

## 5.3 AGRICULTURAL & TIMBER RESOURCES

This section evaluates potential impacts caused by implementing the proposed Fortuna General Plan on: (1) the conversion of prime farmland to non-farmland use; (2) the conversion of timberland to non-timberland use; (3) potential conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts; and (4) other changes which could result in farmland conversion (e.g., land use conflicts).

For purposes of this analysis “prime farmland” is defined as farmland mapped by Humboldt County’s county-wide GIS mapping based on the presence of Grade 1 soils (e.g., soils with a Storie Index of 80-100). For purposes of this analysis, “timberland” includes forested areas, regardless of whether it is subject to logging. Timberland is evaluated in this analysis, despite that it is not identified as a resource under the “Agricultural Resources” section of the CEQA Checklist because of the importance of the logging industry in Humboldt County.

### **Environmental Setting**

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#### **Agricultural Production**

The City of Fortuna and greater Planning Area are located within the Eel River Valley. The Eel River Valley receives ample precipitation, contains fertile soils, and benefits from a mild coastal climate, all of which have supported productive agriculture for over 150 years (Humboldt County 2002). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, fruit and vegetable crops were grown to feed local populations and to be shipped to San Francisco. Soon after, dairy became the region’s primary agricultural industry. Agriculture still plays a vital economic and cultural role within the City of Fortuna and greater Planning Area. City events related to agriculture are celebrated throughout the year and include the Farmer’s Market, the Apple Harvest Festival, the Daffodil Show, and the Fortuna Rodeo. The county’s only livestock auction yard is located in Fortuna and, serves as a destination for ranchers and farmers in the region. Clendenen’s Apple Orchard is a popular stop for locals and tourists alike during apple season (City of Fortuna 2009).

#### **Prime Farmland**

“Thresholds of significance” are used to evaluate impacts to resources. When addressing impacts to agricultural resources, one threshold is whether a proposed project will convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Important (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the California Resources Agency (CRA), to non-agricultural uses (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G). However, farmland in Humboldt County is not yet included in CRA’s FMMP mapping (Humboldt County 2002; Rio Dell 2007). This analysis utilizes county-wide GIS mapping of “prime farmland”, based on Grade 1 soils, as a proxy for the FMMP mapping.

The County mapped its agricultural soils in 1965, in a cooperative effort with the University of California at Davis. Soils were rated for quality along a 100% scale based on each of four factors: character of soil profile and depth, texture, slope, and a composite of other factors (nutrient level, pH, erosion). These four factors were multiplied together to produce a composite

index rating (e.g., Storie Index). The Storie Index expresses relative suitability soil for general intensive agriculture (Humboldt County 2002). Grade 1 soils (those with a Storie Index rating from 80 to 100) are well-suited to general intensive agriculture. They are easily worked and very productive; irrigation is simple and efficient. The Lower Eel River Watershed contains the City of Fortuna and greater Planning Area and has the greatest amount of Grade 1 soils and more prime farmland than any other of Humboldt County's 12 major watersheds (Humboldt County 2002).

Prime farmland is indicated as yellow in Figure 5-4. Approximately 923 (13%) of the Planning Area's 7,110 acres is occupied by prime farmland.<sup>1</sup> This farmland is concentrated in the eastern and southern portions of the City's SOI. Pockets of prime farmland can be found in the central and southern portions of the City along several of the creeks that bisect the City. The agricultural activities currently practiced on this farmland include cattle grazing, cattle and dairy production, flowers, and the growing of small amounts of food crops including apples, strawberries, corn, and string beans. Among these activities, grass-fed cattle grazing and organic dairies are becoming increasingly popular (City of Fortuna 2009).

## Timberland

There are 1.9 million acres of timberland (forested land) in Humboldt County, accounting for more than 80% of the County's total land area. Approximately 36% of this forested land is under public ownership. The balance is in private ownership, including a large proportion under timber company ownership. Timber production was one of the County's main industries, but reduced harvesting and the closure of lumber mills has resulted in a significantly diminished industry (Humboldt County 2002; City of Fortuna 2009).

