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Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City of Roseville Retention Basin Project

Roseville, California

October 16, 2002

SCH #2002072084

Prepared for



Submitted by



In Association with



4.0 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1.1 Agricultural Land Use

California generates more than \$23 billion in agricultural products sold, and contributes significantly to the agricultural industry of the United States with the state ranked in first position (11.7 percent) for the market value of agricultural products sold (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999a and 1999b). Approximately 29 percent of total land area within California is currently used for agricultural purposes (California Department of Conservation, 2002a). Agricultural produce grown in California includes livestock and poultry, corn, wheat, cotton, hay crops, vegetables and orchards (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999a). A significant proportion of California's agriculture relies on irrigation and the state is ranked in first position for the largest land area occupied by farmed land requiring irrigation (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999b).

Placer County generates more than \$58 million in agricultural products sold (based on 1999 statistics) and contributes approximately 0.25 percent towards California's total market value of agricultural products sold (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999a). Approximately 19 percent of the total land area within Placer County and approximately 1 percent of the total land area within California is currently used for agricultural purposes (California Department of Conservation, 2002a and 2002b). Agricultural production in Placer County includes large-scale rice and field crop operations in the western portion of the County; timber production in the eastern portion of the County; orchard fruit tree operations in the transition zone between the Central Valley and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada; small-scale operations, i.e., strawberries, in the Sierra Nevada foothills; and range livestock operations interspersed throughout remaining areas of agricultural land (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002). Rice, cattle and calves, nursery products, and chickens are the most valuable commodities produced in Placer County (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002).

The project area lies within Placer County and is designated Agriculture in the Placer County General Plan, and zoned Farming and "Minimum Building Site as Shown on Map" (F-B-X). The project area is predominantly agricultural, with approximately 90 percent used for rice cultivation and approximately 10 percent used for grazing or grassland. Rice production in California, Placer County and the site is discussed in Section 4.1.2, Rice Farming.

Existing land uses surrounding the site are predominantly agricultural (rice cultivation to the south and west and row crops/grazing to the north and east), residential to the northeast, and water courses/wetland areas and riparian habitat along the upstream and downstream portions of Pleasant Grove Creek outside the site boundaries.

Future potential land uses surrounding the site include the development of the West Roseville Specific Plan area, and development within the area covered by the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Roseville and Placer County. Development of these areas are expected to be for predominately residential land use. The existing land use of these areas is predominantly agricultural, including a range of uses such as rice cultivation, grain and hay crops, pasture and other "native" vegetation (California Department of Water Resources, 2000).

4.1.2 Rice Farming

California contributes significantly to rice production within the United States and is ranked third, contributing 16.5 percent of the total area of land harvested for rice (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999b). The majority, more than 90 percent, of California's rice farms are located in the Sacramento Valley with the remaining approximate 10 percent located in the north to central San Joaquin Valley (Hill et al., 1997). Counties farming rice in the Sacramento Valley include Tehama, Glenn, Butte, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, Placer and Sacramento (Hill et al., 1997). Colusa, Butte, Sutter and Glenn counties are ranked as the highest producers of rice in California (Hill et al., 1997).

Rice in California is grown mostly on fine-textured, poorly drained soils with impervious hardpans or claypans, which are well suited to rice production as their low permeability enhances water use efficiency. The rice is grown primarily in a continuously flooded, flow-through system of basins where water is guided from the highest elevation basin to the lowest elevation basin and is regulated by irrigation boxes placed in the levees between basins. The majority of irrigation water comes from a combination of winter rain and snow-fed reservoirs of the Cascade, Klamath and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges. Less than 10 percent of rice irrigation water is abstracted from groundwater wells in areas where surface water is not available (Hill et al., 1997).

A wide range of rice varieties are grown in California, including short, medium, and long grain as well as specialty varieties such as glutinous and aromatic. The growing season, from seeding to harvest, ranges from 130 days to 175 days depending on climatic variation experienced within the state. Rice production in California is highly mechanized, requiring only about four hours of labor per acre. Mechanization includes laser technology to precision-level rice fields and establish field grades, large tractors, and heavy-duty implements to prepare seed beds and self-propelled combines with half or full tracks for harvesting in muddy soils. Aircraft are often used for seeding, pest control and fertilization (Hill et al., 1997).

