

## **5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**



This section describes the agricultural resources in the area and the policies pertaining to these resources. Sources used to assess impacts of the Project include the Land Use Element and Conservation and Air Quality Element of the General Plan (City of Elk Grove 2003a), the Elk Grove General Plan EIR (City of Elk Grove 2003b), the California Department of Conservation (2013c) Farmland Conversion Reports, the California Department of Conservation (2013a) Important Farmlands Map, and the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (USDA 1993).

**5.2.1 EXISTING SETTING**

**FARMLAND AND SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS**

The two systems used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine a soil’s agricultural productivity include the Soil Capability Classification and the Storie Index Rating System. The “prime” soil classifications of both systems indicate the absence of soil limitations, which if present, would require the application of management techniques (e.g., drainage, leveling, special fertilizing practices) to enhance production.

**Soil Capability Classification**

The Soil Capability Classification System takes into consideration soil limitations, the risk of damage when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment. Capability classes range from Class I soils, which have few limitations for agriculture, to Class VIII soils, which are unsuitable for agriculture. Generally, as the ratings of the capability classification system increase, the yields and profits are more difficult to obtain. A general description of soil classification, as defined by the NRCS, is provided in **Table 5.2-1**.

**TABLE 5.2-1  
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Definition</b>
I	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
II	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices.
III	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both.
IV	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.
V	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VI	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VII	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VIII	Soils and landforms have limitation that preclude their use for commercial plant production and restrict their use to recreation, wildlife habitat, or water supply, or to aesthetic purposes.

Source: NRCS 1993

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

### Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating system ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture from Grade 1 soils (80 to 100 rating), which have few or no limitations for agricultural production to Grade 6 soils (less than 10), which are not suitable for agriculture. Under this system, soils deemed less than prime can function as prime soils when limitations such as poor drainage, slopes, or soil nutrient deficiencies are partially or entirely removed. The six grades, ranges in index rating, and definition of the grades as defined by the NRCS, are provided in Table 5.2-2.

**TABLE 5.2-2  
STORIE INDEX RATING SYSTEM**

Grade	Index Rating	Definition
1 – Excellent	80 through 100	Soils are well suited to intensive use for growing irrigated crops that are climatically suited to the region.
2 – Good	60 through 79	Soils are good agricultural soils, although they may not be so desirable as Grade 1 because of moderately coarse, coarse, or gravelly surface soil texture; somewhat less permeable subsoil; lower plant available water holding capacity, fair fertility; less well drained conditions, or slight to moderate flood hazards, all acting separately or in combination.
3 – Fair	40 through 59	Soils are only fairly well suited to general agricultural use and are limited in their use because of moderate slopes; moderate soil depths; less permeable subsoil; fine, moderately fine or gravelly surface soil textures; poor drainage; moderate flood hazards; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
4 – Poor	20 through 39	Soils are poorly suited. They are severely limited in their agricultural potential because of shallow soil depths; less permeable subsoil; steeper slope; or more clayey or gravelly surface soil textures than Grade 3 soils, as well as poor drainage; greater flood hazards; hummocky micro-relief; salinity; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
5 – Very Poor	10 through 19	Soils are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland.
6 – Nonagricultural	Less than 10	Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization.

Source: NRCS 1993

### Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (USDA-SCS) (now the NRCS). The intent was to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. As part of the nationwide agricultural land use mapping effort, the USDA-SCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classified the land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability included both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and the actual land use. Important Farmland Maps are derived from the USDA-SCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria.

Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the USDA-SCS with completing its mapping in the state. The FMMP was created in the California Department of Conservation (DOC) to continue

the mapping activity with a greater level of detail, which was achieved by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California. The LIM criteria in California utilize the Soil Capability Classification and Storie Index Rating systems, but also consider physical conditions such as a dependable water supply for agricultural production, soil temperature range, depth of the groundwater table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth.

Important Farmland Maps for California are compiled using the modified LIM criteria, as described above, and current land use information. The minimum mapping unit is 10 acres unless otherwise specified. Units of land smaller than 10 acres are incorporated into the surrounding classification. The Important Farmland Maps identify five agriculture-related categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. Definitions for each Important Farmland classification are provided below, based on information from the DOC FMMP website page (2013a).

### Prime Farmland

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

### Farmland of Statewide Importance

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

### Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is composed of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

### Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. Sacramento County defines its Farmland of Local Importance as lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique designation but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or non-irrigated crops; lands that would be Prime or Statewide designation and have been improved for irrigation but are now idle; and lands which currently support confined livestock, poultry operations, and aquaculture (DOC 2013b).

### Grazing Land

Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

### Urban and Built-Up Land

Urban and Built-Up Land is land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential,

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

### Other Land

Other Land is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

### CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY ECONOMY

In 2011, Sacramento County ranked twenty-fifth in total value of production out of 58 counties in California, with gross revenues from the sales of agricultural commodities of \$405.2 million in 2011. The leading products included wine grapes, milk, alfalfa hay, field corn, and poultry (Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner 2012). In 2011, 2,600 people in Sacramento County were employed in the farm industry (EDD 2013a). By comparison, there were approximately 608,400 total jobs in Sacramento County in 2012 (EDD 2013b).

### SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARMLAND CONVERSION

One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion states that the proximity of agricultural land to urban uses increases the value of the agricultural land, either directly through formal purchase offers or indirectly through recent sales in the vicinity, and through the extension of utilities and other urban infrastructure into productive agricultural areas. The conversion of Important Farmlands in Sacramento County from 2000 to 2010 is presented in **Table 5.2-3**.

