

7 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This chapter provides an evaluation of the potential effects to agriculture and forestry resources with implementation of the proposed City of Folsom 2035 General Plan (2035 General Plan). As established in the Notice of Preparation for the proposed 2035 General Plan (see Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation*), urban development and other activities subject to the plan may result in adverse effects to the agriculture and forestry resources environment. Biological resources impacts, including potential impacts to oak woodland habitat, are evaluated in Chapter 8, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft PEIR.

The following environmental assessment includes a review of agriculture and forestry resources potentially affected by the implementation of the 2035 General Plan, including a description of existing agricultural resources, potential conversion of farmlands, and conflicts with Williamson Act contracts. This analysis includes a review of regulations, requirements, plans, and policies applicable to agriculture and forestry resources.

The existing condition of the agriculture and forestry resources environment in the City of Folsom was determined by a review of important farmlands classified by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), the Williamson Act Program, and examination of aerial photographic records and other mapping data. Potential impacts related to agriculture and forestry resources were determined by comparing potential activities to the existing environment, based on CEQA assessment criteria, and by considering the policies, regulations, and guidelines adopted by the City of Folsom and by State resource agencies.

7.1 SETTING

The environmental and regulatory setting of the City of Folsom with respect to agriculture and forestry resources is described below for both the physical environment and the body of federal, state, and local policies and regulations that govern such resources.

7.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

EXISTING LAND USES

Land uses within the city include residential land uses, vacant land, roadways, commercial uses, public/semi-public uses, and parks and open space. The city north of Highway 50 consists of primarily urbanized uses. This area of the city does not contain any land that supports commercial agricultural operations. Agricultural uses are limited to hobby farming and the keeping of animals in the more rural residential areas of the city west of the American River and mostly along Baldwin Dam Road, as long as these uses are in harmony with the character of these neighborhoods.

South of Highway 50, the Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan (FPASP) area generally consists of undeveloped grasslands used for cattle grazing, in addition to a small number of rural residences, and open space. This area is planned for urban development in the 2035 General Plan. Land south of the FPASP area is characterized primarily by seasonal grazing land in an unincorporated area regulated by Sacramento County, and the majority of these lands are under Williamson Act contracts.

EXISTING AGRICULTURAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

There are no General Plan agricultural land use designations within the City of Folsom. There are several scattered areas totaling approximately 680 acres located in the Agricultural Reserve District (A-1A) zoning designation (City of Folsom 2018). The Agriculture Reserve District (A-1-A) is intended to provide areas for interim agricultural uses until it is developed in accordance with the General Plan land use designation. Large parcels of land designated A-1-A have been developed into Folsom Lake College and Vista del Lago High School; another along Oak Avenue Parkway is used as a major electric substation; another area on East Natoma Street is designated for single family residential uses by the General Plan; and a parcel on Blue Ravine Road is designated for single family high density and open space uses by the General Plan. Much of the south shore of Folsom Lake is also marked as A-1-A, but this land is part of the State Recreation Area.

The Zoning Ordinance also establishes overlay districts, one of which is the Agriculture Combining District. The Agriculture Combining District allows all uses normally permitted in the base district, as well as minor livestock and the sale of agricultural products by right, and kennels, dairy processing, and a veterinary hospital with a use permit. Approximately 347 acres in Folsom have the Zoning designation of Agricultural Combining District. All such parcels area located west of the American River, primarily in the vicinity of Baldwin Dam Road and Oak Avenue.

FARMLAND MAP CLASSIFICATIONS

The Important Farmlands Map prepared for Sacramento County by the California Resources Agency classifies the majority of the city north of Highway 50 as Urban and Built-Up Land. According to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, Urban and Built-Up lands are defined to be land occupied by structures or infrastructure to accommodate a building density of at least one unit to one and one-half acres, or approximately six structures to 10 acres. Appropriate uses within the Urban and Built-Up Land category include residential, industrial, and commercial uses, in addition to institutional facilities and other uses (DOC 2017). There is one parcel of Unique Farmland within the northern area of the city, approximately 29 acres in size. This parcel consists of an abandoned orchard located east of Folsom-Auburn Road and west of the American River Bike Trail and is zoned Open Space Conservation District. Unique Farmland includes lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

South of Highway 50, the FPASP area is classified as Grazing Land. Grazing land includes land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. The FPASP area does not include any agricultural land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance as defined in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.

