

## 4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This chapter describes the existing agricultural resources in the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan Area (Parkway Plan Area) and evaluates the proposed Project's potential direct and cumulative impacts to agricultural resources. According to 2003 mapping data from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Parkway Plan Area does not contain woodland or forest land cover;<sup>1</sup> therefore, the Parkway Plan Area does not contain lands zoned for Timberland Production, and forestry resources is not considered, nor analyzed in this chapter.

### 4.2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### 4.2.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This section summarizes existing State and local laws, policies, and regulations relevant to agricultural resources in the Parkway Plan Area. There are no federal policies or regulations applicable to agricultural resources that are relevant to this environmental evaluation.

#### State Laws and Regulations

##### *Williamson Act*

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) allows local governments to enter into voluntary contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural uses. In return, restricted parcel property taxes are assessed at a rate consistent with their actual use rather than potential market value. The minimum length of Williamson Act contracts is ten years. Because the contract term automatically renews on each anniversary date of the contract, the actual contract length is essentially indefinite.

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

Within the California Natural Resources Agency, the State Department of Conservation (CDC) provides services and information that promote informed land use decisions and sound management of the State's natural resources. The Department manages the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which supports agriculture throughout California by developing maps and statistical data for analyzing land use impacts to farmland.

The developed maps are called the Important Farmlands Inventory (IFI). The IFI categorizes land based on the productive capabilities of the land. There are many factors that determine the agricultural value of land, including the suitability of soils for agricultural use, whether soils are irrigated, the depth of soil, water-holding capacity, and physical and chemical characteristics. To categorize soil capabilities, two soil classification systems are used: the

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and Resource Assessment Program, Land Cover map, [http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/webdata/maps/statewide/fvegwhrl13\\_map.pdf](http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/webdata/maps/statewide/fvegwhrl13_map.pdf), accessed April 21, 2017.

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Capability Classification System and the Storie Index. The Capability Classification System categorizes soils from Class I to Class VIII based on their capability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without deteriorating over a long period of time (Class I soils have few limitations for agriculture; Class VIII soils are unsuitable for agriculture).<sup>2</sup> The Storie Index takes into account other factors, such as slope and texture.

FMMP rates the production potential of agricultural land according to the following classifications:

- **Prime Farmland** has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Prime Farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agriculture production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance** is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as steeper slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland** consists of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance** is land that is important to the local agricultural economy. It is determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land** is the land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land** is occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. Common examples include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.
- **Other Land** is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; wetlands and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, and aquaculture facilities; and strip mines. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as other land. The Rural Land Mapping Project provides more detail on the distribution of various land uses within the Other Land category in all eight San Joaquin Valley counties. The Rural Land categories include: Rural Residential Land, Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land, Vacant or Disturbed Land, Confined Animal Agriculture, and Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation.
- **Water** is used to describe perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

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<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service, [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/about/history/?cid=nrcs143\\_021436](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/about/history/?cid=nrcs143_021436), accessed April 21, 2017.

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### *California Government Code Section 56064*

This section of the Government Code defines “Prime Agricultural Land” as follows:

- Prime agricultural land means an area of land, whether single parcel or contiguous parcels, that has not been developed for a use other than an agricultural use and that meets any of the following qualifications:
  - Land that qualifies, if irrigated, for rating as class I or class II in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service land use capability classification, whether or not land is actually irrigated, provided that irrigation is feasible.
  - Land that qualifies for rating 80 through 100 Storie Index Rating.
  - Land that supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber that has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the USDA in the National Range and Pasture Handbook, Revision 1, December 2003.
  - Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops that have a nonbearing period of less than five years and that will return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than \$400.00 dollars per acre.
  - Land that has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant products an annual gross value of not less than \$400.00 dollars per acre for three of the previous five calendar years.

### **Parkway Master Plan Policies**

The Conservancy will implement its mission and the Parkway Master Plan in a manner consistent with its adopted Parkway Master Plan goals, objectives, policies, design guidelines, and best management practices (BMPs) to the extent practicable.

