

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### 5.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section of the draft program environmental impact report (PEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed San Bernardino Countywide Plan (proposed Project or Countywide Plan) to impact agriculture and forestry resources in unincorporated San Bernardino County.

#### 5.2.1 Environmental Setting

##### 5.2.1.1 REGULATORY SETTING

###### Farmland Protection and Policy Act

The Farmland Protection and Policy Act (FPPA) (7 USC §§ 4201 et. seq.), was enacted in 1981 to minimize the loss of prime farmland and unique farmlands because of federal actions by converting these lands to nonagricultural uses. It ensures that federal programs are compatible with state and local governments, and private programs and policies to protect farmland (HRSA 2011).

###### Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65570, the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program compiles important farmland maps for the state. These maps combine soil survey and current land use information from the United States Department of Agriculture and Natural Resource Conservation Service to provide an inventory of agricultural resources in each county. The maps show urbanized lands and a qualitative sequence of agricultural designations. County, state, and federal agencies have established several classifications of important agricultural land based on factors such as soil characteristics, climate, and water supply.

**Prime Farmland.** This land has the best combination of physical and chemical features and is able to sustain long-term agricultural production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as steeper slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Unique Farmland.** Lesser-quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include unirrigated orchards or vineyards. Land must have been cultivated at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local economy, as defined by each county's local advisory committee and adopted by its board of supervisors. This refers to all farmable lands in the county that do not meet the definitions of Prime, Statewide, or Unique. This includes land that is or has been used for irrigated pasture, dryland farming, confined livestock and dairy, poultry facilities, aquaculture, and grazing land.

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Note that CEQA analysis focuses on impacts to three categories of mapped farmland—Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. In this section, the term *mapped important farmland* refers to these three categories of farmland combined.

#### California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act, or Williamson Act, was adopted in 1965 (California Government Code §§ 51200 et. seq.). The Act was established to encourage the preservation of agricultural lands in view of the increasing trend toward their “premature and unnecessary” urbanization. The Act enables counties and cities to designate agricultural preserves (Williamson Act lands) and offer preferential taxation to agricultural landowners based on the land’s income-producing value. In return for the preferential tax rate, the landowner is required to sign a contract (Williamson contract) with the county or city agreeing not to develop the land for a minimum of 10 years. The Williamson contract is renewed automatically on its anniversary date unless a notice of nonrenewal or petition for cancellation is filed.

#### 5.2.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

##### Existing Agricultural Uses

There were 60,279 acres of agricultural use, including ranching, in unincorporated areas of the county in 2014 (SBCTA 2014). About 61 percent of the acreage in agricultural use was in the North Desert Region, and approximately 33 percent was in the Valley Region. About 64 percent of the total land in agricultural use was in unincorporated areas.

**Table 5.2-1 Existing Agricultural Uses Including Ranching, San Bernardino County, 2014**

Region	Acres		Total
	Unincorporated Areas	Incorporated Areas	
Valley	2,639	17,387	20,026
Mountain	827	0	827
North Desert	33,054	3,944	36,998
East Desert	2,208	219	2,427
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,728</b>	<b>21,551</b>	<b>60,279</b>

Source: SBCTA 2014.

##### *Agricultural Production*

The total value of agricultural production in San Bernardino County in 2016 was \$456.4 million. The top five crops by dollar value in 2016 were milk, cattle and calves (meat), replacement heifers (young cows), eggs, and alfalfa (DAWM 2016).

The County Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures reports agricultural production data for six areas in the County. The six areas are described and agricultural production in 2016 in dollar value by area is listed in Table 5.2-2. Four of the areas are in the Valley and Mountain regions, and the other two areas are in the Desert regions. About 77 percent of the production (\$358 million) was from the West End South area, that is, the

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cities of Chino, Chino Hills, and part of the City of Ontario. Approximately 11 percent of production was from the two desert areas (DAWM 2016). In the four areas in the Valley and Mountain regions, about 76 percent of production consisted of livestock and poultry. In the North Desert area, most production was field crops, livestock and poultry; in the South Desert area, about half of production consisted of nursery crops (DAWM 2017).

California State Board of Equalization timber harvest data show no timber was harvested in San Bernardino County between 2006 and 2017; in 2005 timber harvest in the County was 604,000 board feet, that is, about 0.04 percent of the statewide harvest (CBOE 2018; CBOE 2017).

