

## 3.4 Agricultural Resources

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on agricultural resources. This evaluation includes an assessment of the direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action on Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide importance, including potential conflicts with *Williamson Act* contracts. The evaluation is based on the Community Impact Assessment for the San Vicente Dam Raise Carryover Storage Project (CIC Research, 2007), which is included as Appendix H to this EIR/EIS, and the map of San Diego County Important Farmland 2000 (California Department of Conservation, 2002).

### 3.4.1 Affected Environment

#### 3.4.1.1 Environmental Setting

The following discussion describes the existing agricultural resources within San Diego County (County) and the SV 100K study area.

#### **San Diego County**

San Diego County's unique topography creates a wide variety of microclimates, resulting in nearly 30 different types of vegetation communities. This diversity allows for the production of more than 200 different agricultural commodities in the County. Table 3.4-1 provides a summary and comparison of the major crops grown in the County in 1995, 2004, and 2005.

As shown in Table 3.4-1, nursery and flower crops (at \$990,900,400) accounted for 64 percent of the total value of agriculture in San Diego County in 2005. The value of fruit and nut crops grew 29 percent in 2005, even as this acreage saw a slight decrease. The number and value of livestock and poultry products decreased as livestock and poultry facilities continue to either close or migrate out of the County to the Central Valley in California. Timber and firewood continued a multi-year upward trend with an increase of value of 34 percent and 30 percent from 2004 to 2005, respectively. This upward trend is a result of the dead and dying trees being removed in the aftermath of the 2003 fires.

#### **SV 100K Study Area**

The proposed SV 100K inundation area does not contain any agricultural resources. The public uses San Vicente Reservoir for recreational purposes, including boating, fishing, and waterskiing. No structures, except for the recreational facilities at the existing marina, are within the proposed expanded inundation area.

**Table 3.4-1. Major Crops Grown in San Diego County**

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Nursery & Flower	2005	10,221	\$990,900,400	64%
	2004	10,070	\$972,928,140	67%
	1995	8,163	\$643,192,766	61%
Fruit & Nut	2005	42,815	\$325,988,273	21%
	2004	43,127	\$252,489,571	17%
	1995	47,087	\$220,648,993	21%
Vegetable	2005	7,044	\$137,990,797	9%
	2004	6,736	\$140,979,535	10%
	1995	8,115	\$81,729,577	8%
Livestock & Poultry Products	2005		\$47,631,604	3%
	2004		\$64,924,206	4%
	1995		\$80,881,406	8%
Livestock and Poultry	2005		\$18,596,610	1%
	2004		\$20,967,320	1%
	1995		\$14,400,080	1%
Field Crops	2005	213,096	\$6,154,802	<1%
	2004	206,149	\$5,939,669	<1%
	1995	109,464	\$6,716,147	<1%
Apiary	2005		\$3,323,750	<1%
	2004		\$3,162,300	<1%
	1995		\$1,151,497	<1%
Specialty	2005		\$955,000	<1%
	2004		\$727,000	<1%
	1995		\$672,658	<1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>273,176</b>	<b>\$1,531,541,236</b>	
	2004	266,082	\$1,462,117,741	
	1995	172,829	\$1,049,393,124	

The San Diego County Important Farmland Map 2000 (Farmlands Map) is an inventory of agricultural resources that does not necessarily reflect local general plan or zoning designations. Under the Farmlands Map, lands are mapped in the following categories:

- Prime Farmland – land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance – land with a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for agricultural production.
- Unique Farmland – land used for production of the state’s major crops on soils not qualifying for prime or statewide importance.

- Farmland of Local Importance – land that meets all of the characteristics of prime and statewide, with the exception of irrigation.
- Grazing Land – land on which the existing vegetation is suitable for grazing of livestock.
- Urban and Built-up Land – residential land with a density of at least six units per ten-acre parcel, as well as land used for industrial and commercial purposes, golf courses, landfills, airports, sewage treatment, and water control structures.
- Other Land – land that does not meet the criteria of any other category.
- Water – perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

The Farmland map indicates that most of the land surrounding San Vicente Reservoir is classified as Grazing Land or Other Land. The closest mapping of Prime Farmland is in Moreno Valley south of the intersection of Vigilante Road and Moreno Avenue, nearly one mile from the San Vicente Dam, and more than one-half mile south of the southern extent of the SV 100K construction zone. To the east of these small patches of Prime Farmland in Moreno Valley is an area of Farmland of Local Importance. This area is also more than one mile from San Vicente Dam and well outside of the SV 100K construction zone.

The SV 100K footprint does not include any active farms, and the soils are largely unsuitable for farming. However, based on soil types, and in consultation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmland Conservation Analyst, two soil types in the SV 100K study area represent potential Farmland soils. Visalia sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes) represents potential Prime and Unique Farmland soils. Tujunga sand, (0 to 2 percent slopes) represents potential Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance.

Rural land uses consisting of low-density, large-lot residences intermingled with agricultural lots occur within Moreno Valley south of the reservoir. Many of these residential lots contain equestrian and agricultural structures. There are also some lands designated for agricultural preserves on Slaughterhouse Canyon Road to the west of the reservoir; this area is generally rural in nature.

