

## 4.16 Agricultural Resources

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*As a result of comments received on the January 2017 Draft EIR/EIS, revisions have been made to this EIR/EIS section. Those changes include:*

- *Updates to Table 4.16-1 to include the most recent Land Use Conversion data;*
- *Clarification about the historical use of the proposed MPWSP Desalination Plant site;*
- *Revision to Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 to include consultation with property owners during the construction season; and*
- *Additional language in the impact conclusion to Impact 4.16-2 to clarify that operation of the proposed project would not adversely affect farmland because the proposed project would result in less-than-significant impacts on groundwater quality and levels.*

This section evaluates the potential for implementation of the Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project (MPWSP or proposed project) to adversely affect existing agricultural operations or agricultural resources in the vicinity.

### 4.16.1 Setting/Affected Environment

The study area for agricultural resources is the project area boundary and contiguous properties. The project area boundary is defined as the area within which all construction-related disturbances would occur. This section provides an overview of agricultural resources in the Monterey region and identifies the resources within and adjacent to the project area, including designated farmland, grazing land, and land protected by Williamson Act contracts. There are no Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) resources that would be affected by impacts identified in this section; all impacts related to agricultural resources would occur outside of MBNMS boundaries. Therefore, MBNMS resources are not described in the environmental setting/affected environment.

Monterey County is California’s third largest agricultural producer. Agricultural crop production and livestock grazing is the largest industry in the county, with approximately 56 percent of the land (or approximately 1.3 million acres) used for agricultural purposes. Of the total land in the

county dedicated to agriculture, approximately 80 percent is used for grazing. The county's predominant crops are cool-season vegetables, strawberries, wine grapes, and nursery plants. Most of the agricultural lands are in the northern portion of the county and in the Salinas Valley (Monterey County, 2010).

Agricultural lands in the project area are concentrated north of Reservation Road in unincorporated Monterey County. This area contains a mosaic of predominantly row crop agricultural fields bordered by coastal dunes and beaches to the west. Project components proposed in this area include the Source Water Pipeline, MPWSP Desalination Plant, Brine Discharge Pipeline, Brine Mixing Box, Pipeline to CSIP Pond, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline.

### 4.16.1.1 Farmland Classifications

#### ***Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program***

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection (CDC) maps important farmlands throughout California through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). Important farmland and agricultural land is classified into the following categories based on soil conditions (i.e., their suitability for agriculture) and current land use.

- ***Prime Farmland*** is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for long-term crop production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to sustain high crop yields when appropriately treated and managed. In addition, the land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production four years prior to the mapping date to qualify under this category.
- ***Farmland of Statewide Importance*** is similar to Prime Farmland in that it has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for crop production, but with minor shortcomings such as greater slopes and less ability to store moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- ***Unique Farmland*** is land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance but has been used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include the types of non-irrigated orchards or vineyards that are found in some climatic zones of California. Unique Farmland must have been in agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- ***Farmland of Local Importance*** applies to land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by the county. This land is either currently producing crops or has the capability of production, but does not meet the criteria of the preceding categories. According to the CDC (2015a), there is no Farmland of Local Importance in Monterey County. Therefore, this category is not discussed further.
- ***Grazing Land*** is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

The FMMP updates its Important Farmland Series Maps every two years and produces a biannual report on the amount of land converted from agricultural to non-agricultural use. The most recent land use conversion data summarize land use conversion by FMMP category between 2012 and 2014. **Table 4.16-1** shows the total acreage and recent conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Grazing Land in Monterey County. In summary, there was a net decrease in acreage of Prime Farmland, a net increase in acreage in Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland, but a net decrease in grazing land between 2012 and 2014.

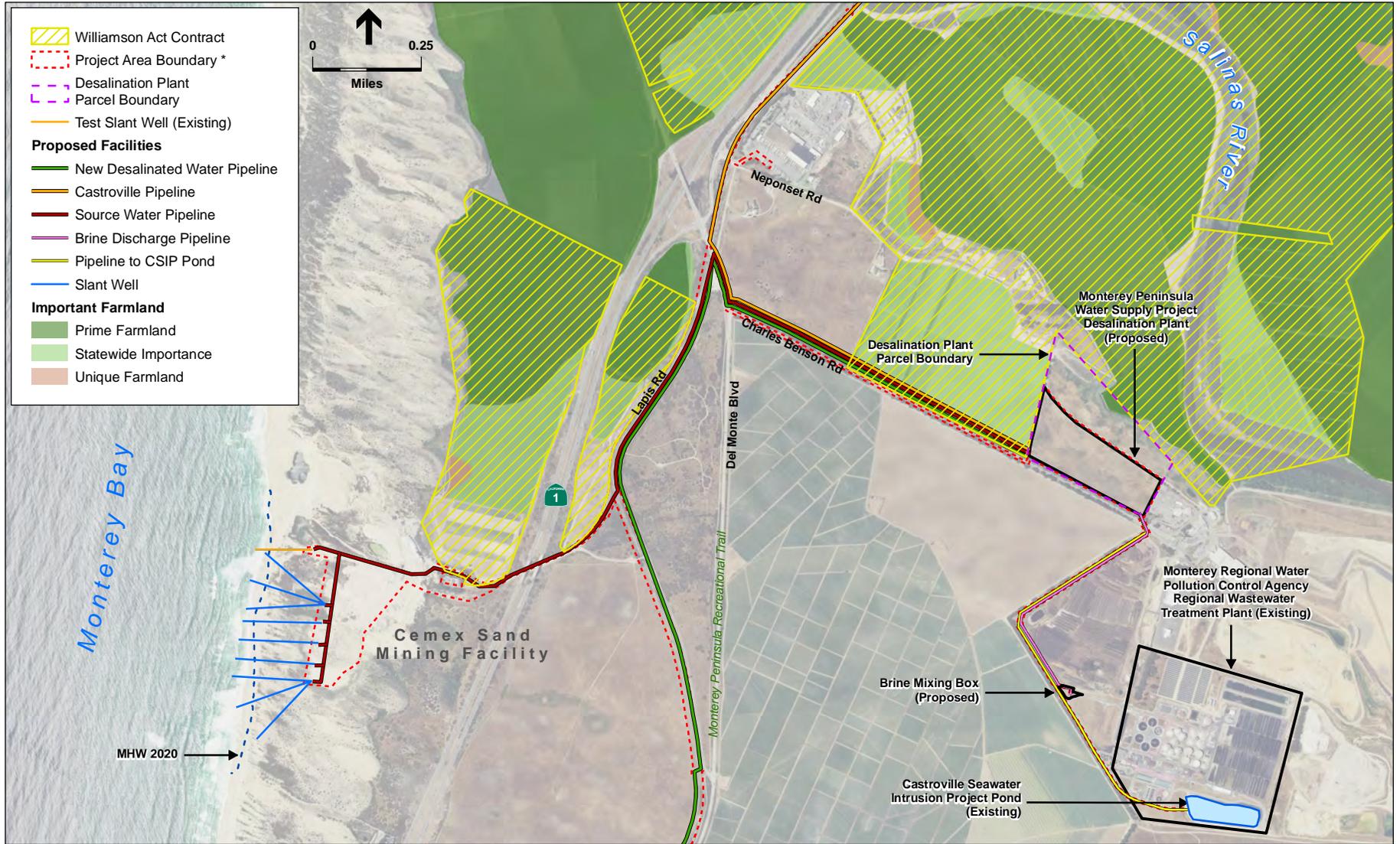
**TABLE 4.16-1  
 MONTEREY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND SUMMARY  
 AND CONVERSION BY FMMP LAND USE CATEGORY (2012-2014)**

