

3.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates the direct and indirect environmental impacts to agricultural resources that may result from the proposed Bilby Ridge Sphere of Influence Amendment (SOIA). It describes Sacramento County's agricultural land uses; the significance, quality, and extent of agricultural land on-site and within the county; and conversion of Important Farmland in the county to other uses. This section also addresses the project's consistency with Sacramento County and the City of Elk Grove's general plans, as well as the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCo's) policies pertaining to agricultural resources as identified in Sacramento LAFCo Policies, Standards, and Procedures Guidelines (LAFCo 2007). The analysis includes a description of the existing environmental conditions, the methods used for assessment, and the potential direct and indirect impacts of project implementation. Where feasible, mitigation measures are recommended to address impacts determined to be significant or potentially significant.

Comments were received on the Notice of Preparation from the Sacramento County Office of Planning and Environmental Review, Sacramento County Department of Agriculture, and the Environmental Council of Sacramento. The relevant concerns raised in those comments are addressed in this section.

3.2.1 Environmental Setting

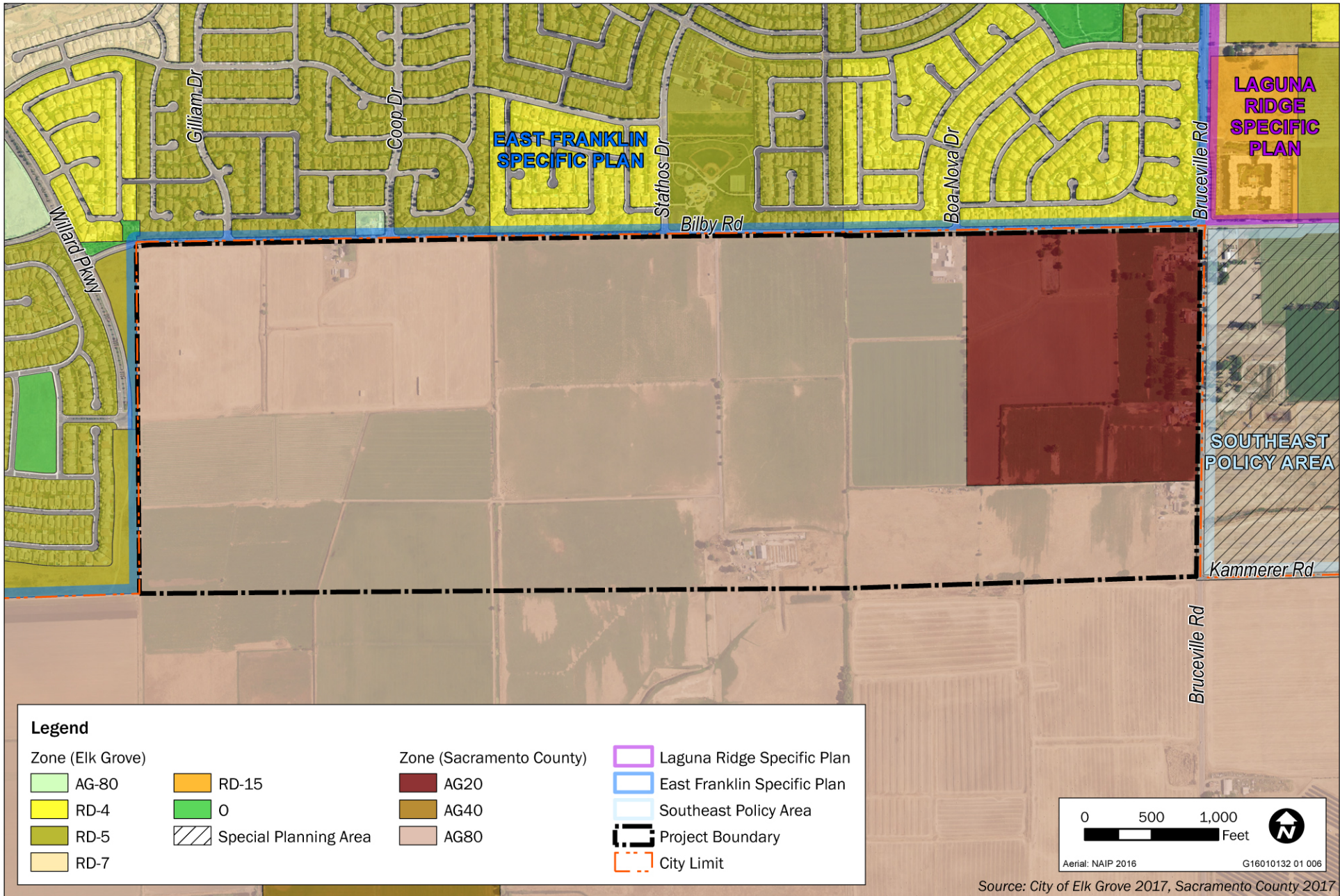
Sacramento County is the state's 24th largest agricultural producer, in total value of agricultural production. The gross valuation for all agricultural commodities produced in Sacramento County was approximately \$470 million in 2015 (California Department of Food and Agriculture 2016). Wine grapes had the highest crop value (\$128 million) followed by milk (\$49 million), Bartlett pears (\$40 million), and poultry (\$39 million) (Sacramento County Agricultural Commission 2015).