**Table 5.2-2 Agricultural Production by Area, 2016**

Area	Agricultural Production, 2016 \$ (millions)
<b>Valley and Mountain Regions</b>	
Central (Fontana, Rialto, Bloomington, Colton, Grand Terrace, Devore, Cajon Valley and parts of Rancho Cucamonga and Ontario between Interstate 215 and Interstate 15)	10
East End (San Bernardino, Highland, Loma Linda, Redlands, Mentone, Yucaipa and all other Valley areas east of Interstate 215, including all the San Bernardino Mountains east of Interstate 15)	29
West End North (Upland, Montclair and most of Rancho Cucamonga and Ontario, incl. all areas north of Mission Blvd., and west of Interstate 15)	8
West End South (Chino, Chino Hills and part of Ontario, including all areas south of Mission Blvd., and west of Interstate 15)	358
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>403</b>
<b>Desert Regions</b>	
North Desert (Barstow, Newberry Springs, Cadiz, Sandy Valley, Needles and all areas east along Highway 40 and SR-66.)	32
South Desert (Victorville, Apple Valley, Hesperia, Wrightwood, Phelan, Adelanto, Oro Grande, Helendale, Lucerne Valley, Yucca Valley, Morongo Valley, 29 Palms and surrounding areas)	21
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>456</b>

Source: DAWM 2017.

### Mapped Important Farmland

There were about 19,821 acres of mapped important farmland in the County in 2016. Approximately half that total (9,649 acres) was in the Valley Region, and nearly all the rest was in the North Desert Region. About 57 percent of the total was prime farmland, and most of the remainder was farmland of statewide importance. Approximately 61 percent of total important farmland was in unincorporated areas (see Table 5.2-3, *Mapped Important Farmland in San Bernardino County*).

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**Table 5.2-3 Mapped Important Farmland in San Bernardino County**

	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Total
<b>Valley Region</b>				
<b>Unincorporated Areas</b>				
Bloomington CPA	11	24	0	35
Mentone CPA	1,194	94	441	1,729
Other Unincorporated Areas	369	55	121	545
<b>Subtotal, Unincorporated areas</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>2,308</b>
<b>Incorporated Cities and Towns</b>				
Incorporated Cities and towns	5,514	482	1,344	7,340
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,088</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>1,907</b>	<b>9,649</b>
<b>Mountain Region</b>				
<b>Unincorporated Areas</b>				
Oak Glen CPA	137	25	4	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>North Desert Region</b>				
<b>Unincorporated Areas</b>				
Daggett CPA	267	1,093	48	1,409
El Mirage CPA	0	616	0	616
Helendale CPA	49	70	0	119
Lucerne Valley CPA	160	1,166	86	1,413
Newberry Springs CPA	1,286	1,530	537	3,353
Oro Grande CPA	79	14	0	92
Phelan/Pinon Hills CPA	6	34	0	40
Yermo CPA	0	188	0	188
Other Unincorporated Areas	2,006	251	152	2,474
<b>Subtotal Unincorporated areas</b>	<b>3,854</b>	<b>4,962</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>9,705</b>
<b>Incorporated Cities and Towns</b>				
Incorporated Cities and Towns	236	64	2	302
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,129</b>	<b>5,699</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>10,007</b>
<b>East Desert Region</b>				
none				
<b>Countywide Totals</b>				
<b>Unincorporated Areas</b>	<b>5,565</b>	<b>5,159</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>12,179</b>
<b>Incorporated Cities and Towns</b>	<b>5,750</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>7,642</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,315</b>	<b>5,705</b>	<b>2,585</b>	<b>19,821</b>

Source: FMMP 2017.

#### Valley Region

Mapped important farmland in the Valley Region is concentrated in two areas: 1, the east Valley region in the cities of Yucaipa and Redlands, and the unincorporated Community of Mentone; and, 2, the southwest Valley region, mainly in the southern part of the City of Ontario and the southeast part of the City of Chino (see

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Figure 5.2-1, *Agricultural Resources, Valley Region*). There are a total of 2,308 acres of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland in the Valley Region (see Table 5.2-3).

### *Mountain Region*

The only mapped important farmland in the Mountain Region is in the Oak Glen CPA. The Division of Land Resource Protection does not map important farmland on National Forest land, which represents nearly the entire Mountain region.

### *North Desert and East Desert Regions*

Most of the important farmland in the North Desert Region is in the Mojave River Valley near Barstow, Daggett, and Newberry Springs (see Figure 5.2-2, *Agricultural Resources, North Desert Region, Victor Valley*). There is no mapped important farmland in the East Desert Region (DLRP 2017).

### **Forests**

The information on forests here focuses on conifer forests, that is, forests that are or could be cultivated for timber and other forest resources. Over 99 percent of the timber harvest in California in 2006 was of conifers (USDA 2012). Countywide, 37,473 acres of forest and woodland vegetation are under County jurisdiction. Approximately 64 percent of that total (24,028 acres) is in the Mountain Region, and 36 percent (13,444 acres) is in the desert regions. None is in the Valley Region. Most of the conifer forests in the desert regions are in the eastern part of the San Bernardino Mountains in the East Desert Region. Of the total 270,704 acres of forest and woodland vegetation in the County, some 86 percent of it is outside of County jurisdiction (see Table 5.2-4 below).