In Sacramento County, there has been an increase in the acreage of Farmland of Local Importance and a 400-acre loss in Unique Farmland over ten years. While there was an overall decrease in Unique Farmland, this category often saw increases in all but two report years since 2000. The increases are explained by several factors: the redistribution of farmland between categories, conversion of fallow land to irrigated cropland after a long drought, conversion due to land left idle for three or more update cycles, and new vineyards and corn production in the southeastern portion of the county. Nevertheless, as presented in **Table 5.2-3**, the total amount of agricultural land in Sacramento County decreased by approximately 7.1 percent during the ten-year period from 2000 to 2010. This decrease equates to an average loss of approximately 1,619 acres of Important Farmlands annually, which includes land both in and out of production. A portion of this farmland is being lost due to economic incentives to convert vacant land to developed uses (City of Elk Grove 2003a).

**TABLE 5.2-3  
ACRES OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS – SACRAMENTO COUNTY (2000 TO 2010)**

Year	Acres Present by Type				
	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Total Important Farmlands
2000	115,389	63,536	15,476	33,530	227,931
2002	111,984	60,773	15,834	37,885	226,476
2004	110,278	56,141	15,188	39,873	221,480
2006	106,667	51,217	15,268	41,961	215,113
2008	104,367	49,470	15,462	43,819	213,118
2010	97,476	45,264	15,076	53,928	211,744
10-Year Difference	-17,913	-18,272	-400	+20,398	-16,187
Annual Average Difference	-1,791	-1,827	-4	+2,040	-1,619
10-Year Percentage Difference	-15.5 %	-28.8 %	-2.6%	+60.8 %	-7.1 %

Source: DOC 2013c

## PROJECT AREA CHARACTERISTICS

### Production and Soil Conditions

The Project area is predominantly undeveloped, with a few scattered residences and associated ornamental landscaping and outbuildings. The site has been historically used for agricultural purposes, including two dairies.

The majority of soils within the Project area consist of San Joaquin Silt Loam (leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes), Bruella Sandy Loam (0 to 2 percent slopes), San Joaquin-Durixeralfs Complex (0 to 1 percent slopes), and Galt Clay (leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes). The soil capability classification, Storie Index rating and grade, and designation as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance are presented for each soil type in **Table 5.2-4**.

As shown, Project area soils include mostly Class III and Class IV soil capability classifications. With two exceptions, all Project area soils have a Storie Index Grade of Poor or Very Poor. Eight of the soil types on the site are classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance, and one soil is classified as Prime Farmland.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

**TABLE 5.2-4  
ON-SITE SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION AND STORIE INDEX RATING**

Soil Map Symbol and Name	Soil Capability Classification	Storie Index Rating	Storie Index Grade	Important Farmlands Designation	Acres On-Site
111 Bruella sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	I/III <sup>1</sup>	68	2 – Good	Prime	103
137 Durixeralfs, 0 to 1 percent slopes	IV/IV	12	5 – Very Poor	Unique	52
151 Galt clay, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	15	5 – Very Poor	Statewide	79
152 Galt clay, 0 to 2 percent slopes	III/III	14	5 – Very Poor	Statewide	32
164 Kimball silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	III/III	55	3 – Fair	Statewide	23
176 Madera-Galt complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes	NA/IV	18	5 – Very Poor	Local	51
213 San Joaquin silt loam, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	28	4 – Poor	Statewide	616
214 San Joaquin silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	III/III	28	4 – Poor	Statewide	33
216 San Joaquin-Durixeralfs complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes	IV/IV	21	4 – Poor	Unique	71
217 San Joaquin-Galt complex, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	23	4 – Poor	Statewide	38
218 San Joaquin-Galt complex, 0 to 3 percent slopes	NA/III	22	4 – Poor	Statewide	12
221 San Joaquin-Xerarents complex, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III <sub>s</sub> -3 <sup>1</sup>	31	4 – Poor	Statewide	0.5
238 Xerarents-San Joaquin complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	36	4 – Poor	Statewide	74

Notes:

