

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the agricultural resources that exist within the City of Elk Grove Planning Area. Sources utilized in this section to assess impacts of the project include the current City of Elk Grove General Plan Conservation Element, the Sacramento County General Plan Update and EIR, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Report (2002), the California Department of Conservation Important Farmlands Map, and the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (April 1993).

4.1.1 EXISTING SETTING

EXISTING AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS

Sacramento County ranked twenty-sixth in agricultural production out of fifty-eight counties in the State, with gross revenues from the sales of agricultural commodities of \$285.6 million in 2000. The leading farm commodities included wine grapes, milk, nursery stock, pears, and field corn (see **Table 4.1-1**). The agricultural sector employed approximately 2,200 individuals with jobs ranging from crop production to processing, shipping, and other related industries. In comparison, total employment in the County consisted of approximately 587,086 total jobs in 2000.

**TABLE 4.1-1
SACRAMENTO LEADING FARM COMMODITIES, 2000**

Commodity	Value
Grapes, Wine	\$95,231,000
Milk	\$42,517,000
Nursery Stock	\$26,408,000
Pears, Bartlett	\$26,100,000
Corn, Field	\$10,295,000

Source: Sacramento County 2000 Crop & Livestock Report

According to the 2000 Sacramento County Crop and Livestock Report, the following field crop production values were as follows: \$60 per acre for barley, \$77 per acre for grain hay, \$54 per acre for oats, \$87 per acre for wheat, and \$125 for irrigated pasture.

Planning Area

The Planning Area contains a variety of agricultural uses, including row crops, field crops, orchards, vineyards, and dairies, as well as grazing land for cattle. Together, these agricultural uses consist of approximately 59,000 acres across the Elk Grove Planning Area. Crops grown in the Planning Area include wine grapes, pears, and walnuts.

City of Elk Grove

Within the City limits of Elk Grove there currently exists approximately 8,650 acres of agricultural land uses. However, the majority of this land is considered fallow (vacant or underutilized). Few crops are grown in the City itself, the exception being small strawberry fields located on select corners in the City. There are no major intensive agricultural operations (though small family farm activities do exist) that occur within the City limits. With the development of large planned projects (i.e. East Franklin and Laguna Ridge Policy areas), much of the remaining agricultural land uses are expected to be converted to other land uses. As noted in the previous section, the majority of the utilized agricultural land uses lie outside the City limits, within the Planning Area.

4.1 AGRICULTURE

FARMLAND CLASSIFICATIONS AND RATING SYSTEM

Three classification programs are used to determine a soil’s agricultural productivity. 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. The Storie Index Rating System ranks soils based on their suitability for agriculture. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program maps out agricultural areas based on soil quality and land use.

Soil Capability Classification System

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 National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), is provided in **Table 4.1-2**.

**TABLE 4.1-2
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

Class	Definition
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: USDA Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.

Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating System ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture. Ratings range 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 grades, as defined by the NRCS, are provided below in **Table 4.1-3**.

**TABLE 4.1-3
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: USDA Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.

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.

Planning Area Characteristics

The soils in the Planning Area primarily consist of San Joaquin silt loam (0 to 1 and 0 to 3 percent slopes), the San Joaquin-Durixeralfs complex (0 to 1 percent slopes), the San Joaquin-Galt complex (0 to 1 and 0 to 3 percent slopes), and Redding gravelly loam (0 to 8 percent slopes). The soil capability classification, Storie Index rating and grade, and designation if soil is Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance is presented for each of these soils in **Table 4.1-4**.

4.1 AGRICULTURE

TABLE 4.1-4
ONSITE SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION AND STORIE INDEX RATING

Soil Map Symbol and Name	Soil Capability Classification	Storie Index Rating	Storie Index Guide	Prime or Statewide Importance Farmlands
198 Redding gravelly loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes	IV	16	5 – Very poor	N/A
213 San Joaquin silt loam, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III	28	4 – Poor	Statewide
214 San Joaquin silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	III	28	4 – Poor	Statewide
216 San Joaquin-Durixeralfs complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes	IV	21	4 – Poor	N/A
217 San Joaquin-Galt complex, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III	23	4 – Poor	Statewide
218 San Joaquin-Galt complex, 0 to 3 percent slopes	III	22	4 – Poor	Statewide

Source: *Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California, 1993; Soil Candidate Listing for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, Sacramento County, California Department of Conservation, 1993.*

As shown, project soils have either a Class III or IV soil capability classification and have a Storie Index Grade of Poor or Very Poor. However, of the six soil types listed, four are classified as Farmlands of Statewide Importance.