**Table 5.2-4 Forest Land in San Bernardino County**

Vegetation Community	Acres in County Boundary	Acres in County Jurisdiction
<b>Valley Region</b>		
Coastal Montane Douglas-Fir Forests and Woodlands	10	0
Pine Forests and Woodland	15	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b> (0.01 percent of Valley Region) (0.01 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in County)	<b>0</b>
<b>Mountain Region</b>		
Coastal Montane Douglas-Fir Forests and Woodlands	13,229	1,333
Forest and Woodland Dominated by Fir	52,868	3,588
Pine Forests and Woodland	152,253	19,108

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**Table 5.2-4 Forest Land in San Bernardino County**

Vegetation Community	Acres in County Boundary	Acres in County Jurisdiction
<b>Total</b>	218,349 (39 percent of Mountain Region) (81 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in County)	24,028 (11 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in Mountain Region) (64 percent of total forest and woodland vegetation in County jurisdiction countywide)
<b>Desert Regions</b>		
Pine Forests and Woodland	52,330 (0.67 percent of Desert Regions) (23 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in County)	13,444 (28 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in Desert Regions) (36 percent of total forest and woodland vegetation in County jurisdiction countywide)
<b>Countywide Total</b>		
Not applicable	270,704 (2.1 percent of County)	37,473 (14 percent of forest and woodland vegetation in County)

Source: Dudek 2016.

### Williamson Act Contracts

There were 4,993 acres of Williamson Act lands in San Bernardino County in 2016, as shown below in Table 5.2-5 and mapped on Figure 5.2-1, *Agricultural Resources, Valley Region* and 5.2-2, *Agricultural Resources, North Desert Region, Victor Valley*. Approximately 70 percent of the total, or 3,516 acres, were in the North Desert Region. About 75 percent of the total was renewal status and the remainder non-renewal. Nearly 98 percent of the total acreage was in unincorporated areas.

**Table 5.2-5 Williamson Act Lands in San Bernardino County**

	Non-Renewal	Renewal	Total
<b>Valley Region</b>			
<b>Unincorporated Areas</b>			
Mentone CPA	0	314	314
Other Unincorporated Areas	0	540	540
<b>Subtotal, Unincorporated Areas</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>854</b>
<b>Incorporated Cities and Towns</b>			
City of Yucaipa	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>854</b>
<b>Mountain Region</b>			
<b>Unincorporated</b>			
Oak Glen CPA	0	813	813
Other Unincorporated Areas	0	300	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,112</b>	<b>1,112</b>

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**Table 5.2-5 Williamson Act Lands in San Bernardino County**

	Non-Renewal	Renewal	Total
<b>North Desert Region</b>			
Unincorporated	0	2,331	2,331
<b>East Desert Region</b>			
none			
<b>Countywide Totals</b>			
Unincorporated Areas	0	4,297	4,297
Incorporated Cities and Towns	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,297</b>	<b>4,297</b>

Source: FMMP 2016

**Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use**

The County has the following zoning districts designated for agricultural use:

- **Agriculture (AG).** The AG zoning district provides sites for commercial agricultural operations, agriculture support services, rural residential uses and similar and compatible uses. Open space and recreation uses may occur on non-farmed lands within this district.
- **Floodway (FW).** The FW zoning district provides sites for animal keeping, grazing, crop production, and similar and compatible uses.

In addition, the following overlays allow agricultural use on areas not explicitly zoned for agriculture. Overlays provide standards that apply to proposed development in addition to the standards and regulations of the primary land use zoning district.

- **Additional Agriculture (AA) Overlay.** The AA Overlay is intended to create, preserve, and improve areas for small-scale and medium-scale agricultural uses utilizing productive agricultural lands for raising, some processing, and the sale of plant crops, animals, or their primary products. It is an overlay where agricultural uses exist compatibly with a variety of rural residential lifestyles.
- **Agricultural Preserve (AP) Overlay.** The AP Overlay identifies properties within an established agricultural preserve. The properties may be subject to a Land Conservation Contract executed between the landowner and the County Board of Supervisors. These agreements offer tax advantages to the landowner and include an enumerated list of the allowed uses for the commercial production of plant and animal products that have been found to be compatible with agriculture.

Because the preservation of agricultural land uses is essential to the economic well-being of the County, the AP Overlay is intended to protect vital agricultural uses by limiting allowed land uses to those that are compatible and supportive of agriculture and related uses and/or agricultural by-products.

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Areas with agricultural use zoning or overlays within unincorporated San Bernardino County are shown on Figures 5.2-3, *Agricultural Zoning and Overlays in Unincorporated Areas, Valley Region* and 5.2-4, *Agricultural Zoning and Overlays in Unincorporated Areas, North Desert Region, Victor Valley*, and detailed in Table 5.2-6.

**Table 5.2-6 Agricultural Zoning and Overlays in Unincorporated San Bernardino County**

Planning Region	AG Zoning District	FW Zoning District	AA Overlay	AP Overlay
Valley Region	915	3,593	2,007	1,882
Mountain Region	309	5,620	0	1,080
North Desert	35,054	14,536	0	3,347
East Desert	7,202	950	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,480</b>	<b>24,699</b>	<b>2,007</b>	<b>6,310</b>

Note that there is some overlap between the zoning districts and the overlays; thus, the zoning districts and the overlays are not totaled.