Land Use Category	Total Acreage Inventoried		2012–2014 Acreage Changes			
	2012	2014	Acres Lost (-)	Acres Gained (+)	Total Acreage Changed	Net Acreage Changed
Prime Farmland	166,334	166,188	673	527	1,200	-146
Farmland of Statewide Importance	43,824	43,994	399	569	968	170
Unique Farmland	25,708	26,101	227	620	847	393
<b>Important Farmland Subtotal</b>	<b>235,866</b>	<b>236,283</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>1,716</b>	<b>3,015</b>	<b>417</b>
Grazing Land	1,063,438	1,062,699	1,816	1,077	2,893	-739
<b>Agricultural Land Subtotal</b>	<b>1,299,304</b>	<b>1,298,982</b>	<b>3,115</b>	<b>2,793</b>	<b>5,908</b>	<b>-322</b>
Urban and Built-up Land	57,927	58,147	11	231	242	220
Other Land	757,745	757,847	383	485	868	102
Water Area	6,246	6,246	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Area Inventoried</b>	<b>2,121,222</b>	<b>2,121,222</b>	<b>3,509</b>	<b>3,509</b>	<b>7,018</b>	<b>0</b>

SOURCE: CDC, 2016a.

### **Important Farmland Designations in the Project Area**

As shown in the FMMP land use conversion data in Table 4.16-1, important farmland is classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. As shown in **Figures 4.16-1** and **4.16-2**, portions of the project area north of Reservation Road are within or adjacent to important farmland. The farmland in this area is categorized as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Important farmland borders the west side of the Source Water Pipeline and the new Desalinated Water Pipeline along Lapis Road between the CEMEX access road and Del Monte Boulevard. The proposed alignments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be installed outside of the Charles Benson Road paved roadway, and within important farmland that borders the north side of Charles Benson Road and west side of the MPWSP Desalination Plant site. If the Source Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, new Desalinated Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, and