### **Local Regulations and Policies**

The Conservancy is the lead agency responsible for preparing, approving, and implementing the proposed Parkway Master Plan. The Conservancy may assist other government agencies and nonprofit organizations in implementing elements of the proposed Plan. The Conservancy’s authorities and jurisdiction are described in Chapter 3. Local land use policies relevant to Parkway development and implementation are discussed in this section.

### *Madera County General Plan*

Section 5, Agricultural and Natural Resources, found in Part II of the Madera County General Plan contains several goals and policies to ensure the protection and continued operation of farmland and agricultural resources in the County. Table 4.2-1 lists the goals and policies that are relevant to the proposed Plan.

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**TABLE 4.2-1 MADERA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

Policy/Goal Number	Policy/Goal
Goal 5.A	<i>To designate adequate agricultural land and promote development of agricultural uses to support continued viability of Madera County's agricultural economy.</i>
Policy 5.A.1	The County shall maintain agriculturally-designated areas for agricultural uses and direct urban uses to designated new growth areas, existing communities, and/or cities.
Policy 5.A.2	The County shall discourage the conversion of prime agricultural land to urban uses unless an immediate and clear need can be demonstrated that indicates a lack of land for non-agricultural uses.
Policy 5.A.3	The County shall seek to ensure that new development and public works projects do not encourage further expansion of urban uses into designated agricultural areas.
Policy 5.A.4	The County will maintain large-parcel agricultural zoning and prohibit subdivision of agricultural lands into parcels smaller than permitted by the zoning.
Policy 5.A.13	The County shall require development within or adjacent to designated agricultural areas to incorporate design, construction, and maintenance techniques that protect agriculture and minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural uses.
Policy 5.A.14	The County shall enforce the provisions of its Right-to-Farm Ordinance and of the existing state nuisance law.

Source: Madera County General Plan, October 24, 1995.

### *Madera County Municipal Code*

Chapter 6.28, Right to Farm, of the Madera County Municipal Code is an ordinance to conserve, protect, and encourage the development, improvement, and continued viability of its agricultural land and industries.

### *Fresno County General Plan*

The Agriculture and Land Use Element contains policies and goals with respect to agricultural land use in Fresno County. Relevant policies and goals are shown in Table 4.2-2 below.

### *City of Fresno General Plan*

Chapter 4, Section G, Resource Conservation Element, contains policies and objectives to protect and enhance agricultural resources, land, and production within the City of Fresno. Relevant policies and objectives are shown in Table 4.2-3 below.

## 4.2.1.2 EXISTING SETTING

This section provides an overview of the existing conditions of the agricultural resources in Madera County, Fresno County, and the City of Fresno. Agricultural lands in the Parkway Plan Area consist primarily of row crops, orchards, and vineyards. Pumpkins are grown near Highway 41. The orchards are composed of citrus, stone fruits, and nut crops. The vineyards are composed of raisin, table, and wine grapes.

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**TABLE 4.2-2 FRESNO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

<b>Policy/Goal Number</b>	<b>Policy/Goal</b>
Goal LU-A	To promote the long-term conservation of productive and potentially-productive agricultural lands and to accommodate agricultural-support services and agriculturally-related activities that support the viability of agriculture and further the County's economic development goals.
Policy LU-A.1	The County shall maintain agriculturally-designated areas for agriculture use and shall direct urban growth away from valuable agricultural lands to cities, unincorporated communities, and other areas planned for such development where public facilities and infrastructure are available.
Policy LU-A.12	In adopting land use policies, regulations and programs, the County shall seek to protect agricultural activities from encroachment of incompatible land uses.
Policy LU-A.13	The County shall protect agricultural operations from conflicts with non-agricultural uses requiring buffers between proposed non-agricultural uses and adjacent agricultural operations.
Policy LU-A.14	The County shall ensure that the review of discretionary permits includes an assessment of the conversion of productive agricultural land and that mitigation be required where appropriate.

Source: Fresno County General Plan, October 2000.