Most of the Bilby Ridge site is in agricultural production. Significant agricultural activities include field crops (hay) and grazing land. A small portion of the site associated with a residential property includes viticulture. Adjacent land uses to the project site include agricultural operations to the south and east, a large cattle facility 0.5 mile to the south, and single-family residential and related uses to the west and north. As shown on Exhibit 3.2-1, the site and adjacent lands to the south are zoned AG20 and AG80 by the Sacramento County General Plan (2011).

FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION

The State of California maps and classifies farmland through the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). Classifications are based on a combination of physical and chemical characteristics of the soil and climate that determine the degree of suitability of the land for crop production. The classifications under the FMMP are as follows:

- ▲ Prime Farmland—land that has the best combination of features to produce agricultural crops;
- ▲ Farmland of Statewide Importance—land other than Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical features to produce agricultural crops, but that has more limitations than Prime Farmland, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture;
- ▲ Unique Farmland—land of lesser quality soils used to produce the state's leading agricultural cash crops;
- ▲ Farmland of Local Importance—land of importance to the local agricultural economy;
- ▲ Grazing Land—existing vegetation that is suitable for grazing;



Source: City of Elk Grove 2017, Sacramento County 2017

Exhibit 3.2-1

Surrounding Zoning



- ▲ Urban and Built-Up Land—land occupied by structures in density of at least one dwelling unit per 1.5 acres;
- ▲ Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use—vacant areas; existing land that has a permanent commitment to development but has an existing land use of agricultural or grazing lands; and
- ▲ Other Land— land not included in any other mapping category, common examples of which include low-density rural developments, brush, timber, wetland, and vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded by urban development.

According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service’s (NRCS’s) *Sacramento County Important Farmland Map*, the project site is identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Farmland of Local Importance, as shown on Exhibit 3.2-2. The site is composed of roughly 113 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, 362 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 1 acre of Other Land, and 3 acres of Urban and Built-Up Land (FMMP 2014). Lands to the east and south of the Bilby Ridge project site are also classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Farmland of Local Importance.

FARMLAND CONVERSION

Over the 12-year period from 2004 to 2016, the Department of Conservation estimated that the total acreage of Important Farmland in Sacramento County decreased by approximately 5.8 percent. Furthermore, the most productive categories of farmland, Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, experienced declines of 17 percent and 23 percent, respectively, over the same period. Table 3.2-1, below, summarizes the acreages of agricultural land in Sacramento County between 2004 and 2016 (California Department of Conservation [DOC] 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014a, 2016a).

Table 3.2-1 Agricultural Land Conversion in Sacramento County

| Important Farmland Category | Acres | | | | | | | Net Change (2004-2016) | Percent Change (2004-2016) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2016 | | |
| Prime Farmland | 110,278 | 106,667 | 104,367 | 97,476 | 93,916 | 91,569 | 90,691 | -19,587 | -17.8 |
| Farmland of Statewide Importance | 56,141 | 51,218 | 49,470 | 45,264 | 43,580 | 43,104 | 43,342 | -12,799 | -23.8 |
| Unique Farmland | 15,188 | 15,267 | 15,462 | 15,076 | 15,060 | 15,125 | 15,540 | 352 | 2.3 |
| Farmland of Local Importance | 39,873 | 41,960 | 43,819 | 53,928 | 56,981 | 58,852 | 57,910 | 18,037 | 45.2 |
| Important Farmland Subtotal | 221,480 | 215,112 | 213,118 | 211,744 | 209,537 | 208,650 | 207,483 | -13,997 | -6.3 |
| Grazing Land | 163,173 | 156,979 | 156,146 | 155,822 | 154,744 | 153,454 | 153,174 | -9,999 | -6.1 |
| Agricultural Land Total | 384,653 | 372,091 | 369,264 | 367,566 | 364,281 | 362,102 | 360,657 | -23,996 | -6.2 |

Source: DOC 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014a, 2016a

According to the Department of Conservation’s most recent field report, conversion of Important Farmland to Other Land in Sacramento County resulted from the construction of new houses, commercial and industrial buildings, and parkland; the build-out of solar facilities; and plots of irrigated farmland or pastureland left fallow for three or more update cycles. Conversions from non-irrigated land uses to Irrigated Farmland resulted from additions of vineyards, corn, alfalfa, various row crops, and irrigated pasture in the southern part of the county; multiple rice plantings east of the Sacramento International Airport; and corn and irrigated hay near Twin Cities Road (DOC 2014b).