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 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (USDA-SCS). The intent of the USDA-SCS 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 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 within the California Department of Conservation (DOC) to carry on the mapping activity on a continuing basis, and with a greater level of detail. The DOC applied a greater level of detail by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California. The LIM criteria in California utilize the SCS 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 ground water table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth.

Important Farmland Maps for California are compiled using the modified LIM criteria (as described below) 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. Each is summarized below, based on *A Guide to the*

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (1994), prepared by the Department of Conservation.

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain the long-term production of agricultural crops. These lands have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Lands defined as prime farmland must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the two updated cycles, (a cycle is equivalent to 2 years) prior to the mapping date of 2000 (or since 1996).

Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of statewide importance is land similar to prime farmland, but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or with less ability to hold and store moisture. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date of 2000 (or since 1996).

Unique Farmland

Unique farmland is land 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. The land must have been cultivated at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date of 2000 (or since 1996).

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. Farmland of local importance in Sacramento County includes lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique farmland, but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or non-irrigated crops; lands that would meet the Prime or Statewide designation and have been improved for irrigation, but are now idle; and lands that currently support confined livestock, poultry operations and aquaculture.

Grazing Land

Grazing land is land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suited to the grazing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for this category is 40 acres.

IMPORTANT FARMLAND MAP

The Important Farmland Map for Sacramento County designates the majority of the Planning Area (approximately 24,509 acres) as "Farmland of Statewide Importance," of which approximately 5,893 acres are within the City limits (see **Figure 4.1-1**). There are approximately 13,460 acres of Prime Farmland within the Planning Area, and approximately 175 acres are within the City limits. There are approximately 12,355 acres classified as Farmland of Local Importance in the Planning Area with approximately 3,997 acres within the City, and approximately 13,036 acres of Urban and Built-up Land, with approximately 8,649 acres within the City. **Table 4.1-5** shows the breakdown of acreage between the City and Planning Area. These figures and **Figure 4.1-1** do not take into account any development within Sacramento County and the City after the last date the map data was collected, or the year 2000. These

4.1 AGRICULTURE

numbers would drastically decrease as a result of large approved development projects, such as the East Franklin and East Elk Grove policy areas.

TABLE 4.1-5
IMPORTANT FARMLAND – CITY OF ELK GROVE AND PLANNING AREA (IN ACRES)

Farmland Type	City	Planning Area	Total
Prime Farmland	175	13,285	13,460
Farmland of Statewide Importance	5,893	18,616	24,509
Unique Farmland	327	3,561	3,888
Farmland of Local Importance	3,997	8,358	3,997
Grazing Land	1,564	15,527	17,091
Urban and Built-up Land	8,649	4,387	13,036
Other Land	4,118	4,286	8,404

Source: Sacramento County GIS Department, 2000

SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARMLAND CONVERSION

One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion is 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. This premise is evidenced by the fact that property values, as measured by the County Assessor's office, are higher adjacent to the urban fringe. The conversion of Important Farmlands in Sacramento County from 1992 to 2000 is presented in **Table 4.1-6**.

TABLE 4.1-6
ACRES OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS – SACRAMENTO COUNTY (1992 TO 2000)

Year	Acres Present by Type				
	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Total Important Farmlands
1992	123,414	76,923	11,607	27,592	239,536
1994	123,201	76,217	11,306	28,259	238,983
1996	123,104	74,276	11,389	28,426	237,175
1998	121,974	67,713	13,521	33,732	236,940
2000	116,116	62,650	15,609	39,745	234,120
8 Year Difference	-7,298	-14,273	+4,002	+12,153	-5,416
Annual Average Difference	-912	-1,784	+500	+1,519	-677
8 Year Percent Difference	-6%	-23%	+26%	+31%	-2%

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Conversion Reports 1992 to 1994, and 1996 to 1998, 1998 to 2000, July 2002.

Figure 4.1-1: Important Farmland Map 11x17 color

4.1 AGRICULTURE

In Sacramento County, there has been an increase in the acreage of Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance; this increase is explained by the redistribution of categories in 1994 and 1998, as well as the conversion of fallow land to irrigated cropland after a long drought. Nevertheless, as presented in **Table 4.1-6**, the total amount of important agricultural land within the County decreased by approximately 2 percent during the eight-year period from 1992 to 2000. This decrease equates to an average loss of approximately 677 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 land to developed uses.

