

4.2 AGRICULTURE

This section of the DEIR describes the existing agricultural resources within Mendocino County and identifies appropriate General Plan policies to reduce identified impacts, where necessary. Sources utilized in this section to assess impacts of the proposed project include the Background Report for the County of Mendocino General Plan Update (2003), the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Report (2004), the 2006 Mendocino County Crop Report, the Soil Survey of Mendocino County – Eastern Part (1991), and the Soil Survey of Mendocino County, California, Western Part (1999). The reader is referred to Section 4.9, Land Use, for discussions regarding other types of land use.

4.2.1 EXISTING SETTING

MENDOCINO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS

Based on information published by the United States Department of Agriculture, Mendocino County ranked 35th in agricultural production out of 58 counties in the State of California in 2007 (USDA, 2002). The total value of production in 2007 was \$202,800,000 (excluding timber). Some of the leading commodities are shown in **Table 4.2-1**.

**TABLE 4.2-1
MENDOCINO COUNTY LEADING FARM COMMODITIES, 2007**

Commodity	Value
Wine Grapes	\$75,348,300
Bartlett Pears	\$14,049,800
Cattle & Calves	\$6,342,600
Milk	\$6,202,700
Pasture	\$3,646,400
Nursery	\$3,583,500
Range	\$1,744,500
Bosc Pears	\$1,468,000
Apples	\$1,420,200
Red Pears	\$1,409,400
Pasture, Irrigated	\$1,026,000

Source: County of Mendocino, Department of Agriculture, 2007

The value of one fruit product, wine grapes, was greater than that for all other leading farm commodities, including timber production which totaled \$74,594,400. According to the 2007 Mendocino County Crop Report, wine grape production in Mendocino County has been steadily increasing over the past 30 years. In 1977, the total value was approximately \$10,000,000 and by 1998 the value had increased to approximately \$85,000,000. In 2006, total wine grape value was \$87,661,500, which was similar to the peak value reached between 1998 and 2001. The value of wine grapes dropped in 2002 to 2004 and 2007 (County of Mendocino, Department of Agriculture, 2007).

Based on these values from 1977 to 2007, wine grape production has increased in Mendocino County by approximately 600 percent. If these trends continue over the next 30 years, it is estimated that wine grapes may increase to a \$452 million per year crop. However, since

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growth in wine grape production would most likely occur in the previously established viticultural areas, the value of wine grape production is not anticipated to reach this level by 2030.

MENDOCINO COUNTY FARMLAND

In 2002, approximately 31 percent of the county was utilized for some form of agriculture, up 2 percent from 1997. The number of acres of farmland has increased by 51,361 acres (see **Table 4.2-2**).

TABLE 4.2-2
MENDOCINO COUNTY FARMLANDS (1997 AND 2002)

Farmlands	1997	2002	Change
Area of county (acres)	2,246,400	2,246,400	N/A
Total cropland (acres)	68,019	77,256	+9,237
Harvested cropland (acres)	29,991	30,892	+901
Irrigated land (acres)	24,431	27,532	+3,101
Number of farms	1,270	1,184	-86
Land in farms (acres)	656,105	707,466	+51,361
Average farm size (acres)	517	598	+81

Source: USDA, 2002

Cropland

As shown in **Table 4.2-2** above, approximately 77,256 acres of land in Mendocino County was cultivated cropland in 2002. Of this total, approximately 27,532 acres, or 35 percent, was irrigated. The remaining acres were dry farmed field crops and relatively small areas of fruit and nut crops (USDA, 2002).

Croplands are located primarily in the warmer inland valleys and on coastal terraces. Grapes are grown on suitable soils in the warmer inland valleys, from Hopland north to Redwood Valley along the Russian River, as well as in Anderson Valley. While fruit and nut orchards are concentrated around Hopland, Ukiah, Talmage, Potter Valley, and Anderson Valley, fruit and nuts are also grown throughout the cropland areas. Irrigated pastures augment dryland livestock feeds and dairies in the county. Vegetable production in the county includes beans, sweet corn, garlic, herbs, melons, peas, potatoes, squash, and tomatoes.

According to the 2007 crop report, the county had approximately 2,047 acres in pears. The years of 1999, 2000, and 2001 were disasters for pear growers due to market conditions and weather/pest conditions, and many orchards were removed. In 2006, the pear industry in Lake and Mendocino counties experienced up to 30 percent crop losses due to lack of qualified pickers to harvest the crop (University of California Cooperative Extension, 2007). In 2008, records indicate that April's freeze was the worst Mendocino County growers have seen in nearly half a century, with a very rough, preliminary estimate of crop loss at more than 40 percent countywide. The county's total agricultural production is valued at about \$140 million (California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008). Some of the pests that threaten the county's pear industry include coddling moth, pear scab, psylla, and fire blight. Ukiah has one of the most modern controlled atmosphere cold storage packing plants in northern California, making the industry

more viable and competitive. Market conditions and competition from imports have also contributed to the decline in crop production within the county.

Since 2000, there has been increasing grape acreage, slowly decreasing fruit and nut crops, and stable field crop acreages, as shown in **Table 4.2-3**.

TABLE 4.2-3
MENDOCINO COUNTY – WINE GRAPES, FRUIT AND NUT CROPS, AND FIELD CROP ACREAGES
2000 THROUGH 2007

Crop	2000 Total Acreage	2007 Total Acreage	Difference
Wine Grapes	12,838	16,342	+3,504
Fruit and Nut Crops	3,113	2,642	-471
Field Crop	726,000	726,000	0
Miscellaneous	250	330	+80
Total	742,201	745,314	+3,113

Source: Mendocino County Crop Report, 2007

* Miscellaneous: berries, cherries, chestnuts, olives, other pears, peaches, persimmons, pistachios, and walnuts

The climate in Mendocino County has a strong influence on the crops that can be grown. The frosts late in spring in the northern part of the unincorporated county area make it difficult to produce grapes and pears. The main crops grown in Little Lake Valley, Round Valley, and the Laytonville area are hay and pasture, but some pears and walnuts are also grown. All crops are suited to the major producing valleys along the Russian River drainage ways. In the southern part of the unincorporated county area, these valleys extend from the Redwood and Potter valleys south to Hopland, where the growing season is longer.

Cropland – Eastern Part of Mendocino County

According to the USDA NRCS soil survey for the eastern part of the county, approximately 90,000 acres, or 8 percent, of the survey area consists of soils on bottomland and terraces. Of this, 45 percent, or about 40,000 acres, is used mainly for crops such as varietal wine grapes, pears, alfalfa, hay, and pasture. Walnuts, peaches, berries, and other field crops are also grown.

The cropland is mainly in river valleys and along tributaries of the Russian and Eel rivers, although varietal grapes are grown on about 500 acres on hillsides with slopes of 15 to 60 percent.

