

Section B  
Agricultural Resources

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## AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

### Setting

#### Soils and Agricultural Production

The project site contains five soil types, as preliminarily classified by the Stockton office of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). These soils, with their soil capability classifications (irrigated), are as follows: Jacktone clay (III<sub>s</sub>-8); Egbert mucky clay loam (II<sub>w</sub>-2); Peltier mucky clay loam (III<sub>w</sub>-5); Scribner clay loam (II<sub>w</sub>-2); and Valdez silt loam (III-w2) (Meissner pers. comm.). (See Section C, "Geology and Soils," for additional information on onsite soils.)

All five soil types represent prime agricultural land as defined by Public Law 97-98, which contains the current SCS guidelines for determining prime farmland status. Prime farmland is defined by SCS to be land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for production of crops. These characteristics include the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields.

The Egbert mucky clay loam and Scribner clay loam soils also represent prime agricultural land as defined in the Stockton Area General Plan. The Stockton Area General Plan includes all Class I and II soils as prime agricultural land.

The project site has produced a variety of field crops in recent years, including safflower, corn, wheat, alfalfa, sugarbeets, and pasture (Huber pers. comm.). Crops grown onsite in 1987, with estimated planted acreage, are shown in Table B-1. Based on average prices received by San Joaquin County farmers in 1986, the project site's agricultural production was valued at an estimated \$492,000 in 1987.

#### Pesticide Information

According to the San Joaquin County Office of the Agricultural Commissioner (Mahoney pers. comm.), several varieties of pesticides may have been used on the project site and on lands west of the project site. The varieties used, and methods of application, depend on factors such as time of year, crop type, weather, and pest population.

Both restrictive and nonrestrictive pesticides may be used in the project vicinity. Restrictive pesticides would require a "Restrictive Materials Permit" while nonrestrictive, such as sulfur dust, would not require a permit.

Table B-1. Estimated Value of Onsite Agricultural Production

Crop	Acres	Average Yield Per Acre	Estimated Yield	Unit	\$/Unit	Gross Value
Grain corn	394	26.3	10,362.2	Ton	\$16.50	\$170,976
Alfalfa	301	6.5	1,956.5	Ton	84.00	164,346
Sugar beets	150	24.8	3,720.0	Ton	34.00	126,480
Irrigated pasture	145	1.0	145.0	Acres	130.00	18,850
Wheat	55	2.5	137.5	Ton	84.20	11,578
Not planted	104	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	1,149					\$492,230

Note: Table includes crops grown onsite in 1987 (Huber pers. comm.). Yields and unit values reflect average 1986 yields and unit values for San Joaquin County crops (San Joaquin County Department of Agriculture 1987).

Approximately 100 pesticides are on the restricted list. Examples of restricted pesticides that were issued permits for use in 1986, and that could be used in the project vicinity, include: Paraquat, 2-4-D, Simazene, and Parathion. These are liquid herbicides or insecticides that are applied either on the ground or aerially. Restricted pesticides for which permits were issued in 1986 as soils fumigants (injected 6-24 inches into the soil) include Systox, Methylbromide, and Telone. Other restricted pesticides used as grain bait are placed underground and used for rodent control. These include aluminum phosphide, zinc phosphide, and strychnine.

The Office of the Agricultural Commissioner could not say which of these pesticides, if any, have recently been used in the project vicinity.

### Williamson Act Contracts

Approximately 436 acres on the project site are currently under California Land Conservation (Williamson Act) contracts. As shown in Figure B-1, approximately 306 acres of the Williamson Act lands are located near the northern boundary of the project site; the remaining 130 acres are located at the bottom of the site along the Calaveras River.

