protect existing agricultural and forestry resources within Riverside County. These policies and regulations have been approved by the County of Riverside as separate prior discretionary actions and are not part of GPA No. 960.

Ordinance No. 559 - Regulating the Removal of Trees: The purpose of this ordinance is to ensure that Riverside County's timberlands are protected and their ecological balance preserved by requiring the review and issuance of a permit prior to removal of living native trees on properties greater than one-half acre and located in the unincorporated area of the County of Riverside above 5,000 feet in elevation. In view of the proximity of the timberlands to urban centers of expanding population, and the unique nature of the timberlands themselves, this ordinance is necessary to protect and preserve such lands to serve the interests and provide for the welfare of the people of Riverside County.

This ordinance does not apply to: timber operations conducted under the Forest Practice Act; trees removed on lands owned by the United States government or the State of California; activities conducted by a public utility, subject to the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission or any other constituted public agency, where, to construct and maintain safe operation of facilities under their jurisdiction, trees are removed, pruned, topped or braced; trees removed by a federal or state agency; trees required to be removed per other codes, ordinances or laws of the county, state or federal government; trees which Cal Fire recommends be removed because they are diseased, dying, dead or otherwise detrimental to the forest health; trees constituting immediate threats to public health, safety or general welfare and requiring emergency removal; trees needing removal for stand management or stocking control (when accompanied by the written plan approved by Cal Fire); trees removed pursuant to a County of Riverside permit containing conditions for the removal of trees; trees which a fire protection agency require be removed as part of an approved fire hazard reduction program; and, lastly, any tree within 20 feet of an existing legal structure.

Ordinance No. 509 - Establishing Agricultural Preserves: Agricultural preserves are lands identified for, and devoted to, agricultural and compatible uses, and are established through resolutions adopted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. The purpose of this ordinance is to ensure that incompatible uses are not allowed within established agricultural preserves. It sets forth the powers of the County of Riverside in establishing and administering agricultural preserves pursuant to the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (CGC Section 51200, *et seq.*). The ordinance also establishes "Uniform Rules" for the agricultural and compatible uses allowed in an agricultural preserve. Land uses not covered in the ordinance are prohibited within agricultural preserves.

Ordinance No. 625 – Right To Farm: The purpose of this ordinance is to “conserve, protect and encourage the development, improvement and continued viability of agricultural land and industries for the long-term production of food and other agricultural products, and for the economic well-being of the county’s residents.” It seeks to “balance the rights of farmers to produce food and other agricultural products with the rights of non-farmers who own, occupy or use land within or adjacent to agricultural areas.” Thus, the ordinance includes regulations to reduce the loss of agricultural resources in Riverside County by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed a “nuisance.” It states that an agricultural activity that has been operating for more than three years on a site (and assuming it was not a nuisance at the time it began) cannot be later classed as a public or private nuisance due to “any changed condition in or about the locality.” This prevents, for example, existing dairies from being targeted by odor complaints from residents of housing units constructed in the surrounding area three or more years after the dairy use began. Further, it requires buyers of properties within 300 feet of any land zoned primarily for agricultural purposes to be given notice of the pre-existing agricultural use and its right to continue.

Resolution No. 84-526 - Riverside County Rules and Regulations Governing Agricultural Preserves: These rules and regulations were adopted pursuant to CGC Section 51231 to govern agricultural preserve procedures within Riverside County and to aid in implementation of the Williamson Act. The rules and regulations address procedures for the initiation, establishment, enlargement, disestablishment and diminishment of agricultural preserves. To protect existing agricultural lands and agricultural preserves within Riverside County, Division VI of the rules require a “Comprehensive Agricultural Preserve Technical Advisory Committee” (CAPTAC) to review and report on land use proposals and applications related to agricultural preserves and advise the Riverside County Board of Supervisors on the administration of agricultural preserves, as well as Williamson Act contract-related matters. In particular, the CAPTAC is charged with reviewing any proposals for the diminishment or disestablishment of an agricultural preserve and providing its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Regarding diminishments and disestablishments, the CAPTAC reviews the following findings:

- Whether a notice of nonrenewal has been served pursuant to the Williamson Act, Section 401 of these rules.
- Whether the cancellation is likely to result in the removal of adjacent lands from agricultural use.
- Whether the proposed alternative use of land is consistent with the provisions of the Riverside County General Plan.
- Whether the cancellation will result in discontinuous patterns of urban development.
- Whether there is proximate non-contracted land which is both available and suitable for the use for which the contracted land is being proposed.
- Whether the development of the contracted land would provide more contiguous patterns of urban development than that of proximate non-contracted land.

C. Existing Riverside County General Plan Policies

The following policies are already part of the General Plan and not part of GPA No. 960. Rather, these policies are those considered to play a role in ensuring any potential environmental effects are avoided, reduced or minimized through their application on a case-by-case basis when a given development proposal warrants their use.

1. Open Space (OS) Element Policies

Policy OS 7.1: Work with State and federal agencies to periodically update the Agricultural Resources map to reflect current conditions.

Policy OS 7.3: Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands and preservation of prime agricultural lands.

Policy OS 7.4: Encourage landowners to participate in programs that reduce soil erosion, improve soil quality, and address issues that relate to pest management. To this end, the County shall promote coordination between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation Districts, UC Cooperative Extension, and other agencies and organizations.

Policy OS 7.5: Encourage the combination of agriculture with other compatible open space uses in order to provide an economic advantage to agriculture. Allow by right, in areas designated Agriculture, activities related to the production of food and fiber, and support uses incidental and secondary to the on-site agricultural operation.

Policy OS 8.1: Cooperate with federal and State agencies to achieve the sustainable conservation of forest land as a means of providing open space and protecting natural resources and habitat lands, included within the MSHCPs.

Policy OS 8.2: Support conservation programs to reforest privately held forest lands.

Policy OS 9.4: Conserve the oak tree resources in the county.

2. Land Use (LU) Element Policies

Policy LU 20.1 (previously 16.1): Encourage retaining agriculturally designated lands where agricultural activity can be sustained at an operational scale, where it accommodates lifestyle choice, and in locations where impacts to and from potentially incompatible uses, such as residential uses, are minimized, through incentives such as tax credits.

Policy LU 20.2 (previously 16.2): Protect agricultural uses, including those with industrial characteristics (dairies, poultry, hog farms, etc.) by discouraging inappropriate land division in the immediate proximity and allowing only uses and intensities that are compatible with agricultural uses.

Policy LU 20.4 (previously 16.4): Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production.

Policy LU 20.5 (previously 16.5): Continue to participate in the California Land Conservation Act (the Williamson Act) of 1965.