The majority of rice farming in California is undertaken within the provisions of the Farm Bill. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the Farm Bill, promotes several farm policy objectives including price support and income protection. The Farm Bill is revised every five years. The 1996 Farm Bill provides a "decoupled contract payment" which is a predetermined payment for a period of seven years (expiring in 2002) that is paid directly to the farmer whether the land is farmed or not. The farmer is free to plant any crop or no crop at all and still receives the contract payment up to specified limits. A small subsidy per crop is also offered. This is in contrast to prior Farm Bills where crops were

fully subsidized by the U.S. Government to allow farmers to continue farming by providing a supplemental income per hundred weight (cwt [1 cwt = 100 pounds]) of rice in addition to current market prices. It is not known at this stage whether the 1996 Farm Bill has had a detrimental effect on rice production in California through the reduction of subsidy offered and introduction of the decoupled contract payment which allows farmers the choice to continue farming or not (Hill et al., 1997). The 2002 Farm Bill (Farm Security and Rural Investment Act 2002) passed Congress on May 8, 2002, and has provisions for income support to farmers similar to those of the 1996 Farm Bill (House Agriculture Committee, 2002).

Currently, all costs for producing rice in California are estimated at approximately \$800/acre, which requires an 8,500 lb/acre yield or higher for farmers to break even on expenses. In recent times the profitability of rice farming has decreased. This is because rice yields have been low (1995 to 1996), which reduces the amount of income generated, and the price received for competing crops (such as grain and safflower) decreased, which increased the demand for conversion of rice farmland to urban land use and other crops. In addition, the rice subsidy offered has been significantly reduced as a result of the 1996 Farm Bill. The provisions of the Farm Bill support the production of a reliable, safe, and affordable supply of food and fiber; promote stewardship of agricultural land and water resources; facilitate access to American farm products at home and abroad; encourage continued economic and infrastructure development in rural America; and ensure continued research to maintain an efficient and innovative agricultural and food sector. The long-term profitability of rice farming in California at this stage is unknown; however, it is likely to depend principally upon the availability and size of the rice subsidy offered and the demand for rice in domestic and export markets (Hill et al., 1997). If the long-term profitability of rice farming is low, this may additionally increase the pressure on land used for rice farming for conversion to urban land use or other crops.

In 1997, there were 49 rice farms in Placer County covering an area of 16,661 acres (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999a), with an average of approximately 340 acres per rice farm. During the same year, approximately 1.3 million cwts of rice were produced. This represents an increasing trend compared to 1992 data, when 44 rice farms in Placer County covered 12,747 acres and produced 1 million cwts of rice (averaging approximately 290 acres per farm) (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999a).

The majority of the project area (known as Reason Farms) has been used for rice farming since 1975. The current owner established Reason Farms as a rice farm and has since continuously farmed the property. Medium grain rice is currently grown on the property, although long grain rice has also been grown in the past. Other types of crops have also been planted on the property including beans, popcorn and wheat; however, the growth of these crops was not successful. The owner has indicated that the property contains very fine-grained impervious soils which are not well suited to the growth of crops other than rice (Amarel, 2002).

Reason Farms consists of 32 fields ranging in size from 3.3 acres to 87.3 acres, resulting in a total area of 1,069.5 acres farmed. The rice fields are configured to allow gravity-dependent water to pass through the

fields. Pumping is not required to move water from field to field. The property is irrigated with groundwater from a network of 12 groundwater wells. Approximately 3.96 billion gallons of groundwater is extracted from 11 of the groundwater wells over a period of 100 days during the growing season (May to October). The remaining well is operational; however, it is not in use (Amarel, 2002).

The rice fields within Reason Farms are small in comparison to rice fields farmed elsewhere in California. For example, the average size of rice fields farmed in Colusa County, where a large proportion of rice is grown in California, is 100 acres; larger rice farms within the Sacramento Valley are approximately 3,000 acres in size. As a result of the small size of the rice fields within Reason Farms, the level of mechanization of farming implemented is lower than for other rice farms in California and the rice fields are planted by hand (Amarel, 2002). The low level of mechanization employed on Reason Farms is thought to affect the profitability of farming the property compared to other rice farming operations.

The two parcels located in the southwestern portion of the project area owned by a separate owner are also partly farmed for rice. The remainder of the parcels is used for grazing. It is assumed that similar farming practices and profitability of operations are experienced on these portions.

4.1.3 Important Farmland Areas

The California Department of Conservation administers the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. The following Department of Conservation-defined categories of farmland exist within California:

- **Prime Farmland:** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland:** Farmland 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 used for production of crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance:** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land:** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and others interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.

- **Urban and Built-up Land:** Land 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. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land:** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural development, timber, wetland and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing, vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits and water bodies smaller than 40 acres.
- **Water:** Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres. (California Department of Conservation, 2002c)

Approximately 43 percent of farmland and 13 percent of the land area within California is Important Farmland contained within the categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance (California Department of Conservation, 2002b). Of the Important Farmland in California, approximately 42 percent is Prime Farmland, approximately 20 percent is Farmland of Statewide Importance, approximately 11 percent is Unique Farmland and approximately 27 percent is Farmland of Local Importance (California Department of Conservation, 2002b).

The majority of farmland occurring within Placer County is Farmland of Local Importance with approximately 62.3 percent of farmland and 37.3 percent of land under this category. Smaller percentages of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland occur within Placer County.

