
3.2 - Agricultural Resources

This section describes and evaluates potential direct and indirect environmental impacts to agricultural resources that may result from the proposed City of Elk Grove Sphere of Influence Amendment (SOIA). Descriptions and analysis in this section are based on information provided by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program and the United States Department of Agriculture. The Notice of Preparation identified the Agricultural Resources topical issue for evaluation (Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission 2010).

3.2.1 - Environmental Setting

Surrounding Agricultural Land Uses

West

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which protects scarce natural habitats and agricultural resources, forms the western boundary of the project site. Land uses within the refuge include pastures and agricultural uses. Agricultural uses occupy the area immediately next to the proposed SOIA Area's western boundary. County of Sacramento land use designations west of the project site include Agricultural Cropland, Natural Preserve, and Resource Conservation. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) classification for lands immediately west of the SOIA Area boundary is predominantly Farmland of Statewide Importance, with portions classified as Grazing, Farmland of Local Importance, and smaller units of Prime Farmland. FMMP classifications are further described below. FMMP classifications for surrounding land uses are show in Exhibit 3.2-1.

North

The project site is bounded by the City of Elk Grove to the north. Land uses immediately north of the SOIA Area include suburban residential uses and vacant land. The FMMP classification for lands immediately north of the SOIA Area boundary is predominantly Urban and Built-Up Land, followed by Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing, and smaller units of Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown in Exhibit 3.2-1.

East

Rural residential and agricultural uses exist immediately east of the project boundary. Land in this area also lies within the Federal Emergency Management Agency 100-year floodplain of the Cosumnes River. County of Sacramento land use designations southeast of the project site include General Agriculture, Agricultural Cropland, Natural Preserve, and Resource Conservation. The FMMP classification for lands immediately east of the SOIA Area boundary is predominantly Prime Farmland, as shown in Exhibit 3.2-1.

South

Land uses in this area are similar to the adjacent agricultural land uses within the project site. County of Sacramento land use designations south of the project site include Agricultural Cropland, Natural Preserve, and Resource Conservation Area (south of Core Road between Franklin Boulevard and Ed

Rau Road). The FMMP classification for lands immediately south of the SOIA Area boundary is predominantly Farmland of Statewide Importance and Prime Farmland, with smaller units of Farmland of Local Importance and Unique Farmland, as shown in Exhibit 3.2-1.

Farmland Classifications

The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) classifies cultivated agricultural land into four categories, listed below:

- **Prime Farmland:** 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.

Prime Farmland is defined in California Government Code Section 56064 as follows:

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 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service 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 United States Department of Agriculture in the National Range and Pasture Handbook, Revision 1, December 2003.
 - (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.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Land similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to hold and store moisture.
 - **Unique Farmland:** 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.

- **Farmland of Local Importance:** Land of importance in the local agricultural economy, as determined by each county’s board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.

The project site contains land in all four farmland categories, as shown on Exhibit 3.2-1. Table 3.2-1 provides the allocation of farmland within the project site. All four categories constitute Important Farmland under the FMMP. Therefore, approximately 94 percent of the SOIA Area is considered Important Farmland under the FMMP. The SOIA Area contains approximately 3 percent of the total Important Farmland inventoried within the county.

Table 3.2-1: FMMP Agricultural Lands in SOIA Area

Farmland Category	Acres	Percentage of SOIA Area	Percentage of County Inventory*
Prime Farmland	446.40	6%	0%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	4,862.80	62%	11%
Unique Farmland	122.40	2%	1%
Farmland of Local Importance	1,928.70	25%	4%
Total Important Farmland	7,360.30	94%	3%

Note:
Total SOIA Area is 7,869 acres.
* County Inventory of farmland categories is based on the 2010 FMMP data, discussed in further detail in Table 3.2-2 and Table 3.2-3. Total percentage of County Inventory calculated from the County 2010 inventory of 211,744 acres. Acreage calculations for SOIA Area are based on the project boundary and source information provided by the City of Elk Grove.
Source: California Department of Conservation 2010a; California Department of Conservation 2010b.