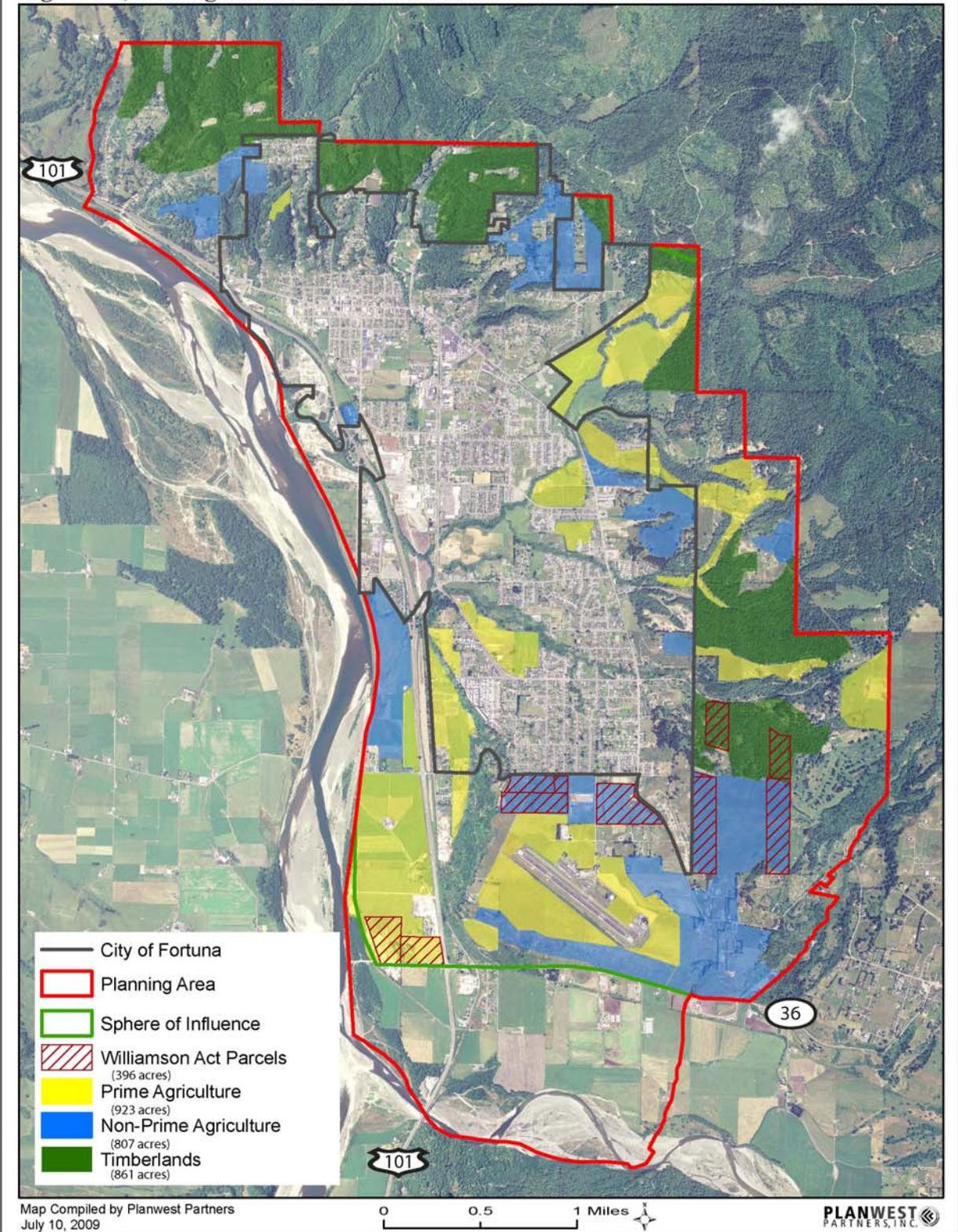
Figure 5-4 shows timberland in green. Approximately 861 (12.1%) of the Planning Area's 7,110 acres is timberland and is concentrated in the northern and eastern portions of the City's SOI, primarily in hillsides and elevated plateau areas, and in some places is contiguous was larger forested areas to the north and east.

No industrial timberland (e.g., timberland under active commercial harvesting) occurs in the Planning Area (Humboldt County 2002). However, an application to harvest timber under a proposed Timber Harvest Plan was recently submitted to Cal Fire by a private property owner for the portion of the Planning Area north of Rohner Park and east of Rohner Creek (Avis 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> The 8,051-acre Planning Area includes three components: (1) the incorporated City of Fortuna (3,114.0 acres); (2) the City's sphere of influence or SOI (3,996.1 acres); and (3) a proposed Planning Area Expansion (940.9 acres) generally located between SR 36 and the Van Duzen River. The Planning Area expansion is an area located outside the incorporated City and its SOI but within the area deemed by the City to bare relation to its planning. The County would continue to exercise land use authority within this area, and no physical changes would occur in this area, under the proposed plan. Therefore, farmland is not addressed in this area in this analysis.