Over 97 percent of the AG-zoned land in the County is in the two desert regions, with over 80 percent of the total in the North Desert Region. For the two zoning districts permitting agriculture, about 85 percent is in the two desert regions, with approximately 73 percent of the total in the North Desert Region. All of the AA Overlay Zone is in the Valley Region, and about half of the AP Overlay Zone is in the North Desert Region and the other half is in the Valley and Mountain regions.

### Existing Conservation Easements

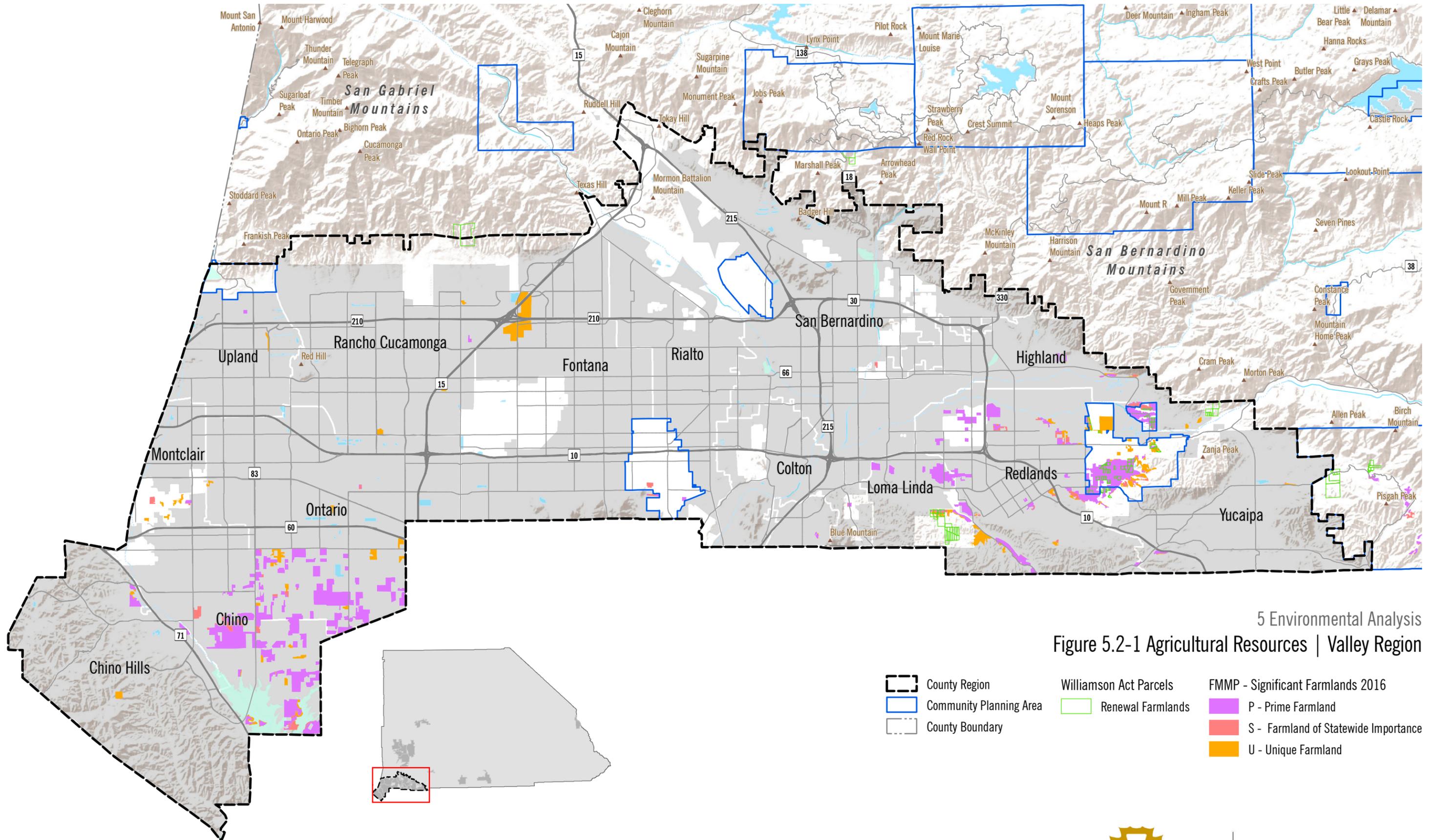
The National Conservation Easement Database, an initiative of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, lists 28 conservation easements in San Bernardino County totaling approximately 11,050 acres. Most of the easements are in the northwest quadrant of the North Desert Region (NCED 2018). Types of agencies and organizations that hold conservation easements on land include resource conservation districts (formerly called soil conservation districts) and land trusts.