**TABLE 4.2-3 CITY OF FRESNO GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

<b>Policy/Objective Number</b>	<b>Policy/Objective</b>
Objective G-5	While recognizing that the County of Fresno retains the primary responsibility for agricultural land use policies and the protection and advancement of farming operations, the City of Fresno will support efforts to preserve agricultural land outside of the area planned for urbanization and outside of the city's public service delivery plans, and development policies.
Policy G-5-b	Plan for the location and intensity of urban development in a manner that efficiently utilizes land area located within the planned urban boundary, including the North and Southeast Growth Areas, while promoting compatibility with agricultural uses located outside of the planned urban area.
Policy G-5-g	In the San Joaquin Riverbottom, accommodate agricultural uses that do not stimulate unplanned growth or conversion of designated open space land to urban uses.
Objective G-6	Support existing farming operations and protect them from untimely urbanization.
Policy G-6-b	The City of Fresno shall continue to recognize its agricultural preserve contracts (i.e. Williamson Act contracts) and shall promote the enrollment of all prime farmland that remains outside of its anticipated urban growth area. Scenic or resource conservation easements should be explored as another means for protecting farmland.
Policy G-6-d	When land proposed for urban development directly abuts actively farmed land that is under an agricultural preservation contract which has not had an application for cancellation filed, nor a Notice of Nonrenewal, appropriate design features need to be incorporated into the development project to buffer the agriculture/urban interface. Design features should include the following, or equivalent measures, to create an adequate buffer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wider building setbacks with fencing.</li> <li>▪ Designated open space (including but not limited to: densely landscaped strips, full-width multi-use trails or bikeways, on-site flood control, drainage or recharge facilities) and/or boundary streets.</li> </ul>

Source: City of Fresno 2025 General Plan, February 1, 2002.

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### Madera County

According to the CDC FMMP, and shown in Table 4.2-4, Madera County has approximately 366,570 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. Within the Madera County portion of the Parkway Plan Area, as shown in Figure 4.2-1 and Table 4.2-4, there are approximately 369 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance.

**TABLE 4.2-4 FARMLAND TYPES LANDS IN MADERA COUNTY**

Farmland Type	Within Madera County (approx. acres)	Within Parkway Plan Area (approx. acres)
Prime Farmland	97,527	187
Farmland of Statewide Importance	84,897	114
Unique Farmland	173,029	67
Farmland of Local Importance	11,117	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>366,570</b>	<b>369</b>

Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resources Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2012.

As shown in Figure 4.2-1, approximately 292 acres of land under Williamson Act contract are located within the Parkway Plan Area. Land zoned for agriculture within the Madera County portion of the Parkway Plan Area totals 2,778 acres, and is comprised of the following zones:<sup>3</sup>