Table 4-1 identifies the acreages of important farmland within Placer County and California from 1992 through 2000.

The data presented above indicate areas of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland in Placer County decreased from 1992 to 1998 and then slightly increased from 1998 to 2000. During the same period, areas of Farmland of Local Importance in Placer County increased slightly from 1992 to 1998 and then decreased from 1998 to 2000. In addition, during the same period, the total agricultural area within Placer County decreased. The decline in important farmland has been widely attributed to the significant urbanization of southern and western Placer County converting agricultural lands to urban use (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002). The majority of growth over the past twenty years has occurred in the cities of Roseville and Rocklin, with more recent growth noted in the City of Lincoln (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002). Growth projections for Placer County indicate future significant growth, including the potential future development of the West Roseville Specific Plan (WRSP) area and a larger area to the west and south that is the subject of an MOU between the City of Roseville and Placer County. It is anticipated that additional losses of agricultural and important farmland areas would be experienced as further development and growth continue in Placer County.

**Table 4-1
Important Farmland, Placer County and California**

Category	1992			1994			1996			1998			2000		
	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA
Placer County															
Prime Farmland	10,523	5.5	1.1	10,458	5.5	1.1	9,867	5.3	1.0	9,750	5.3	1.0	9,901	5.5	1.0
Farmland of Statewide Importance	5,546	2.9	0.6	5,608	3.0	0.6	5,546	3.0	0.6	5,196	2.8	0.5	5,312	2.9	0.6
Unique Farmland	23,975	12.6	2.5	23,848	12.6	2.5	23,300	12.5	2.4	22,726	12.4	2.4	23,616	13.1	2.5
Farmland of Local Importance	113,464	59.8	11.8	113,505	60.0	11.8	114,271	61.2	11.9	114,453	62.3	11.9	111,987	62.1	11.7
Total Farmland	189,805			189,272			186,670			183,820			180,472		
Total Area	964,140			960,090 ^a			960,090			960,090			960,090		
California															
Prime Farmland	4,317,754	18.5	5.4	4,265,512	18.4	5.3	4,349,141	18.2	5.4	4,315,886	18.1	5.3	3,230,032 ^b	18.1	11.3
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2,099,193	9.0	2.6	2,096,233	9.0	2.6	2,083,528	8.7	2.6	2,062,777	8.6	2.5	1,798,039 ^b	10.1	6.3
Unique Farmland	1,026,444	4.4	1.3	1,016,242	4.4	1.3	1,052,287	4.4	1.3	1,074,796	4.5	1.3	839,501 ^b	4.7	2.9
Farmland of Local Importance	2,121,237	9.1	2.6	2,138,515	9.2	2.7	2,759,085	11.5	3.4	2,766,149	11.6	3.4	2,186,088 ^b	12.2	7.6
Total Farmland	23,285,776			23,238,183			23,920,527			23,822,973			17,849,448 ^b		
Total Area	80,498,835			80,096,651			80,947,633			80,955,627			28,607,441 ^b		

Source: California Department of Conservation, 2002b and 2002d.

Notes:

TF Total farmland within Placer County and California.

TA Total area within Placer County and California.

^a Total area under the jurisdiction of Placer County declines from 1992 to 1996 due to annexations by the Cities of Rocklin and Roseville.

^b Area excludes Butte, Colusa, Kern, San Diego, San Luis Obispo and Sonoma counties as data were not available.

The project area is currently used for agricultural purposes and includes Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation (1999). Approximately 5 percent of the project area is designated as Prime Farmland, 20 percent is designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance, 60 percent is Unique Farmland, and 10 percent is Farmland of Local Importance. The farmland occurring within the project area is predominately used for rice cultivation, with approximately 90 percent (1,350 acres) used for rice cultivation and approximately 10 percent (150 acres) used for grazing or left as open space.

Surrounding potential future areas of development including the WRSP area and the MOU area are currently used for agricultural purposes and contain important farmland. The proposed WRSP contains approximately 0.3 percent of Prime Farmland and 2.8 percent of Farmland of Local Importance, and the MOU area contains approximately 2.1 percent of additional Farmland of Local Importance.

Areas of important farmland occurring within the project area, the proposed WRSP, and the MOU area between the City of Roseville and Placer County are shown on Figure 4-1.

4.1.4 Williamson Contract Areas

The Williamson Act, enables local governments to restrict the use of specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. Approximately 66 percent of farmland and approximately 19 percent of the total land area within California is subject to the Williamson Act (California Department of Conservation, 2002e). Williamson Act areas enrolled within Placer County have been declining over the past 20 years following a significant increase of areas enrolled during the first decade of the Act's introduction. The most recent data (collected in 2000) indicated that 30.3 percent of farmland and 4.4 percent of the total area of Placer County were placed under active contracts. Table 4-2 presents the historical data for Williamson Act contract areas in Placer County from 1970 to 2000.