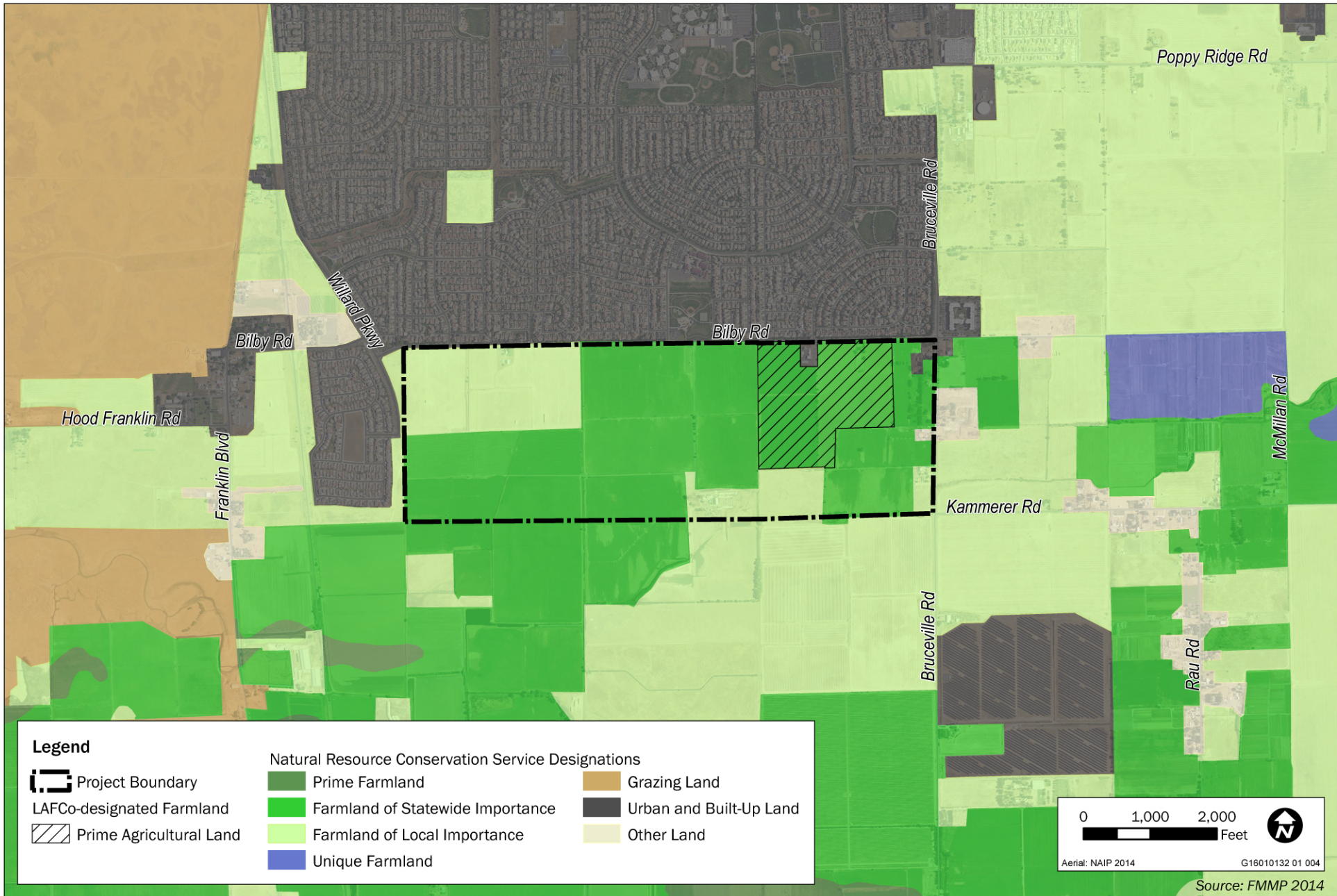


Exhibit 3.2-2

Important Farmland



3.2.2 Regulatory Framework

FEDERAL

There are no federal plans, policies, regulation, or laws applicable to this project.

STATE

California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The FMMP was established by the State of California in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (now called NRCS under the U.S. Department of Agriculture). The California Department of Conservation, Office of Land Conservation, maintains a statewide inventory of farmlands. Authority for the FMMP comes from Government Code Section 65570(b) and Public Resources Code Section 612. Government Code Section 65570(b) requires the Department of Conservation to collect or acquire information on the amount of land converted to or from agricultural use for every mapped county and to report this information to the Legislature. The maps are updated every 2 years with the use of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and field reconnaissance.

California Land Conservation Act of 1965

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, or Williamson Act (California Government Code Section 51200 et seq.), preserves agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive use contracts (DOC 2016b). Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses under minimum 10-year rolling term contracts. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value.

As shown in Exhibit 3.2-3, two of the seven project site parcels (73-AP-014 and 81-AP-001) are currently under Williamson Act contracts.

Public Resources Code

Public Resources Code Section 21060.1 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.