In addition, Exhibit 3.6-1, Soils Map, in Section 3.6, Geology, Soils, and Seismicity, of this Recirculated Draft EIR, shows the soils in the SOIA Area. Detailed information on soils properties is provided in Table 3.6-3, Soils Properties Summary, which contains data from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Farmland Conversion

The FMMP now has more than 20 years of data for locations across the state. Land use conversion data is available for Sacramento County in two-year increments (such as 2008–2010) from 1988 to present. Acreage of Important Farmland designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance has steadily declined within Sacramento County between 1988 and 2010, with marked reductions in acreage occurring between 1998 and 2000 and between 2002 and 2006. FMMP data shows an average of 1,654 acres of Important Farmland removed annually within the county. Table 3.2-2 contains select years of FMMP data for FMMP land use categories within Sacramento County.

Table 3.2-2: Historical Land Use Conversion in Sacramento County

Land Use Category	Acreage by Category			1988–2010 Net Acreage Change	Average Annual Acreage Change
	1988	2000	2010		
Prime Farmland	124,415	115,389	97,476	-26,939	-1,225
Farmland of Statewide Importance	79,822	63,536	45,264	-34,558	-1,571
Unique Farmland	12,082	15,476	15,076	2,994	136
Farmland of Local Importance	31,821	33,530	53,928	22,107	1,005
Important Farmland Subtotal	248,140	227,931	211,744	-36,396	-1,654
Grazing Land	176,777	168,144	155,822	-20,958	-953
Agricultural Land Subtotal	424,917	396,075	367,566	-57,351	-2,607
Urban and Built-Up Land	131,321	157,162	178,784	47,463	2,157
Other Land	61,150	64,593	71,584	10,434	474
Water Area	18,695	18,253	18,147	-548	-25
Total Area Inventoried	636,083	636,083	636,081	-2	0

Source: California Department of Conservation, 2010c.

The acreages of land use conversions that occurred between 2008 and 2010 are provided in Table 3.2-3. As shown in Table 3.2-3, Farmland of Local Importance increased by over 10,000 acres between 2008 and 2010, while lands categorized as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland decreased by a greater amount. The primary cause of acreage change in this time frame was the conversion, or re-categorization, of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to the Farmland of Local Importance category. Similarly, approximately 171 acres of Unique Farmland were converted to Farmland of Local Importance within this time frame. A detailed breakdown of land use conversions from 2008 to 2010 in Sacramento County is available at the Department of Conservation’s FMMP website.

Table 3.2-3: Land Use Conversion in Sacramento County (2008–2010)

Land Use Category	Acreage by Category		Net Acreage Change
	2008	2010	
Prime Farmland	104,366	97,476	-6,890
Farmland of Statewide Importance	49,470	45,264	-4,206
Unique Farmland	15,463	15,076	-387
Farmland of Local Importance	43,819	53,928	10,109
Important Farmland Subtotal	213,118	211,744	-1,374
Grazing Land	156,144	155,822	-322

Table 3.2-3 (cont.): Land Use Conversion in Sacramento County (2008–2010)

Land Use Category	Acreage by Category		Net Acreage Change
	2008	2010	
Agricultural Land Subtotal	369,262	367,566	-1,696
Urban and Built-Up Land	177,915	178,784	869
Other Land	70,757	71,584	827
Water Area	18,147	18,147	0
Total Area Inventoried	636,081	636,081	0

Source: California Department of Conservation, 2010a; California Department of Conservation, 2010b.

Agricultural Zoning

The project site primarily contains agricultural uses with rural housing, light industrial, commercial, and public facilities. Agricultural-based General Plan land use designations account for approximately 97 percent of the land area within the SOIA Area. The project site contains several agricultural zoning classifications, listed in Table 3.2-4, which provides acreages of each classification within the project site.

Table 3.2-4: Agricultural Zoning

County Zoning	Acreage	Percentage of SOIA Area
A2 ^(a)	53	1%
Agricultural-20 acres (AG20)	302	4%
Agricultural-40 acres (AG40)	53	1%
Agricultural-80 acres (AG80)	7,328	93%
Agricultural Residential-2 acres (AR2)	18	0%
Agricultural Residential-10 acres (AR10)	50	1%
Total	7,804	99%

Notes:
^(a) Multiple zoning designations: Agricultural-40 acres (AG40), Agricultural-80 acres (AG80)
 Total SOIA Area is 7,869 acres.
 Source: City of Elk Grove, Sphere of Influence Amendment Application, 2010.