### **3.4.1.2 Regulatory Setting**

The Water Authority is mandated by its principal act, the County Water Authority Act (Stats. 1943, c. 545) to provide water to meet the needs of member agencies in its service area. As defined under this Act, the Water Authority is not subject to local land use plans, policies, and ordinances. Furthermore, water supply facilities are exempt from local zoning per California Government Code Section 53091(d) and (e). According to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, zoning ordinances do not apply to the location or construction of facilities used for the production, generation, storage, or transmission of water. Refer to Section 3.9.1.2 (Regulatory Setting, Land Use and Planning for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS for a discussion of the plans and policies that support the provision of water infrastructure. The

following discussion addresses federal and state laws, plans, and policies relevant to agricultural resources issues of the Proposed Action.

### **Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981**

The USDA administers this federal act. It is intended to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The act also requires these programs to be compatible with state, local, and private efforts to protect farmland.

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

The California Department of Conservation has categorized agriculturally productive land throughout California under this program, defining areas of prime farmland as highest in agricultural resource importance. Important Farmland maps are compiled by the Department of Conservation pursuant to the provisions of Section 65570 of the California Government Code. Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance are identified in part through the use of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil surveys.

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

The California Legislature passed the *Williamson Act* in 1965 to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging unnecessary conversion to urban uses. Under the Act, private landowners enter into contracts with the responsible agency (e.g., a county or city) to voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and open-space uses. The landowner then receives the benefit of a reduction in property tax that may range from 20 to 75 percent. The contracts have a rolling term of 10 years and run with the land. Only the landowner can petition for cancellation, and the responsible agency must make specific findings supported by substantial evidence to allow cancellation. Opportunities for another use or uneconomic existing agricultural operations do not constitute sufficient reasons for contract cancellation by themselves. In addition, the landowner must pay a cancellation fee equal to 12.5 percent of the unrestricted, current fair market value of the property. Nearly 17 million of the state's 29 million acres of farm and ranch land are currently protected under *Williamson Act* contracts.

## **3.4.2 Project Design Features**

There are no General Conditions and Standard Specifications or Project Design Features that specifically address reducing potential impacts on agricultural resources.

### 3.4.3 Direct and Indirect Effects

#### 3.4.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

Thresholds used to evaluate potential agricultural resources impacts are based on applicable criteria in the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR §§15000-15387), Appendix G. A significant impact on agricultural resources would occur if the Proposed Action would:

1. 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.
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a *Williamson Act* contract.
3. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use.

#### 3.4.3.2 Impact Analysis

##### Methodology

The methodology for determining impacts on agricultural resources was based on the analysis contained in the Community Impact Assessment for the San Vicente Dam Raise Carryover Storage Project (CIC Research, 2007), which is included as Appendix H to this EIR/EIS. The CIC analysis is based on a literature review, field investigation, survey data, and published mapping information. The literature review included an extensive review and analysis of on-line property records, San Diego County Assessors' maps, demographic forecasts, U.S. Census data, SANDAG's 2030 demographic projections, local economic publications, and numerous other sources of published information. A field investigation for the Proposed Action study area was conducted on October 14, 2005. The information on *Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland)* is based on the map of San Diego County Important Farmland 2000 (California Department of Conservation, 2002).

The conversion of areas with soils that could represent potential Farmland soils was evaluated by overlaying the SV 100K footprint on soil type maps. The significance of the conversion was evaluated based on consultation with the NRCS and completion of Form AD-1006 to determine the level of protection that should be given to the farmable land in the study area.

## **Analysis**

### ***Threshold 1: 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***

The Proposed Action would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use, as none of these resources have been mapped on the Important Farmland Map within the SV 100K footprint. Potentially, up to 50 parcels could be affected by proposed expansion of San Vicente Reservoir, including the inundation area, construction areas, and septic system setback areas. However, none of the parcels are agricultural and no farmland would be converted or adversely affected by the Proposed Action. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not impact Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland).

*The Proposed Action would not convert mapped Farmland to non-agricultural use. Therefore, there would be no impact on mapped Farmland from the Proposed Action.*

### ***Threshold 2: Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract***

The SV 100K footprint does not contain any lands zoned or designated for agricultural use, and the proposed reservoir expansion would not encroach on adjacent land zoned for agricultural use. Furthermore, according to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, zoning ordinances do not apply to the location or construction of facilities used for the production, generation, storage, or transmission of water. No lands within the SV 100K footprint are under a *Williamson Act* contract. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a *Williamson Act* contract.

*The Proposed Action would not affect agriculturally zoned areas or any property under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, there would be no impact due to conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.*

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

The proposed SV 100K Alternative does not include any active farms within the area of potential effect, and the soils are largely unsuitable for farming. The total project area encompasses approximately 4,600 acres. Within the SV 100K footprint, a total of 0.9 acre of Visalia sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes) would be converted. Approximately 45 acres of Tujunga sand (0 to 5 percent slopes) would be converted. Based on the site assessment criteria for the 12 impact categories on Form AD-1006, the overall farmland conversion impact rating for the Proposed Action was 86, which is below the significance rating threshold of 160 (CIC Research, 2007). The converted farmland acreage (46 total acres) represents a very small percentage of farmable land in the county (0.04 percent), and based on consultation with the NRCS and completion of

Form AD-1006, would be categorized as “minimal level of consideration for protection.” Therefore, the conversion of the 46 acres of land to reservoir use would result in a less-than-significant impact on the County’s Farmland inventory.