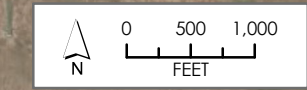
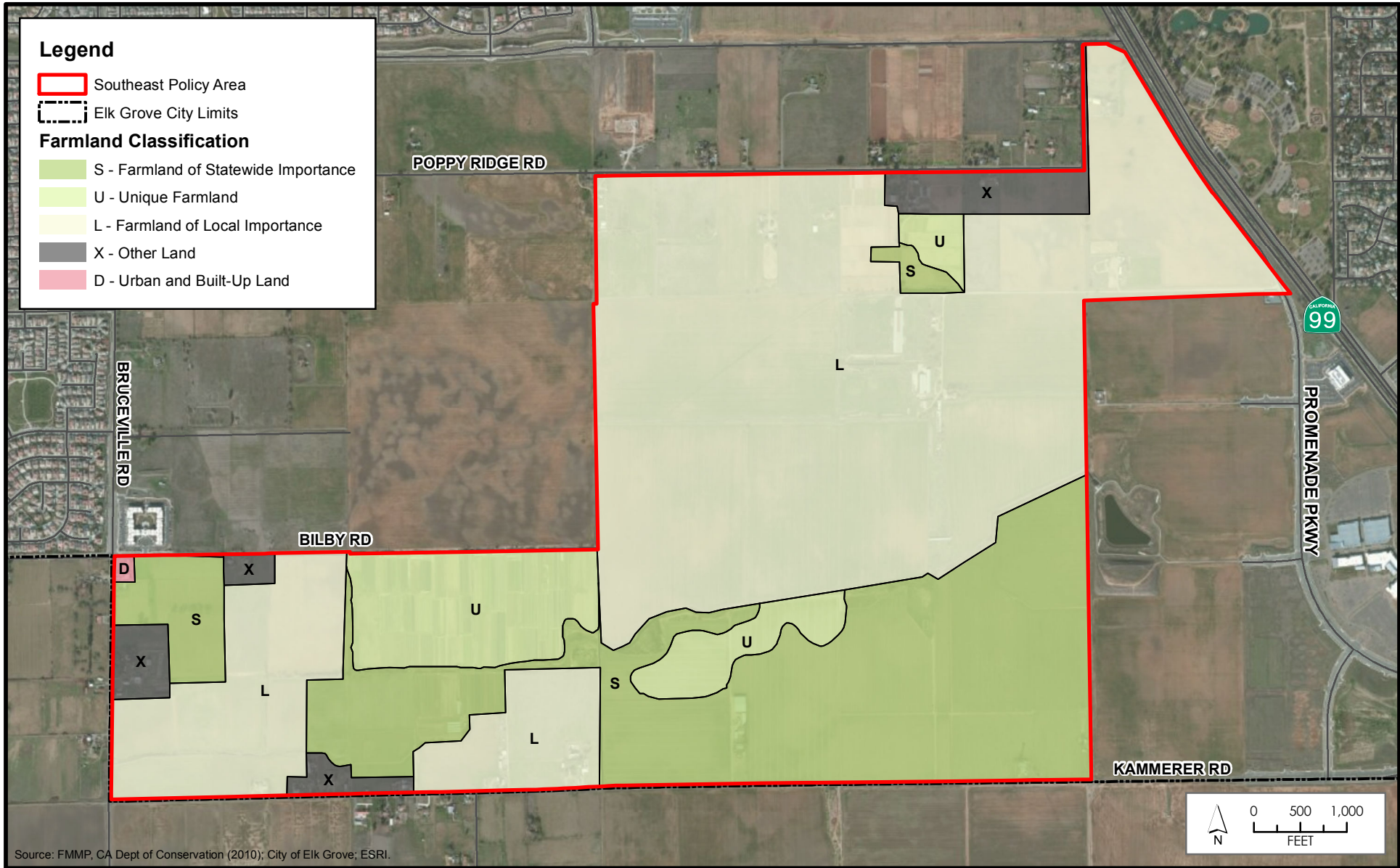
<sup>1</sup>. Irrigated/Non-irrigated

Source: NRCS 2001; DOC 1993

### Important Farmland

The Project area contains lands classified by the FMMP as Important Farmland (see **Figure 5.2-1**). No land is classified as Prime Farmland, but there are approximately 325 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance and 106 acres of Unique Farmland. The Project area also contains 706 acres of Farmland of Local Importance. However, Farmland of Local Importance is not considered Important Farmland under CEQA. Approximately 1.5 acres are classified as Urban and Built-Up Land, and 47 acres are classified as Other Land.





**Figure 5.2-1**  
Important Farmland



### **Williamson Act Contracts**

The Project area contains two Williamson Act contracts that cover four parcels: Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 132-0320-006, 132-0320-008, 132-0320-009, and 132-0320-010. Contract 74-AP-043 covers APN 132-0320-006, while contract 76-AP-001 covers the remaining parcels. The four parcels are adjacent to one another and make up the large central portion of the Project area, as depicted in **Figure 5.2-2**. The parcels total 624 acres of the site.

In October 2002, the Elk Grove City Council adopted Resolution No. 2002-176 that identified the acceptance of a nonrenewal application for a portion of contract 74-AP-043. The portion covered by the application is described legally as Parcel "A" of Parcel Map entitled "Being the Southeast ¼ of Section 11, and the Southwest ¼ of Section 12, the Northwest ¼ of Section 13 and the Northeast ¼ of Section 14, Township 6 North, Range 5 East, M.D.B.&M., Sacramento County, filed February 6, 1973, in Book 10 of Parcel Maps, Page 27." Parcel "B" is located on the western half of APN 132-0320-006. There is no recorded evidence of nonrenewal status of the section identified as Parcel B on the same historic map page.

The Elk Grove City Council adopted Resolution No. 2003-132 in July 2003 that accepted nonrenewal status for contract 76-AP-001, which, according to historic parcel maps from 1973, includes current APNs 132-0320-008, 132-0320-009, and 132-0320-010 (City of Elk Grove 2012, pp. 7-8). When a landowner files a notice of nonrenewal, starting at the next contract anniversary date, the contract winds down over the remaining (usually nine-year) term, with the property taxes gradually rising to the full unrestricted rate at the end of the nonrenewal period.

### **Characteristics of Surrounding Lands**

#### Land Uses

Existing land uses surrounding the Project area predominantly involve agricultural production or fallow land. The area surrounding the Project area was used for a variety of crops including sugar beets, clover, corn, rice, wheat, and hay. Dairy farming activities have also occurred in the vicinity of the Project area.

The approved Sterling Meadows project and the Elk Grove Promenade are located adjacent to the Project area's eastern border. The Sterling Meadows property has been graded and is currently fallow. Properties to the north, east, and west are fallow but are planned for urban development. The approved Laguna Ridge Specific Plan area is located to the north of the Project area, and unincorporated Sacramento County borders the Project area to the west and south. The East Franklin Specific Plan area is located northwest of the Project area. The Sterling Meadows project, Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, and East Franklin Specific Plan allow urban development, including residential and commercial land uses. The properties adjacent to the Project area to the south and west are agricultural lands and are designated as Agriculture in the Sacramento County General Plan and as Urban Study Area in the Elk Grove General Plan. This area is not located within the City or its Sphere of Influence (SOI).

#### Williamson Act Contracts

Another approximately 44-acre parcel under Williamson Act contract, APN 132-0300-002, is located adjacent to the southwest corner of the Project area on the opposite side of Bruceville Road in unincorporated Sacramento County (see **Figure 5.2-2**).