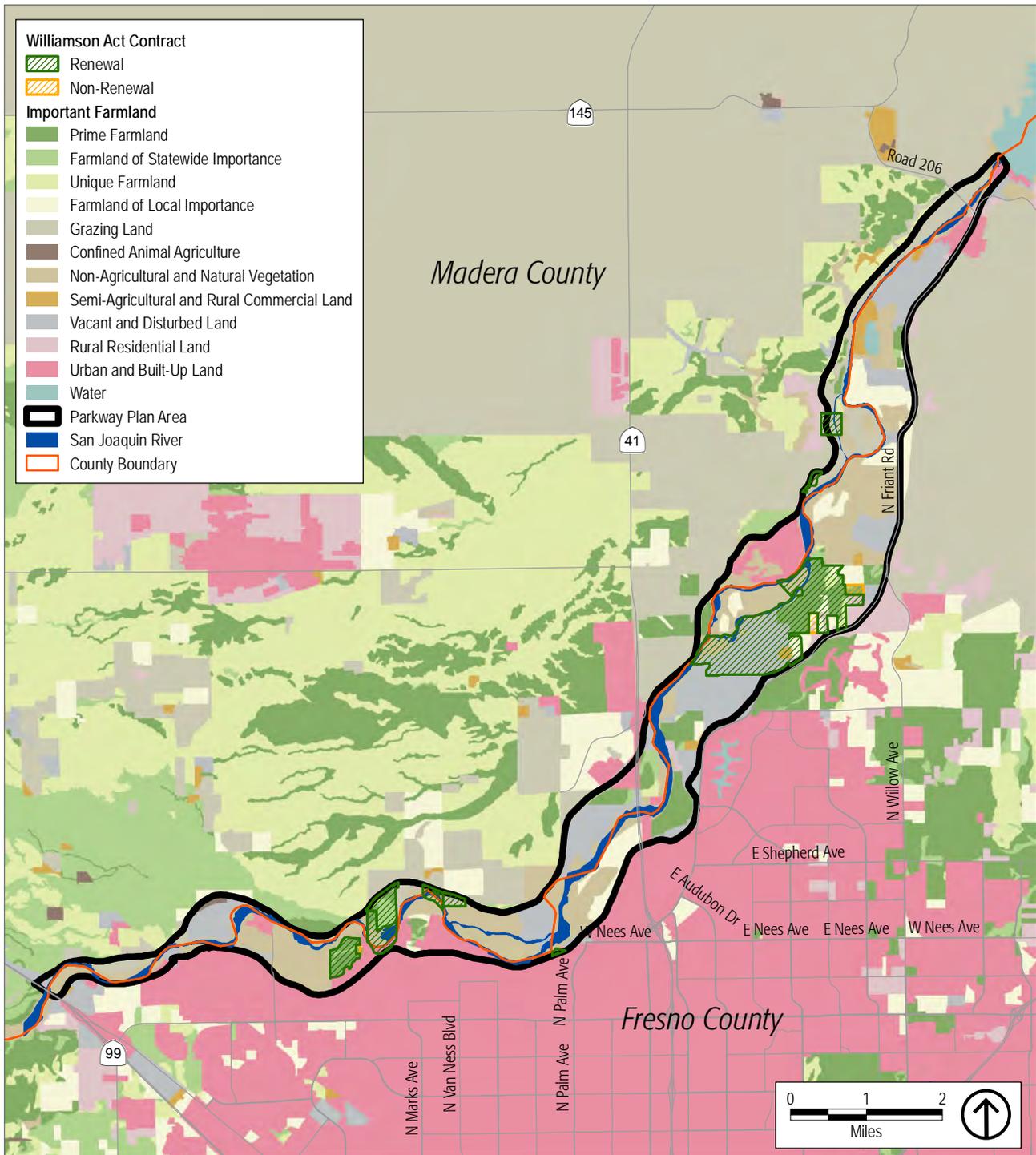
- ARE-20, Agricultural exclusive 20-acre, 17 acres
- ARE-40 Agricultural rural exclusive 40-acre, 465 acres
- ARE-160, Agricultural rural exclusive 160-acre, 44 acres
- ARV-20, Agricultural rural valley 20-acre, 1,803 acres
- ARF, Agricultural rural foothills, 449 acres.

### Fresno County

According to the CDC FMMP, and shown in Table 4.2-5, Fresno County has approximately 1,362,353 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. Within the Fresno County portion of the Parkway Plan Area, as shown in Figure 4.2-1 and Table 4.2-5, there are approximately 1,219 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance.

<sup>3</sup> Madera County Planning Department, 2014.

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Source: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCES PROTECTION, 2012;  
 PLACEWORKS, 2014.

Figure 4.2-1  
 Farmland Types and Williamson Act Contract Lands

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**TABLE 4.2-5 FARMLAND TYPES IN FRESNO COUNTY**

Farmland Type	Within Fresno County (approx. acres)	Within Parkway Plan Area (approx. acres)
Prime Farmland	707,802	518
Farmland of Statewide Importance	477,378	56
Unique Farmland	97,085	55
Farmland of Local Importance	80,088	590
Total	1,362,353	1,219

Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resources Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2012.

As shown in Figure 4.2-1, approximately 1,068 acres of land under Williamson Act Contract are located within the Parkway Plan Area.<sup>4</sup> Of the 1,068 acres under Williamson Act Contract, 1,026 acres are classified as mixed enrollment because they may contain Prime, Non-Prime, open space easement, or other contracted or enrolled land. For the remaining 42 (approximate) acres a non-renewal has been filed on the land and the existing contract remains in effect for the balance of the period remaining on the contracts.