#### *Resource Conservation Districts*

One resource conservation district (RCD) operates entirely within the desert regions of San Bernardino County; two other RCDs operate in the Valley Region and in parts of western Riverside County.

The **Mojave Desert RCD** spans nearly all of the North Desert Region; the entire East Desert Region; and parts of the Mountain Region. The Mojave Desert RCD provides mitigation/compensation and environmental credits for developers wanting to build in the high desert portions of San Bernardino County. Mitigation practices include the removal/retreatment of invasive species in the Mojave River as well as trash removal. To date, the district has 9 active contracts totaling 123 acres (MDRCD 2018).

The **Inland Empire RCD** spans most of the Valley Region and portions of the Mountain Region. Mitigation projects include constructed sediment basins in San Timoteo Creek in Redlands and the restoration of habitat in the Devil's Canyon/San Sevaine region of San Bernardino; Inland Empire RCD projects total 578 acres in area (IERCD 2018).



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 Figure 5.2-1 Agricultural Resources | Valley Region

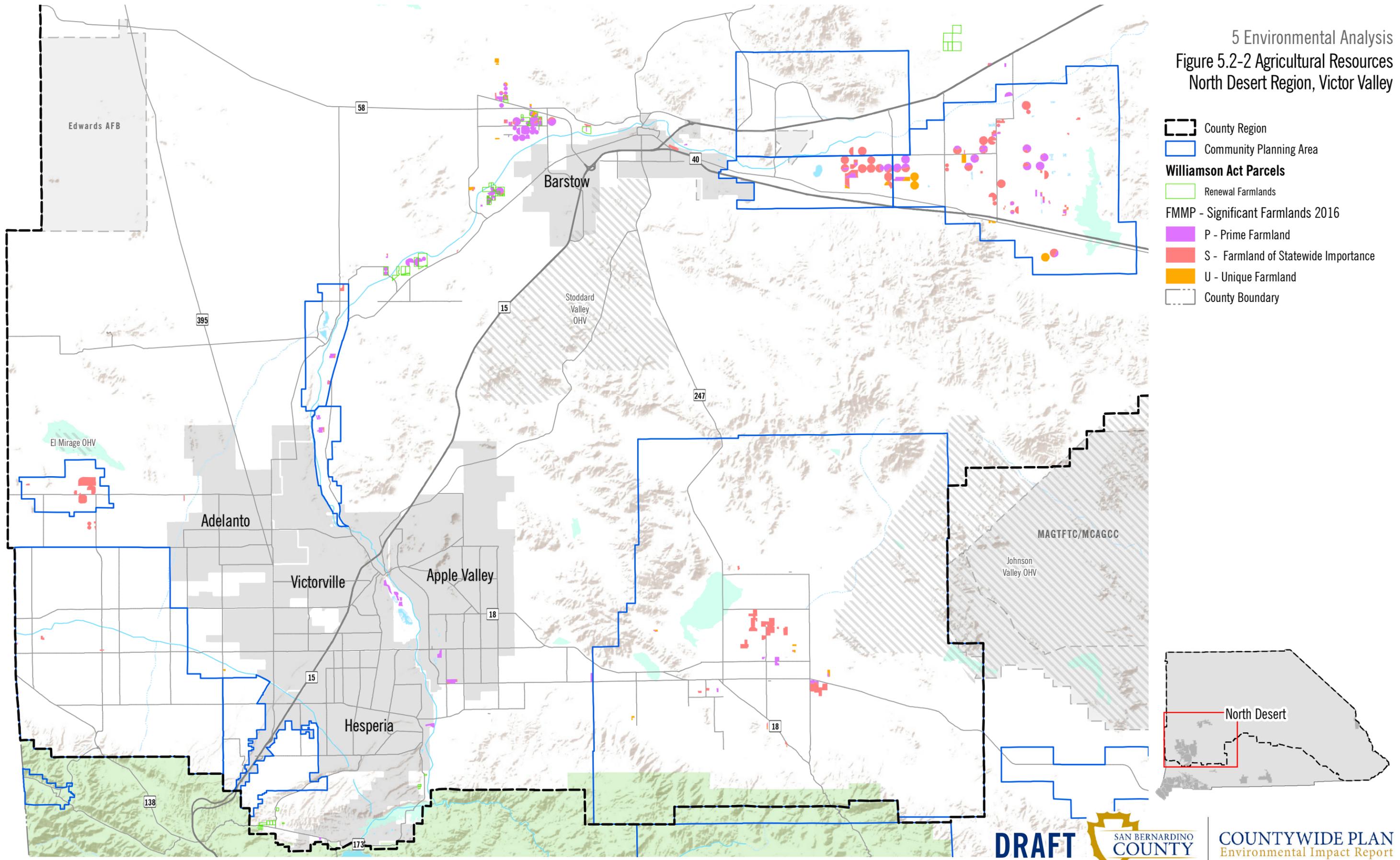
- County Region
- Community Planning Area
- County Boundary
- Williamson Act Parcels
- Renewal Farmlands
- FMMP - Significant Farmlands 2016
- P - Prime Farmland
- S - Farmland of Statewide Importance
- U - Unique Farmland

