

## 4.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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### INTRODUCTION

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The Agricultural Resources chapter of the EIR describes the soils of the study area and examines how buildout of the City of Wheatland General Plan Study Area will affect agricultural resources and operations within the General Plan Update study area. This section is primarily based upon the *Wheatland General Plan Update Background Report*,<sup>1</sup> the *Yuba County General Plan*,<sup>2</sup> and the *Yuba County Soil Survey*.<sup>3</sup>

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

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#### Existing Agricultural Uses

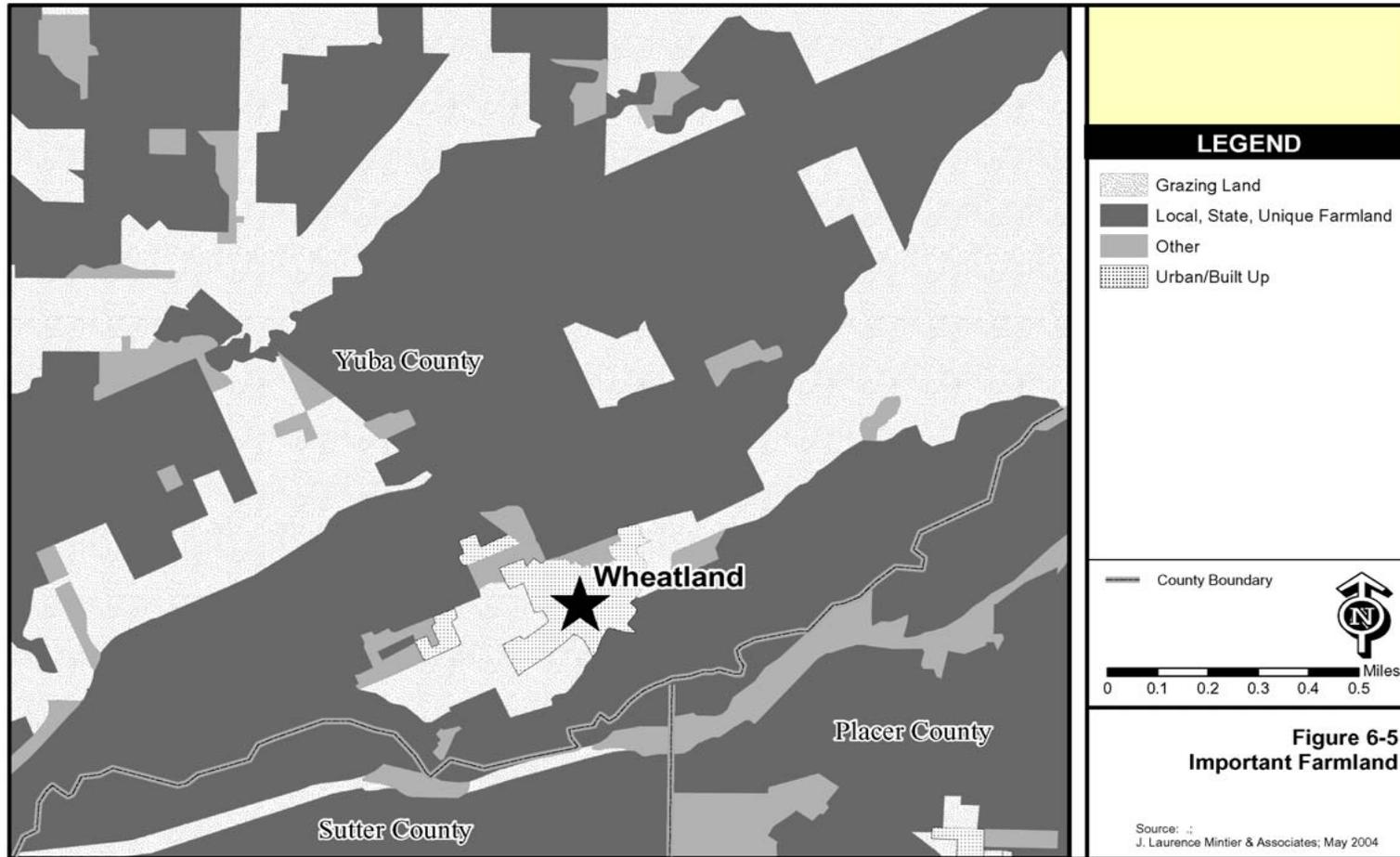
##### Regional Overview

Agriculture is the most extensive land use in Yuba County and the most significant component of the County's economy. Approximately 230,413 acres, or 56 percent of the total County area, is comprised of agricultural croplands and pasture. The value of agricultural land, however, is not limited to the provision of food, fiber and jobs. Agricultural land also provides open space, which has both psychological and aesthetic benefits and provides important wildlife habitat.

About one-third of the agricultural lands in Yuba County are used for agriculture; another one-third is used for livestock grazing; and the remaining areas for timber production. A few areas are used for urban development. Suitable soils, a long growing season, and abundant irrigation water are responsible for an intensive and diversified agricultural industry in Yuba County. About 135,000 acres are intensively used for fruit, nut, grain, vegetable and seed crops. More than 30 crops are grown commercially. Fruit and nut trees and vegetable and seed crops are grown primarily on the deep, alluvial soils along the rivers. Small grain is grown on the fine-textured soils farther from rivers.

In 2002, Yuba County's agricultural industry earned \$115 million in the production of agricultural goods, representing a 4.5 percent increase in gross revenue from 1997. Fruits/berries and grains/beans were the top commodities in Yuba County, producing approximately \$66.7 million and \$18.8 million, respectively, in 2002. Cattle/dairy products and almonds were the next two largest commodities generating approximately \$17.3 million and \$7.4 million, respectively, for the agricultural industry within Yuba County.

**Figure 4.2-1  
Important Farmland**