Land zoned for agriculture within the Fresno County portion of the Parkway Plan Area (not including such lands within the Fresno City limits) totals 5,261 acres, and is comprised of the following zones:<sup>5</sup>

- AE-20, Exclusive Agricultural, 3,885 acres
- AE-5, Exclusive Agricultural, 1,022 acres
- AL-20, Limited Agricultural, 318 acres
- RA, Single Family Residential Agricultural, 34 acres
- AC, Agricultural Commercial Center, 2 acres

### City of Fresno

According to the CDC FMMP, and shown in Table 4.2-6, the City of Fresno has approximately 10,794 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. Within the City of Fresno portion of the Parkway, as shown in Figure 4.2-1 and Table 4.2-6, there are approximately 389 acres of farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance.

<sup>4</sup> Fresno County Planning Department, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Fresno County Planning Department, 2014.

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**TABLE 4.2-6 FARMLAND TYPES IN THE CITY OF FRESNO**

<b>Farmland Type</b>	<b>Within the City of Fresno (approx. acres)</b>	<b>Within Parkway Plan Area (approx. acres)</b>
Prime Farmland	5,232	171
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1,313	10
Unique Farmland	998	2
Farmland of Local Importance	3,251	206
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,794</b>	<b>389</b>

Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resources Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2012.

**4.2.2 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The proposed Project would result in a significant impact to agricultural resources if it 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.

**4.2.3 IMPACT DISCUSSION**

This section analyzes potential project-specific and cumulative impacts to agricultural resources.

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**AG-1                      The proposed Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.**

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The proposed Project would have a significant impact if it converted Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, to non-agricultural use.

As shown on Figure 4.2-1 and described above in Section 4.2.2, Existing Conditions, approximately 1,977 acres of farmland defined as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland or Farmland of Local

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Importance are located within the Parkway Plan Area. It should be noted that in some cases, the actual uses of the land designated as farmland is not for agricultural use, as some parcels are vacant, used as rangeland or otherwise not fully utilized for agricultural purposes.

The Plan includes several policies, listed below, that seek to protect agricultural resources.

### Parkway Master Plan Policies: Agricultural Resources

#### Goals:

- Design, construct and manage the Parkway in a manner that is compatible with agricultural uses (crops, livestock, orchards, and nurseries).
- Encourage the preservation of agricultural uses in the Parkway planning area.

#### Policies:

- AGRI.1      Work with agencies that conserve farmland to secure conservation easements within the Parkway planning area.
- AGRI.2      Support community supported agriculture.
- AGRI.3      Provide buffers, fencing, signage and other measures to reduce potential conflicts between public Parkway use and nearby agriculture.
- AGRI.4      Encourage agricultural uses as buffers between the Parkway and more intensive urban/suburban uses.

As the policies indicate, protection of agricultural resources is an important aspect of implementation of the Plan.

As described in Chapter 3, Project Description, the proposed Project will result in the acquisition of approximately 2,055 acres (with another 3,845 already in public ownership for the Parkway). Candidate properties, which may only be acquired from willing sellers, include, but are not limited to, the 1,977 acres of farmland listed in Tables 4.2-4 through 4.2-6, within the Parkway; therefore, the proposed Project could convert portions of this land to non-agriculture uses, habitat restoration, open space, and recreation. As a result, a *significant* impact would occur.

#### Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Permits, Relevant Local Land Use Policies:

- Williamson Act
- Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
- Madera County General Plan (Goal 5.A, Policy 5.A.1, Policy 5.A.2, Policy 5.A.3, Policy 5.A.4, Policy 5.A.13, and Policy 5.A.14)
- Madera County Municipal Code, Chapter 6.28, Right to Farm
- Fresno County General Plan (Goal LU-A, Policy LU-A.1, Policy LU-A.12, Policy LU-A.13, and Policy LU-A.14)

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- City of Fresno General Plan (Objective G-5, Policy G-5-b, Policy G-5-g, Objective G-6, Policy G-6-b, and Policy G-6-d)

**Significance Without Mitigation:** Significant.

**Impact AG-1:** The proposed Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.

**Mitigation Measure AG-1:** No mitigation measures are feasible to reduce the potential impact. The intent of the Plan is to enhance recreational opportunities and create habitat conservation areas within the Parkway Plan Area. The farmland in the Parkway Plan Area may remain in agriculture, or may be offered for sale to the Conservancy, evaluated for acquisition, and may be acquired. Avoiding the acquisition of offered agricultural lands could interfere with achievement of Parkway goals and objectives. In order to implement the Plan, conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses would not be reduced to a less-than-significant level, and the Project's impacts in this regard would be *significant and unavoidable*.