4.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

STATE

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands and 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 will remain under agricultural production for a ten-year period. The contract is renewed automatically on an annual basis unless the owner files a notice of non-renewal. In this manner, each agricultural preserve contract (at any given date) is always operable at least nine years into the future. 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 or land that qualifies for rating 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating.

Figure 4.1-2 illustrates the location of properties within the Elk Grove Planning Area which currently are or have recently been under Williamson Act contracts. As illustrated, there are approximately 100 active contracts within the Planning Area, one of which is within the City of Elk Grove limits. A Notice of Nonrenewal has been filed on 43 contracts. There are also six cancelled contracts.

LOCAL

City of Elk Grove Right-to-Farm Ordinance

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors passed the Right-to-Farm Ordinance on July 10, 1990. This Ordinance was subsequently adopted by the City upon incorporation in July 2000. This ordinance was established to ensure that agricultural operations which are operated in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards be allowed to continue. It is also designed to allow accepted farming activities to occur twenty-four hours a day without complaints from nearby residents. Those residents that choose to reside adjacent to these uses shall be prepared to accept such inconveniences when they occur. If there is an agricultural production that does not appear to be consistent with accepted practices, then any person may file a complaint with the Agricultural Commissioner.

Sacramento County General Plan

The Sacramento County General Plan is used as the "blueprint" to guide future development in unincorporated portions of the County, including sections of the Planning Area that are outside

4.1 AGRICULTURE

the Elk Grove city limits. The following Sacramento County Agriculture policies are applicable to the Planning Area, outside the existing city limits of Elk Grove.

- AG-1: The County shall protect prime farmlands and lands with intensive agricultural investments from urban encroachments.
- AG-2: The County shall not accept applications for General Plan amendments redesignating prime farmland or lands with intensive agricultural investments to agricultural/residential or urban use (i.e. residential, commercial, industrial) unless proposed development is contiguous to agricultural/residential or urban uses, and unless the applicant demonstrates no feasible alternative sites are available other than prime farmlands or lands with intensive agricultural investment.
- AG-3: The County shall permit agricultural uses on buffers, provided such uses are conducted in a manner compatible with urban uses. Buffers shall be used to separate farming practices incompatible with adjacent urban uses. Any homeowners' association or similar entity within the development shall assist in determining compatible use. Buffers shall not adversely conflict with agricultural uses on adjoining property.
- AG-4: Prospective buyers of agricultural land or property adjacent to agricultural land shall be notified through the title report that they could be subject to inconvenience or discomfort resulting from accepted farming activities as per provisions of the county right-to-farm ordinance.
- AG-5: Mitigate loss of prime farmlands or lands with intensive agricultural investments through CEQA requirements to provide in-kind protection of nearby farmland.
- AG-8: Agricultural land divisions shall not adversely affect the integrity of agricultural pursuits. Agricultural land divisions may be denied if the reviewing authority finds that the division of land is likely to create circumstances inconsistent with this policy.
- AG-9: The County shall balance the protection of prime farmlands and farmlands with intensive agricultural investments with the preservation of natural habitat realized by the establishment of environmental mitigation banks and sites, wildlife refuges and other natural resource preserves so as to protect farmland and to conserve associated habitat values.
- AG-10: Mitigation banks, environmental mitigation sites, wildlife refuges, and other natural resource preserves adjacent to prime farmland or land with intensive agricultural investments shall not disrupt or disturb standard farming practices.
- AG-11: The County would adopt policies and design contracts to promote the placing of natural amenities on land, such as trees and other biota enhancing improvement, by making sure amenities are assets both in nature and under law.
- AG-12: Indemnification against property losses from recreational users shall be provided to agricultural property owners adjacent to mitigation banks, environmental mitigation sites, wildlife refuges, or other natural resource preserves provided loss is proven to be a direct and exclusive result of new recreational access provided by the establishment of, and occurring through, such sites, and provide law enforcement access to such sites.