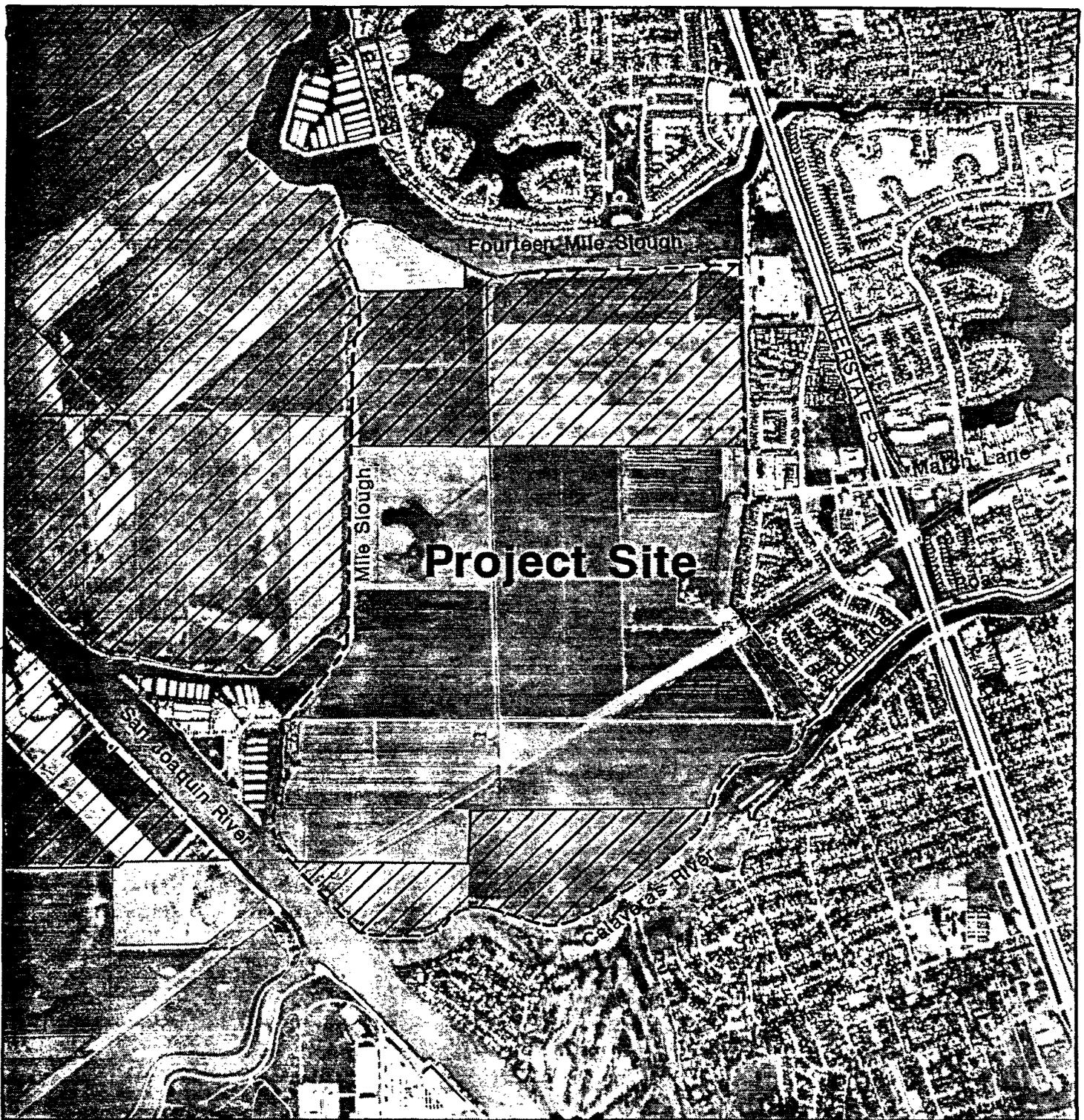
Lands immediately west of the project site, across Ten Mile Slough, are also under Williamson Act contracts.

Williamson Act legislation enables counties and cities to designate agricultural preserves and offer preferential taxation based on a property's agricultural use value, rather than on market value. In return for the preferential tax rate, the landowner is required to sign a contract with the county or city, in which the landowner agrees not to develop his land for a minimum 10-year period. Once the contract is in force, it is automatically renewed each year for an additional 10-year period unless a termination action is initiated.

The termination of a Williamson Act contract is typically initiated by the filing of a notice of nonrenewal by either the landowner or the participating jurisdiction. Once a nonrenewal notice has been filed, the contract continues for 9 more years with assessment rates rising to full market value of zoned use until the contract is terminated.

Under special circumstances, which must be determined by the local jurisdiction to be in the best public interest or consistent with the intent of the Williamson Act, a contract may be terminated by immediate cancellation, and the assessed value of the property then returns to full market value. A penalty fee of 12.5 percent of the new market value of the land at the time of cancellation must be paid by the landowner unless a waiver is obtained from the Secretary of the State Resources Agency.