In addition, the Farmland Protection Policy Act (Section 658.1) specifically states that “Farmland does not include land already in or committed to urban development or water storage.” The San Vicente farmland soils in question are on publicly owned land, and the adopted land use plan is for continued use of the site as a dam and water reservoir. The proposed expansion of San Vicente Reservoir would not involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. The existing use of the reservoir would remain the same after the dam raise and reservoir expansion, and no additional land uses or other substantial changes in the environment would occur as part of the Proposed Action. Therefore, impacts on Farmland from the conversion of the 46 acres of land to reservoir use would be less than significant.

*The Proposed Action would convert 46 acres of soils representing potential Farmland to non-agricultural (reservoir) use; however, this small area rated a minimal level of consideration for protection and is committed to water storage. Therefore, impacts of the Proposed Action would be less than significant.*

### **3.4.3.3 Mitigation Measures**

Impacts on agricultural resources would be less than significant. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

### **3.4.3.4 Residual Impacts after Mitigation**

No residual impacts would occur.

## **3.4.4 Cumulative Effects**

### **3.4.4.1 Other CIP Projects**

The PEIR for the Regional Water Facilities Master Plan concluded that the proposed projects could result in the conversion of sensitive farmland. As described in Section 3.2 (Cumulative Projects for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, it was determined that the Slaughterhouse Terminal Reservoir would be the only CIP project with the potential to contribute to cumulative impacts when combined with the Proposed Action because they are located within two miles of one another. Cumulative agricultural impacts would be expected to be long-term in nature and would consist of the permanent conversion of agricultural land to non-farmland. However, the CIP project in the vicinity of the Proposed Action identified above is not expected to contribute substantially to the cumulative conversion of sensitive farmland. With the implementation of mitigation measures identified in the PEIR, impacts on agricultural resources due to these projects are expected to be minimal. The above conclusions regarding cumulative agricultural

impacts for the CIP project described above are incorporated into the cumulative agricultural analyses in Section 3.4.4.3 below.

### **3.4.4.2 ESP Projects**

ESP project components that would be in the vicinity of the Proposed Action would include the San Vicente Pipeline, the San Vicente Pump Station, and the San Vicente Surge Control Facility. The ESP EIR/EIS concluded cumulative agricultural impacts would be less than significant. The above conclusions regarding agricultural impacts for the ESP projects are incorporated into the cumulative agricultural analyses in Section 3.4.4.3 below.

### **3.4.4.3 Other Planned Projects with CIP and ESP Projects**

This section evaluates the cumulative agricultural impacts of the Proposed Action when considered in conjunction with the other planned projects listed in Table 3.2-1, and incorporates the cumulative agricultural impacts associated with the CIP and ESP projects described in the above sections. The following cumulative agricultural analysis addresses each of the three significance thresholds listed in Section 3.4.3.2 above.

***Cumulative Threshold 1: 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***

As discussed in Section 3.4.3.2 above, implementation of the Proposed Action would not convert any mapped farmland to non-agricultural use. Therefore, there would be no cumulatively considerable agricultural impacts due to the construction of the Proposed Action.

***Cumulative Threshold 2: Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract***

As discussed in Section 3.4.3.2 above, the Proposed Action would not adversely affect agriculturally zoned areas or any property under a *Williamson Act* contract. Therefore, there would be no cumulatively considerable agricultural impacts due to conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a *Williamson Act* contract as a result of the Proposed Action.

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

As discussed in Section 3.4.3.2 above, the Proposed Action does not include any active farms within the area of potential effect, and the soils are largely unsuitable for farming. The cumulative projects in the vicinity of the Proposed Action include five mining projects and a number of residential subdivisions (refer to Figure 3.2-1). Because these projects are in a rural area, it is possible that some projects would convert mapped farmland to non-agricultural uses.

However, based on soils analysis, the Proposed Action would convert only a small portion of soils representing farmlands to non-agricultural land (approximately 46 acres or 0.04 percent of the county's Farmland inventory). Therefore, agricultural resources impacts due to construction and operation of the Proposed Action, when combined with agricultural impacts from the CIP, ESP and other planned cumulative projects listed in Table 3.2-1, would not be cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impact would be less than significant.

*The Proposed Action would not convert mapped Farmland to non-agricultural use; would not impact agriculturally zoned areas or any property under a Williamson Act contract; and would convert a minimal amount of potential farmland (46 acres) to non-agricultural (reservoir) use. Therefore, cumulative agricultural resource impacts due to the Proposed Action, when combined with the agricultural resources impacts associated with CIP, ESP and other planned cumulative projects listed in Table 3.2-1 would be less than significant.*

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