Policy LU 20.6 (previously 16.6): Require consideration of State agricultural land classification specifications when a 2.5-year Agriculture Foundation amendment to the General Plan is reviewed that would result in a shift from an agricultural to a non-agricultural use.

Policy LU 20.7 (previously 16.7): Adhere to Riverside County's right-to-farm ordinance.

Policy LU 20.9 (previously 16.9): Weigh the economic benefits of surface mining with the preservation/conservation of agriculture when considering mineral excavation proposals on land classified for agricultural uses.

Policy LU 20.11 (previously 16.11): The County shall pursue the creation of new incentive programs, such as tax credits, that encourage the continued viability of agricultural activities.

D. Proposed New or Revised Riverside County General Plan Policies

The following new or revised General Plan policies are proposed as part of GPA No. 960 to enhance the General Plan’s treatment of development considerations on forest lands.

Policy LU 7.6 (previously 6.7): ~~Require Buffering to the extent possible and/or the maintaining of~~ a natural edge for proposed development directly adjacent to ~~a~~National ~~f~~Forests.

***NEW Policy LU 7.10:** The proponent for new development proposals on forested lands with at least 10% coverage of mature conifer trees, forest land or timber in which three or more acres of forested lands will be cleared (removed) of trees must demonstrate to the County compliance with any/all applicable State regulations regarding the protection and operation of said forest resources. As used here, the term “native trees” shall only apply to naturally-occurring conifers growing above 5,000 feet AMSL elevation. Additionally, replacement trees for all qualifying mature trees removed must be planted at a ratio of 1:1. The replacement trees must be planted on the project site or, where that is infeasible because the entire site must be permanently cleared, on property in an acceptable alternate location, preferably nearby.*

***NEW Policy LU 20.8:** Encourage educational and incentive programs in coordination with the County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, the University of California Cooperative Extension Service and the Riverside County Farm Bureau, that convey the importance of conserving watercourses and their associated habitat, as well as protective buffers for domestic and farm livestock grazing.*

Policy LU 20.10 (previously 16.10): Allow agriculturally related retail uses such as feed stores and permanent produce stands in all areas and land use designations. ~~It is not the County’s intent pursuant to this policy to subject agricultural related uses to any discretionary permit requirements other than those in existence at the time of adoption of the General Plan. Where a discretionary permit or other discretionary approval is required under the County zoning ordinances in effect as of December 2, 2002, then allow such retail uses with the approval of such a discretionary permit or other approval. The following criteria shall be considered in approving any discretionary permit or other discretionary approval required for these uses:~~

- ~~a. Whether the use provides a needed service to the surrounding agricultural area that cannot be provided more efficiently within urban areas or requires location in a non urban area because of unusual site requirements or operational characteristics;~~
- ~~b. Whether the use is sited on productive agricultural lands and less productive land is available in the vicinity;~~
- ~~c. Whether the operational or physical characteristics of the use will have a detrimental impact on water resources or the use or management of surrounding properties within at least ¼ mile radius;~~
- ~~d. Whether a probable workforce is located nearby or is readily available.~~

~~Allow for proposed agriculturally related processing uses whether or not in conjunction with a farming operation, such as commercial canning, packing, drying, and freezing operations, in all areas and land use designations.~~

~~Where a discretionary permit or other discretionary approval is required under the County zoning ordinances in effect as of December 2, 2002, then allow such processing uses with the approval of such a discretionary permit or other approval. The following criteria shall be considered in approving any discretionary permit required for these uses:~~

- ~~a. Whether the uses are clustered in centers instead of single uses;~~
- ~~b. Whether the centers are located a sufficient distance from existing or approved agricultural or rural residential commercial centers or designated commercial areas of any city or unincorporated community;~~
- ~~c. Whether sites are located on a major road serving the surrounding area;~~
- ~~d. Whether the road frontage proposed for the uses and the number of separate uses proposed are appropriate;~~
- ~~e. For proposed value added uses such as canneries and wineries with on premises retail uses, the evaluation under the criteria above shall consider the service requirements of the uses and the capability and capacity of cities and unincorporated communities to provide the required services.~~

4.5.4 Thresholds of Significance for Agricultural and Forestry Resources

The proposed project would result in a significant impact on agricultural resources or forestry resources if it would:

- 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 Natural Resources Agency [as reflected in Figure 4.5.1], to non-agricultural use.
- 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.
- 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.
- E. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, ‘forest land’ (as defined in PRC Section 12220(g)), ‘timberland’ (as defined by PRC Section 4526), or timberland zoned ‘timberland production’ (as defined by CGC Section 51104(g)).
- F. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest 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.

4.5.5 Effect of GPA No. 960 on the General Plan and on Agricultural and Forestry Resources

The proposed project, GPA No. 960, would have spatial effects where it involves a variety of specific General Plan Land Use Designation (LUD) corrections and changes, several Policy Area, Study Area and overlay changes, proposals for new trail and road alignments and an incidental commercial policy for rural areas. In addition, GPA No. 960 includes a number of updates to proposed roadway alignments and intersection locations, as well as functional classifications (widths, number of lanes, level of service targets, etc.), where needed throughout unincorporated Riverside County. In this section, the changes to the General Plan related to agriculture and forestry are outlined and the effects of proposed changes relative to these resources are discussed. Specific impacts and mitigation for the project are then evaluated according to identified significance thresholds in the section following this one.

A. Proposed Changes to the General Plan

As part of the project review process, agricultural and farmland-mapping data in the General Plan was updated and related policies reviewed and revised where necessary. The existing General Plan addresses agricultural and forestry resources mainly in the Multipurpose Open Space (OS) Element, although the Land Use (LU) Element also has many policies related to agricultural land uses as well. GPA No. 960 includes the following updates related to agriculture and forestry; text of relevant revised General Plan policies is provided in Section 4.5.4 (Thresholds of Significance for Agricultural and Forestry Resources).

Farmlands Mapping: As noted in Section 4.5.2.C, the County of Riverside updated Figure OS-2, Agricultural Resources, pursuant to new FMMP data made available by the California Department of Conservation, to ensure that the General Plan reflects the current level of information regarding important farmlands. This proposed figure (equivalent to Figure 4.5.1 herein) encompasses the new mapping information and changes issued by the State of California FMMP. Several agriculture-related policies within the Land Use Element were also revised and Policy LU 20.8 was added.

Forestry Mapping: In conjunction with new regulatory guidance on greenhouse gases (GHG), the State of California has also increased focus on protection of forestry resources (trees provide significant GHG-absorbing benefits). In response, GPA No. 960 includes revisions to the General Plan to provide more robust direction on the relationship between forest resources and future development within Riverside County. In particular, maps showing the general location and extent of forest resources within the county were developed and proposed for incorporation into the General Plan as new Figures OS-3b and OS-3c (for west and east Riverside County, respectively). To accompany these maps, and provide additional guidance on land use development proposals on forested lands, a new policy, LU 7.10, is proposed as part of GPA No. 960.