## Local Overview

The *Yuba County General Plan* designates all unincorporated lands within the Wheatland study area as Wheatland Community Valley Agriculture. The study area encompasses approximately 10,420 acres. Although only minor agricultural activities are currently being conducted within the Wheatland city limits, the study area includes orchards and row crops, along with some grazing and fallow lands. As described above, approximately 230,413 acres, or 56 percent of the total County area, is comprised of agricultural croplands and pasture; the study area encompasses 4.5 percent of Yuba County's total acreage designated for agriculture uses.

The study area is generally bordered by Dry Creek to the north and Bear River to the south. These watercourses provide irrigation water for the surrounding agricultural fields. The predominant soil complexes located in the study area are *Conejo loam*, *Horst silt loam*, and *Redding gravelly loam*. The *Conejo loam* and *Horst silt loam* soils are well suited to intensive uses for growing irrigated crops. The *Redding gravelly loam* soils however, are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated, and are thereby used for range, pasture, or woodland.

## **Agricultural Land**

### Farmland Classifications

To determine a soil's agricultural productivity, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) use two systems of measurement: the Soil Capability Classification and the Storie Index Rating System. The "prime" soil classifications of both 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.

### Soil Capability Classification

The Soil Capability Classification System takes soil limitations, the risk of damage when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment into consideration. 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 4.2-1, Soil Capability Classification.

<b>Table 4.2-1 Soil Capability Classification</b>	
<b>Class</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>I</b>	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
<b>II</b>	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices.
<b>III</b>	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both.
<b>IV</b>	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.
<b>V</b>	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations; impractical to remove that limit their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
<b>VI</b>	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
<b>VII</b>	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.
<b>VIII</b>	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.

Data Source: USDA Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.

Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating system ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture 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 NRCS definitions of the six soil grades as well as the soil index ranges are provided in Table 4.2-2, the Storie Index Rating System.