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 Figure 5.2-2 Agricultural Resources  
 North Desert Region, Victor Valley



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Date: 6/5/2019 Created by PlaceWorks | Source: FMMP 2016, San Bernardino County 2019

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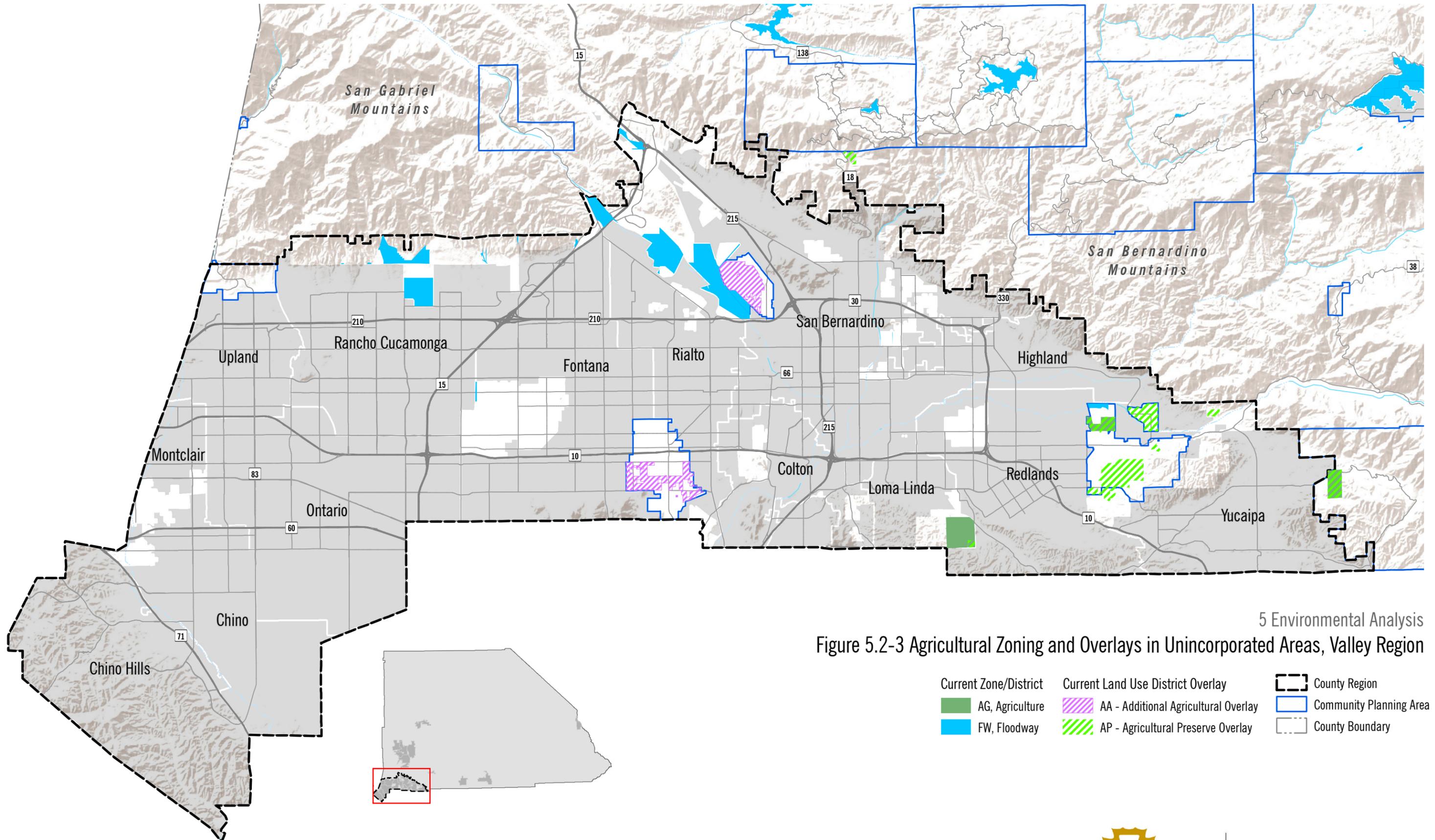