Agricultural Economy

Agriculture provides jobs directly through farming operations and in related industries such as food processing, transportation, equipment sales, and other vertically integrated production processes. Agriculture in the Central Valley provides more than 10 percent of all jobs. The sub-region in the Central Valley least dependent on agricultural jobs is the Sacramento metropolitan sub-region, representing 1.7 percent of all jobs. In 2007, total gross agricultural production was estimated at \$36.6

Agricultural Resources

billion. Of that, the Sacramento metropolitan region accounted for \$1.46 billion, or approximately 4 percent of the state’s total production (Great Valley Center 2009).

According to the Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, the project site contains multiple crop types, as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, Crop Commodities in the SOIA Area, which provides acreages of each crop within the project site as well as the County’s estimated value for each crop.

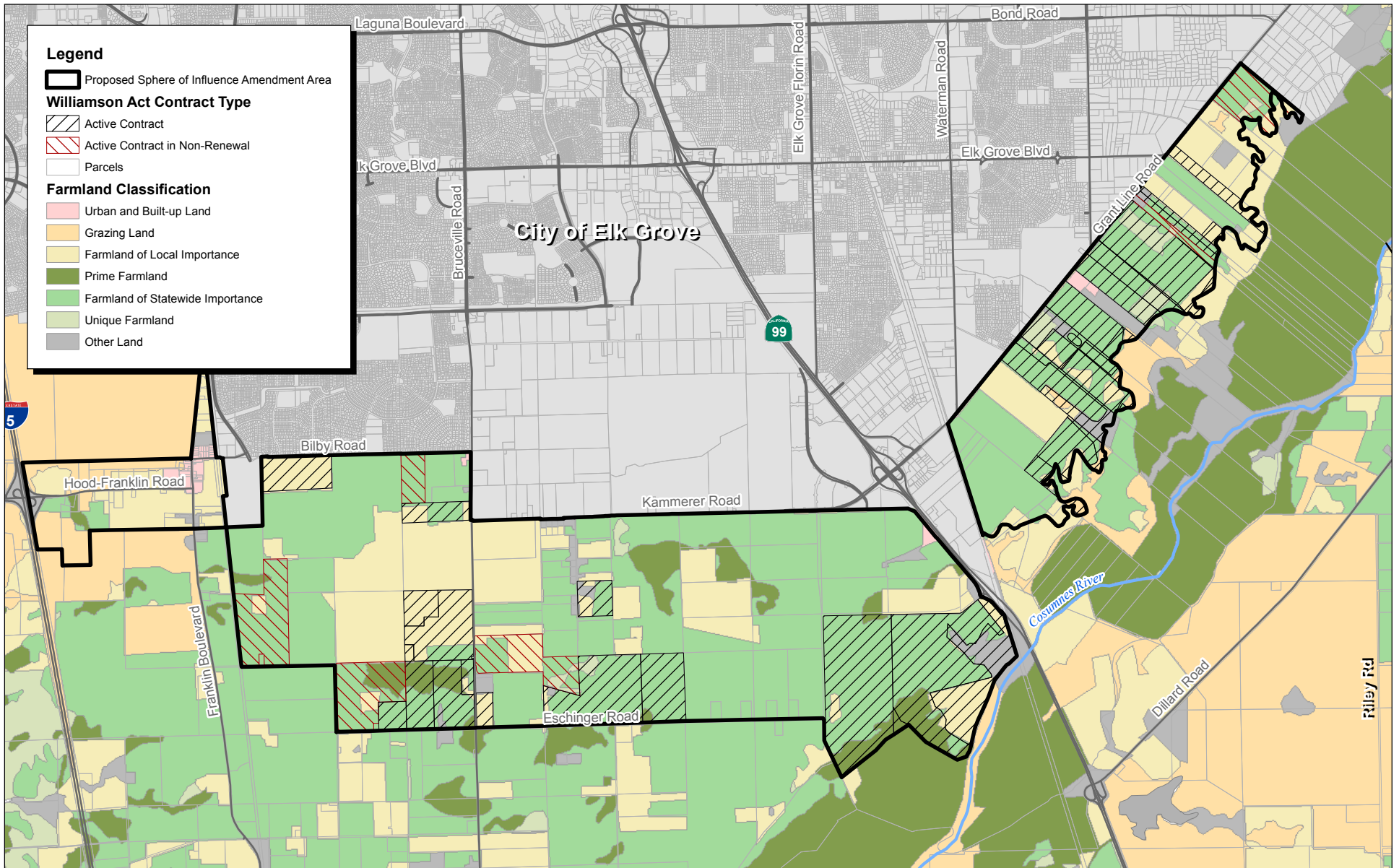
Table 3.2-5: Crop Commodities in the SOIA Area