In addition to these mapping and specific policy changes, a variety of LUD and policy area changes are proposed, as per the descriptions in Section 3.0 (Project Description) of the EIR and associated Figure 3-1 (and corresponding maps within each Area Plan) that may directly or indirectly affect agricultural or forestry resources. Such changes would lead to either an increase or decrease in development potential (density or intensity); the risks associated with introducing new people and property into areas with agricultural or forestry resources would be

increased correspondingly. The potential for conflicts between agricultural and urban uses would also be increased where urbanizing development spreads into previously rural and agriculture-based areas.

GPA No. 960 also includes new and revised policies which would be implemented at a future time in locations not foreseeable at present; for example, the new incidental rural Retail-Commercial policy, Indian fee land policies, and others as described in Section 3.0 of the EIR. Similarly, new maps for trails and county roads (GP Figures C-7 and C-1, respectively, plus corresponding maps within each Area Plan) indicate general road and trail alignments, but not specific locations since specific design and construction sites must be determined based on specific site topography, existing development and timing, as well as both existing and future levels of service to be met. Actual locations for these improvements will be determined based on site assessment of opportunities and constraints, including farmland designations and soils, forestry resources and compatibility with surrounding uses, to determine environmentally preferred alignments that minimize adverse effects. Likewise, other infrastructure and utilities, such as power transmission lines, water and sewer lines and such, are also developed based on the providing agency's existing and future levels of service and need assessments and forecasts; typically based on five-year capital improvement plans. Generally, however, such improvements are not proposed until either specific new developments or overall growth within an area triggers their need.

Accordingly, specific locations and timing of future infrastructure, including power and natural gas transmission lines, water and sewer lines and pumps, as well as roads, schools and other public services, are not presently foreseeable beyond the master countywide level already depicted in the 2003 General Plan and addressed previously in EIR No. 441. These improvements will require site-specific analyses and mitigation when proposed as part of (or to serve) future development as the General Plan builds out. As such, future impacts and mitigation, including those for agriculture and forestry resources, would be assessed programmatically pursuant to the performance standards outlined in this EIR, as well as EIR No. 441, with project-specific analysis and mitigation developed at the later individual project stage.

B. Analysis of GPA No. 960 Effects on Agriculture

GPA No. 960 includes items that would directly or indirectly affect agricultural resources as a result of land use designation (LUD) changes in development potential on individual sites; changes to policy areas or other large-scale planning policies affecting development potential across regions; and, changes to the General Plan circulation network that may affect existing or future roadways either directly (establishing new future roadway locations or sizes) or indirectly (triggering the need for a new road on previously vacant lands or changing the size of roadway needed). The specifics of each of these types of changes proposed by the project are fully detailed in EIR Section 3.0.

1. Effects on Agricultural Usage and General Plan Designated "AG" Lands

Among other things, GPA No. 960 includes changes that would directly alter the agricultural ("AG") land use designations in the General Plan for a variety of locations. A summary of these General Plan changes is provided in Table 4.5-E (Project Effects on Agriculture Land Use Designations in the General Plan), below. Of the areas directly affected by changes proposed by GPA No. 960, a total of 4,080 acres are designated AG under the existing General Plan. The proposed changes would result in an overall net loss of 170 acres of designated AG in the General Plan. Per Table 4.2-D (Existing General Plan Mapped Land Uses (Countywide)), this is less than 0.10% of the countywide total of 189,730 acres designated AG.

The subsequent table, Table 4.5-F (Project Effects on Lands in Agricultural Use), shows the approximate amount of agricultural uses existing on the sites in question, as assessed by photo-interpretation of GIS data. In terms of

build out (over the next 50 years), it is assumed that *all* of the proposed land use designations indicated in the Riverside County General Plan are developed according to their mapped uses. Thus, since agricultural uses are present on lands *not* currently designated with an ‘AG’ LUD, as shown in Table 4.5-F, the project’s changes would mean the loss of over 5,300 acres of agricultural lands (which include croplands, grazing and fallow lands, as well as ranches and similar uses). This is approximately 2% of the 226,900 acres of agriculture estimated currently in unincorporated Riverside County (per Table 4.2-C). In reality, however, it is highly unlikely that all the land uses designated in the General Plan will ever build out. It would require new development on all of the developable vacant land in the county and also the replacing of many long-standing existing uses which historically never occurs 100%. Nevertheless, it is assumed to occur for the purposes of this EIR to ensure that the worse-case environmental effects and resource needs are addressed programmatically.

Table 4.5-E: Project Effects on Agriculture Land Use Designations in the General Plan

Project Component	Current General Plan “AG” LUD (acres)	Proposed “AG” LUD (acres)	Change in “AG” LUD (acres)
Aguanga RVSA	0	0	NC
Anza Valley PA	950	950	NC
Blythe Airport	0	0	NC
El Cariso RVSA	0	0	NC
Fish Farms	0	470	+ 470 acres
Flabob Airport	0	0	NC
Goodhope RVO	0	0	NC
Meadowbrook RVO	0	0	NC
Northeast Business Park OV	180	0	- 180 acres
Parcel-Specific LUD Changes	80	0	- 80 acres
Riverside Municipal Airport	0	0	NC
San Jacinto Ag/Development Potential Study Area	2,870	2,830	- 40 acres
Totals	4,080	4,250	- 170 acres

* All values rounded to nearest 10; those under 10 rounded to nearest whole number. Thus, totals may not sum.
 Key: LUD = General Plan Land Use Designation NC = No Change OV = Overlay
 RVSA = Rural Village Study Area RVO = Rural Village Overlay PA = Policy Area
 Source: Riverside County Planning and GIS Departments, GIS analysis of project application data, 2011.

2. Effects on Important Farmlands Designated by the State

Based on farmland mapping data from the State Department of Conservation, the relationship of the project’s known spatial components was analyzed relative to Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance, Farmlands of Local Importance and Unique Farmlands (collectively referred to as “Farmlands” herein). Table 4.5-F, below, shows how the land use designation changes summarized in Table 4.5-E would affect mapped Farmlands for the sites.

Overall, extremely small amounts (roughly 32 acres) of Prime and State-Important Farmlands would potentially be directly adversely affected (i.e., made unavailable for agricultural uses) due to GPA No. 960 LUD changes. In terms of Farmlands of Local Importance, gains in AG-designated lands from the fish farm changes offset those lost elsewhere, resulting in an overall net gain of 74 acres.