Figure 4.1-2 Williamson Act contracts 11x17

4.1 AGRICULTURE

- AG-13: Initiate intergovernmental agreements with State and Federal Wildlife management authorities in order to mitigate loss of prime farmland or land with intensive agricultural investment due to natural habitat conversion.
- AG-14: The County shall pursue opportunities to create mitigation banks, environmental mitigation sites, wildlife refuges, or other natural resource preserves wherein substantial agricultural activities that are compatible with protection of high habitat values continue, but incompatible activities and conversion for development are precluded by conservation easements.
- AG-15: Instigate coordination with nonprofit organizations to acquire conservation easements for preserving farmlands.
- AG-16: The County shall actively discourage unlawful activities on farmlands associated with use of public recreation facilities.
- AG-17: Recreational trails shall not be placed adjacent to or on farmland if feasible alternative routes exist elsewhere in the vicinity. However, if no other feasible routes exist, trail facilities shall be designed in cooperation with adjacent property owners to minimize adverse impacts on farming practices.
- AG-18: Public recreation trails adjacent to permanent agriculture shall be designed to provide appropriate vehicle access for law enforcement needs.
- AG-19: County encourages the preservation of prime agricultural land as open space, including opposing any residential or commercial development for the Cosumnes River of Deer Creek riparian areas which is not compatible with agricultural use.
- AG-20: If land within the Cosumnes River watershed is developed for non-agricultural purposes, the County should actively pursue easement dedication for equestrian trails and bikeways within such development as a condition of approval.
- AG-21: The County seeks to minimize agricultural/trail-user conflicts by recommending and seeking buffer zones between trails and nearby agricultural land and by locating trails away from the Cosumnes and Deer Creek riparian areas.
- AG-22: The County shall actively encourage enrollments of agricultural lands in its Williamson Act program.
- AG-23: Discourage property owners from filing notices of nonrenewal.
- AG-24: Support and promote the rescission of notices and nonrenewal and replacement of Williamson Act contracts, pursuant to the provisions of Government Code Section 51254, in areas outside the Urban Services Boundary for which notices of nonrenewal have been filed.
- AG-25: The County shall actively encourage water conservation by both agricultural and urban water users.
- AG-26: The County shall actively encourage conservation of soil resources.
- AG-27: The County shall minimize flood risks to agricultural lands resulting from new urban developments by:

4.1 AGRICULTURE

- 1) requiring that such developments incorporate adequate runoff control structures; and/or
- 2) assisting in implementing comprehensive drainage management plans to mitigate increased risks of farmland flooding resulting from such developments.

- AG-28: Provide a plan focused on noxious weed control in agricultural areas.
- AG-29: Control agricultural losses caused by pests and fires resulting from lack of management of idled farmlands.
- AG-30: The County shall allow construction and occupancy of agricultural accessory dwellings provided that such dwellings provide living quarters for full-time, on-site agricultural employees.
- AG-31: Allow with as simple regulatory and administrative procedures as possible the construction of nonresidential farm accessory buildings in the floodway fringe provided such structures do not obstruct floodflows or impair public safety.
- AG-32: The County shall provide operators of farmstands greater flexibility with respect to the produce sold at such stands.
- AG-33: The County shall ensure that proposed changes in dependent special district levies are equitable, especially where such changes could unduly increase the tax burden on owners of agricultural lands.
- CO-54: Direct development away from prime or statewide importance soils or otherwise provide for mitigation that slows the loss of additional farmland to other uses.
- CO-55: Projects resulting in the conversion of more than fifty (50) acres of prime or statewide in importance farmland shall be deemed to have a significant environmental effect, as defined by CEQA.
- CO-56: Golf courses shall not be constructed on prime farmlands outside of the urban service area boundary.

4.1.3. IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

For purposes of this EIR, the following criteria were used in determining whether the implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in a significant impact:

1. Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural 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 non-agricultural use.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of potential agricultural impacts of the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan was based on review of the Sacramento County General Plan and Zoning Code, and a field review of the city. The agricultural analysis is based on information gathered from the City of Elk Grove Agricultural Element and Conservation Element to the existing 2000 General Plan, the General Plan Update EIR, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Report 1998 – 2000, the California Department of Conservation Important Farmlands Map, the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (April 1993), and the Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner’s Report (2000). The proposed project is then compared to the existing conditions to determine the impacts due to loss of agricultural resources.

PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Loss of Agricultural Land

Impact 4.1.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of important farmlands (Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) as designated under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as well as lands under active Williamson Act contracts. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Subsequent land use development and associated public improvements (e.g., roadway improvements, infrastructure facilities, parks and public schools) within current City limits under the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan would result in the conversion of important farmland. According to the California State Department of Conservation Important Farmland Map (2000), there are approximately 175 acres of Prime Farmland within the City limits. There are approximately 5,893 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, approximately 3,997 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, and approximately 327 acres of Unique Farmland. Since the last update of this data by the Department of Conservation in 2000, there has been development occurring in Elk Grove that has resulted in further conversions (e.g., East Franklin and East Elk Grove policy areas). A vast majority of this acreage will be lost as a result of the development of approved projects such as the East Franklin Policy Area (1,425-acre loss of Farmland of Statewide Importance) and the proposed Laguna Ridge Policy Area (52.8 acres of Prime Farmland, 1576.3 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 171 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, and 51 acres of Unique Farmland) (see **Figure 4.1-1**). Large areas of important farmlands will also be lost from development of the Southeast Policy Area and South Pointe Policy Area.

In addition to the loss of important farmlands, implementation of the General Plan would also result in the conversion of farmland areas currently protected under Williamson Act contracts in the southern portions of the City (see **Figure 4.1-2**).

General Plan Policies and Action Items

As further noted under Policy CAQ-2 identified below, the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan Conservation and Air Quality Element acknowledges that implementation of the General Plan would result in the loss of agricultural productivity within the current City limits. In addition, Policy CAQ-3 identifies the City’s position regarding the feasibility of possible agricultural mitigation associated with the purchase of fee title or easements on existing agricultural lands.

4.1 AGRICULTURE

The following are applicable proposed policies and actions associated with agricultural resource protection:

CAQ-2 *The loss of agricultural productivity on lands designated for urban uses within the city limits as of January 2002 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 2002 city limits anticipates the retention of significant areas of agricultural production outside the current city limits.*

CAQ-3 *The City of Elk Grove considers the only mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to consist of the creation of 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 protection 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.*

LU-11 *The Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area (Figure LU-2) provides conceptual land use policy for the area outside the current incorporated boundaries of Elk Grove. This policy is intended as a statement of the City's long-term vision for this area; these lands remain under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County. Except where specifically indicated, the City's land use policy for areas outside the city limits reflects the County of Sacramento's land use policy as it existed on December 31, 2002.*

LU-11-Action 1 *Following the annexation of any area within the Planning Area to the City of Elk Grove, initiate any planning process necessary to implement the land uses shown in the Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area.*

PRO-5 *The City views open space lands of all types as important resource which should be preserved in the region, and supports the establishment of multi-purpose open space areas to address a variety of needs, including, but not limited to:*

- *Maintenance of agricultural uses*
- *Wildlife habitat*
- *Recreational open space*
- *Aesthetic benefits*
- *Flood control*

To the extent possible, lands protected in accordance with this policy should be in proximity to Elk Grove, to facilitate use of these areas by Elk Grove residents, assist in mitigation of habitat loss within the city, and provide an open space resource close to the urbanized areas of Elk Grove.

PRO-5-Action 1 *Consider the establishment of a citywide fee and/or assessment system which would provide funding for the purchase of open space land or easements and the maintenance of these areas.*

PRO-5-Action 2 Work with the County of Sacramento and other resource agencies to develop a regional open space plan which provides for multiple uses of open space (e.g., agriculture and wildlife foraging).

PRO-5-Action 3 Consider using funds collected under existing (2002) fee programs (e.g., Swainson's Hawk mitigation and East Franklin Specific Plan agricultural mitigation) to fund this expanded open space program.

Mitigation Measures

Potential mitigation measure options for this impact include the following:

Development of an agricultural land mitigation program to protect existing farmland within the City or in the region associated with land and/or easement purchases: This mitigation approach would consist of requiring subsequent projects under the General Plan (such as private development projects) to either acquire fee title, easements or fees to the City for the protection of existing agricultural land in order to preserve it from conversion at a predetermined ratio (farmland acreage lost to existing farmland to be protected). This mitigation approach is similar to the policy guidance under Sacramento County General Plan Policy AG-5 and the mitigation program developed by Sacramento County for the East Franklin Specific Plan. This mitigation approach would not fully or partially mitigate the direct loss of approximately 10,392 acres of important farmlands associated with the implementation of the General Plan. CEQA Guidelines 15370 definition of "mitigation" is described below as well as an analysis of why this mitigation option does not meet the definition set forth in CEQA:

- a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.* – Protection of existing farmland would not result in any avoidance of the expected significant conversion of important farmland in the City.
- b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.* – Protection of existing farmland would not limit the extent of the expected significant conversion of important farmland in the City.
- c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment.* – Protection of existing farmland would not involve repairing, rehabilitating or restoring the important farmland expected to be converted in the City.
- d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.* – Protection of existing farmland would not result in any avoidance of the expected significant conversion of important farmland in the City.
- e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.* – Protection of existing farmland would not result in any compensation of the expected significant conversion of important farmland in the City. This important farmland would still be lost in its entirety even with this mitigation option, since it would not provide any offset associated with this loss.