The majority of the project area is not subject to the Williamson Act, except for the southwestern portion including portions of parcels 17-010-033 and 17-090-028 (see Figure 4-2). This area is under contract (No. 536) and is currently active. It includes both Prime Farmland and Non-Prime Farmland and covers an area of approximately 170 acres within the project area. The adjacent areas to the northwest and southwest of the area under contract are also subject to the Williamson Act; however, they are under separate contracts. These adjacent areas are located outside of the project area.

4.2 REGULATORY SETTING

4.2.1 Federal

The federal regulation that applies to agricultural resources present at the project area is the Farmland Protection Policy Act 1994. This regulation is described in more detail below.

**Table 4-2
Williamson Act Contract Areas Within Placer County**

Williamson Act Contract	1970			1980			1990			2000		
	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA	Acreage	% TF	% TA
Active	18,695	8.9	1.9	53,230	28.4	5.5	44,058	27.6	4.6	42,244	30.3	4.4
Non-Renewal	0	0	0	5,273	2.8	0.5	19,251	12.1	2.0	3,308	2.4	0.3
Expired	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,536	4.1	0.7	32,262	23.1	3.4
Total Farmland	209,235^a			187,199^a			159,749^a			139,587^b		
Total Area	960,090			960,090			960,090			960,090		

Source: AgResource Solutions and North Fork and Associates, 2002.

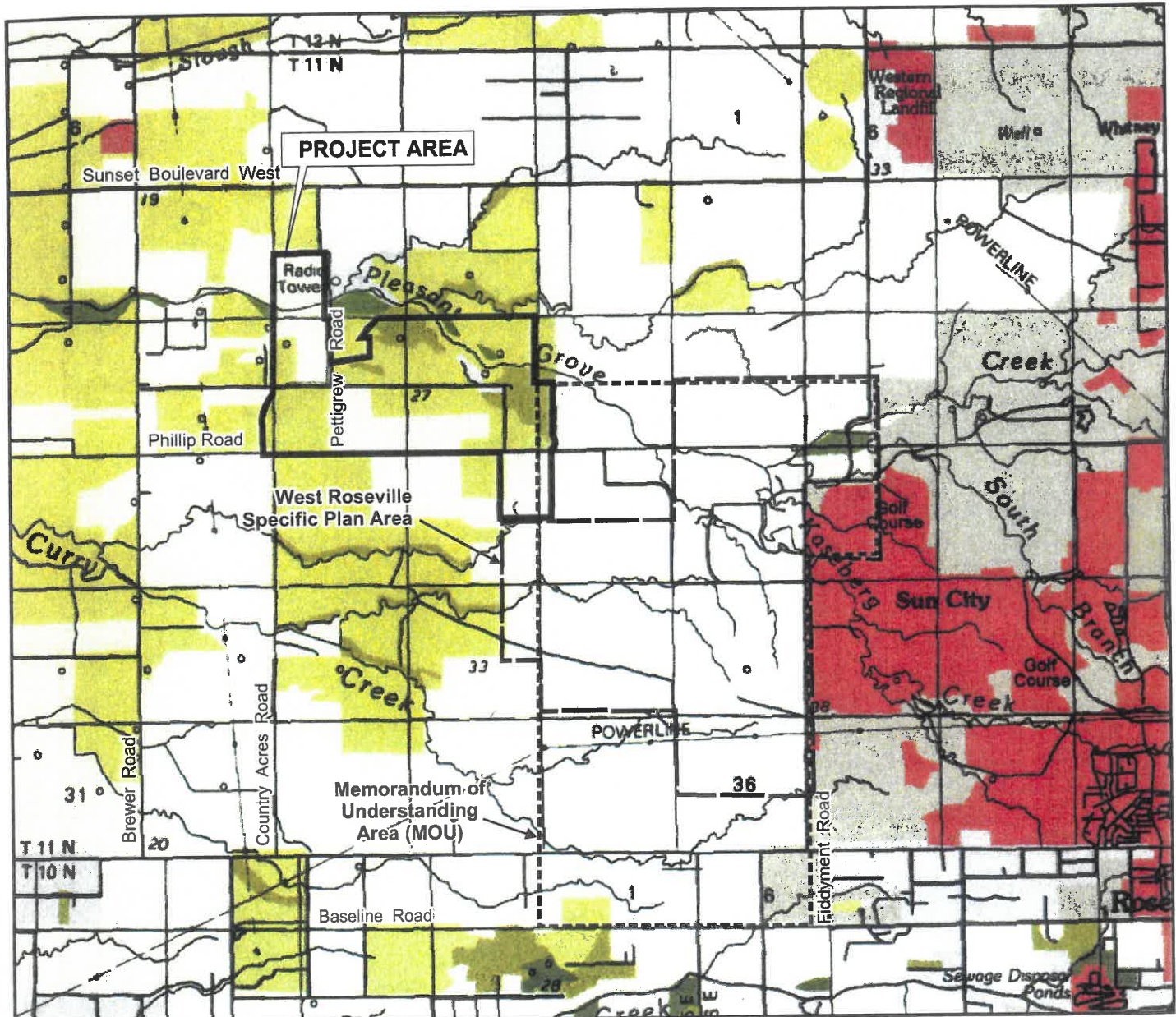
Notes:

^a Figures calculated from acreages given for 1969, 1982, and 1997.