3. Effects on Existing Agricultural Preserves

Analysis of the known spatial components of the proposed project indicates that roughly 4,900 acres fall within an existing Agricultural Preserve. Of these, nearly 90% (4,280 acres) fall within revised policy areas in which land

use development potentials are being reduced (this includes the removal of the potential urbanizing development from the San Jacinto Agriculture/Potential Development Study Area). Roughly 20 acres within preserves are being designated OS-CH for biological and open space conservation (which also preserves any farmland soils) and 120 acres are going to OS-C for other reasons. Just over 30 acres are being changed to AG designation to preserve and foster fish farms (aquaculture) in the Salton Sea region.

Table 4.5-F: Project Effects on Lands in Agricultural Use

Project Component	Land Currently in Agricultural Use ¹ (acres)	Proposed for Agricultural Use ("AG" LUD) (acres)	Change in Agri. Land Usage at Build out ² (acres)
Aguanga RVSA	630	0	- 630 acres
Anza Valley PA	3,880	950	NC
Blythe Airport	310	0	-310 acres
El Cariso RVSA	2	0	- 2 acres
Fish Farms	470	470	NC
Flabob Airport	40	0	- 40 acres
Goodhope RVO	20	0	- 20 acres
Meadowbrook RVO	30	0	- 30 acres
Northeast Business Park OV	180	0	- 180 acres
Parcel-Specific LUD Changes	530	0	- 530 acres
Riverside Municipal Airport	10	0	- 10 acres
San Jacinto Ag/Development Potential Study Area	3,500	2,830	-530 acres
Totals	9,590	4,250	- 5,340 acres

Key: LUD = General Plan Land Use Designation NC = No Change OV = Overlay
 RVSA = Rural Village Study Area RVO = Rural Village Overlay PA = Policy Area

Footnotes:

- Existing uses derived from photo-inspection of aerial parcel data, *not* General Plan LUDs (which may or may not be "AG" under the existing General Plan). Uses deemed "existing agriculture" include crops, pastures, grazing lands, dairies, orchards, groves, vineyards, etc., as well as feedlots, ranches (i.e., non-residential facilities for animal keeping, handling, etc.) and dairies. Where distinguishable from these agricultural uses, residential uses (homes and their yards) are *not* included in this category. All values rounded to nearest 10 or whole number if under 10.
- Difference between lands in existing agricultural uses and lands that would be in agricultural usage at build out of the General Plan as amended by GPA No. 960 (assuming 100% build out of all lands proposed for AG designation and that all lands build out as per their proposed General Plan LUDs).

Source: Riverside County Planning and GIS Departments, GIS analysis of project application data, 2011.

The 4,900-acre total also includes the proposed Northeast Business Park Overlay which provides an alternate industrial (business park) designation on an AG-designated area with existing dairies (affecting roughly 260 acres within preserves). A number of parcel-specific changes totaling roughly 180 acres within agricultural preserves would also be changed to developed land uses; mostly rural residential. In addition, the changes proposed near Blythe Airport plus a number of other parcel-specific proposed changes would occur within one-quarter mile of an existing agricultural preserve. None of the new policy areas or overlays increasing development potential (e.g., Meadowbrook RVO, Goodhope RVO, Lakeland Village) are within a quarter-mile of any agricultural preserves.

Table 4.5-G: Effects on State-Designated Farmlands

State Farmland Classification / Designation	Total Acreage in Unincorp. Riverside County	Areas to Non-AG LUD* GPA No. 960 (acres)	AG LUD Gains* GPA No. 960 (acres)
Prime Farmland	105,390	- 5	0
Farmland of Statewide Importance	36,660	- 27	0
Unique Farmland	32,360	0	0
Farmland of Local Importance	162,410	- 210	317
TOTALS	336,830 ac	- 243 ac	+ 317 ac
Overall net change = + 74 acres			

* Only areas going into AG land use designations (LUDs) calculated. Additional farmlands are expected to be conserved where lands are proposed to be placed under OS-CH or OS-C designations for conservation of biological/habitat values.

Source: Riverside County GIS Dept., GIS analysis of project data, 2010. California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, Important Farmland Maps 2008, published September 2009.

Table 4.5-H: Project Relationship to Existing Agricultural Preserves

Project Component ¹	Near Ag. Preserve (Within 1/4 mile)	Within Ag. Preserve (Acres) ²
Aguanga RVSA ³	yes	200
Anza Valley PA ³	yes	1,020
Blythe Airport	yes	---
Fish Farms ³	yes	30
Northeast Business Park OV	yes	260
Parcel-Specific LUD Changes	yes	300 (120) ³
RCA-Acquired Conservation Lands ³	yes	20
San Jacinto Ag/Development Potential Study Area ³	yes	3,060
Totals		4,890 acres

Key: LUD = General Plan Land Use Designation NC = No Change OV = Overlay
 RVSA = Rural Village Study Area RVO = Rural Village Overlay PA = Policy Area

Footnotes:

1. Project components *not* in or near an agricultural preserve are not listed.
2. All values rounded to nearest 10. Thus, totals may not sum precisely.
3. Changes proposed would generally reduce development potential or be consistent with agricultural uses; that is, they would *not* adversely affect agricultural activities.

Source: Riverside County Planning and GIS Departments, GIS analysis of project application data, 2012.

C. Analysis of Effects on Forestry Resources

Of land use changes associated with GPA No. 960, only two sites have existing forestry resources. Site C2-3b encompasses just under 36 acres forested with mature pines and firs in the Idyllwild region off Highway 243. Site C2-4 encompasses roughly 41 acres similarly forested and also located northwest of Idyllwild in the San Jacinto Mountains. These two sites are vegetated with a high percentage of cover by “Montane Coniferous Forest” vegetation of varying densities, according to Western Riverside County mapping data (see Figure 4.5.2) and aerial photo (RCLIS layer) inspection. These are the only two sites included in GPA No. 960 located at elevations at which commercially important timber resources are known to occur (that is, generally above 5,000 feet).

Both sites are proposed to change from OS-CH (Open Space – Conservation Habitat, which is a designation used only from public lands acquired for conservation and, thus, was misapplied to this privately owned land) to OS-RUR (Open Space – Rural, which allows one single-family home per 20 acres). Although the placement of houses on these sites would be inconsistent with commercial timber operations, neither site is of sufficient size to offer significant potential for commercial timber operations. Further, any timber/tree removal necessary for potential future single-family residential development on these sites could readily be accomplished under the 3-acre timber clearing exemptions discussed earlier.