4.1 AGRICULTURE

Preservation of existing important farmland areas within the City: Implementation of this mitigation option would avoid the significant loss of important farmland areas within the City. However, this mitigation option is considered infeasible, since it would conflict with General Plan Guiding Goals 1 and 2, Focused Goals 1-6, 1-9, 2-1 through 2-4, and Housing Goals 1, 2, and 5, which consist of the general intent of the proposed General Plan. Thus, this mitigation option is considered infeasible.

Creation of new and/or improved farmland to offset project impacts: Implementation of this mitigation option would reduce General Plan impacts associated with the significant loss of important farmland areas within the City and is identified under Policy CAQ-3. This mitigation option would involve improvements to existing land areas (e.g., the provision of irrigation) that would improve its agricultural capability beyond existing conditions. As a result of the amount of important farmland expected to be lost within the City (approximately 10,392 acres) and the General Plan Land Use Policy Map, creation of improved farmland would need to occur outside of the City limits in the unincorporated portion of the County. Given the extensive amount of improved farmland that would need to be created and the fact that this farmland would need to be provided outside of the jurisdiction of the City, this mitigation option is not considered feasible.

Based on the analysis provided above, no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the loss of important farmland due to the implementation of the proposed General Plan. This impact is considered **significant and unavoidable**.

Agricultural/Urban Interfaces

Impact 4.1.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses within and adjacent to the City. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Implementation of the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan would result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses. Based on Policy CAQ-2 in the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan, loss of agricultural land is accepted as a consequence of development within the City limits. Therefore, there will be no agriculture/urban interface conflicts within the City limits at buildout, only between the City limit line and the remainder of the Planning Area, which is also part of the unincorporated area of Sacramento County. However, it is acknowledged that as the City builds out, short-term agriculture/urban interface conflicts may occur.

As previously described, existing agricultural activities within the City consist of small areas of row crops, but mostly is fallow land. Given the current land values within the City (approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 an acre) and the agricultural production value identified in **Table 4.1-1**, it is not expected that land areas within the City would see increased agricultural activity and/or increased investment in existing agricultural activities. Thus, land use conflicts are expected to be limited to types of inconveniences or discomforts associated with small owner-occupied farms (e.g., farms used for personal reasons, not for profit).

Regarding agriculture/urban interface conflicts along the City boundaries and the unincorporated area of Sacramento County, current agricultural uses bordering the City consist of the following:

- North (east of State Route 99): small farms with fruit and vegetable stands

South (between Interstate 5 and State Route 99):	vineyards, dairies, and row crops
Southeast (east of State Route 99):	vineyards and row crops

However, it should be noted that areas outside of the Urban Services Boundary delineated by Sacramento County are currently planned to remain in agricultural use and agricultural uses in these areas may become more intensive over time.

Agriculture/urban interface conflicts vary depending on the type of agricultural use, and generally include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Inconveniences or discomforts associated with dust, smoke, noise, and odor from agricultural operations;
- Restrictions on agricultural operations (such as pesticide application) along interfaces with urban uses;
- Conflicts with farm equipment and vehicles using roadways;
- Trespassing and vandalism on active farmlands; and
- Farmland proximity to urban areas can place growth pressure to convert land to urban uses as a result of above mentioned conflicts and increases in property value.

General Plan Policies and Action Items

As further noted under Policy CAQ-4 identified below, the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan Conservation and Air Quality Element acknowledges that implementation of the General Plan would result in the loss of agricultural productivity within the current City limits, but that existing agricultural uses may continue. However, CAQ-4 specifically restricts the use of buffers between urban and farmland uses. In addition, Policy CAQ-4 includes two actions that consist of the use of the City's Right to Farm Ordinance.

The following are applicable proposed policies and action items associated with agricultural resource protection:

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:

CAQ-4-Action 1 Implement the City's "Right to Farm" ordinance.