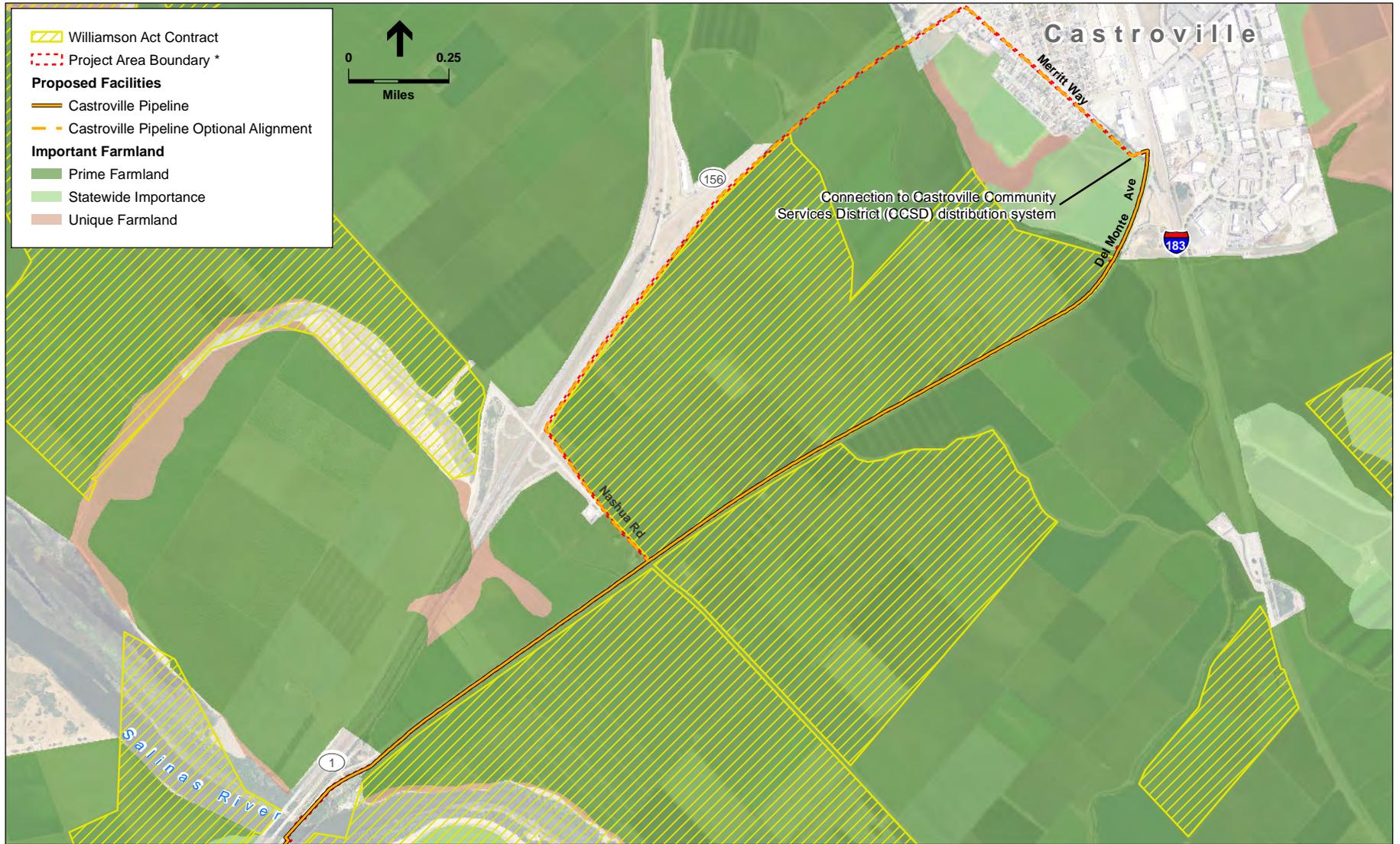


NOTE:  
 \*Project area boundary refers to the area within which all construction-related disturbance would occur.

SOURCE: ESA, 2016; CDC, 2015b, 2016b; Monterey County, 2016

205335.01 Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project

**Figure 4.16-1**  
 Farmland Mapping Designations and Williamson Act Contracts



NOTE:  
 \*Project area boundary refers to the area within which all construction-related disturbance would occur.

SOURCE: ESA, 2016; CDC, 2015b, 2016b; Monterey County, 2016

205335.01 Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project  
**Figure 4.16-2**  
 Farmland Mapping Designations and  
 Williamson Act Contracts for the Castroville Pipeline

Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 2 were implemented, pipeline installation in the important farmland would be avoided because these optional alignments would be installed within the paved roadway of Charles Benson Road.

The 25-acre MPWSP Desalination Plant site is located on the upper terrace of a 46-acre parcel. Approximately 1.7 acre in the lower terrace of the parcel is designated as Prime Farmland, but is outside of the project area. As indicated above, important farmland also exists west of, but outside of, the MPWSP Desalination Plant site (see **Figure 4.16-1**). The proposed desalination plant site layout therefore, provides for a 200 foot buffer from the adjacent farmland west of the site as shown in Figure 3-5b in Chapter 3, Description of the Proposed Project.

North of Neponset Road and south of the Salinas River crossing, important farmland borders the east side of the Castroville Pipeline and TAMC right-of-way for approximately 0.25 mile (1,200 feet). The remaining 2.75 miles of the Castroville Pipeline, between the Salinas River and Highway 183, would be installed in Monte Road and a dirt agricultural road (see **Figures 4.16-1** and **4.16-2**). Although most of Monte Road and the dirt agricultural road are mapped as important farmland, no crops are planted within these roads; they are used for the movement of vehicles, semi-trucks, and farm equipment.

Approximately 950 feet of the Castroville Optional Alignment 1 would be installed along Nashua Road, and 1,900 feet of the Castroville Optional Alignment 1 would be installed along the Monterey Peninsula Recreational Trail and east of Highway 1. These areas are mapped as important farmland but no crops are planted in Nashua Road or the recreational trail. Approximately 1.2 miles (6,350 feet) of the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 that is located east-to-west along Nashua Road and north-south along the Monterey Peninsula Recreational Trail is bordered to the north and east by important farmland, respectively (see **Figure 4.16-2**).

South of Reservation Road, land uses within and adjacent to the project area are predominantly urban and do not include agriculture, and the proposed facilities south of Reservation Road would not be within or adjacent to any important farmland (CDC, 2015b).

#### **4.16.1.2 Williamson Act Program**

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is the State's primary program aimed at conserving private land for agricultural and open space uses. The Williamson Act provides a mechanism through which private landowners can contract with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open space uses. In return, Williamson Act contracts offer tax incentives by ensuring that land is assessed for its agricultural productivity rather than its highest and best use. Contracts typically restrict land use for a period of 10 years; however, some jurisdictions exercise the option to extend the term for up to 20 years. Contracts are automatically renewed annually unless the landowner files for non-renewal or petitions for cancellation. The CDC is responsible for administering the Williamson Act and prepares countywide maps of lands enrolled in Williamson Act contracts.

In 2013, Monterey County had a total of 732,954 acres of agricultural land protected under Williamson Act contracts and was ranked third in an assessment of California counties with the greatest number of new Williamson Act enrollments (CDC, 2015c).

### ***Williamson Act Contracts in the Project Area***

Lands under Williamson Act contract are present at several locations in the project area north of Reservation Road (see **Figures 4.16-1** and **4.16-2**). Lands under Williamson Act contract extend across a portion of the CEMEX access road west of Highway 1, and border the north side of the CEMEX access road between Highway 1 and Lapis Road. The Source Water Pipeline would be buried underneath the CEMEX access road. In addition, Williamson Act contracts border the west side of the Source Water Pipeline and the new Desalinated Water Pipeline alignments along Lapis Road between the CEMEX access road and Del Monte Boulevard. The proposed alignments for the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be installed within the southern edge of Williamson Act land located on the north side of Charles Benson Road and west of the MPWSP Desalination Plant site. Since the Source Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, new Desalinated Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, and Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 2 would be installed within the paved roadway of Charles Benson Road, implementation of these optional alignments would avoid construction in Williamson Act lands.

Williamson Act contracts border the south side of the Castroville Pipeline and TAMC right-of-way for approximately 1.4 miles between Neponset Road and the Monte Road/Nashua Road intersection. Roughly 0.5 mile of the section of Castroville Pipeline that would be installed in the dirt agricultural road located north of Monte Road/Nashua Road is mapped as land under Williamson Act contracts. However, as stated above, no crops are planted within the agricultural road as it has historically been and is currently used for the movement of vehicles, semi-trucks, and farm equipment. The eastern 0.8-mile of pipeline in the dirt agricultural road is bordered to the north by Williamson Act lands. The Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 is bordered to the north by Williamson Act contracts between the intersection of Monte Road/Nashua Road and the Monterey Peninsula Recreational Trail and for approximately 1 mile to the east of the Monterey Recreational Trail as the alignment heads northward from Nashua Road. No crops are planted in Nashua Road or the recreational trail.