^b Acreage listed is for 1997 as acreage not available for 2000.

TF Total Farmland

TA Total Area



Source: Department of Conservation, 1998. Placer County Important Farmland Map.
 City of Roseville, 2001. Major West Placer County Ownership and Potential Development Projects Map.

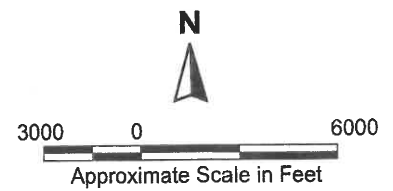
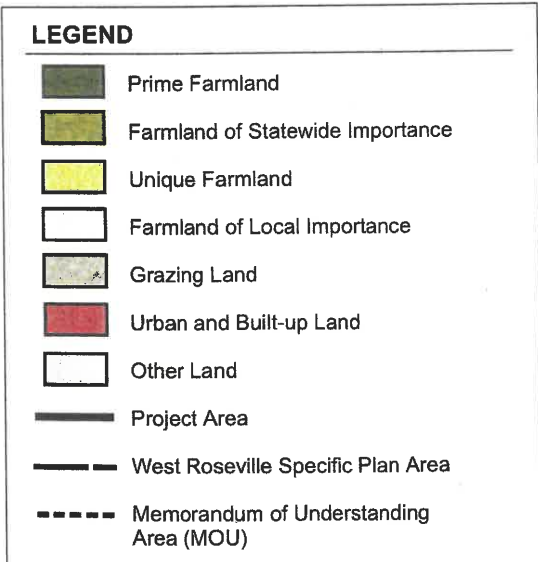
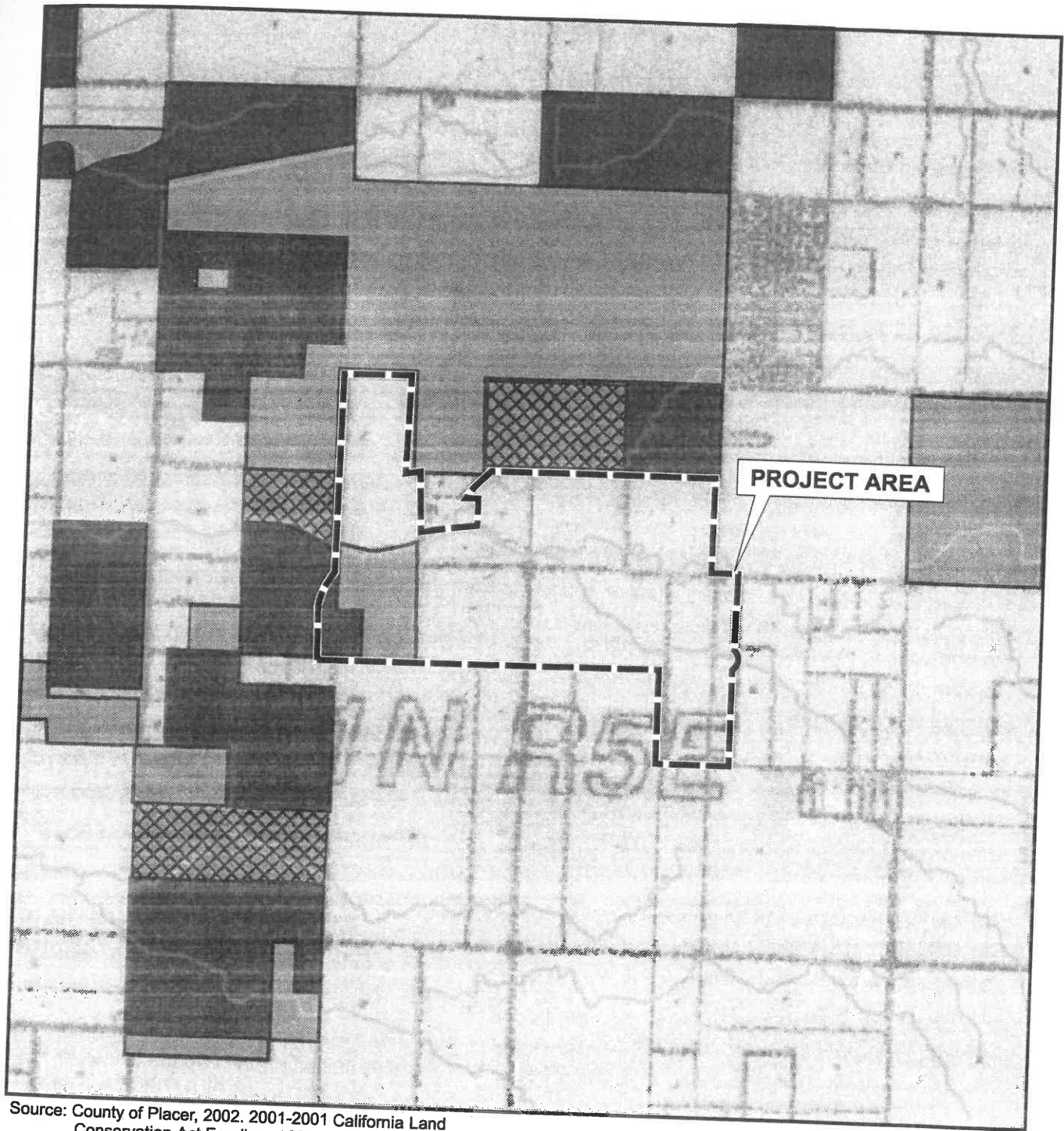