**Significance With Mitigation:** Significant and unavoidable.

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### AG-2                      The proposed Project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

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The proposed Project would have a significant effect if it conflicted with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. As identified in Figure 4.2-1, and discussed above in Section 4.2.2, Existing Conditions, approximately 1,360 acres of land located within Parkway Plan Area is under Williamson Act contract. In addition, approximately 2,780 acres of land zoned for agriculture are located in the Madera County portion of the Parkway Plan Area.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 5,261 acres of land zoned for agriculture by Fresno County are located in Fresno County portion of the Parkway Plan Area.<sup>7</sup> (Parks and open space, as envisioned in the proposed Plan, are allowed uses consistent with the non-exclusive agriculture zones.)

As discussed above under Impact AG-1, acquisition of Parkway land could result in conversion of several hundred acres of important farmland to non-agricultural uses. As the proposed Plan is implemented, the Conservancy may purchase land zoned for agriculture uses or under Williamson Act contract, portions of which would be converted to non-agricultural uses. Although the non-agricultural uses would include areas for habitat restoration, open space, and recreation, the location and amount of affected acreage is undetermined. As such, implementation of the Plan

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<sup>6</sup> Madera County agricultural zoning located within Parkway Plan Area: ARE-20, Agricultural exclusive twenty-acre, 16.77 acres; ARE-40 Agricultural rural exclusive forty-acre, 465.32 acres; ARE-160, Agricultural rural exclusive 160-acre, 43.95 acres; ARV-20, Agricultural rural valley twenty acre, 1,802.67 acres; ARF, Agricultural rural foothills, 449.42 acres.

<sup>7</sup> Fresno County agricultural zoning located within Parkway Plan Area: AE-20, Exclusive Agricultural, 3,884.73 acres; AE-5, Exclusive Agricultural, 1,022.28 acres; AL-20, Limited Agricultural, 318.06 acres; RA, Single Family Residential Agricultural, 34.16 acres; AC, Agricultural Commercial Center, 2.21 acres.

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and the subsequent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses would conflict with land zoned for exclusive agricultural use or currently under Williamson Act contract. Therefore, a *significant* impact would occur.

### **Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Permits, Relevant Local Land Use Policies:**

- Williamson Act
- Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
- Madera County General Plan (Goal 5.A, Policy 5.A.1, Policy 5.A.2, Policy 5.A.3, Policy 5.A.4, Policy 5.A.13, and Policy 5.A.14)
- Madera County Municipal Code, Chapter 6.28, Right to Farm
- Fresno County General Plan (Goal LU-A, Policy LU-A.1, Policy LU-A.12, Policy LU-A.13, and Policy LU-A.14)
- City of Fresno General Plan (Objective G-5, Policy G-5-b, Policy G-5-g, Objective G-6, Policy G-6-b, and Policy G-6-d)

**Significance Without Mitigation:** Significant.

**Impact AG-2:** The proposed Project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

**Mitigation Measure AG-2:** No mitigation measures are feasible to reduce the potential impact. The intent of the Plan is to enhance recreational opportunities and create habitat conservation areas within the Parkway Plan Area. The farmland in the Parkway Plan Area may remain in agriculture, or may be offered for sale to the Conservancy, evaluated for acquisition, and may be acquired. Avoiding the acquisition of offered agricultural lands could interfere with achievement of Parkway goals and objectives. Implementation of the Plan would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract and cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level, and the Project's impacts in this regard would be *significant and unavoidable*.