Williamson Act legislation allows a city to protest Williamson Act contracts entered into by the county affecting properties that lie within 1 mile of a city's limit. Upon annexation of a property with a protested contract, a city has the option of succeeding or not succeeding to the county's provisions of the Williamson Act contract. The city council will, by resolution, declare the city's intent on the matter.



LEGEND



Williamson Act Contract Parcels



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FIGURE B-1. WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT LANDS WITHIN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT SITE

## Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

### Impact: Conversion of Agricultural Land

The primary impact of urban development on the project site would be the conversion of 1,149.4 acres of potentially prime agricultural land. The conversion of this agricultural land would result in the subsequent loss of agricultural production, which, in 1987, was valued at an estimated \$492,000 (in 1986 dollars). The project site acreage represents approximately 0.2 percent of the 463,000 acres planted in field crops in San Joaquin County in 1986 (San Joaquin County Department of Agriculture 1987). While this is a relatively small percentage of the county total, the unique soils and economic value of the crops makes the loss significant.

Since no feasible mitigation measures exist for the loss of prime agricultural land, the conversion of the project site is considered a significant adverse impact that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Adoption of a statement of overriding considerations would be required under CEQA prior to project approval.

### Mitigation Measures

- o None available.

### Impact: Potential for Conversion of Adjacent Agricultural Lands

Due to potential land use conflicts, urbanization of the project site could further induce premature conversion of agricultural lands immediately west of the project site.

The existence of urban development adjacent to agricultural uses often presents the following types of conflicts:

- o Pesticides/Herbicides Application. Urbanized uses proximate to agricultural operations could limit growers in the varieties, methods of application, and timing of pesticide use. The County Agricultural Commissioner may condition the use of restricted pesticides if urban uses are too close to the agricultural uses.
- o Complaints. The project could result in complaints from future project residents about agricultural spraying, burning, dust, odors, and noise from adjacent agricultural operations.
- o Vandalism and Trespass. The project could increase the potential for vandalism to crops and farm equipment, trespass, and waste disposal on adjacent agricultural land.

Farmers experiencing these difficulties could decide that farming is no longer a viable land use, causing their agricultural lands to become available for conversion to compatible urban uses.

The project site is set apart from adjacent agricultural lands by a levee and Ten Mile Slough on the west, and the San Joaquin River on the south-west. These physical barriers could reduce the potential for vandalism and trespassing problems, but the distance created by these barriers between planned residential uses on the project site and offsite agricultural operations would not reduce much of the potential for complaints concerning pesticide/herbicide applications, noise, and dust (Niblock pers. comm.).

The physical separation of the project site from adjacent agricultural operations should reduce some of the potential impact of the project on adjacent agricultural operations, but this impact is considered a significant unavoidable impact that cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level without implementing the No-Project Alternative.

#### Mitigation Measures

- o None available.

#### Impact: Cancellation of Williamson Act Contracts

Urbanization of the project site would involve cancelling the three Williamson Act contracts governing 436 acres of the project site.

The City of Stockton protested the three Williamson Act contracts affecting the project site. Annexation of the project site properties would authorize the Stockton City Council to succeed or not succeed to the provisions of the contracts. If the City does not succeed to the provisions of the contract, the contract is null and void (Scott pers. comm.).

As discussed previously in this section, conversion of the project site, including the Williamson Act lands, is considered a significant, unmitigable adverse impact.

#### Mitigation Measures

- o None available.

### Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Impact: Preemption of Prime Agricultural Land

Cumulative development would result in the conversion of more than 4,600 acres to urban uses. Much of this acreage consists of prime soils and is presently in agricultural use. Recent reports indicate that the conversion of irrigated farmland in California is occurring at an annual rate of 44,000 acres, and that the rate of farmland conversion may accelerate significantly in San Joaquin County due to a growing number of development proposals received since 1987 (O'Bryant pers. comm.).

Because of the productivity and increasing scarcity of prime agricultural land, this impact is considered to be significant. Onsite mitigation

measures such as partial, clustered, or phased development approval could reduce this impact but would not reduce it to a less-than-significant level. To adequately mitigate this impact, implementation of the following offsite measures would be necessary.

Mitigation Measures

- o Direct future urban growth away from prime agricultural land to areas of nonprime or lower quality soils.
- o Limit future annexations, actively promote infill development, and increase housing densities where feasible so as to preserve agricultural uses at the urban periphery.
- o Use innovative methods of farmland conservation such as transfers of development rights and land trusts.