**Fortuna General Plan 2030**  
**Figure 5-4, Existing Farmland and Timberland**



## Agricultural Zoning

As indicated in Figure 5-4, the Planning Area is currently split between two local land use jurisdictions; City of Fortuna zoning applies within the incorporated portions of the Planning Area and Humboldt County zoning applies within the unincorporated portions. Farmland and timberland in the City is zoned Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Residential Estate (RE), Residential Single Family (R-1), and Public Facility (PF) (City of Fortuna 1995). Farmland and timberland in the unincorporated portions of the Planning Area is zoned Timberland Production (TPZ), Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Agriculture General (AG), Airport (AV), and Heavy Industrial (MH) (Humboldt County 2009). The City's AE district, and the County's TPZ, AE and AG districts represent agricultural zoning.

## Williamson Act Contracts

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, better known as the Williamson Act, allows for the preservation of agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive use contracts. This program requires the County to assess Williamson Act property on the basis of its agricultural production rather than at the current market value. The minimum term for a Williamson Act contract is ten years; automatically renewed annually unless advance notice of non-renewal (by either party) or the property owner applies for early withdrawal from the contract.

Within the City and SOI there are 396 acres of land under Williamson Act contracts. Williamson Act lands (Figure 5-4) are located in the southern portion of the SOI between Drake Hill Road and Rohnerville Airport, east of the incorporated boundary of the City between Mill Creek and SR 36, and on the north side of Fowler Lane west of U.S. 101.

## Applicable Plans, Policies, Codes and Regulations

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### State

**Forest Practice Rules.** Adopted in 1973, the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practices Act (FPA) regulates the conduct of timber operations. In passing the FPA, the legislature expressly preempted the ability of local jurisdictions to regulate the conduct of timber harvesting operations and gave this authority to the State Board of Forestry and CAL FIRE, who were to adopt and implement Forest Practice Rules (FPR). It was the legislature's intent that timber operations conducted in a manner consistent with the Forest Practice Rules not be restricted by local governments' regulations.

The FPR addresses fire prevention, soil erosion, water quality, watershed and flood control, stocking, protection of young growth, soil productivity, control of insects, pests and disease, protection of natural and scenic qualities, stand density, reforestation methods, soil movement, debris disposal, wind throw, noise, treatment of slash and debris and hours of operation. The FPR include procedures and requirements that must be met before timberlands can be converted to non-timber uses. The requirements for conversions differ depending on whether or

not the conversion exceeds three acres and whether or not is the acreage is in a Timberland Production Zone (TPZ - see below). Single conversions involving less than three acres are exempt. To convert timberland within the TPZ, applicants must obtain a Timberland Conversion Permit from CDF.

**Timberland Production Zones (TPZ).** Adopted in 1976, the Forest Taxation Reform Act requires counties to provide for the zoning of parcels used for the growing and harvesting of timber as Timberland Production Zones (TPZ). A TPZ restricts the use of the land to the growing and harvesting of timber and compatible uses in return for tax assessment benefits. In response Act, Humboldt County zoned many parcels in the County as TPZ in the late 1970's.

**Timberland Productivity Act (TPA).** Adopted in 1982, the California Timberland Productivity Act (TPA) was intended to protect properly conducted timber operations from being prohibited or restricted due to conflict with surrounding land uses. The Act prohibits timber operations conducted in compliance with THPs or Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans (NTMPs) to be restricted in response to complaints from adjacent land uses.

**Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP).** The Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program (FMMP) was implemented in 1982 by the California Resources Agency (CRA) to monitor the conversion of the California's agricultural lands. The program uses information from soil surveys and the Soil Capability Grouping Rating System to generate Important Farmland Series Maps which designate Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance (collectively, "Farmland"). "Farmland" contains soils with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for intensive agricultural production. Humboldt County is not yet included in CRA's FMMP mapping (Humboldt County 2002; Rio Dell 2007). Therefore, this analysis utilizes Humboldt County's county-wide GIS mapping of "prime farmland" as a proxy for the FMMP mapping.