**Significance With Mitigation:** Significant and unavoidable.

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**AG-3**                      **The proposed Project would involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.**

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The proposed Plan would result in a significant impact if future activities, including land acquisition for habitat restoration, open space, and recreational amenities and access, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. As discussed under AG-1, implementation of the Plan would result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses and introduce construction of new facilities to support recreational activities in the Parkway Plan Area, which would result in changes in the existing environment.

Although changes to the existing environment would occur as a result of implementation of the Plan, such changes aim to enhance the Parkway Plan Area as a regional open space area, with enhanced habitat areas and active and passive recreational opportunities. For those agricultural lands in proximity to the Parkway, the proposed Plan includes policies to protect agricultural uses from impacts of Parkway development and use. However, the Project would result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses and a *significant* impact would occur.

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### Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Permits, Relevant Local Land Use Policies:

- County of Madera General Plan (Policy 5.A.2, Policy 5.A.3, and Policy 5.A.13 )
- County of Fresno General Plan (Goal LU-A, Policy LU-A.1, and Policy LU-A.13)
- City of Fresno General Plan (Policy G-5-g, Objective G-6, and Policy G-6-d)

**Significance Without Mitigation:** Significant.

**Impact AG-3:** The proposed Project would involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

**Mitigation Measure AG-3:** No mitigation measures are feasible to reduce the potential impact. The intent of the Plan is to enhance recreational opportunities and create habitat conservation areas within the Parkway Plan Area. The farmland in the Parkway Plan Area may remain in agriculture, or may be offered for sale to the Conservancy, evaluated for acquisition, and may be acquired. Avoiding the acquisition of offered agricultural lands could interfere with achievement of Parkway goals and objectives. In order to implement the Plan, conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level, and the Project's impacts in this regard would be *significant and unavoidable*.

**Significance With Mitigation:** Significant and unavoidable.

## 4.2.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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**AG-4** Implementation of the Project, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would result in significant cumulative impacts with respect to agricultural resources.

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The geographic scope for purposes of this cumulative impact analysis is the Parkway Plan Area and adjacent agricultural land uses in Madera and Fresno counties. As discussed throughout this chapter, implementation of the Plan would result in the conversion of farmland in the Parkway Plan Area to non-agricultural uses. Because future implementation program areas have not been identified, this EIR assumes that approximately 1,977 acres of agricultural land within the Parkway Plan Area could be converted through implementation of the proposed Project, and there is the potential for all of the remaining farmland land within the Parkway Plan Area to be converted to non-agricultural land uses through the Conservancy's others' unrelated actions.

As discussed above, the Plan includes several goals and policies that seek to protect existing agricultural resources. However, with the conversion of farmland that would result from implementation of the Plan, development projects in the vicinity of the Parkway, including the Friant Ranch Specific Plan in Fresno County, and the Rio Mesa Area Plan in Madera County, would combine to result in a loss of agricultural land in Madera and Fresno counties. As a result, a *significant cumulative impact* to agricultural resources would occur.

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### **Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Permits, Relevant Local Land Use Policies:**

- Williamson Act
- Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
- Madera County General Plan (Goal 5.A, Policy 5.A.1, Policy 5.A.2, Policy 5.A.3, Policy 5.A.4, Policy 5.A.13, and Policy 5.A.14)
- Madera County Municipal Code, Chapter 6.28, Right to Farm
- Fresno County General Plan (Goal LU-A, Policy LU-A.1, Policy LU-A.12, Policy LU-A.13, and Policy LU-A.14)
- City of Fresno General Plan (Objective G-5, Policy G-5-b, Policy G-5-g, Objective G-6, Policy G-6-b, and Policy G-6-d)

**Significance Without Mitigation:** Significant.

**Impact AG-4:** Implementation of the Project, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would result in significant cumulative impacts with respect to agricultural resources.

**Mitigation Measure AG-4:** The intent of the Plan is to enhance recreational opportunities and create habitat conservation areas within the Parkway Plan Area. In order to implement the Plan, impacts to agricultural resources, in combination with the potential conversion of agricultural land resulting from others' unrelated actions, cannot be reduced to a less than significant level, and the Project's cumulative impact in this regard would be *significant and unavoidable*.

**Significance With Mitigation:** Significant and unavoidable.