Figure 4-1
IMPORTANT FARMLAND AREAS

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 Roseville, California




URS Ref. 28065805 October 2002





Source: County of Placer, 2002. 2001-2001 California Land Conservation Act Enrollment Map.

LEGEND

-  Prior Non-Renewal Williamson Act Contract
-  Open (Non-Prime Farmland) Williamson Act Contract
-  Prime Farmland Williamson Act Contract

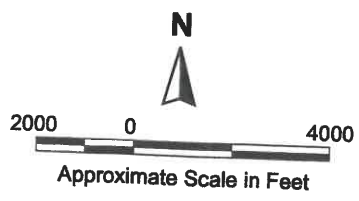


Figure 4-2
WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT AREAS

Draft Environmental Impact Report
City of Roseville Retention Basin
Roseville, California

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October 2002



Farmland Protection Policy Act 1994

The Farmland Protection Policy Act 1994 is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The provisions of the Act aim to minimize the impact that federal programs may have on the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. Federal programs are administered to be compatible with state and local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland. Federal agencies are required to develop and review their policies and procedures to implement the Farmland Protection Policy Act 1994 (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2002).

4.2.2 State

The main California state regulation that applies to resources at the project area is the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act). This regulation is described in more detail below.

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, otherwise known as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to restrict the use of specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space. Landowners enter into contracts with participating cities and counties and agree to restrict their land to agriculture or open space use for a minimum of 10 years. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market (speculative) value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act 1971 (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002).

In 1998, the Williamson Act's farmland security zone provisions were enacted with the passage of Senate Bill 1182 (Costa, Chapter 353, Statutes of 1998). This sub-program, called the "Super Williamson Act," enables agricultural landowners to enter into contracts with the county for 20-year increments with an additional 35 percent tax benefit over and above the standard Williamson Act contract (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002).

The Williamson Act is implemented in Placer County according to the provisions of the Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves. The Placer County Agricultural and Open Space Preserve Program was established in accordance with the Williamson Act to protect agricultural lands for the continued production of agricultural commodities, and to protect certain other lands devoted to open space uses. There are currently no provisions for the Super Williamson Act within the County's Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002).

To be eligible for a Williamson Act contract, a site must satisfy the following requirements:

- Have a total area of at least 100 acres;
- Parcels should be adjacent to others subject to the contract so that the total area under contract is 100 acres or more; and
- Parcels should be located in an area with unique agricultural enterprises, where the establishment of an agricultural preserve with a total area of less than 100 acres is in public interest and consistent with Placer County's General Plan (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002).

Placer County also requires that sites be developed with an existing commercial agricultural operation engaged in the active production of an agricultural commodity. In addition, Placer County's Administrative Rules provide an opportunity for the protection of certain non-agricultural open space lands that the General Plan classifies as desirable open space or environmentally sensitive, and other lands with environmental characteristics determined by the Board of Supervisors to be of high value to the current and future residents of Placer County (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002). This is consistent with Govt. Code Section 51201 of the Williamson Act, which lists non-agricultural uses which may be preserved as those that are compatible with the agricultural, recreational, or open-space use of land. These uses include a managed wetland area; a wildlife habitat area; and use of land in its agricultural or natural state by the public for recreational uses such as walking, hiking, picnicking, fishing, and hunting.

The southwestern portion of the project area is under contract (No. 536) and is currently active. It includes both Prime Farmland and Non-Prime Farmland and covers an area of approximately 170 acres within the project area.

Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1994 (Federal Act Implemented in State of California)

The California Farmland Conservancy Program of the California Department of Conservation administers the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program in California (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2002). As described in Section 4.1.3 above, the following categories of farmland exist in California: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land and Water. Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance are classified as important farmland categories.