Water from the Russian River, especially via the Eel River, is extremely important to agricultural uses in Mendocino County.

Irrigation is required in the summer in the eastern part of the county to achieve maximum production of most crops, and in the spring it is a necessary tool for frost protection. A combination of community water systems, riparian or other water rights, and groundwater wells is used. Irrigation methods used in the eastern part of Mendocino County are sprinkler and trickle systems for fruit and nuts, sprinkler systems for pastures, and ditch conveyance systems for field crops and some pastures in Potter Valley conveyed by the Potter Valley Irrigation District.

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Cropland – Western Part of Mendocino County

According to the USDA NRCS soil survey for the western part of the county, approximately 28,000 acres, or 2.7 percent, of the survey area is used for crops and pasture. The cropland in the western part of the county is mostly in Anderson Valley.

Varietal wine grapes, apples, and pears are the major crops in Anderson Valley. Anderson Valley grapes are considered premium wine grapes and receive some of the top prices in the industry. About 1,000 acres in the survey area were used for producing wine grapes, and the acreage has been steadily increasing (USDA, 2001). As of February 2008, there were approximately 2,806 acres of wine grapes in Anderson Valley (Bengston, 2008b).

Irrigation is usually needed through the dry summer to maximize production from most crops. Most growers use wells or pump from streams. Sprinkler and trickle irrigation systems are the most common methods for irrigating fruit and pasture crops.

The cool, moist coastal terrace soils have been historically used to produce berries, bulbs, potatoes, peas, and other field and truck crops. A few growers are producing cool-season vegetables for local markets.

Rangeland

Rangeland is used for livestock grazing. Rangelands in Mendocino County are predominantly composed of annual grasses, clovers, and forbs and are often mingled with brushes and trees. Annual grasses grow from seed each year, germinating after late fall and early winter rains and growing slowly through the winter. When the weather warms in the spring the grasses put on rapid growth and produce seed for the next year's crop. Grass rangelands often have significant amounts of legumes (clovers) and other forbs mixed with the grasses.

Forage production is closely tied to the soil and the growing season. The number of sheep and cattle that can be grazed corresponds with the amount of forage available.

According to the Agricultural Commissioner, the sheep industry has leveled off at a very low level compared to historical times. But it has added a new dimension. There is a new small cottage industry of people raising sheep for fine wool that sells at much higher rates, which is connected to a small cottage industry of weavers and spinners. These wools sometimes sell for \$12.00 to \$27.00 per pound, while wool from traditionally raised sheep wool may only sell for \$.30 to \$.90 per pound. This industry is not huge, but is characterized as very important, especially for the survival of the industry.

The cattle industry has declined in the last few years due to market conditions and the breakup of some of the large ranches. However, in 2007, milk set an all-time value record of \$6,202,707.

The predator pressure on the sheep industry has continued but some of the industry is surviving by the use of guard dogs, fencing, and bringing the sheep into barns at night (Bengston, 2008b).

Rangeland – Eastern Part of Mendocino County

Approximately 415,000 acres, or 37 percent of the eastern area of the county, is considered potential rangeland. Beef cattle and sheep operations are the major users of rangeland. Beef producers conduct both cow-calf and stocker operations. Cow-calf operators use the rangeland late in winter and in spring, and the rest of the year they provide supplemental hay or

irrigated pasture, or both. Stocker operators generally buy young cattle in December and January, use the rangeland forage during the green-feed period, and then sell the heavier cattle in May or June. Sheep operators use the rangeland during the fresh green grass period, from November to June, following lambing (USDA, 1991).

Rangeland – Western Part of Mendocino County

Approximately 114,000 acres, or 11 percent of the western area of the county, is considered rangeland. Privately owned rangeland is primarily along the coast and near the eastern boundary of the western area of the county, including Anderson Valley (USDA, 2001).

Rangeland vegetation consists of oak grasslands that are dominated by annual grasses and forbs. Livestock use is mostly seasonal. Livestock are transported into the area during fall and winter to take advantage of the annual vegetation which begins growth after the rains. Stocker cattle normally are bought in late fall or early winter. The nutritional value of the herbaceous vegetation drops sharply following the burst of growth during spring. Cattle are either moved to better pasture or are shipped to market or to feedlots prior to the animals being offered for sale. Lambing on sheep ranches occurs during the winter, and lambs are sold in the spring (USDA, 2001).

In the western part of the county, mountain meadows are mostly dominated by perennials. Areas are used primarily for livestock year-round in the western part of the survey area. The green-feed period is considerably longer in these areas than in other areas, and livestock operations are quite diverse, including a few dairies. Most of the ranches are cow-calf and sheep operations, but some are stocker operations. Some ranches have developed irrigated pastures to produce additional forage or hay (USDA, 2001).

The acreage grazed by cattle and sheep is about equal, but sheep production is declining slightly because of predator problems. Coyotes, mountain lions, and bobcats repeatedly prey upon lambs and ewes. Losses can be so great that ranchers turn to other livestock enterprises. According to the 2006 Mendocino County Crop Report, sheep producers reported \$26,034 in predatory losses compared to \$256,400 in value.

Organic Farming

Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.

Organic farms must meet standards established by the USDA under its National Organic Program. Before a product can be labeled "organic," a government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards (National Organic Program, 2008). The California Department of Food and Agriculture has established the California Organic Program, which enforces both federal and state legislation related to organic farming. Each producer of organic foods that sells more than \$5,000 worth of product per year is required to be certified (USDA, 2008).

Organic farming, including crops and livestock, is an expanding niche in Mendocino County, especially in Potter, Round, and Redwood valleys. In 2007, there were 209 organic growers

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registered in Mendocino County on 8,393 acres. This compares with 6,817 acres in 2006 and 3,460 acres in 2005. **Table 4.2-4** summarizes the number of farms and acreage of organic farms by crop type for the year 2007.

TABLE 4.2-4
ORGANIC FARMS IN MENDOCINO COUNTY, 2007

Crops	Number of Farms	Crop Acres
Wine Grapes	71	3,557
Apples	22	166
Pears	15	246
Miscellaneous Vegetables	25	358
Miscellaneous Fruit and Nut	34	195
Nursery and Cut Flowers	19	10
Pasture	6	3,066
Biodynamic Wine Grapes	7	690
Miscellaneous	10	105
Total	209	8,393

Source: Mendocino County, Crop Report, 2007

Mendocino County has the third highest number of organic farmers in the state, and its largest winery, Fetzer Vineyards, has an organic label. Approximately 17 percent of the county's wine grape acreage is organic, which accounts for 36 percent of the statewide total of organic wine grapes (Bengston, 2008a).

FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION AND RATING SYSTEM

Farmland classification programs are used to determine the agricultural productivity of a soil. The two systems used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine a soil's agricultural productivity include the Soil Capability Classification System and the Storie Index Rating System.