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

### 5.2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

#### STATE

##### **California Environmental Quality Act**

Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21060.1(a) defines agricultural land as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.

##### **Williamson Act**

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 in order to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands and to prevent their premature conversion to urban uses. In order to preserve these uses, the act established an agricultural preserve contract procedure by which any county or city within the state taxes landowners at a lower rate, using a scale based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted market value. In return, the owners guarantee that these properties remain under agricultural production for a ten-year period.

The contract is renewed automatically unless the owner files a notice of nonrenewal. In this manner, each agricultural preserve contract (at any given date) is always operable at least nine years into the future. Currently, approximately 70 percent of the state's prime agricultural land is protected under this act. Prime farmland under the Williamson Act includes land that qualifies as Class I and II in the SCS classification and land that qualifies for a rating of 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating.

#### LOCAL

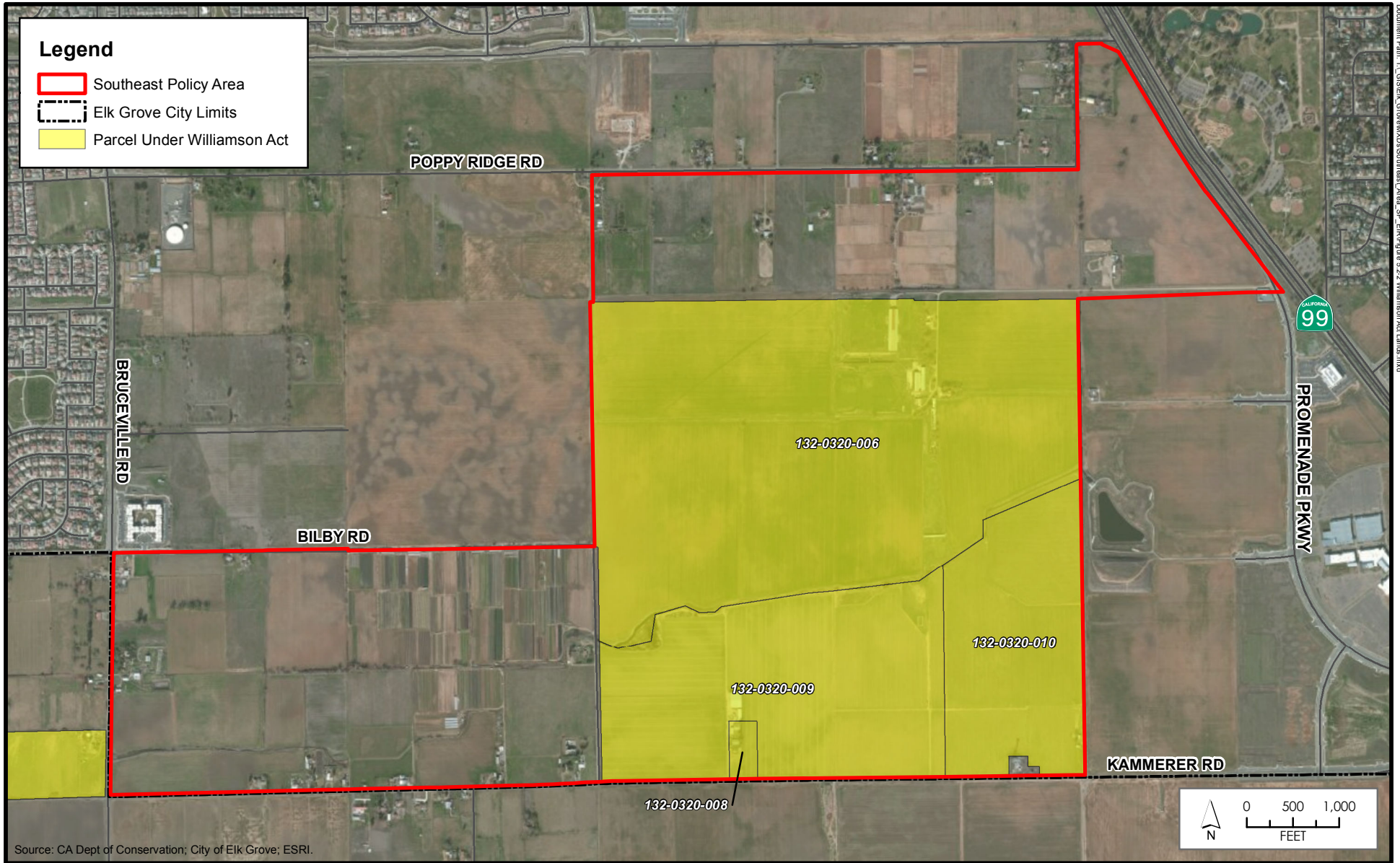
##### **City of Elk Grove General Plan**

Agricultural preservation and conversion issues are addressed in the Land Use Element and Conservation and Air Quality Element of the Elk Grove General Plan. The following policies are applicable to the proposed Project:

**"Policy CAQ-2:** The loss of agricultural productivity on lands designated for urban uses within the city limits as of January 2004 is accepted as a consequence of the development of Elk Grove. As discussed in the Land Use Element, the City's land use concept for the planning area outside the 2004 city limits anticipates the retention of significant areas of agricultural production outside the current city limits."

**"Policy CAQ-3:** The City of Elk Grove considers the only mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to consist of the new agricultural land in the Sacramento region equal in area, productivity, and other characteristics to the area which would be lost due to development. The production of *existing* agricultural land through the purchase of fee title or easements is not considered by the City to provide mitigation, since programs of this type result in a net loss of farmland."