South of Reservation Road there are no Williamson Act contracts within or adjacent to the project area (CDC, 2016b).

## **4.16.2 Regulatory Framework**

This section provides an overview of notable federal, state, and local environmental laws, policies, plans, regulations, and/or guidelines (hereafter referred to generally as “regulatory requirements”) relevant to agricultural resources. A brief summary of each is provided, along with a finding regarding the proposed project’s conformity with those regulatory requirements. The conformity findings concern the proposed project, without mitigation. Where the proposed project would be consistent with the applicable regulatory requirement, no further discussion of project consistency with that regulatory requirement is provided. Where the proposed project would be potentially

inconsistent with the applicable regulatory requirement, the reader is referred to a specific, detailed impact discussion within Section 4.16.5, Direct and Indirect Effects of the Proposed Project. Where applicable, the discussion in Section 4.16.5 identifies feasible mitigation that would resolve or minimize the potential inconsistency.

### **4.16.2.1 Federal Regulations**

#### ***Farmland Protection Policy Act***

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA; 7 USC §4201 et seq.) is intended to minimize the impact of Federal programs on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The FPPA seeks to protect Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Farmland of Statewide Importance from irreversible conversion to non-agricultural use (7 USC §4201(c)(1)). Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they would irreversibly convert farmland to nonagricultural use and are completed by a Federal agency or with assistance from a Federal agency. Projects subject to FPPA should consider alternative actions that could lessen any adverse effects and assure that such projects are compatible with State and local programs and policies created to protect farmland. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for administering the FPPA (USDA, 2016).

Consistency with FPPA is relevant to the proposed project because portions of the project require various Federal permits, approvals, or authorizations, as described in Section 3.5, Permits, Approvals, and Regulatory Requirements. Furthermore, it would be funded, in part, by the State Revolving Fund program, a federal-state partnership that provides low-interest loans for investments in water and sanitation infrastructure. The proposed project would not be subject to FPPA requirements because the project would not irreversibly convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance to nonagricultural use. See Impacts 4.16-1 and 4.16-2 for additional discussion.

### **4.16.2.2 State Regulations**

#### ***California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)***

As described above, the California Land Conservation Act, or Williamson Act, is the State's primary program for conserving private land for agricultural and open space use. It is a voluntary, locally administered program that offers reduced property taxes on lands whose owners place enforceable restrictions on land use through contracts between the individual landowners and local governments.

The proposed alignments for the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be potentially inconsistent with the Williamson Act because they would be located on lands protected by Williamson Act contracts. This issue is further discussed below in Impact 4.16-2.

### **California Coastal Act**

The California Coastal Act (Public Resources Code Section 30000 et seq.) provides for the long-term management of lands within California's coastal zone boundary. Of primary relevance to agricultural resources are Coastal Act policies concerning maintenance of agricultural lands in production and limitations on conversions of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. None of the MPWSP components subject to the Coastal Act is proposed on agricultural lands. Therefore, the MPWSP would not conflict with Coastal Act policies governing the productivity or conversion of agricultural.

#### **4.16.2.3 Applicable Regional and Local Land Use Plans and Policies**

**Table 4.16-2** summarizes the regional and local land use plans, policies, and regulations pertaining to agriculture and indicates whether the proposed project is consistent with such plans, policies, and regulations. Where the analysis concludes the proposed project would be consistent with the applicable plan, policy, or regulation, the finding is noted and no further discussion is provided. Where the analysis concludes the proposed project is potentially inconsistent with the applicable plan, policy, or regulation, the reader is referred to the specific impact discussion in Section 4.16.5, Direct and Indirect Effects of the Proposed Project. In that subsection, the significance of the potential conflict is evaluated. Where the effect of the potential conflict would be significant, feasible mitigation is identified to resolve or minimize that conflict.

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**TABLE 4.16-2  
APPLICABLE REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