<b>Table 4.2-2 Storie Index Rating System</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Index Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
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

<b>Table 4.2-2 Storie Index Rating System</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Index Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
		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.
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 Non-Agricultural	Less than 10	Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization.
<i>Data Source: USDA Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Sacramento County, April 1993.</i>		

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 the 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 State 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. The LIM criteria in California utilize the SCS and Storie Index Rating systems, but also consider 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 (as described above) and current land use information. The minimum mapping unit is 10 acres unless otherwise specified. Units of land smaller than 10 acres are incorporated into the surrounding classification. Acres of Important Farmland are shown in Table 4.2-3 below. The Important Farmland Maps identify four agriculture-related categories: prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, and grazing land. Each is summarized below, based on *A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (1998)*, prepared by the California Department of Conservation.

Acres Present by Type	Acreage
Prime Farmland	42,678
Farmland of Statewide Importance	11,094
Unique Farmland	33,108
Grazing Land	143,533
Urban and Built-Up Land	12,081
Other Land	163,034
Water	6,289
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>411,817</b>
Data Source: California Department of Conservation, <a href="http://www.consrv.ca.gov">http://www.consrv.ca.gov</a>	

### Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, is 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 also been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles (a cycle is equivalent to 2 years) prior to the FMMP mapping of Yuba County in 1998.

The soil-mapping units listed below meet the criteria for Prime Farmland, as outlined in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) Project for the Yuba County Soil Survey.

These lists have been updated with information from the SOI - Classification and Correlation of Soils of Yuba County, California. Changes include additions and deletions, as well as map symbol conversions from field symbols to publication symbols.

### *Symbol Name*

- 101 Aiken-Horseshoe complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes
- 105\* Argovar silt loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
- 123 Boomer gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
- 129 Bruella loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 130 Capay clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 131 Hollenbeck silty clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes

- 132 Hollenbeck silty clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 133 Hollenbeck clay, 0 to 3 percent slopes
- 134 Hollenbeck-Urban land complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 137 Columbia fine sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 138 Columbia fine sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 139\* Columbia fine sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, frequently flooded
- 140 Columbia-Urban land complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 141 Conejo loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
- 142 Conejo loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 143 Conejo-Urban land complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 147 Feather silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 161 Holillipah loamy sand, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 162 Holillipah loamy sand, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 163+ Holillipah loamy sand, 0 to 1 percent slopes, frequently flooded
- 169 Horst sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 170 Horst silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
- 175 Jocal loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
- 178 Jocal loam, cool, 3 to 8 percent slopes
- 182 Kilaga clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 183 Kilaga clay loam, hardpan substratum, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 184 Kilaga clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 197 Oakdale sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
- 203 Perkins loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
- 204 Perkins loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 211 Ricecross loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
- 212\* Ricecross loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 218 Shanghai silt loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 219 Shanghai silt loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded
- 220 Shanghai silt loam, clay substratum, 0 to 1 percent slopes
- 221 Sites loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
- 225 Sites gravelly loam, bedrock stratum, 3 to 8 percent slopes
- 248 Trainer loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded

\* This unit Prime Farmland only if drained.

+ This unit Prime Farmland only if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season.

#### Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, is 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 1994).

### Unique Farmland

Unique farmland, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, 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 1994).

### Grazing Land

Grazing land, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, is 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, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, is 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.

### Other Land

Other land, as defined by the California Department of Conservation, is land that is not included in any other mapping categories. The following uses are generally included: rural development, brush, timber, government land, strip mines, borrow pits, and a variety of other rural land uses.

## **General Plan Study Area Soil Conditions**

According to the Soil Capability Classification System Class I through Class IV, and VIII soils are found within the Wheatland General Plan Update study area. The Soil Classification of each soil found in the Wheatland study area are shown in Table 4.2-4.

