

4. Environmental Impact Assessment

4.2 Agricultural and Forestry Resources

This section describes the agricultural and forestry resources in the Proposed Project Area and discusses the affected environment, regulatory setting, and potential impacts to agriculture and forestry.

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

Historically, agricultural production has been a significant portion of the Kern and San Bernardino County economies. However, farming and other agricultural land uses have not been widespread within the vicinity of the Proposed Project and do not currently play an important part of the local economy. In fact, agricultural entities are not currently listed among the top 30 employers within the City of Ridgecrest (Ridgecrest 2010).

No Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or parcels covered by a California Land Conservation Act contract are known to exist within the entirety of the Proposed Project area. In addition, no portion of the Proposed Project within the City of Ridgecrest is designated for Agricultural (A-5) use. The Proposed Project area is sparsely vegetated by non-timber producing flora; no forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production are known to exist within the entirety of the Proposed Project area.²¹

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

4.2.2.1 Federal

No federal regulations concerning agriculture or forestry are applicable to the Proposed Project.

4.2.2.2 State

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965—Commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that reflect the land worth based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. In addition, local

²¹ Note: Portions of the Proposed Project within San Bernardino County are not covered by existing maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency.

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governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971.

4.2.2.3 Local

No local regulations concerning agriculture or forestry are applicable to the Proposed Project.

4.2.3 Significance Criteria

The significance criteria for assessing the impacts to Agriculture and Forestry Resources come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. A project causes a potentially significant impact if it would:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
- 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 land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- 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.

4.2.4 Impact Assessment

Construction and operation of the Proposed Project would result in no impacts for the following CEQA criteria:

Would the Proposed Project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

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No Impact. No Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance exists within the Proposed Project area, and none would be converted to non-agricultural use. Therefore, no impacts would occur under this criterion as a result of the Proposed Project.

Would the Proposed Project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact. No existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contracts exist within the Proposed Project area. Therefore, no impacts would occur under this criterion as a result of the Proposed Project.

Would the Proposed Project 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))?

No Impact. No forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production exists within the Proposed Project area. Therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion as a result of the Proposed Project.

Would the Proposed Project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. No forest land exists within the Proposed Project area. Therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion as a result of the Proposed Project.

Would the Proposed Project 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?

No Impact. No changes to the existing environment would occur that could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion as a result of the Proposed Project.

4.2.5 Applicant Proposed Measures

Because the Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts to agricultural and forestry resources, no Applicant Proposed Measures are offered.

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REFERENCES

- California Department of Conservation (CDC), Division of Land Resource Protection, Williamson Act Program. 2006. Kern County Williamson Act Lands 2005. Published March 5, 2006. [Online Resource] Available at: <ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/wa/Map%20and%20PDF/Kern/>. Accessed June 30, 2010.
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