Document Path: \\GIS\ELK\_Gov\GIS\Map\_Southern\_Area\_Sp\_EIR\Figure 5.2.2 Williamson Act Lands.mxd

**Figure 5.2-2**  
 Parcels Under Williamson Act Contract



**“Policy CAQ-4:** While agricultural uses are anticipated to be phased out within the city limits, the City recognizes the right of these uses to continue as long as individual owners/farmers desire. The City shall not require buffers between farmland and urban uses, relying instead on the following actions to address the impacts of farming on urban uses.”

**“Policy LU-7:** The City encourages disclosure of potential land use compatibility issues such as noise, dust, odors, etc., in order to provide potential purchasers with complete information to make informed decisions about purchasing property.”

### **City of Elk Grove Municipal Code**

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors passed the Right-to-Farm Ordinance on July 10, 1990. This ordinance was subsequently adopted by the City of Elk Grove upon the City's incorporation in July 2000. City of Elk Grove Municipal Code Chapter 14.05, Agricultural Activities, ensures that agricultural operations which are operated in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards are allowed to continue and requires that notification be provided to residents of property located near properties designated for agricultural use, that these agricultural uses are encouraged, that accepted agricultural practices may continue, and that efforts to prohibit, ban, restrict, or otherwise eliminate established agricultural uses will not be favorably received. It also includes notification and mediation procedures for cases in which agricultural activities are not being conducted in a reasonable manner, or when the operator of an agricultural operation is not using currently acceptable methods in the conduct of the farm.

### **5.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### **STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The impact analysis provided below is based on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance. A project is considered to have a significant effect on the environment if it will:

- 1) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use.
- 2) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- 3) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Evaluation of potential agricultural impacts of the proposed Project was based on review of the City of Elk Grove (2003a) General Plan amended elements (2003a), City of Elk Grove General Plan EIR (2003b), Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations (City of Elk Grove 2003c), the City of Elk Grove Zoning Code, and field review of the Project area and surrounding area. The agricultural analysis is based on information gathered from the City of Elk Grove Land Use and Conservation and Air Quality elements of the General Plan, the California Department

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

of Conservation (2013c) Farmland Conversion Reports for 2000 to 2002, 2002 to 2004, 2004 to 2006, 2006 to 2008, and 2008 to 2010, the California Department of Conservation (2013a) Important Farmlands Map, the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, and California (USDA 1993). The proposed Project was also compared to the existing conditions to determine the impacts due to loss of agricultural resources.

### Conversion of Agricultural Land/Loss of Important Farmland and Conflicts with Williamson Act Contracts (Standards of Significance 1 and 2)

**Impact 5.2.1** Implementation of the proposed Project would result in the conversion of approximately 1,184 acres of agricultural land, which includes approximately 325 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance and 106 acres of Unique Farmland. The Project would also result in conversion of land under Williamson Act contract. This would constitute the loss of an irreplaceable resource and is considered a **significant** impact.

The Project area includes lands classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland (see **Figure 5.2-1**). The proposed Project would convert this Important Farmland to urban uses and would remove approximately 1,184 acres from an agricultural land use and place urban land uses directly adjacent to existing agricultural uses. The conversion of the Project area from agricultural uses to urban uses would reduce the amount of Important Farmland in Sacramento County by approximately 0.7 percent. **Table 5.2-6** illustrates the total amount of each specific type of Important Farmland in Sacramento County and the loss if the Project is approved.

**TABLE 5.2-6  
ACRES OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS AND LOSS FROM PROJECT**

Type of Farmland	Total Acres Within Sacramento County	Total Acres Lost from Project	Countywide Percentage Loss from Project Approval
Farmland of Statewide Importance	45,264	325	0.7%
Unique Farmland	15,076	106	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,340</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>0.7%</b>

Source: DOC 2013c

In addition to conflicts with Important Farmland, the proposed Project would conflict with currently active Williamson Act contracts. Two Williamson Act contracts cover four parcels within the Project area; one contract is entirely in nonrenewal status, while the other contract only has a portion in nonrenewal status, with the other portion remaining active.

The entire contract 76-AP-001, in the southern portion of the Project area, filed nonrenewal status in July 2003 and has reached the end of the nonrenewal period. The contract in the northern portion of the Project area, 74-AP-043, only has the portion identified by the legal description in historic parcel maps as Parcel "A" of Parcel Map entitled "Being the Southeast ¼ of Section 11, and the Southwest ¼ of Section 12, the Northwest ¼ of Section 13 and the Northeast ¼ of Section 14, Township 6 North, Range 5 East, M.D.B.&M., Sacramento County, filed February 6, 1973, in Book 10 of Parcel Maps, Page 27." There is no recorded evidence of nonrenewal status of the portion that would be considered Parcel "B" on the historic parcel map. Thus, the Project would result in conversion of land under Williamson Act contract to nonagricultural use.



The conversion of the Project area to nonagricultural use would be considered a **significant** impact.