Other areas proposed for foreseeable land use changes have sporadic or occasional stands of forest vegetation. For example, scattered stands of “Montane Hardwood” and “Montane Hardwood-Conifer Forest” occur sporadically within the bounds of the proposed Anza Policy Area. None of these areas or forest resources, however, occurs to the extent necessary to support industrial or commercial timber resource production. No known Christmas tree farms, the only type of on-going commercial timber activity known to occur in Riverside County, occurs on or in the vicinity of any of the proposed land use or other project changes. Woody biomass clearance activities would not be affected by the project as such activities are triggered by fire safety needs not development potential.

4.5.6 Agricultural and Forestry Resources - Impacts and Mitigation

A. *Would the project 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 Natural Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*

Impact 4.5.A – Cause the Conversion of Designated Farmlands: The specific land use and policy changes proposed by the project, GPA No. 960, would adversely affect (i.e., result in the conversion of) only minimal amounts of State-designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Farmland of Local Importance (“Farmlands”) to a variety of non-agricultural uses. No Unique Farmland would be affected. Due to the very small areas involved, these impacts would be less than significant. Indirectly, the growth accommodated and facilitated by the project would result in additional development and infrastructure demand that would further conversion of designated Farmlands to urban uses and result in other changes in the existing environment leading to additional Farmland conversion. This indirect impact would be significant and unavoidable.

1. Analysis of Impact 4.5.A

Assuming that 100% of the lands with LUDs being revised are built out with their new designated use, as shown in Table 4.5-G (Effects on State-Designated Farmlands), the specific land use and policy changes proposed by the project would adversely affect (i.e., result in the conversion of) only minimal amounts (32 acres) of State-designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. In addition, while 210 acres of Farmland of Local Importance would be converted to a variety of non-agricultural uses, nearly 220 acres of lands, including existing fish farms (aquaculture) are proposed for new designation as agriculture (“AG” LUD).

As mapped according to the baseline data provided by the State of California, the unincorporated portion of Riverside County has designated Farmland totals of 105,390 acres of Prime, 36,660 acres of Statewide Importance, 32,360 acres of Unique and 162,410 acres of Farmland of Local Importance (See Table 4.5-D (State-Designated Farmland Data for Riverside County)). According to the Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner, the amount of land in agricultural production totaled 187,800 acres as of 2009 (inclusive of cities) (See Table 4.5-A). Thus, in light of these totals, the loss of 32 acres represents an insignificant amount overall.

However, the total amount of land designated for agricultural uses under both the existing General Plan and the General Plan as amended GPA No. 960 at full build out (roughly 190,000 acres) is *less* than the amount of agricultural land currently designated as Prime, Unique, Statewide and Locally Important Farmland (roughly 336,800 acres). Thus, future development accommodated by the project in locations not foreseeable at this time would still likely result in the loss of additional Prime, Unique, Statewide and Locally Important Farmlands.

Indirectly, the growth accommodated and facilitated by the project would also result in additional development and infrastructure demand that would further fuel conversion of agricultural uses to urban resulting in further loss of designated Farmlands. Compliance with existing and proposed regulations, General Plan policies and mitigation measures would help reduce this indirect impact. However, it would still be significant and unavoidable.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.5.A

The adverse effects associated with potential changes to agricultural resources would be avoided, reduced or minimized through adherence to or compliance with the following regulations and policies.

a. Compliance with Riverside County Regulations

Compliance with the following Riverside County regulations would prevent or reduce significant impacts due to, or resulting in, the conversion of State-designated Farmlands to non-agricultural uses. The existing regulations and policies presented here are not part of proposed GPA No. 960. Rather, they are policies within the existing General Plan and ordinances.

Ordinance No. 509 - Establishing Agricultural Preserves: Compliance with Ordinance No. 509 would protect agricultural uses from incompatible uses by limiting what types of development and use may occur within an agricultural preserve and ensuring such preserves are operated and managed pursuant to all applicable State of California regulations.

Ordinance No. 625 – Right to Farm: Existing agricultural uses, including any lands zoned primarily for agricultural purposes, are protected from nuisance complaints often generated by encroaching non-agricultural uses via the “right to farm” ordinance. It reduces legal nuisance liabilities potentially directed at pre-existing agricultural uses by requiring new properties within 300 feet of any land zoned primarily for agricultural purposes be given notice of the pre-existing use and its rights to continue.

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

The following existing policies of the Riverside County General Plan would contribute to ensuring development impacts on Farmlands, including their conversion to non-agricultural uses, are less than significant. See Section 4.5.3.C for full text of each of these policies. Implementation of these agricultural General Plan policies would help reduce the interface effects of development encroachment from surrounding area upon farmlands, but would not reduce the significant impact associated with the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Policy OS 7.1: This policy encourages the County of Riverside to collaborate with federal and state agencies in updating and maintaining accurate agricultural resources maps. Identifying and mapping agricultural resources throughout Riverside County aids in the preservation and protection of those resources and ultimately reduces potential adverse impacts to those areas including impacts due to farmland conversion.

Policy OS 7.3: This policy encourages “conservation of productive agricultural lands and the preservation of prime agricultural lands.”

Policy OS 7.5: This policy addresses combining agriculture with “other compatible open space uses in order to provide an economic advantage to agriculture.”

Policy LU 20.1: This policy encourages the preservation of agriculturally designated lands through various incentives such as tax credits for those lands where agricultural activity can be sustained, impacts from incompatible uses are minimized and the character and lifestyle of the area is accommodated, thereby reducing the potential amount of land being proposed for farmland conversions.

Policy LU 20.2: This policy ensures the protection of agricultural uses by discouraging incompatible land uses, intensities and land divisions in the proximity of agricultural operations, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts related to farmland conversion.

Policy LU 20.4: This policy encourages conservation of productive agricultural lands, including those in high-value crop production, reducing potential adverse impacts related to farmland conversion.

Policy LU 20.5: This policy encourages Riverside County's continued participation in the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act). Continuing to restrict lands subject to the Williamson Act to agricultural and related open space uses aids in the prevention of farmland conversions.

Policy LU 20.6: This policy requires that State of California agricultural land classifications be taken into consideration when 2.5-year Agriculture Foundation Component Amendments are reviewed by the County of Riverside, ensuring that any potential conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses will also include review of and compliance with State of California procedures.

Policy LU 20.9: This policy promotes weighing the preservation of agriculture with the economic benefits of surface mining when mineral excavation is proposed on agricultural lands. Studying and weighing the benefits of both proposals will ensure that potential adverse impacts related to the conversion of farmland are reduced.

Policy LU 20.11: This policy encourages the County of Riverside to pursue programs that will create incentives for the continued viability of agricultural activities. This policy recognizes the importance of agricultural activity to Riverside County and promotes the preservation of those activities, thereby reducing potential impacts to farmland conversion.