Soil Capability Classification

The Soil Capability Classification System takes into consideration soil limitations, the risk of damage when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment. Capability classes range from Class I soils, which have few limitations for agriculture, to Class VIII soils, which are unsuitable for agriculture. Generally, as the ratings of the capability classification system increase, the yields and profits are more difficult to obtain. A general description of soil classification, as defined by the NRCS, is provided in **Table 4.2-5**.

**TABLE 4.2-5
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

Class	Definition
I	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
II	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices.
III	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both.
IV	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.
V	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations; impractical to remove limits to their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VI	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VII	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VIII	Soils and landforms have limitation that preclude their use for commercial plant production and restrict their use to recreation, wildlife habitat, or water supply, or to aesthetic purposes.

Source: USDA, 2001

Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating System ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture. Ratings range from Grade 1 soils (80 to 100 rating), which have few or no limitations for agricultural production, to Grade 6 soils (less than 10), which are not suitable for agriculture. Under this system, soils deemed less than prime can function as prime soils when limitations such as poor drainage, slopes, or soil nutrient deficiencies are partially or entirely removed. The six grades, ranges in index rating, and definition of grades, as defined by the NRCS, are provided below in **Table 4.2-6**.

**TABLE 4.2-6
STORIE INDEX RATING SYSTEM**

Grade	INDEX RATING	Definition
1 – Excellent	80 through 100	Soils are well suited to intensive use for growing irrigated crops that are climatically suited to the region.
2 – Good	60 through 79	Soils are good agricultural soils, although they may not be so desirable as Grade 1 because of moderately coarse, coarse, or gravelly surface soil texture; somewhat less permeable subsoil; lower plant available water holding capacity, fair fertility, less well drained conditions, or slight to moderate flood hazards, all acting separately or in combination.
3 – Fair	40 through 59	Soils are only fairly well suited to general agricultural use and are limited in their use because of moderate slopes; moderate soil depths; less permeable subsoil; fine, moderately fine or gravelly surface soil textures; poor drainage; moderate flood hazards; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.

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Grade	INDEX RATING	Definition
4 – Poor	20 through 39	Soils are poorly suited. They are severely limited in their agricultural potential because of shallow soil depths; less permeable subsoil; steeper slope; or more clayey or gravelly surface soil textures than Grade 3 soils, as well as poor drainage; greater flood hazards; hummocky micro-relief; salinity; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
5 – Very Poor	10 through 19	Soils are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland.
6 – Nonagricultural	Less than 10	Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization.

Source: USDA, 2001

MENDOCINO COUNTY SOIL CHARACTERISTICS

The “prime” soil classifications in both of the above systems indicate the absence of soil limitations, which if present would require the application of management techniques (e.g., drainage, leveling, special fertilizing practices) to enhance production.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has identified soils suitable as Prime Farmland in its two soil surveys of Mendocino County. The NRCS definition of Prime Farmland is the same as that in the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program FMMP.

There are many different soil types within the county. The soils can be categorized into 22 generalized soil groups. The descriptions provide information about the characteristics of each soil group. They have been broken up into the eastern and western parts of the county, as well as by general landscape types. The reader is referred to Section 4.6, Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources, of this DEIR for more detailed information about soils in the unincorporated portions of the county.

FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (USDA-SCS). The intent of the USDA-SCS was to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. As part of the nationwide agricultural land use mapping effort, the USDA-SCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classified land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability included both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and the actual land use. Important Farmland maps are derived from the USDA-SCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria.

Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the USDA-SCS with completing its mapping in the state. The FMMP was created within the California Department of Conservation (DOC) to carry on the mapping activity on a continuing basis and with a greater level of detail. The DOC applied a greater level of detail by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California utilizing the SCS and Storie Index Rating Systems, but also considers physical conditions such as a dependable water supply for agricultural production, soil temperature range, depth of the ground water table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth.

Important Farmland Maps for California are compiled using the modified LIM criteria and current land use information. The Important Farmland Maps identify five agriculture-related categories:

Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. Each is summarized below, based on A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (1994), prepared by the Department of Conservation.

Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland is considered land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain the long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. The land must have been producing irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles (a cycle is equivalent to 2 years) prior to the mapping date of 2006 (or since 2002).

Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of Statewide Importance is considered land similar to prime farmland, but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or with less ability to hold and store moisture. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date (or since 2002).

Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is land 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. The land must have been cultivated at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date (or since 2002).

Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is land of importance to the local agricultural economy, as determined by each County's Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. The draft Important Farmland categories are currently undergoing local review. At the terminus of the review, lands will be categorized as Farmland of Local Importance as determined by the County's Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee.

Grazing Land

Grazing Land is considered land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suited to the grazing of livestock. The minimum mapping unit for this category is 40 acres.

Urban and Built-Up Land

Urban and Built-up Land is considered land occupied with structures with a building density of at least one unit to one-half acre. Uses may include, but are not limited to, residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration 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 part of this unit if they are part of a surrounding urban area.

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Other Land

Other land is considered land that is not included in any other mapping categories. The following uses are generally included: rural developments, brush, timber, government land, strip mines, borrow pits, and a variety of other rural land uses.

Mendocino County Farmland Classification

Until 2006, Mendocino County was not included in the FMMP process. However, in March 2000, California voters passed the Proposition 13 bond initiative entitled the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Act (Water Bond). A small component of this bond provided funding to the improvement of the FMMP, in order to assist local land use planning efforts by increasing its mapping capabilities and integrating FMMP data with other information.

In addition to the funds provided by the Water Bond, Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCS) soil survey data for Mendocino County was updated. Currently, the Important Farmland designations for Mendocino County are undergoing local review, but they are available in draft form on the Department of Conservation website.

In addition to Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, and Water, there are a few other categories have been added to incorporate areas specific to Mendocino County. However, as of the release of this Draft EIR, the FMMP categories specific to Mendocino County have not yet been approved by the Board of Supervisors, so are still in draft form.

Area Not Mapped (Z)

This area falls outside the boundaries that were mapped by the NRCS soil survey. This was also not mapped by the FMMP.

Agricultural Land Not Yet Classified (NC)

This includes dryland grains and irrigated pastures on soils not qualifying for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. These and other uses may be determined by a county Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Board of Supervisors to comprise the Farmland of Local Importance category in the final version of the 2006 Mendocino County Important Farmland Map.

Rural Residential and Rural Commercial (R)

This includes residential areas of one to five structures per ten acres, farmsteads, small packing sheds, unpaved parking areas, composting facilities, firewood lots, campgrounds, and recreational water ski lakes.

Vacant or Disturbed Land (V)

This consists of open field areas that do not qualify for an agricultural category, mineral and oil extraction areas, and rural freeway interchanges.

Confined Animal Agriculture (CI)

This includes aquaculture, dairies, feedlots, and poultry facilities.

Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation (NV)

This covers heavily wooded, rocky or barren areas, riparian and wetland areas, grassland areas which do not qualify for Grazing Land due to their size or land management restrictions, and small water bodies. Constructed wetlands are also included in this category.

All of the draft Mendocino County FMMP categories can be seen in **Table 4.2-7** below. **Figure 4.2-1** shows the draft FMMP categories in Mendocino County.

TABLE 4.2-7
DRAFT IMPORTANT FARMLAND CLASSIFICATIONS
AND ACRES FOR MENDOCINO COUNTY

Draft Important Farmland Category	Acres in Mendocino County
Prime Farmland	20,665
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1,164
Unique Farmland	6,962
Grazing Land	1,925,054
Urban and Built-up Land	14,122
Water	2,135
Rural Residential and Rural Commercial	20,998
Confined Animal Agriculture	70
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	45,456
Vacant or Disturbed Land	706
Area Not Mapped	203,246

Source: California Department of Conservation, 2006

TIMBER RESOURCES

Timber harvesting within the county is governed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) Forest Practice Program. The program adheres to the California Forest Practice Rules, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Chapters 4, 4.5 and 10. As described in 14 CCR 895.1 of the rules, "commercial timber species" are all of the species listed in Group A and those in Group B that are found on lands where the species in Group A are now growing naturally or have grown naturally in the recorded past for the Northern Forest Districts. **Table 4.2-8** presents the species included in these groups.

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**TABLE 4.2-8
COMMERCIAL TIMBER RESOURCES**

Coast Forest District	
Group A	Group B
Coast Redwood (<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>)	Tanoak (<i>Lithocarpus densiflorus</i>)
Incense Cedar (<i>Libocedrus decurrens</i>)	Golden Chinkapin (<i>Castanopsis chrysophylla</i>)
Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)	Red Alder (<i>Alnus rubra</i>)
Port Orford Cedar (<i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>)	Pepperwood (<i>Umbellularia californica</i>)
Grand Fir (<i>Abies grandis</i>)	White Alder (<i>Alnus rhombifolia</i>)
California Red Fir (<i>Abies magnifica</i>)	Oregon White Oak (<i>Quercus garryana</i>)
Western Hemlock (<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>)	Eucalyptus (<i>Eucalyptus species</i>)
White Fir (<i>Abies concolor</i>)	California Black Oak (<i>Quercus kelloggii</i>)
Western Redcedar (<i>Thuja plicata</i>)	Pacific Madrone (<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>)
Jeffrey Pine (<i>Pinus jeffreyi</i>)	
Bishop Pine (<i>Pinus muricata</i>)	
Ponderosa Pine (<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>)	
Monterey Pine (<i>Pinus radiata</i>)	
Sugar Pine (<i>Pinus lambertiana</i>)	
Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>)	
Western White Pine (<i>Pinus monticola</i>)	
Northern Forest District	
Group A	Group B
Sugar Pine (<i>Pinus lambertiana</i>)	Knobcone Pine (<i>Pinus attenuata</i>)
Coast Redwood (<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>)	[Gray] Pine (<i>Pinus Sabiniana</i>)
Ponderosa Pine (<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>)	California Black Oak (<i>Quercus kelloggii</i>)
Jeffrey Pine (<i>Pinus jeffreyi</i>)	Oregon White Oak (<i>Quercus garryana</i>)
Western White Pine (<i>Pinus monticola</i>)	Tanoak (<i>Lithocarpus densiflorus</i>)
Lodgepole Pine (<i>Pinus contorta</i>)	Mountain Hemlock (<i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>)
White Fir (<i>Abies concolor</i>)	Brewer Spruce (<i>Picea breweriana</i>)
California Red Fir (<i>Abies magnifica</i>)	Engleman Spruce (<i>Picea engemania</i>)
Noble Fir (<i>Abies procera</i>)	Sierra Redwood (<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>)
Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)	Golden Chinkapin (<i>Castanopsis chrysophylla</i>)
Incense Cedar (<i>Libocedrus decurrens</i>)	Foxtail Pine (<i>Pinus balfouriana</i>)
Port Orford Cedar (<i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>)	White Alder (<i>Alnus rhombifolia</i>)
	Monterey Pine (<i>Pinus radiata</i>)
	Pacific Madrone (<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>)
	California Laurel (<i>Umbellularia californica</i>)
	Western Juniper (<i>Juniperus occidentalis</i>)

Source: CalFire, 2007

Approximately 46 percent of Mendocino County is in National Forest land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and in private Timber Protection Zones. Other forests are located on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and other public agencies (Mendocino County, 2008). Mendocino County contains 1,304,000 acres of unreserved commercial forest land, or 58 percent of the total county area. The combination of climate and soils provides ideal conditions for redwood forests, which extend 10 to 20 miles inland from the coast and account for 55 percent of the county's saw-timber growth. Douglas-fir growth accounts for 29 percent of the total. Production per acre is generally considered higher compared to other timbered areas in the state (Mendocino County, 1981). Historically, Mendocino County has been one of California's leading counties in timber production. However, harvest volumes in Mendocino County have been decreasing since the mid-1950s, reflecting the conversion of old-growth forests to younger stands of timber and reliance on smaller trees (Mendocino County, 2008).

According to the 2007 Mendocino County Crop Report, calendar year 2007 experienced a 6 percent decrease in harvest yields from the previously reported year. The harvest level essentially represents 100 percent extraction from private lands. Mendocino County is ranked fifth in the state for timber-producing counties behind Humboldt, Siskiyou, Shasta, and Plumas counties. However, given the high economic value associated with redwood, Mendocino ranks fourth in the state in total timber value behind Humboldt, Siskiyou, and Shasta. **Table 4.2-9** provides a 10-year comparison of log production in Mendocino County from 1998 to 2007. When compared to other harvested products, timber has made a relatively reduced contribution to total value of output (Mendocino County, 2008). According to the County's 2007 crop report, while the dollar value of timber harvests was approximately \$74.6 million, the value of the county's fruit and nut production was approximately \$95.7 million. The value of one fruit product—wine grapes—was greater than the value of timber.

TABLE 4.2-9
10-YEAR LOG PRODUCTION

Year	Log Production (Board-Feet)	Value at Mill (Gross)
1998	225,878,000	\$126,943,400
1999	227,515,000	\$151,069,000
2000	156,101,000	\$145,798,400
2001	117,596,000	\$80,072,500
2002	97,722,000	\$53,942,500
2003	112,568,000	\$68,496,100
2004	109,548,000	\$66,605,200
2005	120,841,000	\$89,441,000
2006	110,168,000	\$86,481,900
2007	103,031,000	\$74,594,400

Source: 2007 Mendocino County Crop Report

4.2 AGRICULTURE

4.2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

FEDERAL

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is the agency primarily responsible for implementation of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The purpose of the FPPA is to minimize federal programs' contribution to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses by ensuring that federal programs are administered in a manner that is compatible to state, local, and private programs designed to protect farmland. The NRCS provides technical assistance to federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, or nonprofit organizations that desire to develop farmland protection programs and policies.