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act

LAFCo utilizes a definition of agricultural lands that differ from those utilized under CEQA. Section 56064 of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act defines "prime agricultural land" as:

"Prime agricultural land" means an area of land, whether a single parcel or contiguous parcels, that has not been developed for a use other than an agricultural use and that meets any of the following qualifications:

- (a) Land that qualifies, if irrigated, for rating as class I or class II in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) NRCS land use capability classification, whether or not land is actually irrigated, provided that irrigation is feasible.
- (b) Land that qualifies for rating 80 through 100 Storie Index Rating.
- (c) Land that supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and that has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the USDA in the National Range and Pasture Handbook, Revision 1, December 2003.

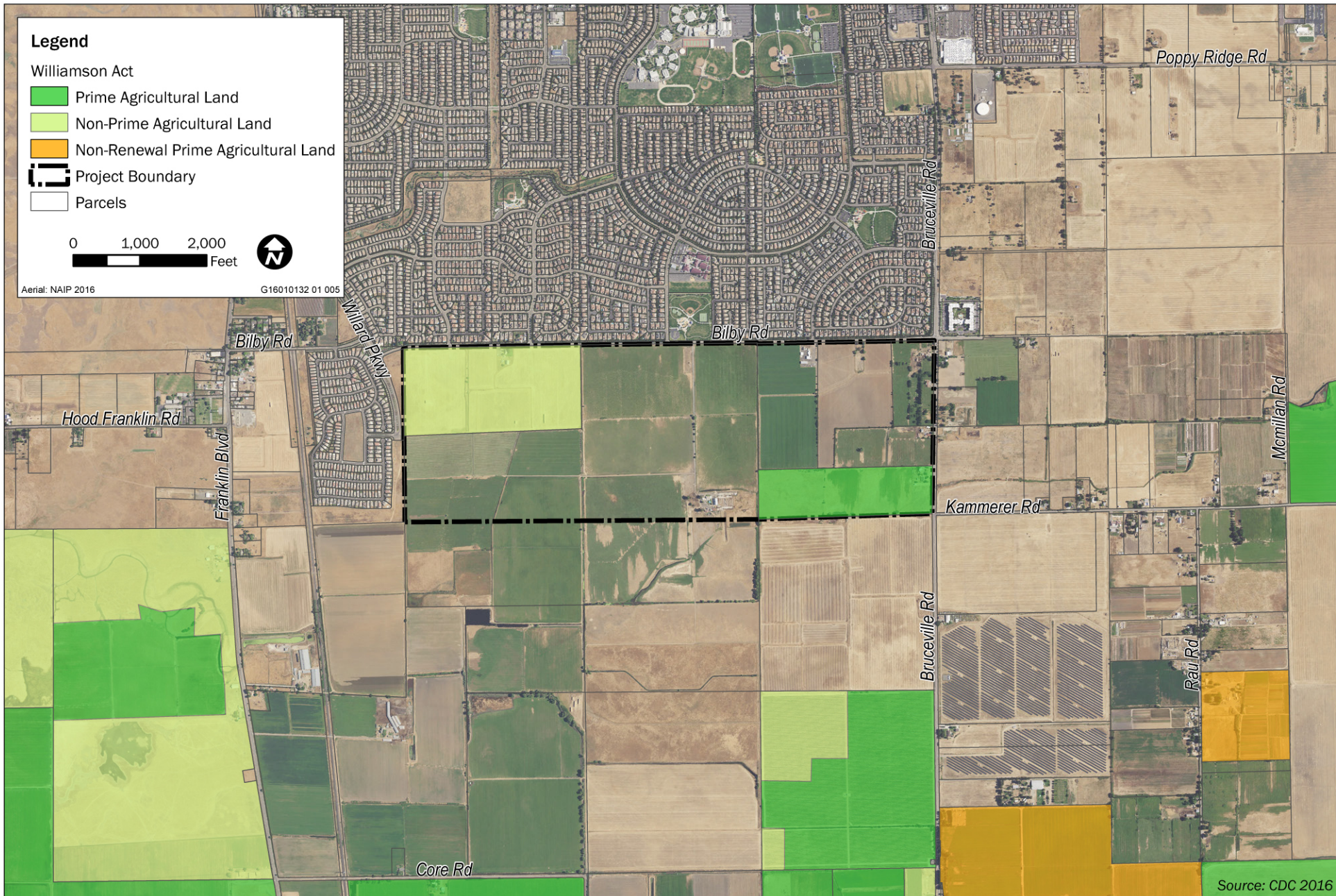


Exhibit 3.2-3

Williamson Act Map



- (d) Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops that have a nonbearing period of less than five years and that will return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than four hundred dollars (\$400) per acre.
- (e) Land that has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant products an annual gross value of not less than four hundred dollars (\$400) per acre for three of the previous five calendar years.