### Mitigation Measures

- MM 5.2.1** Future projects shall protect 1 acre of existing farmland or land of equal or higher quality for each acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland that would be developed as a result of the Project. This protection may consist of the establishment of a farmland conservation easement, farmland deed restriction, or other appropriate farmland conservation mechanism that ensures the preservation of that land from conversion in perpetuity, but may also be utilized for compatible wildlife habitat conservation efforts (e.g., Swainson's hawk foraging habitat mitigation). In deciding whether to approve the land proposed for preservation by the Project applicant, the City shall consider the benefits of preserving farmlands in proximity to other protected lands. The preservation of off-site farmland may be done at one time, prior to the City's approval of the Project's first grading permit, or may be done in increments with the buildout of the Project, with preservation occurring prior to the approval of each grading permit. Grading plans shall include the acreage and type of farmland impacted. In addition, the City shall impose the following minimum conservation easement content standards:
- a. All owners of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land shall execute the document encumbering the land.
  - b. The document shall be recordable and contain an accurate legal description of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
  - c. The document shall prohibit any activity that substantially impairs or diminishes the agricultural productivity of the land. If the conservation easement is also proposed for wildlife habitat mitigation purposes, the document shall also prohibit any activity that substantially impairs or diminishes the wildlife habitat suitability of the land.
  - d. The document shall protect any existing water rights necessary to maintain agricultural uses on the land covered by the document and retain such water rights for ongoing use on the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
  - e. Interests in agricultural/habitat mitigation land shall be held in trust, in perpetuity, by the City and/or an entity acceptable to the City. Without the prior written approval of the City, the entity shall not sell, lease, or convey any interest in agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
  - f. The applicant shall pay to the City an agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation monitoring fee to cover the costs of administering, monitoring, and enforcing the document in an amount determined by the receiving entity, not to exceed 10 percent of the easement price paid by the applicant, or a different amount approved by the City Council, not to exceed 15 percent of the easement price paid by the applicant.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

- g. The City shall be named a beneficiary under any document conveying the interest in the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land to an entity acceptable to the City.
- h. If any qualifying entity owning an interest in agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land ceases to exist, the duty to hold, administer, monitor, and enforce the interest shall be transferred to another entity acceptable to the City.
- i. Before committing to the preservation of any particular farmland pursuant to this measure, the Project applicant shall obtain the City's approval of the farmland proposed for preservation.

*Timing/Implementation:*        *Prior to the issuance of grading permits*

*Enforcement/Monitoring:*    *City of Elk Grove Planning Department*

While implementation of the above mitigation measure would reduce the impact resulting from the conversion of Important Farmland, it would not fully mitigate the permanent and irreplaceable loss of Important Farmland and Williamson Act land. The development of agricultural land with an urban use, as proposed by the Project, would result in the permanent loss of the agricultural resource. Requiring the preservation of existing agricultural land in another location or requiring the payment of fees to allow for the purchase of conservation easements on existing agricultural land would offset some of the permanent loss, but the Project area itself would still be converted to nonagricultural use, which would result in a net reduction of agricultural land. No other feasible mitigation is available to mitigate the direct conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses. Therefore, the conversion of Important Farmland and land under Williamson Act contract associated with the proposed Project would be considered **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Impairment to Productivity/Land Use Compatibility (Standard of Significance 3)**

**Impact 5.2.2**        Implementation of the proposed Project would place urban land uses adjacent to primarily agricultural uses, which may impair agricultural production and result in land use compatibility conflicts. This would result in a **less than significant** impact.

In addition to the on-site conversion of farmland that would occur as a result of the proposed Project, the Project's compatibility with surrounding uses is largely based on the interaction of the proposed use and the extent to which adjacent land uses would be affected by this interaction. The primary areas of concern associated with this Project would be the southern residential-agricultural interface that would be created along an approximately 2-mile stretch of Kammerer Road, as well as the southwestern boundary adjacent to unincorporated Sacramento County. While some of the lands adjacent to the northern and eastern boundaries (i.e., Laguna Ridge Specific Plan and Sterling Meadows) are primarily undeveloped and anticipated to remain in their existing state until development of the sites is initiated, they have been designated and approved for future urban uses.

Agricultural production can be adversely affected as a result of restrictions on pesticide, herbicide, and fungicide use, conflicts with agricultural equipment and vehicles, trespassing and pilferage, noise and odor complaints, and littering of fields. These potential land use interface

conflicts can individually or cumulatively decrease the efficiency of farming operations, causing production costs to rise and make farming operation less appealing, which could induce the farmer into a land use conversion. As such, the Project may result in significant impacts due to the impairment of productivity and land use conflicts.

From the perspective of the occupants of the proposed residential uses, adjacent agricultural land uses may result in a number of nuisances and perceived hazards, such as concern over pesticide, herbicide, and fungicide use on adjacent properties, odors, dust, noise, and slow-moving vehicles.

It should be noted that agricultural properties are protected pursuant to Chapter 14.05 of the City Municipal Code, provided that farming activities are properly conducted in accordance with City standards. Furthermore, as long as the farmer is following applicable laws and regulations such as those established for pesticide applications, no formal complaint would be taken or enforced.

### Agricultural Chemical Usage

Agricultural practices on-site and on parcels adjacent to the Project area are anticipated to involve the use of restricted and nonrestricted pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. These materials could be applied through either manual application and/or aerial spraying. Currently, the Sacramento County Department of Agriculture and Measurements regulates and imposes limitations on the use of all restricted materials as part of the conditions for obtaining a permit for use. Based on state law and county policy, permit limitations would include, but are not limited to, not allowing chemicals to drift on to adjacent properties (Food and Agricultural Code Section 12972), limiting the use of application of chemicals to periods when the pesticides are least likely to affect an adjacent land use, and requiring buffers for some restricted chemicals. The County of Sacramento issues the permit application conditions for restricted chemicals on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration surrounding land uses and the chemicals being applied. There is no single buffer distance that is applied to all chemicals. For instance, nonrestricted materials do not require a permit for application and include such materials as "Round-Up" and other chemicals commonly found in the household.