Project Planning Region	Applicable Plan	Plan Element/Section	Project Component(s)	Specific Plan, Policy, or Ordinance	Relationship to Avoiding or Mitigating a Significant Environmental Impact	Project Consistency with Plan, Policy, or Ordinance
County of Monterey (coastal zone & inland area)	Monterey County General Plan	Agriculture	MPWSP Desalination Plant, Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Brine Discharge Pipeline, Brine Mixing Box, Pipeline to CSIP Pond, and Castroville Pipeline	<b>Policy AG-1.1:</b> Land uses that would interfere with routine and ongoing agricultural operations on viable farmlands designated as Prime, of Statewide Importance, Unique, or of Local Importance shall be prohibited.	This policy is intended to protect agricultural operations on designated important farmlands from the loss of productivity as a result of incompatible land uses nearby.	<u>Consistent:</u> The proposed project would not introduce land uses that would interfere with routine and ongoing agricultural operations on viable farmlands. Although the proposed alignments for the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be installed within Farmland of Statewide Importance located on the north side of Charles Benson Road, impacts would be temporary and existing agricultural land uses could resume after pipeline installation is completed.
County of Monterey (coastal zone & inland area)	Monterey County General Plan	Agriculture	MPWSP Desalination Plant, Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Brine Discharge Pipeline, Brine Mixing Box, Pipeline to CSIP Pond, and Castroville Pipeline	<b>Policy AG-1.2:</b> The County shall require that well-defined buffer areas be provided as partial mitigation for new non-agricultural development proposals that are located adjacent to agricultural land uses on farmlands designated as Prime, of Statewide Importance, Unique, or Local Importance.	This policy is intended to ensure that non-agricultural uses do not encroach on the agricultural lands.	<u>Consistent:</u> The proposed development on the MPWSP Desalination Plant site incorporates a 200-foot-wide buffer from the adjacent designated farmland located west of the site. Pipelines used for distribution of water are allowed in all zoning districts without a use permit and do not require a buffer provided they are buried at a sufficient depth to prevent conflicts with agricultural activities.
County of Monterey (coastal zone & inland area)	Monterey County General Plan	Agriculture	MPWSP Desalination Plant, Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Brine Discharge Pipeline, Brine Mixing Box, Pipeline to CSIP Pond, and Castroville Pipeline	<b>Policy AG-1.4:</b> Viable agricultural land uses, including ancillary and support uses and facilities on farmland designated as Prime, of Statewide Importance, Unique, or of Local Importance shall be conserved, enhanced, and expanded through agricultural land use designations and encouragement of large lot agricultural zoning, except as provided in a Community Plan. Agriculture shall be established as the top land use priority for guiding further economic development on agricultural lands.	This policy is intended to preserve agricultural resources, protect prime agricultural soil, and deter conversion of farmland.	<u>Consistent:</u> The proposed project would not impede the viability, conservation, enhancement, or expansion of agricultural land uses. Although the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be installed in important farmland, impacts would be temporary and existing agricultural land uses could resume after pipeline installation is completed.
County of Monterey (coastal zone)	North County Land Use Plan	Agriculture	Source Water Pipeline and new Desalinated Water Pipeline	<b>Key Policy 2.6.1:</b> The County shall support the permanent preservation of prime agricultural soils exclusively for agricultural use. The County shall also protect productive farmland not on prime soils if it meets State productivity criteria and does not contribute to degradation of water quality. Development adjacent to prime and productive farmland shall be planned to be compatible with agriculture.	This policy is intended to preserve agricultural resources, protect prime agricultural soils, and deter conversion of farmland.	<u>Consistent:</u> Pipeline installation would occur within roads or trails adjacent to, but outside of, agricultural lands. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the permanent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses in areas within the North County Land Use Plan.
County of Monterey (coastal zone)	North County Land Use Plan	Agriculture	Source Water Pipeline and new Desalinated Water Pipeline	<b>Policy 2.6.2.1:</b> Prime and productive farmland designated for Agricultural Preservation and Agricultural Conservation land use shall be preserved for agricultural use to the fullest extent possible as consistent with the protection of environmentally sensitive habitats and the concentration of development.	This policy is intended to preserve farmland designated for Agricultural Preservation and Agricultural Conservation land use.	<u>Consistent:</u> Pipeline installation would occur within roads or trails adjacent to, but outside of, agricultural lands. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the permanent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses in areas within the North County Land Use Plan.

SOURCE: Monterey County, 1999, 2010.

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### 4.16.3 Evaluation Criteria

Implementation of the proposed project would have a significant impact related to agricultural resources if it would:

- Involve changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use;
- Convert 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; or
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or with a Williamson Act contract.

### 4.16.4 Approach to Analysis

The analysis focuses on the potential for implementation of the proposed project to adversely affect agricultural resources through temporary disruption or disturbance of agricultural land uses and activities during construction, conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural land uses during construction and operation, introduction of incompatible land uses or land use activities during operation, or through other changes to the physical environment that could result in loss or conversion of agricultural lands during construction and operation. Unless the land is zoned for agricultural uses, areas designated in the FMMP maps as Grazing Land are not considered in this analysis.

The approach is based largely on a comparison of the proposed project area, which is defined as the area within which all construction-related disturbance would occur, against important farmland as mapped in FMMP Important Farmland Series Maps, maps of Williamson Act contracts, and zoning maps. Existing use of land designated or zoned for agriculture was also considered. Since the project area encompasses all areas that would be disturbed, this analysis assumes that agricultural land that is adjacent to, but outside of, the project area boundary would not be subject to disturbance.

### 4.16.5 Direct and Indirect Effects of the Proposed Project

**TABLE 4.16-3  
 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS – AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

Impacts	Significance Determinations
<b>Impact 4.16-1:</b> Result in changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could temporarily disrupt agricultural activities or result in the permanent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.	LSM
<b>Impact 4.16-2:</b> Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use.	LS
<b>Impact 4.16-3:</b> Conflict with zoning for agricultural uses or with Williamson Act contracts.	LS
<b>Impact 4.16-C:</b> Cumulative impacts related to agricultural resources.	LSM

NOTES:  
 LS = Less than Significant impact, no mitigation proposed  
 LSM = Less than Significant impact with Mitigation

### 4.16.5.1 Construction Impacts

**Impact 4.16-1: Result in changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could temporarily disrupt agricultural activities or result in the permanent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. (*Less than Significant with Mitigation*)**

This impact addresses the potential for construction of the proposed project to result in physical changes to the environment that could temporarily disrupt agricultural activities or result in the conversion of farmland and land zoned for agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses.

Project construction activities, if not properly managed, could temporarily displace or disrupt agricultural land uses, or cause long-term changes in the existing environment that could ultimately result in the conversion of farmland and land zoned for agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses. For example, project construction activities could temporarily interfere with existing agricultural operations, or cause soil compaction from the movement of heavy construction vehicles and equipment, thereby adversely affecting the suitability of soil for agricultural production. Excavation and earthmoving activities during project construction could also result in the loss of fertile topsoil and effectively render previously productive agricultural land unusable. Project components constructed within agricultural lands could convert farmland to non-agricultural uses.

As discussed above in Section 4.16.1, Setting/Affected Environment, portions of the project area are located within, or adjacent to, important farmland and land zoned for agricultural uses. As stated above in Section 4.16.4, given that the project area encompasses all areas that would be disturbed during construction, this analysis assumes that agricultural land that is adjacent to, but outside of, the project area boundary would not be subject to construction disturbance. As a result, this impact focuses on the project facilities within project area boundaries that would require construction on agricultural land or parcels that are zoned for agricultural land uses — MPWSP Desalination Plant, Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1.

#### **MPWSP Desalination Plant**

The MPWSP Desalination Plant would be located on 25 acres of land zoned for Permanent Grazing and designated as Grazing Land by the FMMP. The land has not been used for grazing or any other agricultural purpose since at least 1956 (RBF Consulting, 2012). Therefore, construction of the MPWSP Desalination Plant would not temporarily disrupt agricultural activities, as none currently are conducted on the site, and would have a less-than-significant impact with respect to conversion of land zoned for agricultural use to non-agricultural uses because no agricultural uses currently are present in this location.