WILLIAMSON ACT

There are no Williamson Act contracts within the City of Folsom (DOC 2015). As set forth in the *Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan DEIR/DEIS*, approximately 1,530 acres of the FPASP area consisted of agricultural lands under existing Williamson Act contracts that were in the process of nonrenewal. Notices of nonrenewal were filed on these parcels in 2004 and 2006; as a result, these existing contracts expired in 2014 and 2016, respectively. (Folsom 2011)

7.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

The following regulations of federal, state, and local agencies govern various aspects of agriculture and forestry resources. These regulations are summarized below.

FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

No federal laws or regulations pertaining to agricultural resources apply to the 2035 General Plan.

CALIFORNIA LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, administers the FMMP. The program 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. These ratings are used to help prioritize farmland conservation efforts. The maps are updated every two years with the use of a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance. There is no Prime or Important Farmland in the 2035 General Plan's Planning Area.

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965--commonly referred to as the Williamson Act--enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. There are no Williamson Act contracts within the City of Folsom.

LOCAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

There are no regional or local plans, policies, regulations or laws pertaining to agricultural resources in the City of Folsom that are applicable.

Folsom Plan Area/Russell Ranch Adopted Mitigation Measures

There are no mitigation measures adopted by the City during its approval of the FPASP or the Russell Ranch project related to agricultural resources.

7.1.3 PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

There are no policies from the proposed 2035 General Plan that address agriculture and forestry resources.

7.2 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

7.2.1 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

As set forth in Appendix G, Question II of the State CEQA Guidelines, the following criteria have been established to quantify the level of significance of an adverse effect to agriculture and forestry resources evaluated pursuant to CEQA. An impact would exceed an impact threshold under these circumstances:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use. (II.a)
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract. (II.b)
- Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)). (II.c)
- Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (II.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 or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (II.e)

7.2.2 ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The environmental analysis in this section is based on a review of FMMP Important Farmland maps, Williamson Act parcel maps, and review of the City’s Zoning Code. As part of the analysis, this EIR examines the Important Farmland classifications that are used by FMMP to determine the agricultural significance of the lands (i.e., Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) in the City of Folsom.

7.2.3 LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Based on the evaluations set forth below, potential impacts for the following specific topics with respect to agriculture and forestry resources were found to be less than significant. Therefore, they will not be evaluated further in this chapter.

| II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|
| Would the Project: | Less than Significant Impact | No Impact |
| a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use? | X | |
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract? | X | |
| c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))? | | X |
| d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | | X |

EVALUATION OF LESS-THAN-SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Question (a) Important Farmland: Less-than-Significant Impact. Development of future land uses consistent with the 2035 General Plan would not result in the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses. Except for a 29-acre parcel designated as Unique Farmland located north of Highway 50, there is no designated Important Farmland as defined by the FMMP in the 2035 Plan Evaluation Area. The majority of the city is located on land classified as Urban and

Built-Up Land and Other Land (north of Highway 50) and Grazing Land (south of Highway 50) that is designated for urban development by the 2035 General Plan. The parcel of Unique Farmland north of Highway 50 would be designated as Open Space by the 2035 General Plan, which would preserve the soil qualities that would permit potential future farming operations. Therefore, implementation of the Draft General Plan would not result in the loss of any Important Farmland, this would be a less-than-significant impact, and no mitigation is required.

Question (b) Agricultural Zoning/Williamson Act: Less-than-Significant Impact.

Development of future land uses consistent with the 2035 General Plan would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act Contracts. There are approximately 680 acres within the Agricultural Reserve District (A-1-A) zoning designation within the city. As described above, the Agriculture Reserve District is intended to provide areas for interim agricultural uses until such areas are developed with urban uses in accordance with the General Plan land use and Zoning designations. All of these areas zoned as Agriculture Reserve District are developed with non-agricultural uses, such as schools and an electric substation, or are designated for residential or open space uses. The only agricultural activities occurring within the city are those in parcels covered by the Agricultural Combining District overlay designation, which would not be modified with the proposed 2035 General Plan. In addition, there are no Williamson Act contracts within the City of Folsom. Therefore, implementation of the Draft General Plan would not result in any conflicts with parcels zoned for agriculture or protected by Williamson Act contracts. There would be a less-than-significant impact, and no mitigation is required.