### Agriculture Odors

Agricultural odors that have been of concern in the Elk Grove area in the past have primarily included dairy farm operations. Odors associated with dairy farm operations are generated due to the grazing activities by cattle and the breakdown of manure. These processes typically result in the generation of hydrogen sulfide, methane, and ammonia. The Project area contains a dairy, the operation of which would cease when the Project area is developed. There are some small dairies located south of Kammerer Road, but these dairies are located two or more miles to the south. Furthermore, since only nonresidential uses are proposed along Kammerer Road, these nonresidential uses, in addition to planned sound walls and landscaping areas, would create a buffer that would separate potential odors from sensitive residential receptors. Therefore, impacts associated with odors are not expected to be substantial.

Fertilizer and pesticide use in agricultural areas can generate noticeable odors. The Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner's Office imposes limitations on restricted pesticides as part of obtaining a permit for use of chemicals. Limitations may include not allowing chemicals to drift to adjacent properties in accordance with Food and Agriculture Code Section 12972, limiting the use of aerial spraying of pesticide near residential land uses, and recommending the

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

application of chemicals to periods when the pesticides are least likely to affect an adjacent land use. Considering the lack of proposed residential uses directly adjacent to ongoing agricultural operations, setbacks, and roadway buffers described above, it is not expected that significant odor-related conflicts would arise in the Project area because of surrounding agricultural fields.

Considering the existence of Municipal Code Chapter 14.05, the permit requirements imposed by the County for restricted chemical application, and the separation between the uses north and south of Kammerer Road, the potential impacts related to the residential-agricultural interface are considered to be minimal. The proposed Project would not be subjected to significant levels of odor from off-site uses, and related impacts would be less than significant.

### Remedies for Potential Agriculture/Urban Conflicts

#### *Agriculture/Urban Buffer Areas*

Agricultural buffers or agricultural transition areas can reduce conflicts between urban and agricultural land uses. Separating agricultural from urban uses can help reduce the actual or perceived impacts on residents (spray drift, noise, odor, dust) and on agricultural operations (theft, trespass, restrictions on farming practices). Depending on their design, buffers can also provide associated visual, recreational, and wildlife habitat benefits.

The placement of Light Industrial/Flex Space, Commercial, and Office uses directly adjacent to the areas outside of the City that would remain in agricultural production would create a buffer of sorts between those areas and most of the planned residential uses within the Project area. The placement of Estate Residential in the western portion of the Project area could also reduce potential conflicts between more heavily developed residential areas and agricultural uses.

#### Adjacent Agricultural Area Separation

To the east of the Project area are lands within the Sterling Meadows project, which has been approved but not yet developed. Currently, this area has been graded and is fallow. Upon development of the Sterling Meadows project, the area would include a mix of single-family and multi-family uses as well as commercial and open space uses. Impacts to agricultural resources resulting from the Sterling Meadows project were addressed in the associated EIR (SCH No. 1999122067).

Directly north of the Project area is the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan. Current land uses in this area include a variety of agricultural activities and rural residences. A large apartment complex has been constructed on the northeast corner of Bruceville Road and Bilby Road. In addition to this apartment complex, development of the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan has begun north of Whitelock Parkway, approximately one-quarter mile north of the Project area. Land uses for the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan area are designated for residential, open space, and parkland development. This area is separated from the proposed Project by Poppy Ridge Road, Big Horn Boulevard (which currently does not extend to the Project area), and Bilby Road. Poppy Ridge Road and Bilby Road are currently two-lane rural roadways. The City General Plan identifies Poppy Road and Big Horn Boulevard to be ultimately four-lane arterial roadways. Bilby Road will be a two-lane collector. Impacts to agricultural resources resulting from the LRSP project were addressed in the associated EIR (SCH No. 2000082139).

Properties adjacent to the south of the Project area are under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County. These areas are currently designated Agricultural Cropland in the Sacramento County General Plan and zoned AG-80 and AG-20. Kammerer Road, which makes up the southern boundary of the Project area, is currently a two-lane arterial roadway. The City General Plan identifies Kammerer Road as a future six-lane expressway between SR 99 and Interstate 5, with eight lanes between the Project area's eastern boundary and SR 99. The proposed nonresidential uses along the southern boundary of the site would provide an additional 900 to 2,000-foot separation between residential uses and agricultural, with the exception of the estate residential use proposed in the panhandle portion of the Project area, which would be separated only by the drainage channel.

Adjacent to the west of the southernmost one-third of the proposed Project are agricultural lands and rural residential under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County. These areas are currently designated Agricultural Cropland in the Sacramento County General Plan and zoned AG-80 and AG-20. Bruceville Road separates the Project area from the agricultural land. Bruceville Road is a north-south two- to four-lane arterial that connects Kammerer Road to Elk Grove Boulevard and areas to the north in the City. The City General Plan identifies Bruceville Road as a future six-lane arterial. Bruceville Road will have a total back-of-curb to back-of-curb dimension of 96 feet (at its ultimate buildout). Additionally, a 36-foot landscape corridor will be constructed on both sides of the roadway that will accommodate a 7-foot sidewalk. This will result in a 168-foot separation between agricultural uses and residential uses. Taken together, these features would provide some buffering between agricultural uses and the proposed Project area.

The placement of nonresidential land uses along Kammerer Road and Bruceville Road would provide adequate separation between residential land uses developed as part of the Project and lands that would remain in agricultural production for the foreseeable future. This, combined with the implementation of Chapter 14.05 of the City Municipal Code, would ensure that development of the proposed Project does not substantially impair agricultural productivity off-site. This impact would be **less than significant**.

### Mitigation Measures

None required.