CAQ-4-Action 2 Prospective buyers of property adjacent to agricultural land shall be notified through the title report that they could be subject to inconvenience or discomfort resulting from accepted farming activities as per provisions of the City's right-to-farm ordinance.

LU-34 The City of Elk Grove shall require that new development – including commercial, office, industrial, and residential development – is of high quality

4.1 AGRICULTURE

and reflects the City's desire to create a high quality, attractive, functional, and efficient built environment.

LU-34-Action 1 Prepare and adopt Design Guidelines for residential and non-residential development.

In addition to these policies, the proposed General Plan includes implementation of the design guidelines and design review ordinances for residential and non-residential uses (Policy LU-34 and LU-34-Action 1). These design guidelines are expected to include provisions for landscape corridors, walls and other features that provide buffering. In addition, the proposed circulation system for the General Plan includes six and eight lane roadway facilities (Calvine Road, Grant Line Road, and Kammerer Road) that would provide approximately 80 to over 100-foot buffers between the City and adjoining agricultural uses.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of General Plan Policy CAQ-4 and CAQ-4-Action 1 and 2 as well as Policy LU-34 and LU-34-Action 1 and implementation of the proposed General Plan circulation system would assist in reducing agriculture/urban interface conflicts within and adjacent to the City's associated nuisance effects (dust, smoke, noise, odor), and restrictions on agricultural operations from interfaces with urban uses. However, these measures would not fully mitigate agriculture/urban interface conflicts, especially in regards to farm equipment and vehicle conflicts on area roadways, and potential trespassing and vandalism to active farmlands and growth pressures on farmland in proximity to urban uses in the City. No feasible mitigation measures are available to fully mitigate this impact. Therefore, this impact is considered **significant and unavoidable**.

4.1.4. CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

CUMULATIVE SETTING

The City of Elk Grove and the Planning Area are located in the southern portion of Sacramento County. As previously described, urban development within Sacramento County (including the unincorporated areas and the cities of Elk Grove, Galt, Folsom, and Sacramento) has resulted in the loss of approximately 5,416 acres of important farmland (see **Table 4.1-6**) between 1992 and 2000. The existing and projected future urban development throughout the state is expected to further contribute to the loss of important farmlands. While the focus of this cumulative impact analysis is Sacramento County, it is acknowledged that the cumulative important farmland conversion contributions associated with the implementation of the Elk Grove General Plan are of a statewide concern.

The cumulative impact analysis takes into account planned development patterns set forth in the Sacramento County General Plan, the North Vineyard Station Specific Plan and Vineyard Springs Comprehensive Plan, City of Sacramento General Plan and the North Natomas Community Plan, potential future urban development within the City of Folsom Sphere of Influence, City of Galt General Plan, as well as large-scale proposed and approved development projects identified in **Table 4.0-2**. This analysis also takes into account the potential urban development of the "Urban Study Areas" identified in General Plan Policy LU-15 and Figure LU-2 of the General Plan.

 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Cumulative Impacts to Agricultural Resources

Impact 4.1.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development in the Urban Study Areas would contribute significantly to the conversion of important farmland and agriculture/urban interface conflicts. This would be a **cumulative significant** impact.

Implementation of the City of Elk Grove General Plan would result in the conversion of approximately 175 acres of Prime Farmland, approximately 5,893 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and approximately 327 acres of Unique Farmland within the City. In addition to this loss, potential urban development of the Urban Study Areas (though not specifically proposed for any development under the General Plan) would result in the conversion of approximately 400 acres of Prime Farmland, 132 acres of Unique Farmland, and 5,236.6 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance. These conversions would make up approximately 2.5 percent of the total important farmland acreage known to exist in Sacramento County in 2000 (approximately 234,120 acres). This would be in addition to important farmland conversions associated with development anticipated under the applicable land use plans of Sacramento County and the cities of Sacramento, Folsom (Sphere of Influence), Galt and the future City of Rancho Cordova. Given the statewide conversion of important farmland areas and the extent of conversion in Sacramento County anticipated as a result of subsequent development under the General Plan and potential development of the Urban Study Areas, the project's contribution to this cumulative impact is considered significant.

In addition to the conversion of important farmland from subsequent development under the General Plan and potential urban development of the Urban Study Areas, the project would also contribute to significant cumulative agriculture/urban interface conflicts that are also considered a regional and statewide issue.