3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.5.A

In terms of direct impacts, the project would have a net increase in the amount of land designated 'Agriculture,' which includes a net increase of roughly 74 acres of land designated as Farmland of Local Importance by Riverside County. This net increase, as well as compliance with the above-cited regulations, programs and General Plan policies, would offset project impacts associated with the direct loss of land designated by the State of California as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance (roughly 32 acres, respectively). Hence, for these reasons, direct impacts resulting from the land use-related changes to the General Plan proposed by GPA No. 960 would be less than significant. Indirectly, however, the growth accommodated and facilitated by the project would also result in additional development and infrastructure demand that would further fuel conversion of agricultural uses to urban resulting in further loss of designated Farmlands. Compliance with existing Riverside County ordinances and General Plan policies would help reduce this indirect impact. However, consistent with the findings made previously for the General Plan in EIR No. 441, these indirect impacts would still be significant and unavoidable.

B. *Would the project conflict with existing agricultural zoning, agricultural use or with land subject to a Williamson Act contract or land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve? Cause development of non-agricultural uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property? Or involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?*

Impact 4.5.B – Encroach On or Conflict With Existing Agricultural Uses: Future development pursuant to the land use and policy changes proposed by the project, GPA No. 960, has the potential to result in conflicts with existing zoning, agricultural uses, lands subject to a Williamson Act contract or within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve. It may also result in the introduction of new urban uses within 300 feet of agriculturally-zoned property. Indirectly, the growth accommodated and facilitated by the project would result in additional development and infrastructure demand that would further conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses, encroach on existing agricultural activities and mapped Farmlands, and result in other changes in the existing environment leading to additional Farmland conversion. This indirect impact would be significant and unavoidable.

1. Analysis of Impact 4.5.B

According to the Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner (Table 4.5-A), nearly 190,000 acres of land was in agricultural production countywide (inclusive of cities) as of 2009. Assuming all land designated for agricultural use was actively farmed at the time of build out (approximately 2065), implementation of the urbanizing overlays, policy areas and other options proposed in the project would result in the loss of approximately 5,340 acres of lands currently in agricultural production (Table 4.5-F). This is despite the overall net *increase* in land designated “AG” pursuant to the General Plan; many agricultural activities within Riverside County occur on lands not formally designated AG under the General Plan. Hence, in addition to the 5,340 acres that would potentially be directly lost by foreseeable spatial changes associated with the project, other development resulting from the project not foreseeable at this time would also be expected to adversely affect existing agricultural uses.

In terms of agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracts, GIS data indicates that of the 4,890 acres of spatial changes associated with the project, only about 560 acres would adversely affect (result in the conversion of or conflict with) lands within existing agricultural preserves. The remaining 4,330 acres would be subject to changes *decreasing* development potential for sites (e.g., Anza Valley Policy Area) or strengthen agricultural usage (fish farm AG LUD designations). See Table 4.5-H (Project Relationship to Existing Agricultural Preserves).

Nevertheless, as the total amount of land designated for agricultural uses under both the existing General Plan and as proposed under GPA No. 960 at full build out is less than the amount of agricultural land currently designated as Prime, Unique, Statewide and Locally Important Farmland (336,830 acres), future development accommodated pursuant to the General Plan as revised by the project would still likely result in significant conflicts with existing agricultural uses, zones and activities, as well as encroachment and other indirect effects leading to further conversion and loss of Farmlands.

Throughout California, Prime Farmland is being lost to urban expansion near existing cities. Urban encroachment of development into areas in agricultural production, particularly if within 300 feet, increases the likelihood of conflicts between these two fundamental types of uses. When residential and other urban-density land uses encroach into areas in agricultural production, traditional agricultural nuisances become much more problematic to the arriving residents. Typical agricultural nuisance effects can include generation of dust, odors and noise from agricultural operation, proliferation of flies and other pests around livestock, potential soil or groundwater

contamination (from large-scale feed lots and dairies) and overspray or runoff exposure from aerial application of agricultural chemicals. For farmers, urban encroachment adversely affects the efficiency of remaining farming operations due to increased air pollution, livestock predation by pets, crop diseases resulting from inadequate care of off-farm ornamental plants, restrictions on pesticide use and burning and requirements to set aside on-farm buffer zones. At the same time, production costs increase due to rising land values, water scarcity, theft and vandalism of farm equipment, crop pilferage, road congestion, change in property tax structure and personal injury liability resulting from trespassing on farms.

By reducing the profitability of remaining farming operations, urban encroachment tends to have a spiraling effect, encouraging further losses of farmland to urban development. The Agricultural Commissioner reports that over the last decade, land in agricultural production (cultivation) has fallen markedly by nearly 30% within Riverside County (including incorporated cities), with accompanying decreases in the number of full-time farms in Riverside County and farm sizes.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.5.B

The adverse effects associated with potential changes to agricultural resources would be avoided, reduced or minimized through adherence to or compliance with the following regulations and policies.

a. Compliance with Riverside County Regulations

Compliance with the following Riverside County regulations would prevent or reduce significant impacts due to, or resulting in, the conversion of Farmlands to non-agricultural uses, encroachment of incompatible uses on agricultural areas and other related changes. The existing regulations and policies presented here are not part of proposed GPA No. 960. Rather, they are regulations and policies that have been approved by the County of Riverside as separate prior discretionary actions.

Ordinance No. 509 - Establishing Agricultural Preserves: Compliance with Ordinance No. 509 would protect agricultural uses from incompatible uses by limiting what types of development and use may occur within an agricultural preserve and ensuring such preserves are operated and managed pursuant to all applicable State of California regulations.

Ordinance No. 625 – Right to Farm: Existing agricultural uses, including any lands zoned “primarily for agricultural purposes,” are protected from nuisance complaints often generated by encroaching non-agricultural uses via Riverside County Ordinance No. 625, the “right to farm” ordinance. It reduces legal nuisance liabilities potentially directed at pre-existing agricultural uses by requiring new properties within 300 feet of any land zoned primarily for agricultural purposes be given notice of the pre-existing use and its rights to continue.

Riverside County Rules and Regulations Governing Agricultural Preserves: In relation to the preservation of existing agricultural lands and the protection of land subject to the Williamson Act, CAPTAC reviews any diminishment or disestablishment of agricultural preserves and provides a recommendation to the Board based on a number of findings:

- Whether a notice of nonrenewal has been served pursuant to the Williamson Act, Section 401 of these rules.
- Whether the cancellation is likely to result in the removal of adjacent lands from agricultural use.