## 5.2.4 CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### CUMULATIVE SETTING

The proposed Project is located in a primarily agricultural area in the southern portion of Elk Grove. Other projects in the area with the potential to urbanize and affect agricultural lands include the approved Elk Grove Promenade, the adopted and under construction East Franklin Specific Plan, the approved Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, and the approved Sterling Meadows project. The City has also pursued expansion of its SOI south of its current boundary, in November 2013, the City withdrew the application from consideration by the Sacramento Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCo). In addition to these local development projects, several urban development projects in Sacramento County and throughout the Central Valley contribute to the cumulative loss of agricultural resources in the region. Development of urban uses adjacent to agricultural areas could also create compatibility issues and affect the productivity of predominantly agricultural lands on the fringes of the planning area.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### Cumulative Loss of Agricultural Land (Standards of Significance 1 and 2)

**Impact 5.2.3** The Project would convert approximately 325 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance and 106 acres of Unique Farmland to urban uses. The Project would also result in the conversion of one parcel under Williamson Act contract. This loss would contribute to the cumulative loss of farmland in the region. The loss of such farmland from the proposed Project would contribute to a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

The Project would contribute to the ongoing conversion of farmland in Sacramento County to urban uses by converting approximately 431 acres of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses. The Project area is designated as the Southeast Policy Area in the City of Elk Grove General Plan, which anticipates such urban uses. The General Plan recognizes that buildout anticipated in the General Plan Land Use Map would convert farmland to urban uses over its 20-year planning period. The Project, in combination with the approved Elk Grove Promenade, the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, and the Sterling Meadows project, is identified for urban uses as part of the City's General Plan. This would contribute to the loss of farmland, including farmland in Williamson Act contract, in Sacramento County.

The proposed Project, in conjunction with other projects approved and proposed in Elk Grove and in Sacramento County, would result in the conversion of Important Farmland, including land under Williamson Act contract, to urban uses. The loss of such farmland from the proposed Project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact. The City General Plan Draft EIR concluded that notwithstanding implementation of conservation and land use policies (CAQ-4 and CQ-4 Action 1 and 2, LU-11 and LU 11 Action 1, LU-15 and LU-15 Action 1, as well as Policy LU-3 and LU-3 Action 1), cumulative important farmland conversions and impacts on agricultural resources would be considered significant. The City adopted Findings of Fact and a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the General Plan (2003c) identifying that there are no feasible mitigation measures to minimize, avoid, or reduce impacts relative to the loss of agricultural land. However, the City determined the loss of agricultural land to be acceptable when balanced against the economic, legal, social, technological, and other benefits of planned development, including the proposed Project.

#### Mitigation Measures

Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 5.2.1** would reduce the impact related to loss of agricultural lands and by limiting future loss, would reduce the Project impact as it relates to cumulative development. However, a permanent and irreplaceable loss of farmland would still occur. Therefore, the Project's contribution of cumulative impacts of agricultural resources is considered **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

#### Cumulative Impacts to Agricultural Productivity/Land Use Compatibility (Standard of Significance 3)

**Impact 5.2.4** Cumulative projects could result in impairment to agricultural productivity and land use compatibility impacts. The proposed Project's contribution to this impact would be **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Cumulative development in Sacramento County and throughout the Central Valley is occurring on lands that are currently in agricultural production and/or adjacent to land in agricultural production. This cumulative development is contributing to the cumulative loss of agricultural resources and the reduction in productivity of active agricultural land in the region. This is a significant cumulative impact. However, as discussed in Impact 5.2.2, the proposed Project is not anticipated to result in significant incompatibilities with adjacent agricultural operations. Adjacent agricultural operations would be protected pursuant to Chapter 14.05 of the City Municipal Code, if applicable to the agricultural operation. Future urban uses within the Project area would be protected from agricultural chemical usage through existing state and county regulations as well as from offensive odors due to the significant distance from existing dairies and the buffer that would be created by the proposed non-residential uses along the Project area's southern boundary. Therefore, the Project's contribution to this impact would be **less than cumulatively considerable**.

### Mitigation Measures

None required.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

---

### REFERENCES

- CDFA (California Department of Food and Agriculture). 2012. *California County Agricultural Commissioners' Reports 2011*.
- City of Elk Grove. 2003a. *City of Elk Grove General Plan*.
- . 2003b. *City of Elk Grove General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report*.
- . 2003c. *Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Elk Grove General Plan Environmental Impact Report*.
- . 2012. *Southeast Policy Area Background Report*.
- DOC (California Department of Conservation). 1993. *Soil Candidate Listing for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance*.
- . 2013a. *FMMP - Important Farmland Map Categories*. Accessed June 20. [http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/mccu/Pages/map\\_categories.aspx](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/mccu/Pages/map_categories.aspx).
- . 2013b. *Farmland of Local Importance*. Accessed June 20. [http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Documents/Local\\_definitions\\_00.pdf](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Documents/Local_definitions_00.pdf).
- . 2013c. *Farmland Conversion Reports 2000 to 2002, 2002 to 2004, 2004 to 2006, and 2006 to 2008, and 2008 to 2010*. Accessed June 20. [http://redirect.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/county\\_info\\_results.asp](http://redirect.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/county_info_results.asp).
- EDD (California Employment Development Department). 2013a. California Labor Market Info Data Library. *Industry Employment (CES), Total Farm Employment, Sacramento County, 2011*. Accessed June 20. <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/dataanalysis/cesReport.asp?menuchoice=ces>.
- . 2013b. California labor Market Info Data Library. *Unemployment Rates (Labor Force), Sacramento County, 2012*. Accessed June 20. <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/dataanalysis/labForceReport.asp?menuchoice=LABFORCE>.
- NRCS (US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service). 1993. *Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California*.
- . 2001. *Land Capability Classification*.
- Sacramento County. 1993. *Sacramento County General Plan Agricultural Element*. <http://www.planning.saccounty.net/general-plan/docs/pdf/GP-Elements/Agricultural-Element.pdf>.
- Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner. 2012. *2011 Sacramento County Crop & Livestock Report*.