**COUNTYWIDE PLAN**  
 Environmental Impact Report

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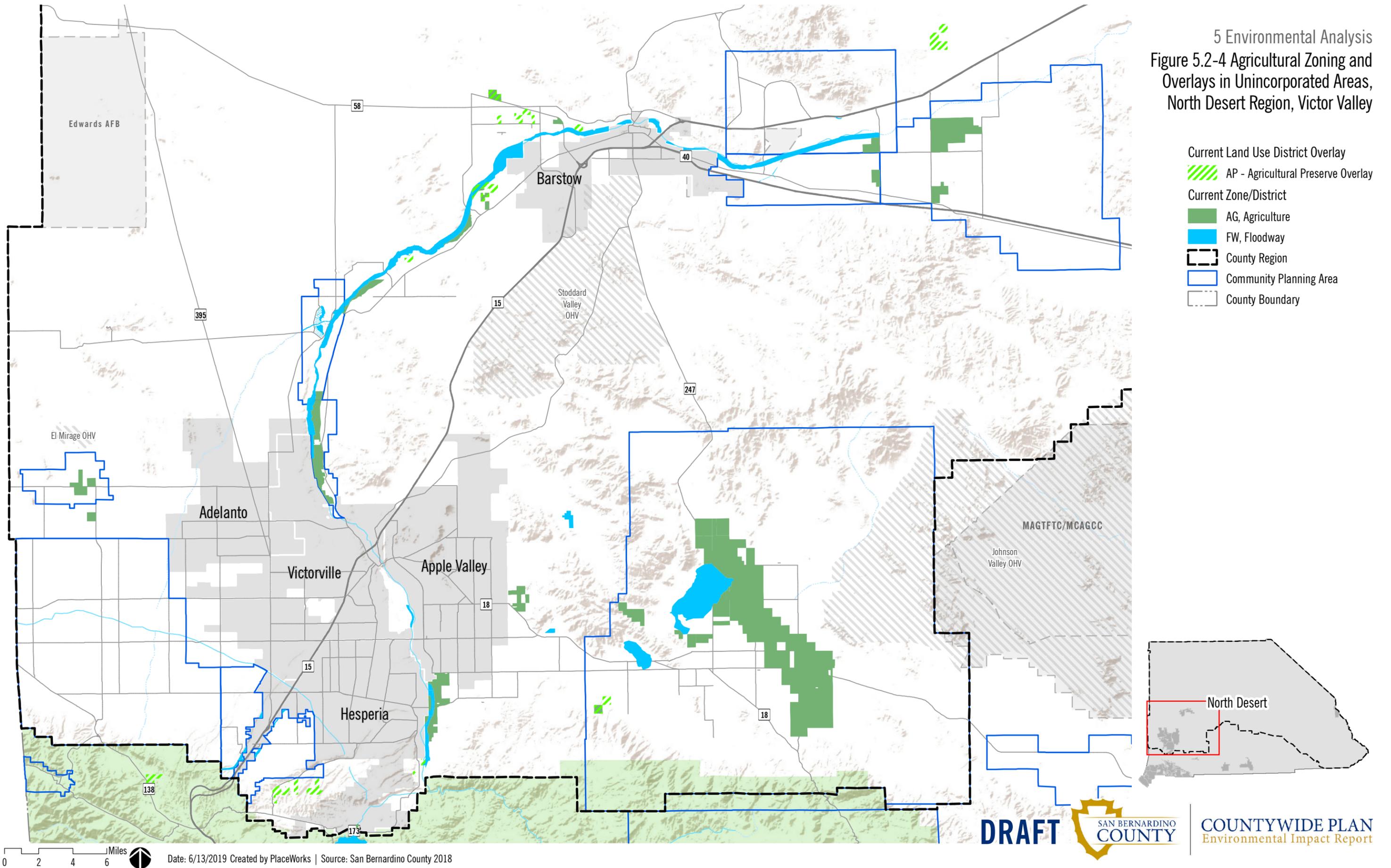
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 Figure 5.2-3 Agricultural Zoning and Overlays in Unincorporated Areas, Valley Region

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 Figure 5.2-4 Agricultural Zoning and  
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The **Riverside-Corona RCD** includes part of the Valley Region in and near the City of San Bernardino. Riverside-Corona RCD manages over 2,000 acres that the district either owns or holds conservation easements on (RCRCD 2018).

### *Land Trusts*

Several land trusts operate in San Bernardino County. Four land trusts whose work is focused in and/or near San Bernardino County are briefly described below; several other land trusts that are statewide or nationwide in scope also operate in San Bernardino County.

The **Mojave Desert Land Trust** focuses on parcels within national parks and preserves, wilderness areas, areas of critical environmental concern, and wildlife linkage corridors. The Mojave Desert Land Trust has acquired over 60,000 acres, of which it manages over 16,000 acres (MDLT 2018).

The **Transition Habitat Conservancy** focuses on land acquisitions and habitat stewardship in the West Mojave Desert in San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties; it has acquired over 7,000 acres of important habitat and helps manage and improve about 300,000 acres (THC 2018).

The **San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust** has acquired over 12,000 acres of open space land—formerly private inholdings—in the San Bernardino National Forest (SBMLT 2018).

The **Rivers and Lands Conservancy** (RLC) currently holds and manages 24 mitigation properties in four southern California counties totaling 1,350 acres (RLC 2018). RLC has acquired over 11,000 acres for preservation and currently manages over 2,400 acres, including land owned by RLC and land RLC holds conservation easements on. RLC is authorized by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to hold conservation easements or fee title lands for mitigation purposes in the coastal, inland, and desert regions of southern California (RLC 2018).