In the context of the project area and as described above, the site contains areas of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance.

4.2.3 Local

Local regulations that currently apply to resources at the project area include the Placer County General Plan, Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program and the Placer County Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves. Goals and policies relating to

agricultural use identified within these policies are summarized below. A discussion of these goals and policies can be found in Appendix A-2 of the Initial Study. When the property is purchased by the City of Roseville, City regulations will apply. No goals or policies relating to agricultural use were identified within the City of Roseville's General Plan.

Placer County General Plan

Goals 1H, 7A, and 7B and Policies 1H1, 1H5, 1H6, 7A1, 7A2, 7A3, 7A4, and 7A13 of the Placer County General Plan relate to agricultural use and are summarized below.

- Maintain agricultural uses and require development with or adjacent to designated agricultural areas to incorporate design, construction and maintenance techniques that protect agricultural use.
- A buffer or setback shall be required for new non-agricultural development immediately adjacent to agricultural lands.

This is applicable to the project area, as it is currently used for agricultural purposes.

Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program

A Draft Natural Community Conservation Planning Agreement (NCCP) has been developed for southwestern Placer County that includes the land associated with the project area (Placer Legacy, 2001). An objective of the NCCP specifically relating to agricultural use is to "Maintain a viable agricultural segment of the economy." This objective is applicable to the project area, as it is currently used for agricultural purposes.

Placer County Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves

The Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves, administered by the County's Planning Director, Agricultural Commissioner and Assessor, implement the provisions of the Williamson Act in Placer County (AgResource Solutions, 2002). These rules do not replace the Williamson Act, but work in conjunction with applicable provisions of the Williamson Act.

To be eligible for a Williamson Act contract, a site must satisfy the following requirements:

- Have a total area of at least 100 acres;
- Parcels should be adjacent to others subject to the contract so that the total area under contract is 100 acres or more; and
- Parcels should be located in an area with unique agricultural enterprises, where the establishment of an agricultural preserve with a total area of less than 100 acres is in public interest and consistent with Placer County's General Plan. (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002)

Placer County also requires that sites be developed with an existing commercial agricultural operation engaged in the active production of an agricultural commodity. In addition, Placer County's Administrative Rules provide opportunity for protection of certain non-agricultural open space lands that the General Plan classifies as desirable open space or environmentally sensitive, and other lands with environmental characteristics determined by the Board of Supervisors to be of high value to the current and future residents of Placer County (AgResource Solutions and North Fork Associates, 2002). This is consistent with Govt. Code Section 51201 of the Williamson Act, which lists non-agricultural uses which may be preserved as those that are compatible with the agricultural, recreational, or open-space use of land. These uses include a managed wetland area; a wildlife habitat area; and use of land in its agricultural or natural state by the public for recreational uses such as walking, hiking, picnicking, fishing, and hunting.

4.3 IMPACTS

4.3.1 Significance Criteria

Potential significant impacts associated with agricultural impacts have been evaluated using the following criteria:

- Type and extent of direct conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use, or impairment of the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land.
- Type and extent of indirect conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use, or impairment of the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land.

4.3.2 Direct Impacts

IMPACT AG-1:	Direct conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use.
SIGNIFICANCE:	Significant
MITIGATION:	None identified
RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANCE:	Significant

The development of the project could convert up to 1,500 acres of agricultural land predominantly used for rice farming to other uses. Approximately 75 acres of Prime Farmland, approximately 300 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, approximately 900 acres of Unique Farmland, and approximately 150 acres of Farmland of Local Importance are contained within the project area. Approximately 560 acres of farmland would be used for flood control as a result of the creation of the retention basin and includes the areas of the North Basin, South Basin, bypass channel, and low-flow channel. The use of the remaining areas of the project area is not known at this stage, but it is likely that some areas could continue to be used for farming, sold by the City for development or offered by the City for mitigation in association with future surrounding developments.

It is unlikely that remaining areas of the project area would be suitable for rice farming. The parts of the project area not used for retention basin features would likely be only marginally viable for rice farming (Amarel, 2002). The project area soils are difficult to grow crops on, other than rice. However, the basin areas of the retention basin could be suitable for grazing and could contribute to agricultural productivity to the region if this use were implemented. Adjacent surrounding areas are currently used for grazing.

The development of the project area would represent a loss of up to approximately 0.8 percent of Prime Farmland, up to approximately 5.6 percent of Farmland of Statewide Importance, up to approximately 3.8 percent of Unique Farmland, and up to approximately 0.1 percent of Farmland of Local Importance within Placer County (California Department of Conservation, 2002b). A loss of up to approximately 0.0017 percent of Prime Farmland, up to approximately 0.014 percent of Farmland of Statewide Importance, up to approximately 0.084 percent of Unique Farmland and up to 0.0054 percent of Farmland of Local Importance would be experienced in California (California Department of Conservation, 2002b). The proposed project could result in the loss of up to approximately 9 percent of rice farmland within Placer County and approximately 0.3 percent of rice farmland in California (Hill et al., 1997; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999b).