The NRCS summarizes FPPA implementation in an annual report to Congress. The FPPA also established the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, which are discussed below.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The NRCS administers the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), which is a voluntary program aimed at keeping productive farmland in agricultural uses. Under the FRPP, the NRCS provides matching funds to state, local, or tribal government entities and nonprofit organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements. According to the 1996 Farm Bill, the goal of the program is to protect between 170,000 and 340,000 acres of farmland per year. Participating landowners agree not to convert the land to nonagricultural use and retain all rights to use the property for agriculture. A conservation plan must be developed for all lands enrolled based upon the standards contained in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. A minimum of 30 years is required for conservation easements and priority is given to applications with perpetual easements. The NRCS provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the easement being conserved (NRCS, 2004).

To qualify for a conservation easement, farm or ranch land must meet several criteria. The land must be:

- Prime, Unique, or other productive soil, as defined by NRCS based on factors such as water moisture regimes, available water capacity, developed irrigation water supply, soil temperature range, acid-alkali balance, water table, soil sodium content, potential for flooding, erodibility, permeability rate, rock fragment content, and soil rooting depth;
- Included in a pending offer to be managed by a nonprofit organization, state, tribal, or local farmland protection program;
- Privately owned;
- Placed under a conservation plan;
- Large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- Accessible to markets for the crop that the land produces; and
- Surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

STATE

California Department of Conservation

The Department of Conservation (DOC) administers and supports a number of programs, including the Williamson Act, the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), the Williamson Act Easement Exchange Program (WAEPP), and the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). These programs are designed to preserve agricultural land and provide data on conversion of agricultural land to urban use. The DOC has authority for the approval of agreements entered into under the WAEPP. Key DOC tools available for land conservation planning are conservation grants, tax incentives to keep land in agriculture or open space, and farmland mapping and monitoring.

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands and to prevent their premature conversion to urban uses. In order to preserve these uses, the act established an agricultural preserve contract procedure by which any county or city within the state taxes landowners at a lower rate, using a scale based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted market value. In return, the owners guarantee that these properties remain under agricultural production for a 10-year period.

The contract is renewed automatically unless the owner files a notice of non-renewal. In this manner, each agricultural preserve contract (at any given date) is always operable at least nine years into the future. Currently, approximately 70 percent of the state's prime agricultural land is protected under this act. Prime farmland under the Williamson Act includes land that qualifies as Class I and II in the SCS classification and land that qualifies for a rating of 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating.

Termination of a Williamson Act contract through the non-renewal process is the preferred method to remove the enforceable restriction of the contract. Cancellation is not appropriate when objectives served by cancellation could be served by non-renewal. Cancellation is reserved for unusual, "emergency" situations. In order to approve tentative cancellation, a board or council must make specific findings based on substantial evidence that a cancellation is consistent with the purposes of the act or in the public interest. Contracts can specify that both findings must be made in order to approve tentative cancellation.

Mendocino County had approximately 499,314 acres of land under Williamson Act contracts as of 2007, the latest year for which data are available (California Department of Conservation, 2008). **Table 4.2-10** tabulates the enrollment of lands into contract from 1991 to 2007. The county had approximately 465,013 acres of land in active contracts in 2006. **Figure 4.2-2** is a map of all lands under Williamson Act contracts in the county as of 2006.

TABLE 4.2-10
MENDOCINO COUNTY WILLIAMSON ACT ENROLLMENT, 1991–2007

Year	Total
1991	472,933
1993	474,112
1995	475,334
1997	499,215
1999	497,930
2001	481,775
2003	482,952
2005	493,121
2007	497,929

Source: California Department of Conservation, Total Reported Enrollment, 1991-2007; The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act 2007 Status Report.

Forest Practices Rules

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) implement the laws that regulate timber harvesting on privately-owned lands. These laws are contained in the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973 which established a set of rules known as the Forest Practice Rules (FPRs) to be applied to forest management related activities (i.e., timber harvests, timberland conversions, fire hazard removal, etc.). They are intended to ensure that timber harvesting is conducted in a manner that will preserve and protect fish, wildlife, forests, and streams. Under the Forest Practices Act, a Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) is submitted to CalFire by the landowner outlining what timber is proposed to be harvested, harvesting method, and the steps that will be taken to prevent damage to the environment. If the landowner intends to convert timberland to non-timberland uses, such as a winery or vineyard, a Timberland Conversion Permit (TCP) is required in addition to the THP. It is CalFire's intent that a THP will not be approved which fails to adopt feasible mitigation measures or alternatives from the range of measures set out or provided for in the Forest Practice Rules, which would substantially lessen or avoid significant adverse environmental impacts resulting from timber harvest activities. THPs are required to be prepared by Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) who are licensed to prepare these plans (CalFire, 2007). For projects involving TCPs, CalFire acts as lead agency under CEQA, and the County acts as a responsible agency.

LOCAL

Mendocino County Agricultural Nuisances and Consumer Disclosures Ordinance

Chapter 10A.13 of the Mendocino County Code contains what is commonly called a "Right-to-Farm" ordinance. The ordinance is based on a finding by the County Board of Supervisors that it is in the public interest to preserve and protect agricultural land and operations within the county and to specifically protect these lands for exclusive agricultural use. The Board of Supervisors also made a finding that residential development adjacent to agricultural land and operations often leads to restrictions on farm operations, to the detriment of the adjacent agricultural uses and economic viability of the county's agricultural industry as a whole. The ordinance requires sellers of property to disclose its zoning as agricultural land or the existence of

zoned agricultural land located within 300 feet of the property for sale. It also requires the disclosure to residents of the property that they may be subject to inconvenience or discomfort arising from the use of agricultural chemicals and the pursuit of agricultural operations. The County has established zoning for agricultural land which sets as a priority the agricultural use of the land. Residents of such property should be prepared to accept such inconvenience or discomfort as normal and necessary to farm operations.

Mendocino County Resource Preserves Ordinance

Under Mendocino County's Resource Preserves Ordinance, agricultural preserves may be established through contracts between single or multiple owners of agricultural land classified Agricultural, Forestlands, or Rangelands by the County. Matching the Williamson Act land designation, Type I preserves encompass prime agricultural lands and intensive cropland uses, while Type II preserves include non-prime agricultural lands, grazing, and dairy uses. The County's ordinance specifies that agricultural preserves shall not consist of less than 100 acres, unless the Board of Supervisors finds that smaller preserves are necessary due to the unique characteristics of the agricultural enterprises in the area (Mendocino County, Background Report, p. 8E-15, 2003). As of 2007, there were approximately 497,143 acres of land in agricultural preserve (Mendocino County Draft General Plan, 2008).