Crop Commodity	Estimated Harvest Acreage	Percentage of SOIA Area	Total Value
Alfalfa	504	6%	\$363,787
Corn, Forage/Fodder	189	2%	\$104,423
Corn, Grain	362	5%	\$306,838
Grape, Wine	1,214	15%	\$4,566,869
Oat, Forage/Fodder	903	11%	\$313,093
Oat Hay	934	12%	\$219,066
Pastureland	1,357	17%	\$169,625
Rangeland	351	4%	\$7,722
Ryegrass, Forage/Fodder	188	2%	\$39,397
Strawberry	8	0%	\$88,704
Wheat	313	4%	\$142,503
Miscellaneous	302	4%	\$764,492
Livestock	NA		\$6,919,000
Total	6,625	84%	\$14,005,519

Notes:
 Total SOIA Area is 7,869 acres.
 NA = Not applicable
 Miscellaneous includes forage hay, safflower, uncultivated land, miscellaneous vegetables, and wheat for fodder.
 Livestock Values are:
 Heifer dairy cow = \$3,000 Cow/calf pair = \$2,100
 Source: Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, 2012.

Williamson Act Contracts

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly called the Williamson Act, has long been the mainstay of Sacramento County’s agricultural land preservation program. The purpose of the Williamson Act is to secure a long-term landowner commitment to maintain farmland in agricultural uses in exchange for assessment of the land based upon use rather than market value.



Source: County of Sacramento, City of Elk Grove, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2008.

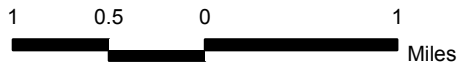
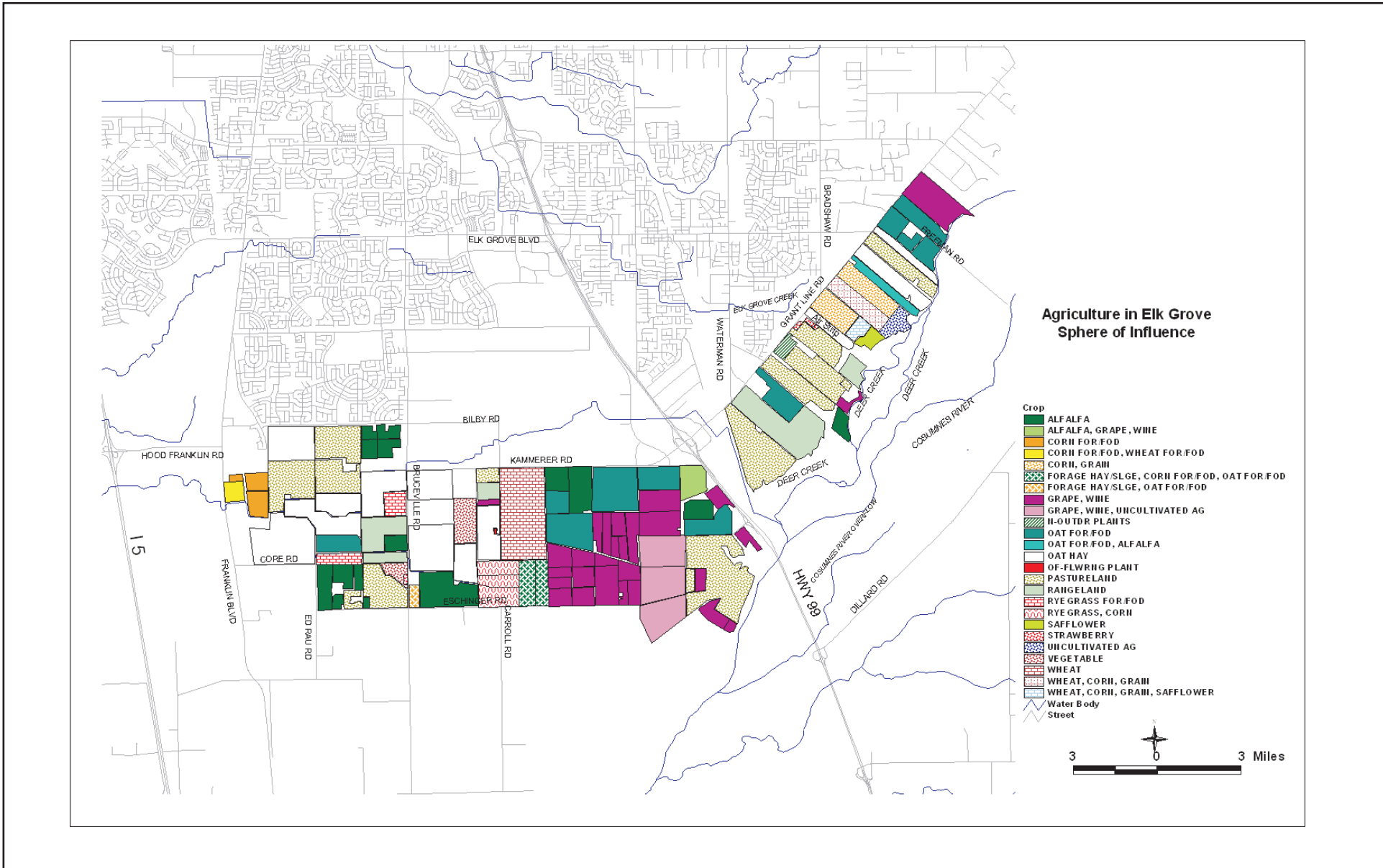