#### **Source Water Pipeline, New Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline**

Construction activities associated with the installation of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would require surface disturbance and earthmoving activities within or near farmland in the following locations:

- The 4,000-foot segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline located north of, and outside of, the Charles Benson Road paved roadway would be installed within designated farmland that is also zoned as Permanent Grazing; however, 2,500 feet (0.5 mile) of this stretch is private agricultural land currently under flower production.
- 2.4 miles of the Castroville Pipeline, between the Salinas River and the Tembladero Slough, would be installed in Monte Road and an unpaved agricultural road. This area is mapped as important farmland but crops are not grown in the roadway. Construction disturbance associated with the Castroville Pipeline would be confined to the road and road shoulder.
- Approximately 950 feet of the Castroville Optional Alignment 1 along Nashua Road is mapped as being within farmland but construction disturbance would be limited to the road and road shoulder and would not affect cultivated row crops.
- 1,900 feet of the Castroville Optional Alignment 1 along the Monterey Peninsula Recreational Trail and east of Highway 1 is also mapped as farmland but crops are not grown in the trail. Pipeline installation activities would be installed within and adjacent to the recreational trail and would not affect cultivated row crops.

Pipeline installation and earthmoving activities associated with the segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road that would be installed in land zoned for Permanent Grazing would involve temporary construction impacts that would not persist after construction is completed and the construction site is restored. The pipeline installation and earthmoving activities associated with the 0.5-mile-long segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road that are within cultivated farmland could result in the loss of topsoil and/or soil compaction and ultimately reduce agricultural productivity, a potentially significant impact. However, the impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of **Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 (Minimize Disturbance to Farmland)**. No impact would occur with any other segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline or with the Castroville Optional Alignments 1 and 2.

### **All Other Proposed Facilities**

Although other pipeline alignments north of Reservation Road border farmland, construction of these pipelines would not result in the disturbance of farmland because the disturbance would be contained within the project area boundary, which is outside of farmland. None of the proposed facilities located south of Reservation Road are located in close proximity to farmland. Therefore, construction of these facilities would not affect soil conditions in farmland areas and would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. No impact would result.

### **Consistency with Regulatory Requirements**

Due to the potential for installation of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road to result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses, these pipelines are considered to be potentially inconsistent with applicable regulatory requirements related to agricultural resources that were adopted for the purposes of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect, namely, the FPPA (described in Section 4.16.2.1, above). The 0.5-mile-long segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new

Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline that would be installed in the farmland north of Charles Benson Road would potentially conflict with the FPPA, which intends to protect farmland from being irreversibly converted to nonagricultural uses. However, CalAm and its construction contractors would be required to implement **Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 (Minimize Disturbance to Farmland)**, which would resolve any potential conflicts with the FPPA.

### **Impact Conclusion**

Construction of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road would cause physical changes to the environment that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses, a significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 (Minimize Disturbance to Farmland)** would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. None of the other proposed facilities or pipeline alignments would result in conversion of farmland.

### **Mitigation Measures**

*Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 applies to the proposed alignments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road.*

#### **Mitigation Measure 4.16-1: Minimize Disturbance to Farmland.**

CalAm and its construction contractor(s) shall incorporate the following measures into construction plans and specifications for all construction activities located in farmland areas to minimize adverse impacts on farmland:

- CalAm shall notify affected property owners at least 90 days prior to initiating construction activities that have the potential to interfere with agricultural operations.
- Construction contractor(s) shall minimize the extent of the construction disturbance, including construction access, in agricultural areas to the maximum extent feasible. Minimization efforts shall include, but not be limited to, consulting with affected property owners to schedule construction activities to minimize impacts during planting, growing, and/or harvest seasons.
- During excavation and other earthmoving activities in designated farmland areas, the surface and subsurface soil layers shall be stockpiled separately when trenches are excavated. Segregated topsoil and subsoil shall be maintained and kept separated throughout all construction activities, and these soils shall subsequently be used to backfill excavations and shall be returned to its appropriate location in the soil profile.
- To avoid over-compaction of the top layers of soil, soil densities shall be measured prior to the start of construction activities, and surface soil (roughly the upper 3 feet of soil) shall be backfilled to within 5 percent of the original density.
- If necessary, following construction activities, the uppermost 3 feet of soil shall be ripped to achieve the appropriate soil density (within 5 percent of the original). Ripping may also be used in areas where vehicle and equipment traffic has compacted the topsoil layers.
- Existing agricultural drainage systems shall be inspected before and after construction to ensure they function as needed.

- Disturbed areas shall be restored to pre-construction conditions following construction.

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### 4.16.5.2 Operational and Facility Siting Impacts

#### **Impact 4.16-2: Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use. (*Less than Significant*)**

This impact is related to the long-term conversion or loss of important farmlands. As discussed above in Section 4.16.1, Setting/Affected Environment, the FMMP Important Farmland Maps for Monterey County indicate that portions of the project area are located within, or adjacent to, lands designated as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Since the project area was designed to encompass all construction-related disturbances, no disturbance to land located outside of the project area is anticipated.

#### **MPWSP Desalination Plant**

As indicated in Section 4.16.1.1, above, approximately 1.7 acres of the northern portion of the larger 46-acre MPWSP Desalination Plant parcel are designated as Prime Farmland. However, the proposed desalination facilities would be constructed on the 25-acre MPWSP Desalination Plant site on the upper terrace of the parcel and outside of the area designated as Prime Farmland. Farmland of Statewide Importance exists west of the MPWSP Desalination Plant site. However, because the plant footprint would neither extend into the approximately 1.7 acre area nor outside of the project area boundary and into this adjacent parcel, no impact would result.

#### **Source Water Pipeline, New Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline**

As described above in Section 4.16.1 and Impact 4.16-1, portions of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson road would be installed in designated important farmland. Portions of the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 would be installed along right-of-ways or trails that are mapped as farmland but have no crops grown within them.