The SOIA area is rated class III in the NRCS land use capability classification for irrigation and has a rating of 11-40 on the Storie Index (NRCS 2017). Based on NRCS soil productivity data, certain soils in the SOIA area could produce up to 234 pounds of dry forage per acre per month (NRCS 2017). The USDA National Range and Pasture Handbook specifies that 1 animal unit month is equal to 790 pounds of dry forage per acre per month (USDA 2003). Therefore, the project site does not contain lands that could support at least one animal unit per acre. The project site is not planted with fruit or nut-bearing plants. Production values from the past 5 years indicate that 70 acres of the site produced alfalfa in 2012, 2013, and 2014 with an annual gross value of \$1309.44, \$978.50, and \$1,172.49 per acre, respectively (Sacramento County Agricultural Commission 2017). Because the Bilby Ridge site contains 70 acres of lands that meet qualification (e) above, it is considered prime agricultural land by LAFCo (See Exhibit 3.2-1).

LOCAL

The project site lies within the jurisdictional boundaries of Sacramento County; therefore, the County's policies with respect to agricultural resources, as well as the Sacramento LAFCo's policies, would apply. Furthermore, if the SOIA is approved, it could lead to annexation to the City of Elk Grove and urbanization. Thus, applicable policies of the City of Elk Grove's General Plan are described below.

Sacramento LAFCo

The project would be subject to the following standards related to agricultural resources from LAFCo's Policies, Standards, and Procedures Manual (2007). LAFCo may make exceptions to these general and specific standards if it determines that such exceptions: are necessary because of unique circumstances; are required to resolve conflicts between general and specific standards; result in improved quality or lower cost of services available; or there exists no feasible or logical alternative.

Chapter IV, Selected General Standards, Standard E. Agricultural Land Conservation. LAFCo will exercise its powers to conserve agricultural land pursuant to the following standards:

- ▲ Standard E.1. LAFCo will approve a change of organization or reorganization which will result in the conversion of prime agricultural land in open space use to other uses only if the Commission finds that the proposal will lead to the planned, orderly, and efficient development of an area. For purposes of this standard, a proposal leads to the planned, orderly, and efficient development of an area only if all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. The land subject to the change of organization or reorganization is contiguous to either lands developed with an urban use or lands which have received all discretionary approvals for urban development.
 - b. The proposed development of the subject lands is consistent with the Spheres of Influence Plan, including the Master Services Element of the affected agency or agencies;
 - c. Development of all, or a substantial portion of, the subject land is likely to occur within five years. In the case of very large developments, annexation should be phased whenever feasible. If the Commission finds phasing infeasible for the specific reasons, it may approve annexation if all or a substantial portion of the subject land is likely to develop within a reasonable period of time.

- d. Insufficient vacant non-prime lands exists within the applicable Spheres of Influence that are planned, accessible, and developable for the same general type of use.
- e. The proposal will have no significant adverse effect on the physical and economic integrity of other agricultural lands. In making this determination, LAFCo will consider the following factors:
 - (1) The agricultural significance of the subject and adjacent areas relative to other agricultural lands in the region.
 - (2) The use of the subject and adjacent areas.
 - (3) Whether public facilities related to the proposal would be sized or situated so as to facilitate the conversion of adjacent to nearby agricultural land, or will be extended through or adjacent to, any other agricultural lands which lie between the project site and existing facilities.
 - (4) Whether natural or man-made barriers serve to buffer adjacent or nearby agricultural lands from the effects of the proposed development.
 - (5) Applicable provisions of the General Plan open space and land use elements, applicable growth-management policies, or other statutory provisions designed to protect agriculture.
- ▲ **Standard E.2.** LAFCo will not make the affirmative findings that the proposed development of the subject lands is consistent with the Spheres of Influence in the absence of an approved Sphere of Influence Plan. LAFCo will not make the affirmative findings that sufficient non- prime land exists within the Spheres of Influence Plan unless the applicable jurisdiction has:
 - a. Identified within its Spheres of Influence all “prime agricultural land” as defined herein;
 - b. Enacted measures to preserve prime agricultural land identified within its Sphere of Influence for agricultural use; and
 - c. Adopted as part of its General Plan specific measures to facilitate and encourage infill development as an alternative to development of agricultural lands.

Chapter V, Specific Standards by Type of Action, Standard I. Amendments to Spheres of Influence

- ▲ **Standard I.6.** Amendment proposals involving Sphere expansion which contain prime agricultural land will not be approved by the LAFCo if there is sufficient alternative lands available for annexation within the existing Sphere of Influence.

Sacramento County General Plan

The Agricultural and Conservation Elements of the Sacramento County General Plan (Sacramento County 2011) contain the following policies related to agricultural resources that may be applicable to the project:

- **Policy AG-5:** Projects resulting in the conversion of more than fifty (50) acres of farmland shall be mitigated within Sacramento County, except as specified in the paragraph below, based on a 1:1 ratio, for the loss of the following farmland categories through the specific planning process or individual project entitlement requests to provide in-kind or similar resource value protection (such as easements for agricultural purposes):
 - prime, statewide importance, unique, local importance, and grazing farmlands located outside the USB; and
 - prime, statewide importance, unique, and local importance farmlands located inside the USB.