General Plan Policies and Action Items

- CAQ-2 *The loss of agricultural productivity on lands designated for urban uses within the city limits as of January 2002 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 2002 city limits anticipates the retention of significant areas of agricultural production outside the current city limits.*
- CAQ-3 *The City of Elk Grove considers the only mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to consist of the creation of 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 protection 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.*
- 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:*

4.1 AGRICULTURE

- CAQ-4-Action 1 *Implement the City's "Right-to-Farm" ordinance.*
- CAQ-4-Action 2 *Prospective buyers of property adjacent to agricultural land shall be notified through the title report that they could be subject to inconvenience or discomfort resulting from accepted farming activities as per provisions of the City's right-to-farm ordinance.*
- LU-11 *The Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area (Figure LU-2) provides conceptual land use policy for the area outside the current incorporated boundaries of Elk Grove. This policy is intended as a statement of the City's long-term vision for this area; these lands remain under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County. Except where specifically indicated, the City's land use policy for areas outside the city limits reflects the County of Sacramento's land use policy as it existed on December 31, 2002.*
- LU-11-Action 1 *Following the annexation of any area within the Planning Area to the City of Elk Grove, initiate any planning process necessary to implement the land uses shown in the Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area.*
- LU-15 *The areas designated in the Planning Area as "Urban Study Areas" are envisioned as areas in which urbanization to some extent could occur, generally in compliance with the following criteria:*
- Development should be limited to areas outside of the 100-year floodplain.*
 - Development should take place in compliance with the goals and policies of this General Plan.*
 - Any study of potential land uses in these areas should be accomplished in cooperation with the County of Sacramento.*
 - Any study of land uses in these areas should be accomplished by an environmental evaluation of the potential impacts of development.*
 - Prior to the completion of land use studies, the City's policy is that County of Sacramento land use designations in effect as of December 31, 2002, are retained.*
- LU-15-Action 1 *Work with the County of Sacramento establish and implement a program to study the potential for these areas to support urban development.*
- LU-34 *The City of Elk Grove shall require that new development – including commercial, office, industrial, and residential development – is of high quality and reflects the City's desire to create a high quality, attractive, functional, and efficient built environment.*
- LU-34-Action 1 *Prepare and adopt Design Guidelines for residential and non-residential development.*
- PRO-5 *The City views open space lands of all types as important resource which*

should be preserved in the region, and supports the establishment of multi-purpose open space areas to address a variety of needs, including, but not limited to:

- *Maintenance of agricultural uses*
- *Wildlife habitat*
- *Recreational open space*
- *Aesthetic benefits*
- *Flood control*

To the extent possible, lands protected in accordance with this policy should be in proximity to Elk Grove, to facilitate use of these areas by Elk Grove residents, assist in mitigation of habitat loss within the city, and provide an open space resource close to the urbanized areas of Elk Grove.

PRO-5-Action 1 Consider the establishment of a citywide fee and/or assessment system which would provide funding for the purchase of open space land or easements and the maintenance of these areas.

PRO-5-Action 2 Work with the County of Sacramento and other resource agencies to develop a regional open space plan which provides for multiple uses of open space (e.g., agriculture and wildlife foraging).

PRO-5-Action 3 Consider using funds collected under existing (2002) fee programs (e.g., Swainson's Hawk mitigation and East Franklin Specific Plan agricultural mitigation) to fund this expanded open space program.

The proposed General Plan includes implementation of the design guidelines and design review ordinances for residential and non-residential uses (Policy LU-34 and LU-34-Action 1). These design guidelines are expected to include provisions for landscape corridors, walls and other features that provide buffering. In addition, the proposed circulation system for the General Plan includes six and eight lane roadway facilities (Calvine Road, Grant Line Road and Kammerer Road) that would provide approximately 80 to over 100-foot buffers between the City and adjoining agricultural uses.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of General Plan Policies CAQ-4 and CAQ-4-Action 1 and 2, LU-11 and action item LU-11-Action 1, LU-15 and LU-15-Action 1, as well as Policy LU-34 and LU-34-Action 1 and implementation of the proposed General Plan circulation system would assist in reducing the project's contribution to cumulative agriculture/urban interface conflicts, but not to less than significant (see the discussion under Impact 4.1.2). As described under Impact 4.1.1, no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the General Plan's contribution to cumulative important farmland conversion impacts. Thus, the General Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts on agricultural resources is **significant and unavoidable**.

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4.1 AGRICULTURE

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