Exhibit 3.2-1 Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program Agricultural Lands



Source: County Agricultural Commissioner.



Michael Brandman Associates

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Exhibit 3.2-2 Agricultural Crops Within SOIA Area

Approximately 2,474 acres of the project site are covered by active, multiple Williamson Act contracts. Some property owners have filed a Notice of Non-Renewal on approximately 548.8 acres to initiate termination of the contract. The Williamson Act expiration dates for the non-renewal lands within the SOI Area range from 2013 to 2016, with the majority of expirations occurring in 2014. Exhibit 2-5, Williamson Act Lands, in Section 2, Project Description, shows the SOIA Area properties that are under active contracts and active contracts where a Non-Renewal Notice has been filed.

According to the General Plan Agricultural Element, by 2003—38 years after the program’s initiation—171,492 acres, representing 27 percent of the County, were enrolled in the Williamson Act program. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the acreage of Williamson Act contracts.

Table 3.2-6: Williamson Act Contracts

Contract Status	Acres
Active Contract	2,474.00
Contract in Non-Renewal	548.80
Total	3,022.80
Note: Acreage calculations are based on the project boundary and source information provided by the City of Elk Grove and information obtained from the State of California. Source: City of Elk Grove, Sphere of Influence Amendment Application, 2010; California Department of Conservation 2010d	

3.2.2 - Regulatory Framework

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)

The FMMP was established in 1982 to continue farmland mapping efforts initiated in 1975 by the Soil Conservation Service (since renamed Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS]) of the US Department of Agriculture. Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the NRCS with completing its mapping in the state. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program was created within the California Department of Conservation to carry on the mapping activity on a continuing basis and with a greater level of detail, with the purpose of assessing the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands over time.

Williamson Act

The Williamson Act is a voluntary program that allows property owners to have their properties assessed on the basis of their agricultural production rather than at the current market value. The property owner is thus relieved of having to pay higher property taxes, as long as the land remains in agricultural production. The purpose of the Williamson Act is to encourage property owners to continue to farm their land and to prevent the premature conversion of farmland to urban uses.