Williamson Act Ordinance

Chapter 22.08 of the Mendocino County Code sets forth procedures for implementing the Williamson Act program in the county. Section 22.08.020 describes the procedures for adopting a Williamson Act contract for a property. Section 22.08.110 describes procedures for the nonrenewal of a Williamson Act contract by a landowner.

4.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The impact analysis provided below is based on the following CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance. An agricultural impact is considered significant if implementation of the proposed project would:

- 1) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, 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.

Since the Important Farmland Maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program are still in draft form for Mendocino County, impacts to the loss of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance will not be discussed further in this DEIR.

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METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of potential agricultural impacts that would result from adoption of the proposed project was based on review of the proposed General Plan Update and the County's Zoning Code. The agricultural analysis is based on information gathered from the Mendocino County General Plan Background Report, the Resource Management Element, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conversion Report 2000–2002, the draft Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Map 2006 for Mendocino County, and the 2007 Mendocino County Crop Report. The proposed project is then compared to the existing conditions (including the impacts that can already occur under the current General Plan) to determine the potential impacts due to loss of agricultural resources.

PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Conversion of Agricultural, Timber, or Farmland to Non-agricultural Uses

Impact 4.2.1 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

The vast majority of vacant land in the county has been designated for agricultural uses, which include Forestland, Rangeland, and Agriculture 40 acre minimum (AG 40) land use designations.

Approximately 736.46 acres have been approved for land use changes by the Board of Supervisors in conjunction with the proposed General Plan Update. These changes involve a variety of land uses, resulting in either a net gain or loss of acreage for the 16 different land use designations. These changes result in a net gain of 6.39 acres of AG 40, a net gain of 66.62 acres of Rangeland, and a net loss of 104.73 acres in Forestland. Overall, as a result of the approved land use changes, 31.72 acres of agricultural lands (including agriculture, farm land and forest land) would be converted to another land use designation. Of the total vacant land in the county (1,881,946.1 acres), the net loss of 31.72 acres of agricultural lands would be approximately 0.000017 percent of land within the county. In comparison, land use designation changes with the greatest gains are 218.76 acres of Remote Residential (20ac min), 99.97 acres of Rural Residential (10ac min), and 92.72 acres of Remote Residential (40ac min). Thus, the unincorporated area of the county is not expected to result in a substantial conversion of designated agricultural lands.

The proposed General Plan Update includes policies intended to protect and preserve agricultural land. Nonetheless, the proposed General Plan Update would not explicitly preclude the conversion of farmlands of concern under CEQA (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland) to other uses in the future.

In addition to state-defined important farmlands, subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the General Plan Update could result in timberland conversion. Approximately 1,304,000 acres of unreserved commercial timberland exists throughout the county. These timberland areas are spread throughout the county and occur on various types of topography, including steep slopes. The county's timberlands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, through private Timber Protection Zones, the Bureau of Land Management, and other public agencies.

Mendocino County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

Chapter 20.052 of the Inland Zoning Code (Mendocino County Code, Title 20, Division I) establishes the A-G Agricultural District. This district is intended to create and preserve areas for the raising of crops and animals.

Chapter 20.056 of the Inland Zoning Code establishes the U-R Upland Residential District. This district is intended to create and enhance farming and low-density agricultural/residential uses.

Chapter 20.060 of the Inland Zoning Code establishes the R-L Rangeland District. This district is intended to create and preserve areas for the grazing of livestock, the production and harvest of natural resources, and the protection of such natural resources as watershed lands from fire, pollution, erosion, and other detrimental effects.

Chapters 20.064 and 20.068 of the Inland Zoning Code establish two zones related to timber production. The F-L Forest Land District is intended to create and preserve areas suited for the growing, harvesting, and production of timber and timber-related products.

Chapter 22.08 of the Mendocino County Code sets forth procedures for implementing the Williamson Act program in the county. Section 22.08.020 describes the procedures for adopting a Williamson Act contract for a property. Section 22.08.110 describes procedures for the nonrenewal of a Williamson Act contract by a landowner.

Together, these County Code sections provide for designation of areas within the county that are suitable for agricultural pursuits. Additionally, these sections provide a "Right-To-Farm" ordinance and awareness to property owners of the surrounding agricultural or timber operations.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy RM-93 identifies that the County supports policies and programs to maintain and enhance the viability of agricultural operations and retention of agricultural land.

Policy RM-94 and associated Action Item RM-94.1 provide for collaboration between the agricultural community and the County to define important farmlands and protect these lands by appropriate zoning under the State Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

Policy RM-97 sets criteria for the protection of agricultural and range lands from being converted to non-agricultural classifications. The associated Action Item RM-97.1 provides for a County ordinance that would protect agricultural lands from nuisances, trespass, vandalism or theft, livestock predation, and contamination from abandoned or uncared for orchards.

Policy RM-102 provides building envelopes and clustered development to be designed with buffers or setbacks, generally of 200 feet, from lands classified as agricultural or range lands.

Policy RM-106 states that lands zoned Timberland Production are considered the highest and best use of the land for timber growing and harvesting.

Policy RM-109 states the importance of protection of industrial zoning for the ability to provide manufacturing facilities for timber as a product.

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Policy RM-112 promotes sustainable forest management practices (e.g., reforestation, timber stand improvement, stream corridor and water quality protection).

Policy RM-113 encourages forest owners and managers to manage the county's diverse commercial timber resources on a sustained yield basis.

Policy RM-114 protects forest-growing stocks and timber supply and provides infrastructure to support a diversified wood products industry.

Policy RM-117 recognizes forest conservation and harvesting operations conflicts posed by non-resource uses.

Policy RM-118 sets criteria for the rezoning and development of prime timberland to other uses.

Policy RM-120 requires parcels on commercial timberland to be sufficient to support productive timber use and practical management and for timber access routes to be in conformance with a timber management plan.

Policy RM-121 sets guidelines for all projects contiguous to designated forest lands on the Land Use Map of the General Plan.

As identified above, subsequent land use activities under the proposed General Plan Update would not result in a substantial loss of designated agricultural lands (well below 1 percent of total lands). Implementation of County Code Chapters 20.052, 20.056, 20.060, 20.064, 20.068, and 22.08, as well as proposed General Plan Update policies and associated action items RM-93, RM-94, RM-94.1, RM-97, RM-97.1, RM-102, RM-106, RM-109, RM-112, RM-113, RM-114, RM-117, RM-118, RM-120, and RM-121 would ensure any potential impacts to the conversion of agricultural, timber, or farmland were **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Conflicts with Williamson Act Contracts

Impact 4.2.2 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in a conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Within Mendocino County, there are approximately 465,013 acres of land under active Williamson Act contracts as of 2006 (see **Figure 4.2-2**). Approximately 2.8 percent of contracts are in non-renewal status.