- The 2,500-foot-long (0.5-mile) segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline would be installed in Farmland of Statewide Importance along the north side of Charles Benson Road. CalAm plans to negotiate an easement along the north side of the existing row of eucalyptus and cypress trees that line Charles Benson Road for this purpose. This easement could encompass up to 3 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance. The affected farmland is currently used for flower cultivation.
- Approximately 2.4 miles of the Castroville Pipeline alignment between the Salinas River and the Tembladero Slough is mapped Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. This section of pipeline would be installed in Monte Road and the private dirt agricultural road along the edge of the cultivated rows and would not convert designated farmland to non-agricultural use.
- Approximately 950 feet of the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 along Nashua Road, and 1,900 feet of the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 along Highway 156

and the Monterey Peninsula Recreational Trail, south of Tembladero Slough, is mapped as Prime Farmland. These pipeline sections would be installed in Nashua Road and the recreational trail along the edge of the cultivated rows and would not convert designated farmland to non-agricultural use.

In summary, only the 2,500-foot segments of the pipelines along the north side of Charles Benson Road would be installed within farmland. Pipelines would be buried at a minimum depth of 4 feet below the ground surface, which would avoid conflicts with typical tillage activities. As a result, agricultural production on land currently used for the cultivation of flowers could resume after pipeline construction has been completed. While the presence of these pipelines would prevent the future cultivation of large woody plants and trees along the pipeline corridors (woody plant types can damage pipelines and interfere with pipeline repairs and maintenance), such plant types are not currently or typically grown in the potentially affected agricultural areas; therefore, this limitation would result in a less-than-significant impact within the 3 or fewer acres of farmland affected, and would not result in the conversion of this farmland to non-agricultural uses.

If selected, the optional alignments for the Source Water Pipeline and new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 2, would be installed within the Charles Benson Road paved roadway and would avoid the Farmland of Statewide Importance located along the north side of Charles Benson Road. Implementation of these optional alignments would have no impact, and would eliminate the impact of the proposed alignments on the 3 acres of farmland described above.

### **All Other Facilities**

None of the other facilities north of Reservation Road would be installed in areas mapped as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. South of Reservation Road, land uses in the project area are predominantly urban and do not include important farmland. Thus, no impact related to the conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural uses would result from implementation of all other proposed facilities. Impacts on agricultural production wells resulting from operation of the slant wells at CEMEX, are discussed in Groundwater, Section 4.4.5.2, Operations Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

### **Impact Conclusion**

Implementation of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline installed in the farmland north of Charles Benson Road would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the permanent conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural uses; farming practices would not be displaced. Alternately, implementation of the optional alignments for the Source Water Pipeline and new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and the Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 2 would eliminate the less-than-significant impact (no impact). For all other facilities, no impact would result.

Impacts 4.4-3 and 4.4-4 in Section 4.4, Groundwater Resources, describe the potential impacts on groundwater quality and quantity due to operation of the proposed project. As described therein, the proposed project would result in less-than-significant impacts on groundwater quality and levels. That analysis identifies less-than-significant impacts on existing users of wells that may be

affected by the proposed project, including agricultural users. Because the proposed project would not affect groundwater quality or levels in a way that would adversely affect existing agricultural users, it would not result in a change in the existing environment that would indirectly result in the permanent conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use.

**Mitigation Measures**

None proposed.

**Impact 4.16-3: Conflict with zoning for agricultural uses or with Williamson Act contracts. (Less than Significant)**

Some of the proposed facilities and pipelines located north of Reservation Road would be constructed on lands under Williamson Act contract and lands zoned for agricultural uses. The proposed project could result in zoning conflicts if it were to introduce incompatible land uses into these areas or cancel or displace Williamson Act land. Land protected by Williamson Act contracts is shown in **Figures 4.16-1** and **4.16-2**. The facilities that would be installed within land zoned for agriculture are shown in **Table 4.16-4**, below. In general, zoning designations do not extend into the road right-of-ways.

**TABLE 4.16-4  
 PROJECT FACILITIES PROPOSED ON LAND ZONED FOR AGRICULTURE**

Facility Name	Current Land Use	Location Where Facility Would Be Sited in Agricultural Zoning	Zoning
MPWSP Desalination Plant	Vacant/undeveloped	25-acre upper terrace (proposed development area)	Permanent Grazing – Permanent Grazing
Source Water Pipeline, New Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline	Vacant/undeveloped and flower cultivation	4,000-foot segment located along the north side of Charles Benson Road between MPWSP Desalination Plant site and Del Monte Boulevard	Permanent Grazing – Permanent Grazing

**MPWSP Desalination Plant**

Current and recent uses of a property can provide a practical measure of its suitability for agriculture. The 46-acre MPWSP Desalination Plant parcel is zoned for Permanent Grazing, but with the exception of the unconnected 1.7 acres of this parcel that form a portion of a neighboring farm and which would not be affected by the proposed project, the property has not been used for grazing or any other agricultural use since at least 1956 (RBF Consulting, 2012). Section 21.34.050 of the Monterey County Zoning Ordinance allows for public and quasi-public land uses including public utilities on land zoned for Permanent Grazing (Monterey County, 2011). Therefore, the proposed development of the 25-acre upper terrace of the parcel for the MPWSP Desalination Plant site would be allowed with a use permit from Monterey County. The 200-foot buffer between farmland and new development that is required by the Monterey County Municipal Code has been accounted for in the preliminary site plan for the MPWSP Desalination Plant (see

**Figure 3-5b** in Chapter 3, Description of the Proposed Project. Therefore, the proposed desalination facilities on the upper terrace would not conflict with the existing zoning for agricultural uses.

The MPWSP Desalination Plant site is not under a Williamson Act contract. The Williamson Act lands located west of the site would not be affected by the proposed desalination facilities.

### **Source Water Pipeline, New Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline**

The 4,000-foot-long (0.75-mile) segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline that would be installed along the north side of Charles Benson Road, outside of the paved roadway, would be installed in land zoned for Permanent Grazing. However, Section 21.64.160 of the Monterey County Zoning Ordinance allows underground public utilities in all zoning districts, without the necessity of obtaining a use permit. Therefore, no conflict with agricultural zoning would occur.

The following segments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 would be installed in land protected by Williamson Act contracts:

- Approximately 0.10 mile within the CEMEX access road west of Highway 1 (Source Water Pipeline).
- Approximately 0.5 mile along the north side of Charles Benson Road (Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, Castroville Pipeline).
- Approximately 0.5 mile of the section of Castroville Pipeline that would be installed in the dirt agricultural road located north of Monte Road/Nashua Road.