- Whether the proposed alternative use of land is consistent with the provisions of the Riverside County General Plan.
- Whether the cancellation would result in discontinuous patterns of urban development.
- Whether there is proximate non-contracted land which is both available and suitable for the proposed use or whether the development of the contracted land would provide more contiguous patterns of urban development of proximate non-contracted land.

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

The following existing policies of the Riverside County General Plan would contribute to ensuring development impacts on Farmlands, including their conversion to non-agricultural uses, are less than significant. See Section 4.5.3.C for full text of each of these policies. Implementation of these agricultural resource-related General Plan policies would help reduce the interface effects of development encroachment upon farmlands, but would not reduce the significant impact associated with the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Policy OS 7.1: This policy encourages the County of Riverside to collaborate with federal and state agencies in updating and maintaining accurate Agricultural Resources maps. Identifying and mapping agricultural resources throughout Riverside County aids in the preservation and protection of those resources and ultimately reduces potential adverse impacts including the potential encroachment on existing agriculture.

Policy OS 7.3: This policy encourages “conservation of productive agricultural lands and the preservation of prime agricultural lands.” Implementation of Policy OS 7.3 will aid in preventing new development from encroaching on existing agriculture.

Policy OS 7.5: This policy addresses combining agriculture with “other compatible open space uses in order to provide an economic advantage to agriculture,” thereby locating those land uses that are incidental to agriculture near land currently designated as agriculture, preventing the encroachment of those uses that are not compatible with agriculture.

Policy LU 20.1: This policy encourages the preservation of agriculturally designated lands through various incentives such as tax credits for those lands where agricultural activity can be sustained, impacts from incompatible uses are minimized and the character and lifestyle of the area is accommodated. Compliance with this policy encourages the preservation of land currently designated as agriculture, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts pursuant to GPA No. 960 in relation to encroachments and conflicts with existing agriculture.

Policy LU 20.2: This policy ensures the protection of agricultural uses by discouraging incompatible land uses, intensities and land divisions in the proximity of agricultural operations, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts pursuant to GPA No. 960 related to encroachments and conflicts with existing agriculture.

Policy LU 20.4: This policy encourages productive agricultural lands to be conserved, including agricultural land that maintains high-value crop production, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts pursuant to GPA No. 960 in relation to encroachments and conflicts with existing agriculture.

Policy LU 20.5: This policy encourages Riverside County’s continued participation in the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act). Continuing to restrict lands subject to the Williamson Act to agricultural and related open space uses aids in the preservation and protection of existing agriculture and prevents encroachments and conflicts on existing agriculture.

Policy LU 20.6: This policy requires that State of California agricultural land classifications be taken into consideration when 2.5-year Agriculture Foundation Component Amendments are reviewed by the County of Riverside, ensuring that any potential conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses would also include review of and compliance with State of California procedures.

Policy LU 20.7: This policy requires the adherence to Riverside County’s right-to-farm ordinance. The implementation of and compliance with Ordinance No. 625 would reduce potential adverse impacts to existing agriculture by establishing standards throughout Riverside County to continue to “conserve, protect and encourage the development, improvement, and continued viability” of agricultural lands and related industries.

Policy LU 20.11: Through Policy LU 20.11, the County of Riverside will explore and create various incentive programs that would encourage the continued viability of agricultural activities. Creating such incentive programs would encourage Riverside County residents and developers alike to preserve and develop agricultural activities throughout Riverside County, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts to existing agriculture.

c. Compliance with Proposed New and Revised General Plan Policies

The following new or revised policies of the Riverside County General Plan, proposed as part of GPA No. 960, would contribute to ensuring development impacts on agricultural activities and uses are less than significant. See Section 4.5.3.C for full text of each of these policies.

Policy LU 20.8: This policy encourages educational and incentive programs in coordination with the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, the University of California Cooperative Extension Service and the Riverside County Farm Bureau to convey the importance of conserving watercourses and their associated habitat and providing protective buffers for domestic and farm livestock grazing. Increasing awareness on this issue will help reduce potential adverse impacts to agriculture.

3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.5.B

As noted for Impact 4.5.B, above, in EIR No. 441, prepared for the 2003 RCIP General Plan, it was found under “Impact 4.2.2” (Final EIR, page 4.2-32) that implementation of the General Plan would “result in the significant conversion of active agricultural land and agricultural soils to non-agricultural uses.” Although the existing General Plan includes policies intended to identify and implement programs that would limit the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, EIR No. 441 finds that these policies do not set specific requirements that would limit the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. Further, EIR No. 441 finds the policies do not identify the amount, extent or location of agricultural land to be conserved and that it is impossible to assess if policies would effectively reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

As a result, future development accommodated by the land use and policy changes proposed by the project is similarly found to have the potential for significant and unavoidable indirect impacts to agricultural uses through introducing new urban uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property and contributing to the demand for additional development and infrastructure that would further fuel conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. Pursuant to EIR No. 441, no additional project-specific mitigation measures are feasible. Thus, impacts due to conflict with existing agricultural zoning or uses, including those leading to the conversion of designated Farmlands, as well as encroachment impacts, would be significant and unavoidable.

C. *Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production? Or 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?*

Impact 4.5.C – Adversely Affect Forest Lands and Forestry Uses: In Southern California, including Riverside County, climate and topography limit the types and locations of forest lands and their potential for commercial or industrial timber utilization. Accordingly, there are no existing or currently proposed zoning of forest land, timberland or Timberland Production Zones within the county; and the project would not conflict with any of these. Woody biomass removal, a type of forestry utilized by utility companies and forest management agencies for fire safety purposes, occurs with Riverside County, but not within fixed locations. Nevertheless, forest lands do occur in scattered locations within the county. Hence, future development accommodated by the land use and policy changes proposed by the project, GPA No. 960, has the potential to result in loss or conversion of forest land to non-forest uses or result in other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in forest land conversion as well. Further, growth accommodated and facilitated by the project would indirectly result in additional development and infrastructure demand that would create additional potential for forest land conversion or encroach of incompatible uses. Compliance with existing and proposed regulations and policies would ensure forestry impacts are less than significant.

1. Analysis of Impact 4.5.C

As discussed in Section 4.5.2.f, above, according to the State of California there are no commercial timber operations or yields within Riverside County. Nor does Riverside County have any existing or currently proposed zoning of forest land, timberland or Timberland Production Zones within the county. Hence, this project would not conflict with any of these. In addition, since the Woody Biomass Program operates on the basis of slash and overgrowth removal, such as removal of brush from under a power line easement or removal of trees killed by bark beetle infestation, none of the changes proposed by GPA No. 960 would have an adverse effect on this program.