Soil Type	Soil Classification	
	Irrigated	Non-irrigated
Columbia fine sand loam	IIs-4	IIIs-4
Conejo loam	I	IIIc
Dumps, mine tailing	VIII	VIII
Holillipah loamy sand	IIIs-4	IVs-4
Horst sandy loam	I	IIIc
Horst silt loam	I	IIIc
Kimball loam	IIIs-3	IIIs-3
Perkins loam	I	IIIc
Redding gravelly loam	IVe-1	IVe-1
San Joaquin loam	IVs-3	IVs-3
Shanghai silt loam	I	IIIc
<i>Data Source: United States Department of Agriculture: Soil Survey of Yuba County</i>		

The USDA: Soil Conservation Service’s (SCS) Yuba County Soil Survey identified and mapped soils in Yuba County. Each identified soil complex has characteristics that affect soil behavior. Soil characteristics may or may not make the soils suitable for accommodating uses such as shallow excavations, levees, and berms, and local roads and streets. Soil limitations can include slow or very slow permeability, limited ability to support a load, high shrink-swell potential, moderate depth to hardpan, low depth to rock, and frequent flooding. Each soil has characteristics that affect soil behavior.

The predominant soils complexes identified throughout the Wheatland study area are described below:

- **Conejo loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes:** a very deep, well-drained soil, found on stream terraces. Characteristics include moderate shrink-swell potential, slight water erosion, and subject to rare flooding.
- **Horst silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes:** a very deep, well-drained soil, found on stream terraces. Characteristics include moderate shrink-swell potential, runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate.
- **Redding gravelly loam, 3 to 8 percent slope:** a well-drained soil placed on high fan terraces. Characteristics include a very slow permeability rate, causing perched water tables to form above the claypan. The shrink-swell potential is high in the subsoil, runoff is moderate, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate. The Redding soil is used mainly for rangeland and for residential or urban development.

More specifically, the complete range of soil types found throughout the study area, through a review of the Yuba County Soil Survey, are described below in Table 4.2-5.

<b>Table 4.2-5 Wheatland Soil Index</b>			
<b>Soil Map Units</b>		<b>Storie Index Rating</b>	<b>Grade</b>
137	Columbia fine sand loam	85	Excellent
141	Conejo loam	90	Excellent
146	Dumps, mine tailing	0	Non-Agricultural
161	Holillipah loamy sand	58	Fair
169	Horst sandy loam	81	Excellent
170	Horst silt loam	95	Excellent
185	Kimball loam	41	Fair
203	Perkins loam	81	Excellent
208	Redding gravelly loam	14	Very Poor
214	San Joaquin loam	23	Poor
218	Shanghai silt loam	95	Excellent
<i>Data Source: United States Department of Agriculture: Soil Survey of Yuba County, October 2005.</i>			

### **Yuba County Farmland Conversion**

One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion is that the proximity of agricultural land to urban uses increases the value of the agricultural land either directly through formal purchase offers, or indirectly through recent sales in the vicinity, and through the extension of utilities and other urban infrastructure into productive agricultural areas. This premise is evidenced by the fact that property values, as measured by the County Assessor’s office, are higher adjacent to the urban fringe.

According to the California Department of Conversion Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 2004 Field Report, a decrease in the acreage of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance has occurred in Yuba County. The decrease is explained by the conversion of Important Farmlands to grazing lands from 2002 to 2004, as well as the conversion of agricultural land to urban and built-up land. The total amount of agricultural land within the County decreased by 2,298 acres during the two-year period from 2002-2004. This decrease equates to an average loss of approximately 1,149 acres of Important Farmlands annually, which includes land both in and out of production.

### **Williamson Act**

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 in order 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 will remain under agricultural production for a ten-year period. The contract is renewed automatically on an annual basis 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 or land that qualifies for rating 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating. Yuba County does not participate in the Williamson Act program.

### **Agricultural Production**

The *Yuba County Agricultural Crop Report for 2003* presents the most recent figures for estimated acreage, yield, and gross value of agricultural products in Yuba County<sup>3</sup>. The gross value of the County's agricultural production for 2003 was \$154.6 million, an increase of \$15.5 million over 2002. Rice continued to be the most valuable crop in the County, valued at \$43.6 million. Rice was followed in value by peaches, prunes, walnuts, and cattle/calves. Within the unincorporated part of the Wheatland General Plan Update study area, agriculture is the primary existing land use, specifically orchards and row crops, along with some grazing and fallow lands. Estimated figures for acreage, yield, and gross value of agricultural products in the study area were not available at the time of writing.

