



5.0 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

5.1 Regulatory Setting

PWP Volume 1 Chapter 4, “Consistency with Local Coastal Plans and the Coastal Act,” includes a detailed discussion of federal, state, and regional and local plans, policies, regulations, and laws, along with PWP consistency, related to coastal plans and the Coastal Act that are applicable to agricultural and forestry resources.

The State of California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) has been the State’s premier agricultural land protection program since its enactment in 1965, preserving agricultural and open-space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive-use contracts at the local level. Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses under minimum 10-year rolling term contracts with local governments. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their agricultural or open space use(s), rather than potential market value.

In addition, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California’s agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. The maps are updated every two years with the use of a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance.

California State Parks does not have a statutory designation for agricultural land. When such land is purchased by the Department for use as parkland, it will receive a designation such as a State Reserve, State Park, State Beach, etc. Whether designated as prime agricultural land or not, once it is in the State system, it may only be used for park-related uses.

5.2 Environmental Setting

The Park does not contain any agricultural or forestry lands with the exception of the Oso Flaco area. The Oso Flaco Improvement Project site consists primarily of agricultural fields (i.e., row crops) (see Figure 3-3 in PWP Chapter 3, “The Plan”). According to the San Luis Obispo County Important Farmland map, published by the California Division of Land Resource Protection (DOC 2016), approximately 116 acres of land within the Oso Flaco Improvement Project site is designated as Prime Farmland.¹ However, this is inaccurate as the site is owned in fee title by State Parks, is not under agricultural preserve, and should not have been designated by the County. State Parks has owned this land for decades and has been leasing the site in the interim to be used by a private entity for agriculture until such time that the site can be used as Park land. Under the current PWP, and specifically as a result of implementation of the Oso Flaco Initial and Future Site Improvement Projects, the site will be developed to provide high-priority public access and recreational use consistent with the Park General Plan. Portions of the site would also be restored to natural habitat, including a riparian buffer along the Oso Flaco Creek. Land designated as Prime Farmland is located adjacent to the south and southeast of the Oso Flaco Improvement Project site. However, these lands would not be affected by PWP implementation.

¹ Prime Farmland is defined by the DOC as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production and sustained high yield crops.



5.3 Project Impacts

Threshold of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the PWP would result in a potentially significant impact related to agricultural and forestry resources if it would:

- 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 non-agricultural use?
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?
- c) 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))?
- d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?
- e) 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?

Impacts associated with the conversion of forestland as defined by Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)² to non-forest uses are evaluated in Chapter 7, “Biological Resources.”

Conflicts with existing zoning of the PWP planning area, including agricultural zoning, is provided in Chapter 14, “Land Use Plans and Policies.”

5.3.1 Issues Not Discussed Further in This EIR

Convert Important Farmland to Nonagricultural Uses—As noted in Section 5.2, “Environmental Setting,” above, the Park does not contain any agricultural lands with the exception of the Oso Flaco area. Approximately 116 acres of land within the Oso Flaco Improvement Project site is designated as Prime Farmland. However, State Parks has owned this land for decades and has been leasing the site in the interim to be used by a private entity for agriculture until such time that the site can be used as Park land. The Oso Flaco Improvement Project site is not under an agricultural preserve program. The proposed site restoration and transition to high-priority public access and recreational use and restored as natural habitat consistent with the Park General Plan would not result in loss of Important Farmland acreage. Therefore, implementation of the PWP and site-specific projects would have no impacts related to the direct conversion of Important Farmland. This issue is not discussed further in this draft EIR.

² Section 12220(g) defines forest land as land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.



Conflict with a Williamson Act Contract—No lands within the PWP planning area are held under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore, implementing the PWP would not conflict with an existing Williamson Act contract. This issue is not discussed further in this draft EIR.

Conflict with Existing Zoning for, or Cause Rezoning of, Forest Land, Timberland, or Timberland Zoned Timberland Production—The PWP planning area is not zoned as forestland, timberland, or a Timberland Production Zone. Furthermore, local government zoning does not apply to state-owned property. Thus, implementing the PWP would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestry resources. This issue is not discussed further in this draft EIR.

5.3.2 Impacts and Mitigation

Impact 5-1: Conflicts with Ongoing Agricultural Operations

Recreational facilities along the north and northeastern border of the Oso Flaco Improvement Project site would be set back from the off-site agricultural operations. Buffers consisting of bioswales and upland restored areas would be established around the improvement site boundaries specifically to provide further separation between visitors to the Oso Flaco Improvement Project site and ongoing agricultural uses. These buffers would effectively reduce potential land use conflicts with ongoing agricultural operations; therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

5.4 Cumulative Effects

Implementation of the PWP and the PWP site-specific projects would have no impacts related to the conversion of Prime Farmland. Therefore, there are no cumulative effects related to the conversion of Prime Farmland.



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