Analysis presented in Section 4.5.4, above, indicates that of land use changes associated with GPA No. 960, only two sites have existing forestry resources. These sites, located in the San Jacinto Mountains in central Riverside County, are vegetated with high percentages of “Montane Coniferous Forest” of varying densities totaling approximately 76 acres. These are the only two sites included in GPA No. 960 located at elevations at which commercially important timber resources are known to occur (that is, generally above 5,000 feet). These sites are proposed to change from OS-CH (Open Space – Conservation Habitat), which generally does not allow any development, to OS-RUR (Open Space – Rural), which allows one single-family home per 20 acres. These sites are too small for most economically viable commercial timber operations. Also, due to the low densities allowed, it is possible that any timber/tree removal necessary for potential future single-family residential use of these sites could be accomplished under the 3-acre timber clearing exemptions discussed earlier. Direct project-related forestry impacts associated with these land use designation changes would be less than significant.

Other areas proposed for land use changes have sporadic or occasional stands of forest vegetation, such as scattered and sporadic stands of “Montane Hardwood” and/or “Montane Hardwood-Conifer Forest,” particularly at elevations below 5,000 feet. None of these areas or forest resources, however, occurs to the extent necessary to support industrial or commercial timber resource production. The only “Christmas tree farms” within Riverside County consist of nursery stock operations and do not utilize naturally occurring stands of trees.

Thus, overall any forestry impacts associated with these resources and the proposed changes, both the known spatial changes and changes not foreseeable at this time, would be minor or less than significant.

In the case of the two sites mentioned above, as well as the sporadic or occasional stands of forest vegetation, where existing forest lands or timber resources may be affected by future development encroachment or other changes in the existing environment as a result of the proposed project, compliance with the regulatory measures and existing and proposed General Plan policies outlined below would be sufficient to ensure any such forestry impacts are less than significant.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.5.C

Adverse effects related to forest lands and timber resources, including loss of forest land, conversion of forest land to non-forest use, zoning or use conflicts, or other changes resulting in conversion of forest land to non-forest uses, would be avoided, reduced or minimized through adherence to or compliance with the following regulations and policies.

a. Compliance with State and County Regulations

The existing regulations and policies presented here are not part of proposed GPA No. 960. Rather, they are regulations and policies that have been approved by the County of Riverside as separate prior discretionary actions. Compliance with the following California State and Riverside County regulations would prevent significant impacts to forest lands and uses.

California Forest Practice Act: Forest land resources shall be protected through the County of Riverside requiring all applicable projects (for example, commercial clearing or other timber operations, site clearances of greater than 3 acres of timber, etc.) to comply with applicable State Forest Practice Act rules and regulations, including attainment of an approved Timber Harvest Plan (THP), Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan or exemption, as warranted by the proposed project and resources of the site. Compliance with these state regulations ensures that any future timberland uses within Riverside County are conducted according to the standards established by the State of California for the protection and safe utilization of forest lands and timber resources. THPs reduce potential adverse impacts on forest lands and uses by establishing a harvest blueprint for a particular site that would detail exactly what would be harvested, how any harvesting would be done, as well as the necessary steps that would be taken to protect the environment. All THPs are required to be in compliance with the appropriate federal and state laws, further ensuring that impacts associated with any harvesting activities would have a minimal impact on forest land and uses.

Ordinance No. 559 - Regulating the Removal of Trees: This ordinance protects forest and timber resources within the county by requiring the review and issuance of a permit for the removal of living native trees on parcels or property greater than one-half acre and located above 5,000 feet elevation. For lots greater than one-half acre and located above 5,000 feet in elevation, the County of Riverside requires projects to demonstrate compliance with this ordinance prior to the issuance of any grading or other ground-disturbing permits. Ordinance No. 559, reduces potential adverse impacts to agricultural and forest lands and uses by protecting existing native trees, thereby protecting the timberlands of Riverside County.

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

The following existing policies of the Riverside County General Plan would contribute to ensuring development impacts on forest lands, including their conversion to non-forest uses, are less than significant. See Section 4.5.3.C for full text of each of these policies.

Policies OS 8.1 and 8.2: These policies reduce potential adverse impacts to forest lands and uses by requiring development proposals cooperate with the appropriate federal and state agencies in order to achieve “sustainable conservation of forest land” and to provide the support for “conservation programs to reforest privately held forest lands.” These policies would aid in protection of Riverside County’s natural resources and habitat lands, including those of the MSHCPs.

Policy OS 9.4: This policy reduces potential adverse impacts to woodlands by promoting the conservation of oak tree resources within the county.

c. Compliance with Proposed New and Revised General Plan Policies

The following new Riverside County General Plan policies, proposed as part of GPA No. 960, would contribute to ensuring development impacts to forest lands are less than significant.

Policy LU 6.8: This new policy is proposed to directly prevent loss of valuable forest lands and timber resources by specifying when compliance with State of California forestry regulations and the Riverside County tree-removal ordinance shall be required. Lastly, it specifies a minimum of 1:1 tree replacement ratio for mature trees lost.

Policy LU 7.6: This proposed policy would require that proposed developments buffer and/or maintain a natural edge when directly adjacent to National Forests. Such buffering and natural edges aid in protecting forests from urban interface conflicts and edge effects.

3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.5.C

As discussed above, implementation of, and compliance with, the above-listed regulatory programs and General Plan policies, would ensure that potential adverse impacts to forest lands and uses from development pursuant to GPA No. 960 would have less than significant impacts.

4.5.7 Significance After Mitigation for Agricultural and Forestry Resources

With the implementation of, and compliance with, the above-listed existing regulatory programs, Riverside County Ordinance No. 559 and General Plan policies, development accommodated under the project, GPA No. 960, would be less than significant with respect to forest land and forestry impacts.

Development and implementation activities accommodated by the proposed project would also be subject to a number of existing General Plan policies, existing Riverside County ordinances and other existing governmental regulations, as identified previously, to reduce to below the level of significance potential adverse impacts on

direct conversion of State-designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Farmland of Local Importance, or land actively utilized for agricultural production, to a variety of non-agricultural uses.

Future development accommodated by the land use and policy changes proposed by the project also has the potential for significant and unavoidable indirect impacts to agricultural uses through introducing new urban uses within 300 feet of agriculturally-zoned property and contributing to demand for additional development and infrastructure that would further spur conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. It also has the potential to conflict with existing zoning, agricultural uses and lands subject to a Williamson Act contract or within a Riverside County agricultural preserve. Pursuant to EIR No. 441, no additional project-specific mitigation measures have been identified for General Plan implementation. Thus, indirect impacts leading to the conversion of designated Farmlands and conflicts between urban and agricultural land uses remain significant and unavoidable.

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