## **REGULATORY CONTEXT**

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### Yuba County General Plan (1994)

The *Yuba County General Plan* states that agriculture is the most extensive land use in the County and the most significant component of the County's economy. The Plan further states that the value of agricultural land is not limited to the provision of food, fiber, and jobs, but also includes open space, which provides psychological and aesthetic benefits as well as important wildlife habitat.

The County General Plan designates all unincorporated lands within the Wheatland Sphere of Influence as Wheatland Community Valley Agriculture. The Valley Agriculture classification is applied to areas of the County outside of community boundaries that are suitable for commercial agriculture and are desirable to retain in agricultural uses. The designation is intended to (a) protect the agricultural community from encroachment of unrelated agricultural uses that would diminish the viability of agricultural production, and to (b) encourage the preservation of agricultural land, both productive and potentially productive.

### Wheatland General Plan Update

The General Plan Update includes the establishment of goals and policies aimed at seeking to maintain agricultural uses as long as possible and to protect adjacent

agricultural lands from the negative effects of continued urban development within the City of Wheatland. These applicable goals and policies have been included in the following impact discussions, where appropriate, in order to mitigate potential impacts.

## **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

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### **Standards of Significance**

An agricultural impact may be considered significant if any of the following conditions, or potential thereof, would result if the proposed project's implementation would:

- convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use;
- conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract; or
- involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

### **Method of Analysis**

Determination of agricultural impacts is based on information from the City of Wheatland General Plan Background Report, and the Yuba County Soil Survey.

### **Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

#### **4.2-1 Development associated with the proposed General Plan Update would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use.**

As Prime Farmland surrounds the City of Wheatland, the proposed General Plan Update would result in urban development of prime agricultural lands. Furthermore, Unique Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, located at the most western portion of the City's Sphere of Influence, would also be developed at urban densities and intensities in portions of the Wheatland Planning Area. The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates 4,700 acres as urban reserve. This designation is applied to land that may be considered for development in the future with urban uses. However, no urban development may occur on lands designated Urban Reserve before the General Plan is amended to specify a primary land use designation for the property. Until then, allowable uses are specified under the Agriculture (A) and Open Space (OS) designations.

The City's surrounding landscape is designated for buildout, which would result in a loss of agricultural resources. The predominant soil complexes located in the study area are *Conejo loam*, *Horst silt loam*, and *Redding gravelly loam*. The *Conejo loam*, and *Horst silt loam* soils are designated as Prime Farmland soils, which are well suited to intensive uses for growing irrigated crops. The *Redding*

*gravelly loam* soils however, are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated, and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland.

Wheatland's agricultural surroundings play a central role in the history and character of the community. The continued growth of Wheatland would inevitably convert agricultural land to urban uses.

The General Plan Update includes the following goals and policies applicable to agricultural issues:

- Goal 1.I To maintain the productivity and minimize developments affects on agricultural lands surrounding Wheatland.
- Policy 1.I.1. The City shall discourage leapfrog development and development in peninsulas extending into agricultural lands to avoid adverse effects on agricultural operations.
- Policy 1.I.2. The City shall support the local agricultural economy by encouraging the location of agricultural support industries in the city, establishing and promoting marketing of local farm products, exploring economic incentives, and support for continuing agricultural uses adjacent to the city, and providing its fair share of adequate housing to meet the needs of agricultural labor.
- Policy 1.I.3. The City shall promote good neighbor policy between residential property owners and adjacent farming operations by supporting the right of the farmers and ranchers to conduct agricultural operations in compliance with state laws.

Implementation of the goals and policies above would minimize impacts to agricultural resources, however not to a *less-than-significant* level. The resulting impact would therefore remain *significant* because the buildout of the proposed plan would convert prime agricultural land for urban use.

Mitigation Measure(s)

The conversion of prime agricultural land to alternate non-agricultural uses involves the development of a limited supply of available prime agricultural land. Because the amount of prime agricultural land is limited and unable to be replaced, there are no available mitigation measures that would sufficiently mitigate these effects. Therefore, impacts related to agricultural resources would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

**4.2-2 Development associated with the proposed General Plan Update would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.**

Implementation of the General Plan Update would result in the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses. The General Plan Land Use Diagram indicates that certain agricultural lands within the Wheatland study area are designated for urban development. These areas are currently outside the city limits and within Yuba County; therefore, City zoning does not exist for these areas.