The Board of Supervisors retains the authority to override impacts to Unique, Local, and Grazing farmlands, but not with respect to Prime and Statewide farmlands.

However, if that land is also required to provide mitigation pursuant to a Sacramento County endorsed or approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), then the Board of Supervisors may consider the mitigation land provided in accordance with the HCP as meeting the requirements of this section including land outside of Sacramento County.

Note: This policy is not tied to any maps contained in the Agricultural Element. Instead, the most current Important Farmland map from the Department of Conservation should be used to calculate mitigation.

The County protects a broader category of farmland quality than the State in CEQA statute or the Guidelines, by also including farmland of local importance and grazing farmlands in its policy requiring mitigation for conversion. Sacramento County defines locally important farmlands as “lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique designation but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or nonirrigated 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” (Sacramento County 2011).

- **Policy CO-51:** Direct development away from prime or statewide importance farmland or otherwise provide for mitigation as required by AG-5 slowing the loss of additional farmland conversion to other uses.

City of Elk Grove General Plan

If there is annexation and future development in the project area, it would be subject to the following policies from the Elk Grove General Plan Conservation and Air Quality Element (City of Elk Grove 2016) related to agricultural resources.

- **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 creation of new agricultural land in the Sacramento region equal in area, productivity, and other characteristics to the area that 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.
- **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:
 - 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.

City of Elk Grove Municipal Code

Chapter 14.05, “Agricultural Activities,” of the City of Elk Grove Municipal Code 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.

3.2.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the project's potential impacts on agricultural resources was based on review of the project description as well as FMMP designations of land within the project site. In addition, relevant goals and policies from the Sacramento County General Plan, City of Elk Grove General Plan, and LAFCo were reviewed. In determining the level of significance, this analysis assumes that the project would comply with relevant state and local ordinances and regulations, as well as the adopted policies presented above.

Although there are no changes to land use proposed as part of this SOIA, the analysis assumes that the Bilby Ridge site would be developed, as described in the Chapter 2, "Project Description," upon approval of the SOIA and annexation to the City at some future time.

According to Government Code Section 56668, the Sacramento LAFCo must evaluate effects on maintaining the physical and economic integrity of agricultural lands based on five factors identified in Policies, Standards, and Procedures Manual Standard E.1 below, and this EIR has considered all of the factors outlined in that policy below.

- ▲ **Factor 1.** The agricultural significance of the subject and adjacent areas relative to other agricultural lands in the region.

 - **Analysis:** Subsection 3.2.1, "Environmental Setting," identifies that the SOIA and adjacent land areas south of the site are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance.
- ▲ **Factor 2.** The use of the subject and adjacent areas.

 - **Analysis:** The SOIA consists of field crops, viniculture, and grazing land. Land areas south and east of the site include grazing and field crops as well.
- ▲ **Factor 3.** Whether public facilities related to the proposal would be sized or situated so as to facilitate the conversion of adjacent or nearby agricultural land, or will be extended through or adjacent to any other agricultural lands which lie between the project site and existing facilities.

 - **Analysis:** The project does not involve any changes to land use nor propose specific public facilities. Growth-inducing effects of the SOIA is addressed in Chapter 5 of this EIR, "Other CEQA Considerations."
- ▲ **Factor 4.** Whether natural or man-made barriers serve to buffer adjacent or nearby agricultural lands from the effects of the proposed development.

 - **Analysis:** The SOIA is bounded on the north, west, and east by the City of Elk Grove. However, areas south of the site do not contain any current natural or manmade barriers to buffer adjacent or nearby agricultural lands from potential impacts of future, indirect growth development within the SOIA. The future extension of Kammerer Road as part the Capital South East Connector may provide barrier for the SOIA.
- ▲ **Factor 5.** Applicable provisions of the General Plan open space and land use elements, applicable growth management policies, or other statutory provisions designed to protect agriculture.

- **Analysis:** The City of Elk Grove General Plan policies and Chapter 14.05, “Agricultural Activities,” of the City Municipal Code related to agricultural resources is provided in Subsection 3.2.2, “Regulatory Framework.” Consistency analysis of adopted City of Elk Grove and Sacramento County land use policies is provided in Tables 3.9-1 and 3.9-2.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the project would result in a potentially significant impact on agriculture and forest resources if it would:

- ▲ convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Important Farmlands), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use, or convert prime agricultural land as defined by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act;
- ▲ conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract;
- ▲ conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g));
- ▲ result in the loss of forest or agricultural land or conversion of forest land to non-forest or non-agricultural use; or
- ▲ involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

ISSUES NOT EVALUATED FURTHER

The project site is zoned by the County as AG-80 and AG-20. The project would not change the zoning designations nor would it allow land use change that would be inconsistent with this zoning designation. The project would not change any land use authority. Thus, the project would not conflict with zoning for agricultural use, and this issue is not evaluated further.