**California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act.** The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, better known as the Williamson Act, created a program for counties to protect viable agricultural land by offering tax incentives to property owners for keeping their land in agricultural production. This program allows property owners to have their property assessed on the basis of its agricultural production rather than its current market value. The minimum contract term is ten years, and the contract is automatically renewed annually unless either party gives advance notice of non-renewal or the property owner applies for and is granted early withdrawal by the county in which the property is located.

## Local

**Humboldt County Williamson Act Implementation.** The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adopted Williamson Act guidelines to implement the Williamson Act on June 24, 1969. In June of 2002, the Board adopted a comprehensive update to the guidelines to reflect major statewide changes to the Williamson Act. The County requires that land under Williamson Act contract be used for the production of agricultural commodities for commercial purposes and for uses compatible with agriculture. In any one year, a minimum of 50 percent of the contracted land must be under production. This allowance permits a portion of the lands to remain fallow or

in crop rotation, or to address market or other conditions (e.g., drought). Additionally, the guidelines permit the Board to suspend the production standard for good cause, including retirement, sudden death or illness of the owner/operator.

## Methodology

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### Policy Background

The following policy background is used to assess the agricultural and timber resource impacts of the proposed plan:

- The proposed Land Use Diagram (Figure 2-7 in Chapter 2 of this PEIR) designates land within the Planning Area for a range of urban, open space, park and agricultural uses. It presumes development will consistent with the proposed land use designations.
- The incorporated City/SOI portion of the Planning Area contains 923 acres of prime farmland, 861 acres of timberland, and 396 acres under Williamson Act contract (inclusive of both some prime farmland and some timberland acreage). The prime farmland and timberland acreages, which are mutually exclusive, collectively represent 22.2% of the Planning Area's 8,051 acres. Where designated by the proposed Land Use Diagram as Agriculture, Open Space, or Parks, Greenways and Recreation, it is assumed that this existing farmland and timberland will remain, and that existing Williamson Act contracts will remain in force and renewed annually. Where urban designations are proposed, it is assumed that existing farmland and timberland will be converted to urban uses.
- It is assumed that conflicts will occur with existing agricultural zoning and Williamson Act contracts where residential uses are developed adjacent to existing agricultural uses (e.g., existing agricultural uses could be considered a "nuisance" to the residential uses in the future, potentially leading to restricting or eliminating some of the agricultural uses).

### Thresholds of Significance

The proposed plan will have a significant agricultural and timber resources impact if it:

- Converts prime farmland, as mapped by Humboldt County's county-wide GIS mapping, to non-agricultural use;
- Converts timberland to non-timber use;
- Conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts; or
- Involves other changes in the existing environment that, due to location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

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## Implications of the Draft Land Use Diagram

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The proposed Land Use Diagram (Figure 2-7 in Chapter 2) designates lands within the Planning Area for a range of urban, open space, parks and agricultural uses. Where the Land Use Diagram designates existing farmland and timberland for urban use, the proposed plan will facilitate the eventual conversion of farmland and timberland to urban use.

Where residential uses are developed adjacent to existing agricultural uses, the existing agricultural uses could be considered a “nuisance” in the future based on odors, dust and noise that some residents could find distracting. This conflict has the potential to restrict or eliminate some agricultural uses

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## General Plan Policy Response

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The proposed General Plan includes the following policies and programs relevant to agriculture and timber resources.

**Policy NCR-3.1 “Right-to-Farm.”** The City shall encourage continuation (e.g., “right-to-farm ordinance”) of existing agricultural activities so long as these agricultural activities occur consistent with applicable federal, state and local regulations.

**Policy NCR-3.2 Retain Agricultural Lands.** The City shall support and encourage the retention of active cultivation operations until such time that these areas are needed for planned urban or suburban expansion or mitigation for flood projects.

**Policy NCR-3.3 Urban/Agricultural Conflicts.** The City shall ensure that new developments adjacent to agricultural areas are informed about nearby agricultural operations and the potential for noise, dust, aerial spraying, and odor.

**Policy NCR-3.4 Agricultural Buffers.** The City shall require proposed development to assess potential impacts from adjacent agricultural uses and recommend buffers and other design features to mitigate the impacts, including air quality impacts.

**Policy NCR-3.5 County Agricultural Policies.** The City shall support policies adopted by Humboldt County to promote the viability of agriculture.

**Policy NCR-3.6 Regional Cooperation.** The City shall cooperate with local agricultural organizations and regional and State agencies that provide funds for agricultural conservation/mitigation to promote the viability of local agriculture.