Questions (c, d) Forest Land: No Impact. Development of future land uses consistent with the 2035 General Plan would not result in the conflict with existing zoning for forest land or timberland, or result in the loss of forest land. No timber management activities occur within the City of Folsom. No areas within the city are designated as forest land, timberland, or zoned for Timberland Production. Because no important timberland or forest land resources or activities exist within the city, no significant impact would occur with implementation of the 2035 General Plan, and no mitigation would be required.

7.2.4 POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The following discussion examines the potential impacts of the proposed project based on the impact threshold criteria described above.

| Impact AG-1 Potential conflicts with existing agricultural operations and Williamson Act Contracts adjacent to the 2035 Plan Evaluation Area | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Applicable Regulations | Williamson Act. |
| Adopted Mitigation Measures | None available. |
| Proposed GP Policies that Reduce Impacts | None available. |
| Significance after Implementation of GP Policies | Significant; mitigation required. |
| Mitigation Measures | None available. |
| Significance after Mitigation | Significant and unavoidable. |

Construction of new development associated with the 2035 General Plan could conflict with lands under Williamson Act contracts south of the FPASP area, thereby potentially resulting in cancellation of those contracts. This would be a significant impact.

Land south of the FPASP area is characterized primarily by seasonal grazing land in an unincorporated area regulated by Sacramento County, and the majority of these lands are under Williamson Act contracts. As discussed above, lands within the FPASP were previously under Williamson Act Contract, though currently there are no Williamson Act contracts within the City of Folsom. The conversion of grazing lands to urban development within the FPASP area may encourage the cessation of agricultural operations and the non-renewal of contracts on lands south of the FPASP area.

Table 7-1 includes existing State regulations that protect agricultural resources under Williamson Act Contract in the 2035 Plan Evaluation Area.

| Table 7-1 Regulatory Requirements and Proposed 2035 General Plan Goals/Policies Related to the Protection of Agricultural Resources under Williamson Act Contracts | |
|---|--|
| Measure Identification | How the Regulation or Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact |
| FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS | |
| <i>None applicable</i> | -- |
| STATE REGULATIONS | |
| <i>Williamson Act</i> | Aids in the preservation of agricultural land uses by giving landowners property tax reductions for restricting land uses to agricultural or open space use. |
| CITY REQUIREMENTS | |
| <i>None applicable</i> | -- |
| FOLSOM PLAN AREA SPECIFIC PLAN EIR/EIS | |
| <i>None applicable</i> | -- |
| RUSSELL RANCH PROJECT EIR | |
| <i>None applicable</i> | -- |
| 2035 GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES | |
| <i>None applicable</i> | -- |

Source: Planning Partners 2018.

The land south of the FPASP area is located in a rural unincorporated portion of Sacramento County beyond the Urban Service Boundary (USB). The USB defines the ultimate boundary of urban development and is intended to be permanent, allowing modification only under special circumstances. These lands are not within the USB, and it is not expected this area would receive urban levels of public infrastructure and services to support urban development. Except for a future Corporation Yard¹, no urban development is currently proposed south of the FPASP area. Nonetheless, the FPASP EIR/EIS (Impact 3A.10-4) found that land uses within the FPASP area would be inconsistent with Williamson Act provisions on adjacent lands, and could result in subsequent contract non-renewals through requests for general plan amendments and rezoning of lands south of White Rock Road in unincorporated Sacramento County.

Because buildout of the 2035 General Plan in the FPASP area could conflict with existing agricultural operations and Williamson Act contracts, or result in the potential cancellation of such contracts on lands south of the FPASP area, this impact is considered significant.

Significance of Impact: Significant.

Mitigation Measure AG-1: None available.

Implementation of the 2035 General Plan could conflict with existing off-site Williamson Act contracts or result in the potential cancellation of such contracts on lands south of the FPASP area outside of city limits. Feasible mitigation measures, such as participation in an agricultural conservation easement, are not available to reduce impacts associated with the cancellation of these Williamson Act contracts to a less-than-significant level because no such programs are available. Therefore, this impact remains significant and unavoidable.

¹ For more information regarding the City's proposed Corporation Yard south of the FPASP area, please refer to Section 3.9 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, of this Draft PEIR.

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