There are no forestry resources on or adjacent to the project site. Because no forest land, timberland, or timberland production areas, as zoned by applicable state regulations, exist on the project site, the project would not conflict with forest land zoning or result in the conversion or loss of forest land. Therefore, no impacts would occur related to forest land resources, and this issue is not evaluated further.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Impact 3.2-1: Direct conversion of Important Farmland and prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use.

While the SOIA would not result in direct physical changes to the site, future development facilitated by subsequent annexation within the Bilby Ridge site could result in the direct conversion of up to 362 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance and 113 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, 70 of which are also considered prime agricultural land by LAFCo, to nonagricultural urban uses. This impact would be a **significant** impact.

The project consists of an expansion of the City of Elk Grove’s Sphere of Influence to include the Bilby Ridge site. Although the SOIA does not propose any land use changes or development, the SOIA would facilitate the potential future development could occur if the property is annexed. A preliminary land use scenario map

includes commercial elements at the corner of Bilby and Bruceville Road as well as Kammerer Road and Willard Parkway; residential component (roughly 1,800 units); a business professional area on the corner of Kammerer and Bruceville Road; and accompanying parks, supporting master-planned infrastructure providing transportation, public lands, associated retail use. The preliminary land use scenario map would result in the direct conversion of existing agricultural uses to non-agricultural urban uses.

As identified in Exhibit 3.2-1, the project site contains 362 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 70 acres of which are also considered prime agricultural land by LAFCo. The loss of this farmland type to urban uses is considered a significant impact under CEQA. Furthermore, the project would also result in the loss 113 acres of Farmland of Local Importance. While this is not considered important farmland under CEQA, Sacramento County requires mitigation for the loss of this farmland type for County projects under General Plan Policy AG-5. Therefore, this impact would be **significant**.

Mitigation Measure 3.2-1: Preserve agricultural land.

At the time of submittal of any application to annex territory within the Bilby Ridge site, the City of Elk Grove shall require that applicants protect 1 acre of existing farmland land of equal or higher quality for each acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance, Farmland of Local Importance, and prime agricultural land that would be developed as a result of the project. In quantifying the amount of protected farmland needed to mitigate impacts, 1 acre of protected farmland that is designated as both Farmland of Statewide Importance and prime agricultural land, for example, would count towards mitigation in both categories. This protection may consist of the establishment of a farmland conservation easement, farmland deed restriction, or other appropriate farmland conservation mechanism to ensure the preservation of the land from conversion in perpetuity, but may also be utilized for compatible wildlife habitat conservation efforts (e.g., Swainson's hawk foraging habitat mitigation) that do not substantially impair or diminish the agricultural productivity of the land. The farmland/wildlife habitat land to be preserved must have adequate water supply to support agricultural use. The City shall consider the benefits of preserving farmlands in proximity to other protected lands.

The total acres of land conserved shall be based on the total on-site agriculture acreage converted to urban uses. Conserved agriculture areas may include areas on the project site, lands secured for permanent habitat enhancement (e.g., giant garter snake habitat, Swainson's hawk habitat), or additional land identified by the City. The City shall attempt to locate preserved farmland within 5 miles of the Bilby Ridge site; however, the preserved farmland shall at a minimum be located inside Sacramento County. The City shall impose the conservation easement content standards to include, at a minimum: land encumbrance documentation; documentation that the easements are permanent, monitored, and appropriately endowed; prohibition of activity which substantially impairs or diminishes the agricultural productivity of the land; and protection of water rights.

In addition, the City shall impose the following minimum conservation easement content standards upon annexation:

- ▲ All owners of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land shall execute the document encumbering the land.
- ▲ The document shall be recordable and contain an accurate legal description of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
- ▲ 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.
- ▲ 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.

- ▲ Interests in agricultural/habitat mitigation land shall be held in trust by an entity acceptable to the City and/or by the City in perpetuity. The entity shall not sell, lease, or convey any interest in agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land that it acquires without the City's prior written approval.
- ▲ 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 or City.
- ▲ 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.
- ▲ 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 or transferred to the City.

Before committing to the preservation of any particular farmland pursuant to this measure, the applicant shall obtain the City's approval of the farmland proposed for preservation. Evidence of compliance with this mitigation measure shall be provided in the annexation application to LAFCo.

Significance after Mitigation

Should the Bilby Ridge SOIA be approved and subsequently annexed, the City of Elk Grove would be the land use entitlement agency. Elk Grove General Plan Policy CAQ-2 indicates that the City accepts the loss of agricultural land within the City limits as of 2004, which does not include the project site. Policy CAQ-3 indicates that the City only considers the creation of new agricultural land to be mitigation for the loss of agricultural land and that the City does not consider the purchase of land for agricultural use or conservation easements to be mitigation. The City's General Plan does not indicate in what circumstances the City would apply the mitigation strategy of creating new agricultural land.