Upon approval of an application by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, the agricultural preserve is established, and the land within the preserve is restricted to agricultural and compatible uses for at least 10 years. Williamson Act contracts are automatically renewed annually for an additional 1-year period, unless the property owner applies for non-renewal or early cancellation. The Williamson Act also contains limited provisions for cancellation of contracts, and a substantial penalty is assessed for the cancellation.

In addition, lands can be designated as “farmland security zones” under the Williamson Act program. A farmland security zone is an area created within an agricultural preserve of a minimum 100 acres in size by a board of supervisors upon request by a landowner or group of landowners. The farmland security zone contract enforceably restricts land to agricultural or open space uses, with a minimum initial term of 20 years. Similar to a Williamson Act contract, farmland security zone contracts self-renew annually; thus, unless either party files a “notice of nonrenewal,” the contract is automatically renewed each year for an additional year. Farmland security zones offer landowners greater property tax reduction. Land restricted by a farmland security zone contract is valued for property assessment purposes at 65 percent of its Williamson Act valuation, or 65 percent of its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower.

Local

Sacramento LAFCo

The Sacramento LAFCo has developed standards and guidelines in its Policies, Standards, and Procedures Guidelines that aid in the implementation of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act and are provided below. LAFCo may make exceptions to these general and specific standards if it determines that such exceptions: are necessary due to 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, 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.

- 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.

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.

City of Elk Grove

Approval by LAFCo of this SOIA does not authorize any change in land use or governance. However, the proposed project would adjust the City of Elk Grove's SOI and allow the City the opportunity to file an annexation request with LAFCo to annex lands within the SOIA Area. The City of Elk Grove General Plan establishes goals and policies to guide both present and future development within the City's jurisdiction. The City of Elk Grove's General Plan policies directly or indirectly related to agricultural resources that may apply to potential future development in the SOIA Area are provided below.

- **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 the 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”¹ 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 Agricultural Activities ordinance.

3.2.3 - Methodology

The City of Elk Grove General Plan was reviewed for applicable policies that apply to the project site. The analysis excluded changes in General Plan land use designations or zoning classifications, including pre-zoning, because neither of these changes is proposed or necessary for project implementation.

The impacts related to agricultural resources from implementation of the 2003 Elk Grove General Plan were evaluated in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). All mitigation measures identified for impacts in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR and adopted by the City continue to remain the responsibility of the City as part of implementation of the General Plan. Consequently, upon approval of any future annexation request for the SOIA Area, those General Plan policies and EIR mitigation measures are assumed to apply to development within the SOIA Area.

3.2.4 - Thresholds of Significance

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.

According to Appendix G, Environmental Checklist of the CEQA Guidelines, agricultural impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project would be considered significant if the project would:

¹ The “Right to Farm” ordinance referenced in this policy is now referred to as the “Agricultural Activities” ordinance.

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

3.2.5 - Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses potential impacts associated with the development of the project and provides mitigation measures where appropriate.

Farmland Conversion within Project Boundary

Impact AG-1: **The project may convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use.**

Impact Analysis

This impact will evaluate the potential for the proposed project to directly or indirectly convert Important Farmland to nonagricultural use.

The proposed SOIA would expand the City’s Sphere of Influence boundary to include agricultural lands classified as Farmland. The land use assumptions discussed in Section 2, Project Description, consider the SOIA Area to be potentially developed with urban uses that would result in a loss of approximately 7,360 acres of Important Farmland. In addition, adjacent agricultural uses and related agricultural businesses may be adversely impacted by urbanization of the SOIA Area.

The proposed project by itself would not directly result in development proposals or proposed changes to General Plan land use designations or zoning classifications that would have the potential to convert Farmland; therefore, direct conversion of Farmland would not occur. However, approval of the SOIA by LAFCo would indicate that the Commission has considered the revised SOIA Area for future urbanization; therefore, indirect impacts related to permanent conversion of agricultural uses to urban uses would be potentially significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the conversion of Farmland by setting aside lands in permanent conservation easements. However, because it is reasonably foreseeable that annexation and development would ultimately follow the expansion of the SOIA, the proposed SOIA would indirectly result in the permanent loss of Important Farmland; impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