Pipeline installation in Williamson Act lands would not result in the cancellation of Williamson Act contracts nor permanently interfere with the ongoing use of the land for agricultural purposes because the existing uses, none of which include the cultivation of woody plants or trees, could resume once construction of the pertinent pipeline segments has been completed. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

As discussed in Section 4.16.4, agricultural land that is adjacent to, but outside of the project area boundary would not be subject to disturbance, therefore the Castroville Pipeline and Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 1 routes that run adjacent to land protected by Williamson Act contracts would have no conflict.

Since the Source Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, new Desalinated Water Pipeline Optional Alignment, and Castroville Pipeline Optional Alignment 2 would be installed within the paved roadway of Charles Benson Road, implementation of these optional alignments would have no impact on Williamson Act lands.

### All Other Proposed Facilities

None of the other proposed facilities would be located within, or adjacent to, land zoned for agriculture or land protected by Williamson Act contracts. Therefore, no conflict would result.

### Impact Conclusion

None of the proposed facilities would conflict with agricultural zoning. The Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline installed in farmland north of Charles Benson Road would result in a less than significant impact related to conflicts with Williamson Act contracts because existing uses could resume during operations. All other proposed facilities, including all optional pipeline alignments, would have no impact on Williamson Act land.

### Mitigation Measures

None proposed.

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## 4.16.6 Cumulative Effects of the Proposed Project

The cumulative scenario and cumulative impacts methodology are described in Section 4.1.7. Table 4.1-2 lists potential cumulative projects.

### Impact 4.16-C: Cumulative impacts related to agricultural resources (*Less than significant with Mitigation*)

The scope for cumulative impacts on agricultural resources encompasses the geographic extent of the California Department of Conservation's FMMP maps for Monterey County and local zoning maps for Monterey County. The timeframe during which the MPWSP could contribute to cumulative agricultural resources effects includes the 24-month construction phase. Cumulatively significant impacts on agricultural resources could result if incremental effects of the MPWSP combined with those of one or more additional projects to cause substantial permanent conversion of designated important farmland (e.g., Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance) to non-agricultural use, conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses or with Williamson Act contracts, or otherwise change the existing environment such that farmland is converted to non-agricultural use (see **Table 4.16-3, Summary of Impacts – Agricultural Resources**).

Projects identified in **Table 4.1-2** in Section 4.1 that could affect agricultural lands include the Regional Urban Water Augmentation Project (RUWAP) Recycled Water Project (No. 35) and the Monterey Peninsula Light Rail Project (MPLRP) (No. 38).

### Cumulative Construction Impacts

As described in Impact 4.16-1, the proposed project would temporarily disrupt agricultural uses along the north side of Charles Benson Road, and construction activities could result in the loss of

topsoil and soil compaction that could reduce agricultural productivity. The RUWAP Recycled Water Project and the MPLRP also would have short-term construction-related effects that could result in the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. The RUWAP Recycled Water Project would temporarily affect a 0.75-mile-long (4-acre) band of Farmland of Statewide Importance and Grazing as a result of construction staging and use of heavy equipment during pipeline installation from the pump station. Following construction, this project would return the ground surface to its original condition (Denise Duffy & Associates, 2007) Phase 2 of the MPLRP would result in short-term disturbance of agricultural activities during construction. These projects' impacts could combine to result in a significant cumulative impact.

Each project enlists specific design features (i.e., avoidance) and/or mitigation measures that would reduce construction impacts on agricultural uses. The RUWAP Recycled Water Project proposes to avoid existing row crop production. The short-term construction impacts on agricultural land associated with Phase 2 of the MPLRP would be mitigated through consultation with government agencies and TAMC leaseholders, development of a construction schedule that avoids conflict with the growing season, and construction equipment staging in areas that avoid active agricultural production (TAMC, 2011). As discussed in Section 4.16.5, above, after implementation of **Mitigation Measure 4.16-1 (Minimize Disturbance to Farmland)**, installation of the proposed alignments of the Source Water Pipeline, new Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the loss of topsoil and/or soil compaction potentially resulting in reduced agricultural productivity and conversion of agricultural land. This mitigation measure would minimize the extent of construction disturbance in agricultural areas, require stockpiling and restoration of topsoil and subsoil layers, backfill and restoration of excavated soils to appropriate densities, and maintenance of functioning agricultural drainage systems (Impact 4.16-1). These effects would be temporary and limited to the MPWSP construction period, and residual impacts on agricultural land following implementation of this mitigation measure would be minimal. No conversion of agricultural land is anticipated as a result of this impact after mitigation. Because the residual construction-related impacts on agricultural land would not cause conversion of these lands to non-agricultural use, with mitigation, the proposed project would have a less than significant contribution to a significant cumulative impact related to temporary disturbance or other changes in the environment that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

### **Cumulative Impacts During Project Operations**

As described in Section 4.16.5.2, above, project operations would not result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland to non-agricultural use (Impact 4.16-2). Therefore, regardless of the impacts of other projects in the cumulative scenario, project operation would have a less than significant contribution to a cumulative impact related to farmland conversion.

The operation of the MPWSP Desalination Plant would permanently occupy 25 acres of land zoned for Permanent Grazing, and a 4,000-foot segment of the Source Water Pipeline, New Desalinated Water Pipeline, and Castroville Pipeline north of Charles Benson Road would be located within land zoned Permanent Grazing (Impact 4.16-3). As previously noted, public

utilities and water system facilities are allowed in the Permanent Grazing district with a use permit, and underground utility uses are allowed in all zones. Therefore, the project would not conflict with zoning for agricultural uses, and would not contribute to a cumulative impact related to agricultural zoning. Additionally, several pipeline segments would be installed within lands protected by Williamson Act contracts as described in Impact 4.16-3. However, these uses would not permanently affect the existing agricultural uses in these locations and thus would not conflict with a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, regardless of the impacts of other projects in the cumulative scenario, project operation would have a less than significant contribution to a cumulative impact on Williamson Act lands.

### **Mitigation Measures**

None proposed.

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