Development of the site would likely remove important rice farmland from production. This impact is considered significant pursuant to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. According to Appendix G, projects involving conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural uses are generally considered to have a significant impact on the environment. This is also in conflict with the Placer County General Plan and the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program, which promote agricultural viability within the economy. Although the rice farmland occurring within the project area is of marginal viability and the loss of important farmland appears fairly small, the project could result in the potential loss of up to 10 percent of the important farmland within Placer County. The conversion of this land would be regarded as a significant impact because farmland within Placer County is declining and under pressure from other uses in the area. No mitigation has been identified to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this impact is considered to be significant and unavoidable.

IMPACT AG-2:	Conflict with Williamson contract areas.
SIGNIFICANCE:	Significant
MITIGATION:	Mitigation Measure AG-1 (Preserve portion of the project area under an Open Space Preserve Contract).
RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANCE:	Less than significant

The development of the project would convert farmland areas currently subject to an active Williamson Act contract to non-agricultural use. The primary use would be for flood control (approximately 560 acres), but it is likely that some areas could continue to be used for farming, sold by the City for development, or offered by the City for mitigation in association with future surrounding developments.

Conversion of Williamson Act contract areas to non-agricultural use is considered significant pursuant to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. However, this impact can be reduced to a less than significant level with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1, described in Section 4.4, Mitigation Measures.

Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the impact of the loss of the Williamson Act contract area to a less than significant level because, although farming would not continue, the area would be preserved as Public Open Space in accordance with Placer County's implementing rules for Williamson Act contracts.

4.3.3 Indirect Impacts

IMPACT AG-3:	Indirect conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use.
SIGNIFICANCE:	Significant
MITIGATION:	None identified
RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANCE:	Significant

The development of the proposed project could facilitate the development of surrounding areas, potentially including the proposed WRSP and the MOU area between the City of Roseville and Placer County. This is because it includes capacity for retention of stormwater/flood waters generated from future growth that could be associated with these projects pursuant to a separate permitting process, including environmental review, that has recently been initiated. The development of these areas, or other undeveloped areas that could be facilitated by the proposed project, could result in the conversion of approximately 3,100 acres of agricultural land, including important farmland, within the WRSP, and an additional approximately 2,800 acres of agricultural land, including some important farmland, within the remainder of the MOU area, to other uses.

The WRSP and the MOU area are used for agricultural purposes, including rice cultivation, grain and hay crops, pasture and other "native" vegetation (California Department of Water Resources, 2000). A loss of approximately 0.3 percent of Prime Farmland and 2.8 percent of Farmland of Local Importance within Placer County and 0.0007 percent of Prime Farmland and 0.12 percent of Farmland of Local Importance within California would be experienced if the West Roseville Specific Plan area were developed (California Department of Conservation, 2002b). An additional loss of approximately 2.1 percent of Farmland of Local Importance within Placer County and approximately 0.084 percent of Farmland of Local Importance within California would be experienced if the remainder of the MOU area were developed (California Department of Conservation, 2002b).

Conversion of important farmland areas to non-agricultural uses as a result of other changes in the existing environment is considered significant pursuant to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project could indirectly facilitate the conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural use as a result of its accommodation of storm water runoff from the proposed WRSP and the potential future

development of the remainder of the MOU area. If development does not occur in these areas, then the retention storage capacity of the proposed project could be used to facilitate conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural use in other areas, the amount of which is unknown.

The proposed project's indirect facilitation of conversion of important farmland areas to non-agricultural use is considered significant. Given the retention requirements of the proposed project, no feasible mitigation has been identified to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this impact is considered to be significant and unavoidable.

4.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

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Mitigation Measure AG-1: Preserve the southwestern portion of the project area under an Open Space Preserve Contract in accordance with Placer County's Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves for a period of twenty years.

Deleted from FEIR
Mitigation Measure AG-1 applies to Impact AG-2.

Mitigation Measure AG-1 would preserve the southwestern portion of the project area currently subject to the Williamson Act under an Open Space Preserve Contract in accordance with Placer County's Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves for a period of twenty years. The implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the impact of the loss of the Williamson Act contract area to a less than significant level. This is because although farming would not continue, the area may be preserved as Public Open Space in accordance with Placer County's Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserve. The Administrative Rules implement the provisions of the Williamson Act within the County. The preservation of the portion of the project area may also provide opportunities for passive recreation and biological preservation, enhancement, and restoration. Therefore, the resultant level of impact is less than significant.

*New MM AG-2
Actively pursue
continued ag use.*