**Policy NCR-3.7 Retain Timber Lands.** The City shall encourage timber land retention.

**Program NCR-17.** The City shall develop, adopt, and apply standards when considering the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses based on a land evaluation and site assessment system.

**Program NCR-18.** The City shall adopt applicable Humboldt County farmland preservation standards.

**Program NCR-19.** The City shall support the agricultural land conservation and encourage the minimization of conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural uses through all of the following:

- By establishing stable boundaries separating urban and rural areas, when necessary, and buffer areas to minimize land use conflicts;
- By promoting in-filling to achieve a more logical urban/agricultural boundary;
- By developing available lands not suited for agriculture, or those located within Urban Study Areas, prior to the conversion of agricultural lands outside of those areas.
- By assuring that public service facility expansions and non-agricultural development do not inhibit agricultural viability, either through increased assessment costs or degraded air or water quality.
- By broadening the utility of agricultural preserves and the Williamson Act Program;
- By not allowing residential subdivision of lands planned Agriculture; and
- By allowing lot-line adjustments for agriculturally designated lands only where planned densities are met and there is no resulting increase in the number of building sites.

**Program NCR-20.** The City shall not permit new urban development on parcels with Williamson Act contracts unless directly related to the existing agricultural activities/operations (e.g., barns, agricultural processing facilities, wells, water reservoirs, etc.).

**Program NCR-21.** The City shall require clustering where development is proposed on Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance pursuant to the California Resources Agency's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, to retain the amount of farmland.

## Impacts and Mitigation

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### Impact 5.3-1: Convert Prime Farmland to Non-agricultural Use

*Proposed General Plan implementation will convert prime farmland to non-agricultural use.*

#### Discussion

The Planning Area contains 923 acres of prime farmland (Figure 5-4). Under the proposed Land Use Diagram (Figure 2-7 in Chapter 3), an estimated 289 acres of this prime farmland is designated for urban use, including: (1) the area in the northwest portion of the Planning Area, east of Quail Hollow Road, which would be designated Residential Rural (RR); (2) the area on both sides of Strong Creek, east of Newburg Park, which would be designated Residential Low (RL); (3) the area south of Newburg Park, on either side of Rohnerville Road, which would be designated RR, RL and Residential Medium (RM); (4) the area along Mill Creek east of the incorporated City limits which would be designated RL; (5) the area around Rohnerville Airport

which would be designated as Public (PUB) and Industrial (IND); (6) the area in the northwest corner of the incorporated City limits, along the north side of Ross Hill Road, which would be designated RL; and (6) the area west of HWY 101 between Drake Hill Road and Fowler Lane.

Under the most conservative assumption, all 289 acres of prime farmland will be converted to non-agricultural use. However, not all land designated for urban uses would be developed (for example, the proposed Rural Residential (RR) designation limits development to one residence per gross acre, meaning that the majority of each parcel would remain in some form of open space). In addition, policies and programs are proposed to minimize farmland conversion:

- Policy NCR-3.1 requires the City to encourage the continuation of existing agricultural activities through the adoption of a “right-to-farm” ordinance;
- Policy NCR-3.2 requires the City to support and encourage the retention of farmland until such time as this farmland is needed for urban expansion;
- Program NCR-17 requires the City to adopt standards for considering the conversion of agricultural lands based on a land evaluation and site assessment system;
- Program NCR-18 requires the City to adopt applicable Humboldt County farmland preservation standards;
- Program NCR-19 requires the City to promote in-fill development, encourage the development of non-agricultural land before agricultural land, and prohibits the residential subdivision of lands designated as Agriculture; and
- Program NCR-21 requires clustering where development is proposed on prime farmland to maximize the amount of farmland retained.

With restrictions on development under each proposed land use designation, and with implementation of the proposed policies and programs listed above, the amount of prime farmland converted to non-agricultural use will be lower than the 289 acre estimate, although the precise amount cannot be quantified because of the programmatic nature of the proposed plan. In addition, some of the existing farmland parcels in the incorporated City and its SOI are under existing Williamson Act contracts. Even if Williamson Act land is designated for urban use under the proposed Land Use Diagram, property owners will be encouraged to retain their farmland in existing agricultural use through the tax benefits offered by the contracts. Finally, simply designating farmland for urban use will not necessarily mean that conversion will occur – property owners retain the right to continue existing agricultural activities on their land under the proposed “right-to-farm” ordinance. Still, some proportion of the existing 289 acres of prime farmland designated for urban use will be converted to non-agricultural use under the proposed plan. Therefore, a significant impact will occur.