While the vast majority of the land under Williamson Act contracts are located in areas that are conducive to their continued agricultural use, subsequent development and other land uses permitted by right (e.g., production of crops, residential and/or farmworker housing, timber harvesting, ranching, development of natural resources, recreation, and utility installations) under implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could have the potential to conflict with existing Williamson Act lands and could lead to the removal of this land from active contracts.

The proposed General Plan Update includes a strengthened policy in order to reduce conflicts with Williamson Act contract property and future residential development. Policy RM-104 states that residential uses and subdivisions must maintain a 10-acre minimum parcel size adjacent to active Williamson Act contract lands classified Agricultural or Rangelands. This is a revision to the current General Plan Policy 2a and 2b, which limits Rural Residential land adjacent to Type I Agricultural Preserve land to a 5-acre minimum parcel size and Type II Agricultural Preserve land to a 10-acre minimum parcel size, respectively (a higher density may be allowed when recognizing the average density of the existing parcel sizes or if the new parcels are zoned for Clustering or Planned Development). Thus, the proposed General Plan Update provides new protections for Williamson Act contract property.

Mendocino County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

Chapter 22.08 of the Mendocino County Code adopts Ordinance No. 616 was established to ensure that properties can be incorporated into an agricultural preserve as defined by the Williamson Act. All properties subject to Mendocino County agricultural preserve contracts are restricted to the agricultural, open-space, recreational, and compatible uses identified in Chapter 22.08, Section 22.08.060 of the County Code for the particular zone within which such property has been classified.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy RM-104 sets a 10-acre minimum parcel size for residential uses and subdivisions that are adjacent to lands under active Williamson Act contracts, allowing smaller parcels that meet the criteria in policies RM-98 through RM-109.

Policy RM-105 encourages the creation and renewal of Williamson Act contracts on eligible agricultural lands, including the Farmland Security Act. Associated Action Item RM-105.1 continues the County's review of conformance with state law and the General Plan for monitoring and updating the County's Williamson Act program. Action Item RM-105.2 maintains land use classifications with sufficient parcel sizes to meet County standards for Agricultural Preserves. Action Item RM-105.4 requires that the County evaluate whether intensively farmed prime lands zoned Rural Residential-10 Acre Minimum or Remote Residential should be eligible for enrollment into Williamson Act contracts.

Significance After Mitigation

Compliance with County Code Section 22.08, as well as proposed General Plan Update policies and action items RM-104, RM-105, RM-105.1, RM-105.2, and RM-105.4 would help reduce potential conflicts to Williamson Act contracts or agriculturally zoned parcels to a **less than significant** level.

Agricultural/Urban Interface Conflicts

Impact 4.2.3 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses within the unincorporated county. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could place urbanized land uses adjacent to existing agricultural uses (Forestland, Rangeland, and AG 40 land use designations). Agricultural and urban land use conflicts are

4.2 AGRICULTURE

expected to be limited to types of inconveniences associated with agricultural operations. These generally include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Inconveniences or discomforts associated with dust, smoke, noise, and odor from agricultural operations;
- Restrictions on agricultural operations (such as pesticide application) along interfaces with urban uses;
- Conflicts with farm equipment and vehicles using roadways;
- Trespassing and vandalism on active farmlands; and
- Farmland proximity to urban areas can place growth pressure to convert land to urban uses as a result of above-mentioned conflicts and increases in property value.

Mendocino County has approximately 1,240,350 acres of land in agricultural preserves or timber production zones. While the vast majority of this land would not be impacted by urban uses, future growth adjacent to any farmland under production may result in agricultural/urban interface conflicts. Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update may involve the continued placement of residential and other non-agricultural land uses adjacent to agricultural uses that could result in the conflicts identified above. Policies could allow for development of residential and accessory agricultural uses including farmworker housing and uses associated with the wine industry or other farming operations. These potential conflicts could occur throughout the unincorporated portion of the county.

Mendocino County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

Chapter 10A.13 of the Mendocino County Code supports and encourages continued agricultural operation in the county. The chapter includes requirements to forewarn prospective purchasers and residents of property adjacent to or near to agricultural operation of the inherent potential problems associated with such purchase of residence including, but not limited to, the sounds, odors, dust, and chemicals that may accompany agricultural operations. The requirements include provisions for disclosure statements to be provided to those purchasing property adjacent to existing agricultural uses, and provisions are also included to allow the County to install or permit the installation of signs at the entry or within established farming areas zoned as "Agricultural Land" to notify and explain to purchasers that some of the land in the area is being used for agricultural purposes and the producer's interests are protected by law.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy RM-92 limits incompatible uses by maintaining extensive agricultural land use areas.

Policy RM-98 maintains land use compatibility in order to minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

Policy RM-99 seeks to reduce piecemeal land use conversion, land fragmentation, urban encroachment, non-compatible uses on adjoining agricultural areas, or extension of growth-inducing urban services through the use of discretionary projects.

Policy RM-100 also uses discretionary projects to provide criteria has been established to ensure that land divisions shall be designed and sized to be compatible with contiguous agricultural or range lands.

Policy RM-102 provides building envelopes and clustered development to be designed with buffers or setbacks, generally of 200 feet, from lands classified as agricultural or range lands.

Policy RM-103 requires that new discretionary projects shall mitigate potential conflicts between development and agricultural operations.

Significance After Mitigation

County Code Chapter 10A.13 described above protects the routine operational activities required to conduct agricultural activities. With these provisions already in place, as well as compliance with proposed General Plan policies RM-92, RM-98, RM-99, RM-100, RM-102, and RM-103, potential impacts to agriculture/urban interface conflicts would be maintained at a **less than significant** level.