MM AG-1 At the time of submittal of any application to change land uses within the Sphere of Influence Amendment (SOIA) Area from agricultural uses to urban uses, the City will require that applicants protect one (1) acre of existing farmland land of equal or higher quality for each acre of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance that would be developed as a result of the project. This protection may consist of the establishment of a farmland conservation easement, farmland deed restriction, or other appropriate farmland conservation mechanism 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). 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 will 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 SOIA Area; 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 encumbrment 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:

- a) All owners of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land shall execute the document encumbering the land.
- b) The document shall be recordable and contain an accurate legal description of the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
- c) The document shall prohibit any activity that substantially impairs or diminishes the agricultural productivity of the land. If the conservation easement is also proposed for wildlife habitat mitigation purposes, the document shall also prohibit any activity that substantially impairs or diminishes the wildlife habitat suitability of the land.

- d) The document shall protect any existing water rights necessary to maintain agricultural uses on the land covered by the document and retain such water rights for ongoing use on the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land.
- e) Interests in agricultural/habitat mitigation land shall be held in trust 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.
- f) The applicant shall pay to the City an agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation monitoring fee to cover the costs of administering, monitoring, and enforcing the document in an amount determined by the receiving entity, in an amount determined by the City.
- g) The City shall be named a beneficiary under any document conveying the interest in the agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land to an entity acceptable to the City.
- h) If any qualifying entity owning an interest in agricultural/wildlife habitat mitigation land ceases to exist, the duty to hold, administer, monitor, and enforce the interest shall be transferred to another entity acceptable to the City or transferred to the City.

Before committing to the preservation of any particular farmland pursuant to this measure, the project proponent shall obtain the City's approval of the farmland proposed for preservation.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Even with mitigation measure AG-1, the proposed SOIA may indirectly result in the permanent loss of Important Farmland and would not create additional farmland to replace it. Therefore, this is a significant and unavoidable impact.

Conflict with Agricultural Zoning

Impact AG-2: **The project may conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.**

Impact Analysis

This impact will evaluate potential agricultural conflicts and loss of Williamson Act contract lands within the SOIA Area.

The proposed SOIA would expand the City's Sphere of Influence to include lands zoned for agricultural use. Should project approval occur, the existing Sacramento County agricultural zoning classifications would be retained. Any future development, if pursued by the City of Elk Grove, will require annexation of the subject parcel(s) and would be subject to its own CEQA review. Accordingly, land use and zoning designation would be revised in conjunction with the project applications.

Agricultural Resources

There are approximately 24 parcels within the SOIA Area that are under Williamson Act contracts. These 24 contracts, which represent approximately 2,474 acres, are “ongoing” contracts, meaning that the property owners have not applied to be released from the contracts. Removal of these properties from their Williamson Act contracts represents a potentially significant impact, as it would allow for the conversion of these properties to urban uses. Approval of the SOIA itself would not directly prompt Williamson Act contract cancellations or non-renewals. However, future proposed annexations with specific developments could prompt such actions. Therefore, the impact of removing these properties from their Williamson Act contracts is taken into account when considering the impacts associated with the loss of farmland within Sacramento County.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-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 proposed SOIA may indirectly result in the permanent loss of Williamson Act contract land and would not create additional farmland to replace it. As such, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

Implement Mitigation Measure AG-1.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Even with mitigation measure AG-1, the proposed SOIA may indirectly result in the permanent loss of Williamson Act contract land and would not create additional farmland to replace it.

Significant and unavoidable impact.

Indirect Farmland Conversion

Impact AG-3:	The project may involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use.
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Impact Analysis

This impact will evaluate the potential for the proposed project to create pressure to convert farmland to nonagricultural use as well as potential conflicts between future urban uses within the SOIA Area and continuing agricultural uses in adjacent areas.

The project site is surrounded by urban uses to the north and east and agricultural land to the south, southeast, and west. The lands south, southeast, and west of the project site are designated General Agriculture, Agricultural Cropland, Resource Conservation, or Natural Preserve by the County of Sacramento.

The proposed project could indirectly result in the loss of approximately 7,360 acres of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Local or State Importance, and Unique Farmland, as designated on the Sacramento County Important Farmlands map (California Department of Conservation) and as shown on Exhibit 3.2-1. These properties could be converted to urbanized, nonagricultural uses as an indirect effect of the project.