## **Determination of Level of Significance**

### **Significant Unavoidable Impact**

Several comments on the previous version of the proposed plan indicated that agricultural easements should be sought by the City to mitigate for the loss of prime farmland. However, it is inappropriate and impractical to require agricultural easements as mitigation is.

- It is economically infeasible for a small rural city such as Fortuna to acquire large agricultural easements, especially during the present economically-depressed environment.
- The prime farmland in question is located in the incorporated City of Fortuna or its SOI, and within a County community planning area. This indicates that both the City and County deem these areas as appropriate for eventual urban development.
- Agricultural easements do not represent mitigation for the loss of prime farmland because they do not result in new (replacement) prime farmland.

### **Mitigation**

No mitigation available

### **Impact 5.3-2: Convert Timberland to Non-timber Use**

*Proposed General Plan implementation will convert timberland to non-timber use.*

### **Discussion**

The incorporated City/SOI portion of the Planning Area contains 861 acres of timberland (Figure 5-4). The proposed Land Use Diagram (Figure 2-7 in Chapter 2) designates the majority of this timberland as Open Space (OS) or Parks, Greenways & Recreation (PRK). The OS designation provides for timberland management, habitat protection, irrigation canals, reservoirs, watershed management, public/quasi-public uses (0.10 FAR), and areas with public health and safety hazards such as steep slopes. The PRK designation permits indoor and outdoor recreational uses, golf course, equestrian uses, trails, and public/quasi-public uses (0.10 FAR). Both designations would preserve the majority of timberland as an open space and timber resource, and thus the impact of these designations would be less than significant.

While the majority of existing timberland within the incorporated City/SOI portion of the Planning Area will be preserved under the proposed OS and PRK designations, the proposed Land Use Diagram will designate approximately 290 acres of existing timberland urban uses, including: (1) the area in the northwestern portion of the Planning Area, along the upper reaches of Palm Creek; (2) the area in the northern portion of the Planning Area, along both sides of Rohner Creek north of Rohner Park; and (3) the area the eastern portion of the Planning Area, between the northern and southern forks of Jameson Creek. In each case, existing timberland would be designated Residential Rural (RR), which permits single-family detached homes, secondary residential units, public and quasi-public use, and similar compatible uses at a maximum density of 1.0 unit per acre and a non-residential FAR of 0.10.

Using the most conservative assumption, this will lead to the eventual conversion of 290 acres of timberland to non-timberland use. However, not all of the land proposed for designation as Rural Residential (RR) will be developed (e.g., the RR designation limits development to one residence per gross acre, meaning that the majority of each RR-designated parcel would remain in some open space use). In addition, Policy NCR-3.7 requires the City to encourage timberland retention.

With restrictions on development under the RR land use designation, and with implementation of the proposed policy, the amount of timberland converted to non-timber use will be lower than the estimate of 290 acres, although the exact amount cannot be quantified because of the programmatic nature of the proposed plan. In addition, simply designating timberland for rural residential use does not necessarily mean that conversion will occur –property owners may choose to retain timberland rather than converting it. Still, some proportion of the existing 290 acres of timberland designated for urban use will be converted to non-timber use under the proposed plan. Therefore, a significant impact will occur.

### **Determination of Level of Significance**

Significant Unavoidable Impact, all outside the City limits but within the City’s SOI (even with implementation of the recommended mitigation measures that will reduce but not prevent timberland conversion)

### **Mitigation**

*Mitigation Measure 5.3-2a:* Make Policies NCR-3.1 through -3.5, and Programs NCR-17, -19, and -21 also applicable to timberland.