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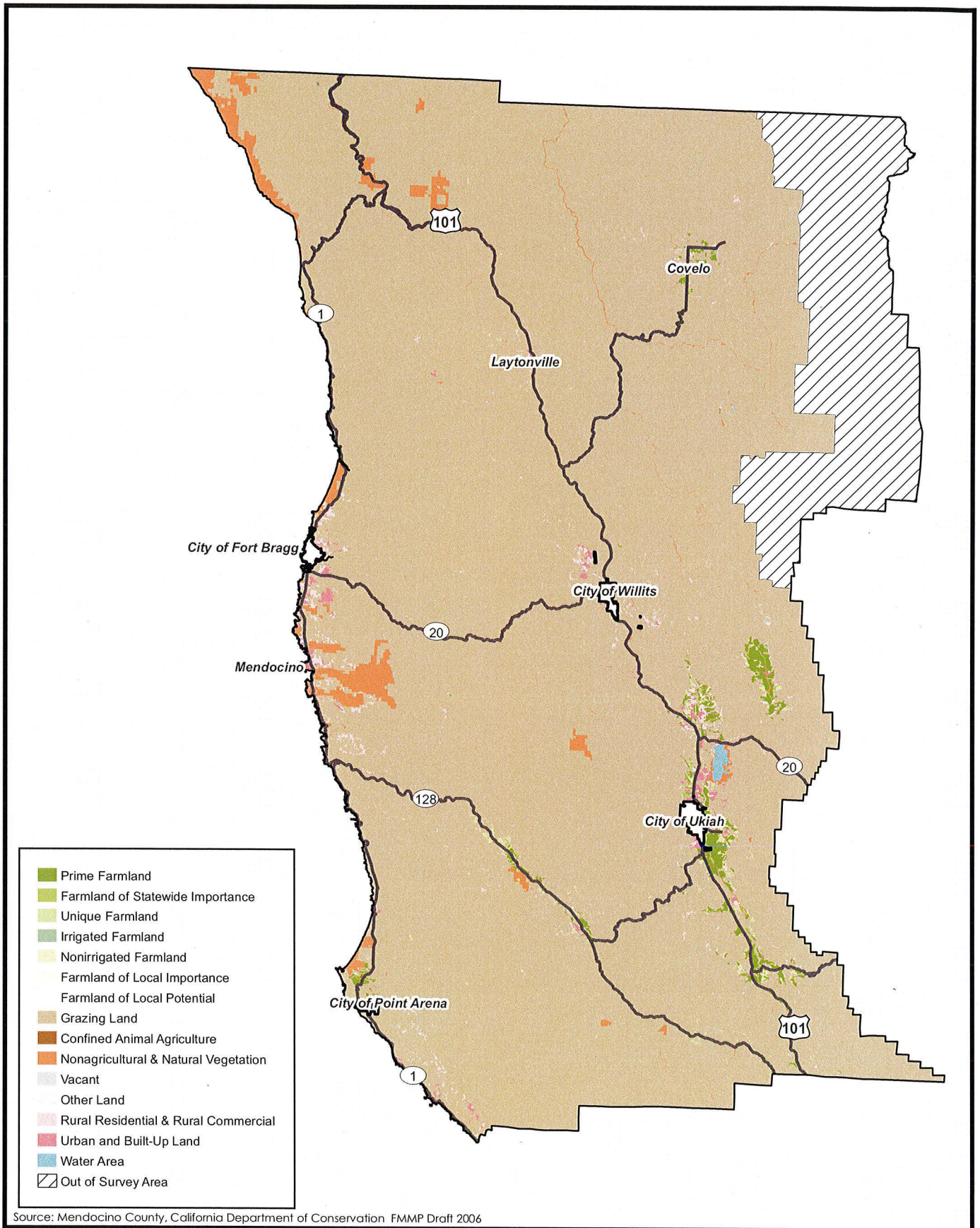


Figure 4.2-1
Draft Important Farmland Map
PMC

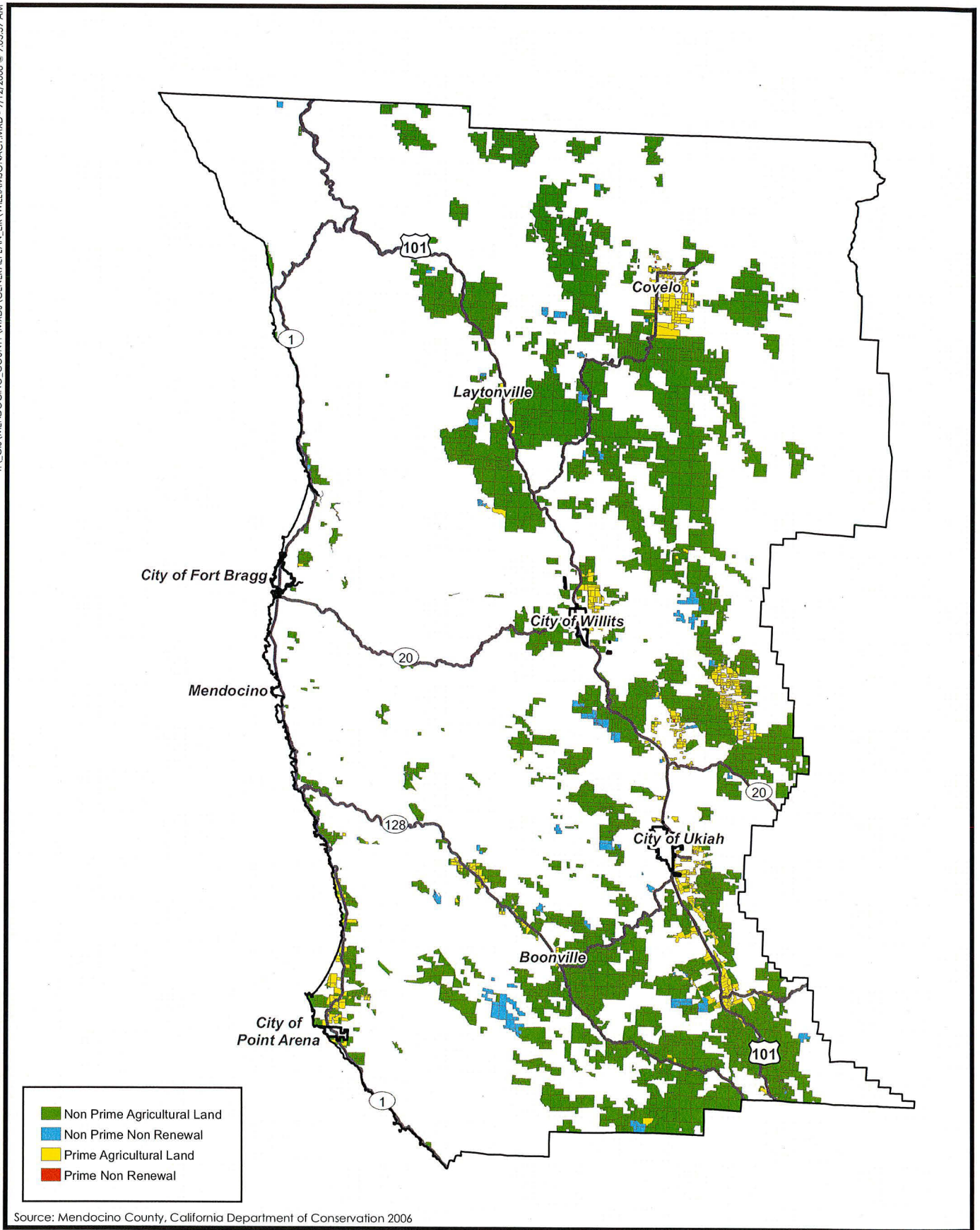


Figure 4.2-2
Williamson Act Contracts
PMC