As discussed in the Regulatory Framework, LAFCo must consider five factors when determining whether a proposal will have no significant adverse effect on the physical and economic integrity of other agricultural lands. These factors, and associated discussions, are:

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

Discussion 1. As discussed in the Environmental Setting and displayed in Exhibit 3.2-1, the SOIA Area and surrounding areas contain lands classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance, with approximately 94 percent of the SOIA Area categorized under one of these classifications.

Factor 2. The use of the subject and adjacent areas.

Discussion 2. The harvestable crops grown within the SOIA Area are described in the Environmental Setting; specifically, acreage and total value per crop commodity are listed in Table 3.2-5. Surrounding land uses south and southwest of the SOIA Area are substantially similar to the SOIA Area, with the inclusion of grazing and conservation uses as described in the Environmental Setting. Lands north of the SOIA Area boundary are largely urban, with a portion of Farmland of Local Importance. The existing Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located northeast of the SOIA Area, and the 100-year floodplain and Cosumnes River are located east and southeast of the SOIA Area.

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.

Discussion 3. The project does not involve any changes to land use nor propose specific public facilities.

Factor 4. Whether natural or man-made barriers serve to buffer adjacent or nearby agricultural lands from the effects of the proposed development.

Discussion 4. The SOIA Area is largely bounded by the City of Elk Grove and urbanization to the north, the existing Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge to the northeast, and the 100-year floodplain and Cosumnes River to the east and southeast. However, areas south and

southeast of the SOIA Area boundary do not contain natural or man-made barriers to buffer adjacent or nearby agricultural lands from potential impacts of future, indirect growth within the SOIA Area.

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.

Discussion 5. The City of Elk Grove General Plan policies are provided in the Regulatory Framework subsection. In addition, a General Plan consistency analysis is provided in Section 3.10, Land Use and Planning, for project consistency with the County of Sacramento General Plan, the City of Elk Grove General Plan, and the Sacramento LAFCo's policies and standards in Table 3.10-3, Table 3.10-4, and Table 3.10-5, respectively.

Land use compatibility impacts could occur between future urban development within the SOIA Area and agricultural uses in adjacent areas. Compatibility issues would most likely include noise, odor, lighting, and truck and tractor traffic.

Although the proposed SOIA would amend the City's Sphere of Influence boundaries, property within the amended SOI Area would not be within the City's jurisdiction until future requests for annexation of property are approved by LAFCo. Upon approval of those future requests for annexation, the newly annexed property would be within the City's jurisdiction and subject to applicable City General Plan policies and regulations. These policies include City of Elk Grove General Plan Policy CAQ-4 and its associated two actions that consist of the use of the City's Agricultural Activities ordinance (Municipal Code Chapter 14.05) and the requirement for notification of prospective buyers of property adjacent to agricultural land that they could be subject to inconvenience or discomfort resulting from accepted farming activities.

Mitigation Measure AG-3 would require the City to prepare a plan to avoid land use compatibility conflicts prior to annexation. The plan shall include implementation of the City's Agricultural Activities (Municipal Code Chapter 14.05), site design, screening, fencing, landscaping and setbacks, as well as procedures for addressing complaints from future SOIA Area residents. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-3 would help reduce potential indirect farmland conversion and land use compatibility impacts to a less than significant level. However, this measure would not fully mitigate agriculture/urban interface conflicts, especially concerning 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 because the process does not guarantee resolution of all conflicts. Therefore, this impact is considered significant and unavoidable.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

MM AG-3 At the time of submittal of any application to annex territory within the Sphere of Influence Amendment (SOIA), the City of Elk Grove shall prepare an agricultural land use compatibility plan for the SOIA Area. The plan shall include implementation of the City’s Agricultural Activities ordinance (Municipal Code, Chapter 14.05), as required under Elk Grove General Plan Policy CAQ-4-Action 1, site design, screening, fencing, landscaping, and setbacks. 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 Agricultural Activities ordinance (City of Elk Grove Municipal Code Chapter 14.05).

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-3 would help reduce potential indirect farmland conversion and land use compatibility impacts to a less than significant level. However, this measure would not fully mitigate agriculture/urban interface conflicts, especially in regard 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 because the process does not guarantee resolution of all conflicts.

Significant and unavoidable impact.