While conservation easements for the same area and quality of farmland placed elsewhere in the region could partially offset the direct conversion of Important Farmland and prime agricultural land that could occur within the Bilby Ridge site, this approach would not create new farmland to replace farmland that could be lost. There is no additional feasible mitigation. The impact would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

Impact 3.2-2: Conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts.

Future development within the Bilby Ridge site could result in conflicts with existing Williamson Act contracts that protect farmland in the SOIA and require filing of non-renewals or cancellations of the contracts. This impact would be a **significant** impact.

Two of the seven project site parcels are currently under Williamson Act contracts (73-AP-014 and 81-AP-001). Approval of the SOIA itself would not directly prompt Williamson Act contract cancellations or non-renewals. However, future annexations to the City could prompt such actions if annexation proceeded prior to non-renewal applications were in place. As such, this impact would be **significant**.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.2-1, as noted above, would reduce the conversion of farmland, including Williamson Act contract land, by setting aside lands in permanent conservation easements. However, this mitigation would not reduce the impact to a less than significant level because the Bilby Ridge SOIA may result in the permanent loss of Williamson Act contract land and would not create additional replaced farmland because it is a finite resource. There are no other feasible mitigation measures available to address this impact.

Significance after Mitigation

The Bilby Ridge SOIA may result in the permanent loss of Williamson Act contract land. There is no mechanism to create additional farmland as it is a finite resource. As such, this impact would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

Impact 3.2-3: Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use.

The project would establish an expanded sphere of influence for the City of Elk Grove that would likely facilitate the subsequent annexation and development of the project site. New urban land uses in the project area could impair or result in conflicts with adjacent agricultural activities. This impact would be **significant**.

As discussed in Impact 3.2-1, the project consists of an expansion of the City of Elk Grove's Sphere of Influence to include the Bilby Ridge site. Although the SOIA does not propose any land use changes or development, the SOIA would facilitate the potential future annexation and development of the site. If development were to occur as shown in the preliminary land use scenario map (Exhibit 2-4), the project would facilitate the conversion of existing agricultural uses to non-agricultural urban uses.

Land areas to the north and west of the project are urban and residential, thus no agricultural use conflicts would occur. Land area to the east of the project site is currently in agricultural production. However, this area is contained within the City of Elk Grove's approved South East Policy Area that is planned for urban uses. Thus, no conflicts would occur.

Land areas to the south of the project site are in agricultural use (mainly grazing and field crops) and are designated Agricultural Cropland by the Sacramento County General Plan. A large cattle facility is located 0.5 mile south of the project site. Potential future development of the Bilby Ridge site would likely conflict with these agricultural uses. Agricultural operations may create risks and nuisances for urban residences, schools, and businesses. Conversely, urban land uses and the associated population create operational difficulties for agriculture. Health risks and nuisances potentially created by agricultural operations in the project area include the following:

- ▲ exposure to pesticide and herbicide applications,
- ▲ exposure to smoke (from burning) and dust (from soil preparation),
- ▲ exposure to noise (from machinery and trucks),
- ▲ hazards to children (irrigation channels and ditches), and
- ▲ exposure to mosquitoes breeding in flooded fields.

These potential nuisances and other aspects of urban land uses, including rising land values, can affect agriculture negatively. Negative effects of urban uses on agriculture could include the following:

- ▲ interference with agricultural operations (e.g., limitations on pesticide/herbicide applications, burning, operational hours);
- ▲ trespassing, vandalism, and theft because of the proximity of urban uses to agricultural areas; and
- ▲ land value impacts because of the proximity to urban areas which tends to increase land values in anticipation of future urban development. This increase reduces the probability that farmers would make long-term investments to maintain the productive potential of the land.

Conflicts between agriculture and urban uses would affect the agricultural areas that would remain to the south of the Bilby Ridge site. The efforts of future urban residents to reduce potential risks and nuisances emanating from surrounding agricultural areas could become a major constraint on agricultural operations. These constraints could result in increasing operational costs, phasing out of crops, moving operations that

create nuisances for adjacent urban areas, and, ultimately, removing lands from production. This would be a **significant** impact.

Mitigation Measure 3.2-3 Provision of agricultural buffering as part of future project design.

At the time of submittal of any application to annex territory within the Bilby Ridge SOIA area, the City shall require the applicant to establish agricultural buffering features in the development site design. This shall include implementation of City Municipal Code, Chapter 14.05, "Agricultural Activities," in effect at the time of the annexation application that may include screening, fencing, landscaping, setbacks, and other provisions to buffer agricultural uses. 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. Evidence of compliance with this mitigation measure shall be provided in the annexation application to LAFCo.

Significance after Mitigation

Mitigation Measure 3.2-3 would reduce potential conflicts that could adversely affect agricultural operations by establishing buffering from existing agricultural uses and disclosure to future residents of adjacent agricultural activities. However, it is not feasible to fully mitigate agriculture/urban interface conflicts, especially as this relates 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. Thus, this impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.

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