Yuba County has zoned much of the area surrounding Wheatland as Exclusive Agriculture (AE). In order for these parcels to be developed consistent with the land use designations indicated on the Wheatland General Plan Update Land Use Diagram, the parcels would need to be annexed to the City. The annexation process would require pre-zoning consistent with the corresponding land use designations for each parcel. Until such time that these parcels are annexed, they remain outside of the City's jurisdiction. Therefore, approval of the General Plan Update would result in conflicts between planned land uses and existing Yuba County zoning for agricultural use.

The General Plan Update includes the following goals and policies applicable to agricultural issues:

Goal 1.A To grow in an orderly pattern consistent with economic, social and environmental needs, while preserving Wheatland's small town character, and historic significance.

Policy 1.A.8 The City shall establish a Memorandum of Understanding with Yuba County in order to maintain agricultural preservation zoning on farmland surrounding the city.

Implementation of the goals and policies above would reduce the impact; however, the impact would remain *significant*.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Feasible mitigation measures do not exist to reduce the above impact to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, the impact would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

**4.2-3 Development associated with the proposed General Plan Update would not conflict with the Williamson Act contract.**

Yuba County does not participate in the Williamson Act program, and therefore the General Plan Update study area is not currently under Williamson Act contract.

The General Plan Update does not contain goals and policies pertaining to Williamson Act issues. Therefore, the General Plan Update would have *no impact* regarding Williamson Act compliance.

Mitigation Measures

*None required.*

**4.2-4 Development associated with the proposed General Plan Update would involve other changes in the existing environment, which could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.**

Wheatland's agricultural surroundings play a central role in its history and character of the community. The continued growth of Wheatland would inevitably convert agricultural land to urban uses. One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion is that the proximity of agricultural land to urban uses increases the value of the agricultural land either directly through formal purchase offers, or indirectly through recent sales in the vicinity, and through the extension of utilities and other urban infrastructure into productive agricultural areas.

The conversion of farmland to developed uses provides economic incentives, which contribute to the increase of development throughout the Wheatland area. The *Land Use Diagram* designates the area east of Jasper Lane, portions of the study area between the county line and the Bear River, and a small area north of Dry Creek, as Urban Reserve. Policies adopted by the General Plan update would require the City to study the implications of future development of the Urban Reserve area to determine if this area is feasible and appropriate for future development.

The General Plan Update includes the following goals and policies applicable to agricultural issues:

Goal 1.H To maintain land as Urban Reserve for consideration for future development.

Policy 1.H.1. No urban development of Urban Reserve areas will be permitted without a General Plan amendment. No General Plan amendment will be considered without an analysis that includes the factors listed in Policy 1.H.2.

Policy 1.H.2. The City shall, when deemed necessary, consider the appropriateness of development of Urban Reserve lands based upon the following factors:

- a) Possible location and mix of land uses;

- b) Implications for overall community form and relationship to the existing community and Downtown Wheatland;
- c) Flooding and drainage implications;
- d) Market feasibility of development in this area, including the expected rate of absorption;
- e) Availability of water supply;
- f) Consideration of circulation patterns and improvements;
- g) Effect on and compatibility with existing City infrastructure (e.g., wastewater treatment plant);
- h) Implications of providing law enforcement and fire protection services;
- i) Potential impacts on sensitive biological resources;
- j) Noise contour implications of Beale Air Force Base.

If the City determines the Reserved Area is applicable for future development, the area shall be accessible for conversion. Access to the Reserved Area, even with minimized impacts from implementation of the goals and policies above, would result in a *significant* impact.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Feasible mitigation measures do not exist. Therefore, impacts related to loss of agricultural resources would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> City of Wheatland, Wheatland General Plan Update Background Report, July 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Yuba County, Yuba County General Plan, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Yuba County, California, 1998.