### **Impact 5.3-3: Conflict with Existing Agricultural Zoning or Williamson Act Contracts**

*Proposed General Plan implementation could conflict with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts.*

### **Discussion**

The proposed Land Use Diagram (Figure 2-7 in Chapter 2), designates the majority of agricultural and timber areas within the incorporated City and its SOI for such the same or compatible uses (e.g., open space, parks and recreation). This includes:

- 1) Clendenen’s Apply Orchard, that is currently zoned AE is designated Agriculture (AG);
- 2) Farmland in the eastern portion of the Planning Area, between Mill Creek and Rohnerville Road, that is currently zoned AG and AE and is designated AG or Open Space (OS);
- 3) Farmland between Rohnerville Road and SR 36, the majority of which is currently zoned AE and is designated AG;

- 4) Farmland along the east side of HWY 101 north of Drake Hill Road, that is currently AE and designated AG;
- 5) Farmland west of HWY 101 and south of the HWY 101/Kenmar Rd. interchange, that is currently zoned AE and is designated AG; and
- 6) Most of the timberland in the northern and eastern portions of the Planning Area that is currently zoned AE or TPZ is designated Open Space (OS) or Parks, Greenways and Recreation (PRK).

In each of these instances, the proposed plan will not conflict with existing agricultural zoning, producing a less than significant impact.

Although the majority of existing agricultural and timber land within the incorporated City/SOI portion of the Planning Area is designated for that use, development under the proposed Land Use Diagram, approximately 235 acres of agricultural and timber land is designated for urban uses:

- 1) Timberland in the northwest portion of the Planning Area, immediately northwest of the Palmer Creek neighborhood, that is currently zoned AE is designated Rural Residential (RR);
- 2) Timberland in the northern portion of the Planning Area north of Rohner Park and the northern incorporated boundary of the City, that is currently zoned AG and TPZ is designated RR;
- 3) Farmland in the northeastern portion of the Planning Area, along the upper reaches of Strongs Creek, that is currently zoned AG is designated Residential Low (RL);
- 4) Farmland in the eastern portion of the Planning Area, along the upper reaches of Jameson Creek, that is currently zoned AG is designated RR;
- 5) Farmland in the southeastern portion of the Planning Area, along the north side of Rohnerville Road in the area of Toyoko Lane and Fox Hill Lane, that is currently zoned AG is designated RR;
- 6) Farmland between Rohnerville Airport and Rohnerville Road, that is currently zoned AE is designated Industrial; and
- 7) The area along HWY 101, east of the airport that is currently zoned AE is designated Industrial.

In each of these instances, the proposed plan will conflict with existing agricultural or timber zoning. Therefore, a significant impact will occur.

No land within the incorporated City limits is under Williamson Act contract. However, 396 acres of farmland and timberland under Williamson Act contract are in the SOI portion of the Planning Area (Figure 5-4). The proposed plan does not designate any of this land for urban use (i.e., all Williamson Act parcels are designated AG or another agriculture-friendly use = Open Space (OS) or Parks, Greenways & Recreation (PRK)). Therefore, development under the proposed plan will not conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts, and as a result, no impact will occur.

## Determination of Level of Significance

Significant Unavoidable Impact, all outside the incorporated City limits but within the SOI (agricultural zoning)

No Impact (Williamson Act contracts)

## Mitigation

No mitigation available (agricultural zoning)

No mitigation required (Williamson Act contracts).

## Impact 5.3-4: Involves Other Changes That Could Result in Conversion of Farmland to Non-agricultural Use

*Proposed General Plan implementation could precipitate other changes in the existing environment (e.g., land use conflicts) that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.*

## Discussion

Agricultural operations can be incompatible with non-agricultural (e.g., residential) uses. Because some crops have a very short growing or harvesting season, cultivation activities may take place around the clock, and suburban residents may object to the hours of operation, emissions, smells, and sounds associated with agricultural production. The proposed plan designates land for residential development adjacent to existing agricultural activities. This could lead to land use conflicts, complaints of existing agricultural activities as a “nuisance”, restrictions on those agricultural activities, and eventual conversion of existing farmland to non-agricultural use. However, the proposed plan contains the following policies designed to reduce this:

- Policy NCR-3.1 requires the City to adopt a “right-to-farm” ordinance encouraging existing agricultural activities to continue as long as they occur consistent with applicable federal, state and local regulations;
- Policy NCR-3.3 requires developers of land adjacent to existing agricultural areas to inform buyers about nearby agricultural operations and the potential for associated noise, dust, aerial spraying, and odors; and
- Policy NCR-3.4 requires prospective developers to assess potential impacts from adjacent agricultural uses and recommend buffers and other design features to avoid land use conflicts.

By implementing these policies, projected development under the proposed General Plan will not precipitate other changes in the existing environment (e.g., land use conflicts) that, due to their

location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. Any impacts will be less-than-significant.

### **Determination of Level of Significance**

Less-Than-Significant

### **Mitigation**

No mitigation necessary

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