

APPENDIX A

**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING
PROGRAM DEFINITIONS FOR IMPORTANT FARMLAND MAP CATEGORIES**

APPENDIX A
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM
DEFINITIONS FOR IMPORTANT FARMLAND MAP CATEGORIES¹

Prime Farmland². *Prime Farmland* is land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. *Prime Farmland* must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Farmland of Statewide Importance². *Farmland of Statewide Importance* is land other than *Prime Farmland* which has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Unique Farmland. *Unique Farmland* is land which does not meet the criteria for *Prime Farmland* or *Farmland of Statewide Importance*, that has been used for the production of specific high economic value crops (as listed in California Agriculture produced by the California Department of Food and Agriculture) at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Farmland of Local Importance. *Farmland of Local Importance* is either currently producing crops, or has the capability of production. *Farmland of Local Importance* is land other than *Prime Farmland*, *Farmland of Statewide Importance*, or *Unique Farmland*. This land may be important to the local economy due to its productivity. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

¹ These definitions have been excerpted from *A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program*, 1992, Department of Conservation, Office of Land Conservation, Publication Number FM-92-01.

² Soil types qualifying for these two categories are provided by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

This category varies from county-to-county and is determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.

Grazing Land. *Grazing Land* is land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for *Grazing Land* is 40 acres.

Urban and Built-up Land. *Urban and Built-up Land* is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment plants, water control structures, and other development purposes. Highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities are mapped as a part of *Urban and Built-up Land* if they are a part of the surrounding urban areas.

The minimum mapping unit is ten acres. Units of land smaller than ten acres will be incorporated into the surrounding map classifications. The building density for residential use must be at least one structure per 1.5 acres (or approximately 6 structures per 10 acres). *Urban and Built-up Land* must contain man-made structures or the infrastructure required for development (e.g., paved roads, sewers, water, electricity, or in specific circumstances, drainage or flood control facilities) that are specifically designed to serve that land. Parking lots, storage and distribution facilities, and industrial uses such as large packing operations for agricultural produce will generally be mapped as *Urban and Built-up Land*, even though they are associated with agriculture.

Urban and Built-up Land does not include strip mines, borrow pits, gravel pits, farmsteads, ranch headquarters, commercial feedlots, greenhouses, poultry facilities, and road systems for freeway interchanges outside of areas classified as *Urban and Built-up Land* areas.

Within areas classified as *Urban and Built-up Land*, vacant and nonagricultural land which is surrounded on all sides by urban development and is 40 acres or less in size will be mapped as *Urban and Built-up Land*. Vacant and nonagricultural land larger than 40 acres in size will be mapped as *Other Land*.

Other Land. *Other Land* is that which is not included in any of the other mapping categories. The following types of land are generally included:

- a. Rural development which has a building density of less than one structure per 1.5 acres, but with at least one structure per ten acres;
- b. Brush, timber and other lands not suitable for livestock grazing;
- c. Government lands not available for agricultural use;
- d. Road systems for freeway interchanges outside of *Urban and Built-up Land* areas;

- e. Vacant and nonagricultural land larger than 40 acres in size and surrounded on all sides by urban development;
- f. Confined livestock facilities of 10 or more acres unless accounted for by the county's definition for *Farmland of Local Importance*;
- g. A variety of other rural land uses;
- h. Strip mines, borrow pits, gravel pits, ranch headquarters larger than 10 acres.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use. *Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use* is land that is permanently committed by local elected officials to nonagricultural development by virtue of decisions which cannot be reversed simply by a majority vote of a city council or county board of supervisors.

County boards of supervisors and city councils will have the final authority to designated lands in this category pursuant to the requirements of this section. The Department will work with city and county planning staffs to obtain this information.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use will be shown on an overlay to the Important Farmland Series maps (and Interim Farmland Maps). The current land use will be indicated on the base map, with the overlay indicating the areas that are *Committed to Nonagricultural Use*.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use must be designated in an adopted, local general plan for future nonagricultural development. The resulting development must meet the requirements of *Urban and Built-up Land* or the rural development density criteria of *Other Land*.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use must also meet the requirements of either (a) or (b) below:

- a. It must have received on the following final discretionary approvals:
 - 1. Tentative subdivision map (approved per the Subdivision Map Act);
 - 2. Tentative or final parcel map (approved per the Subdivision Map Act);
 - 3. Recorded development agreement (per Section 65864 of the Government Code);

4. Other decisions by a local government which are analogous to items #1-3 above and which exhibit the element of permanence discussed in *Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use*. Zoning by itself does not qualify as a permanent commitment.

OR

- b. It must be the subject of one of the final fiscal commitments to finance the capital improvements specifically required for future development of the land in question as shown below:
 1. Recorded Resolution of Intent to form a district and levy an assessment;
 2. Payment of assessment;
 3. Sale of bonds;
 4. Binding contract, secured by bonds, guaranteeing installation of infrastructure;
 5. Other fiscal commitments which are analogous to items #1-4 above and exhibit the element of permanence discussed for *Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use*.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use will be mapped when the respective local government notifies the Department that the land meets qualifying criteria and submits maps at a scale of 1:24,000 identifying the area and showing its boundaries. The notification referred to will be subject to verification by the Department. In the case of land identified per Sections (a)4 and (b)5, the local government must also provide the Department with documentation of the permanent commitment.