### 5.2.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- AG-1 Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency to non-agricultural use.
- AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- AG-3 Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)).
- AG-4 Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

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AG-5        Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

### 5.2.3 Regulatory Requirements and General Plan Policies

#### 5.2.3.1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

California Government Code Sections 51200 et. seq.: Williamson Act

#### 5.2.3.2 POLICY PLAN

The Countywide Plan Natural Resources Element sets forth the following goals and policies pertaining to agriculture:

**Goal NR-7**                    **Agriculture and Soils.** The ability of property owners, farmers, and ranchers to conduct sustainable and economically viable agricultural operations.

**Policy NR-7.1**                **Protection of agricultural land.** We protect economically viable and productive agricultural lands from the adverse effects of urban encroachment, particularly increased erosion and sedimentation, trespass, and non-agricultural land development.

**Policy NR-7.2**                **Preservation of important farmlands.** We require project applicants seeking to develop 20 or more acres of farmland (classified as prime, of statewide importance, or unique farmland) to non-agricultural uses to prepare an agricultural resource evaluation prior to project approval. The evaluation shall use generally accepted methodologies to identify the potentially significant impact of the loss of agricultural land as well as the economic viability and sustainability of future agricultural use of the property, including long-term sustainability and economic viability of water resources. If the conversion is deemed significant, the County shall require mitigation at a 1:1 ratio of converted to preserved acreage through conservation easements, payment of its valuation equivalent if a fee mitigation program is established, or inclusion in a regional agricultural preservation program.

**Policy NR-7.3**                **Conservation and preservation incentives.** We support programs and policies that provide tax and economic incentives to conserve existing productive agricultural lands or preserve farmland classified as prime, of statewide importance, unique, or of local importance. We support land owners in establishing new and maintaining existing California Land Conservation (Williamson Act) contracts.

**Policy NR-7.4**                **Economic diversity of farm operations.** We encourage farm operations to strengthen their economic viability through diversifying potential sources of farm income and activity, including value added products, agricultural tourism, roadside stands, organic farming, and farmers markets.

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**Policy NR-7.5**      **Agriculture on Rural Living and Open Space properties.** We permit small-scale, non-water-intensive, and incidental agricultural on properties designated for Rural Living. In the Oak Glen and Mentone community planning areas, we also permit commercial-scale agriculture on properties designated for Rural Living. In the Oak Glen and Mentone community planning areas and in the Crafton Hills, we also permit commercial-scale agriculture on privately owned properties designated for Open Space.

### 5.2.4 Environmental Impacts

The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after each impact statement.

Most population growth due to Countywide Plan buildout would be in two areas: the Bloomington CPA in the Valley Region, and future master planned communities in the Town of Apple Valley sphere of influence (SOI) in the North Desert Region. Employment growth would be focused in the unincorporated portions of the Valley Region, particularly in the Fontana SOI, East Valley Area Plan, and Bloomington CPA (see Chapter 3.0, *Project Description*, and Figures 3.5(a) and 3.5(b) depicting potential growth areas). Thus, impacts are analyzed in some detail for the four areas where most growth would occur, and much more generally for the rest of the unincorporated areas of the County.

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**Impact 5.2-1: Countywide Plan buildout would convert some California Resource Agency–designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland to nonagricultural land use. [Threshold AG-1]**

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Countywide Plan buildout would involve conversion of some mapped important farmland to non-agricultural uses.

#### Valley Region

##### *Potential Growth Areas*

There are 11 acres of Prime Farmland and 24 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance in the Bloomington CPA, for a total of 35 acres of mapped important farmland, which is all in the southern half of the CPA. There are about 204 acres of mapped important farmland—all of which is Prime Farmland—in the East Valley Area Plan area.<sup>1</sup> No mapped important farmland is present in the City of Fontana SOI (west). Thus, in two of the three areas where most new development in the Valley Region under the Countywide Plan would occur, there are a total of approximately 239 acres of mapped important farmland consisting of 215 acres of Prime Farmland and 24 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance. That is approximately 10 percent of the mapped important farmland in unincorporated areas of the Valley Region, and about 2.5 percent of the total mapped important farmland in the Valley Region.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been considerable development in the East Valley Area Plan area in approximately the last four years, and some of the land mapped as Prime Farmland by the Division of Land Resource Protection has been developed with industrial uses.

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Bloomington and the East Valley Area Plan area would be designated for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Potentially, a total of 239 acres of mapped important farmland could be converted to nonagricultural uses.

#### *Other Areas*

About 90 percent of the mapped important farmland in unincorporated areas of the Valley Region—2,070 acres—is outside of potential growth areas. Approximately 84 percent of that area (1,729 acres) is in the Mentone CPA. Most of the farmland in the Mentone CPA is in the proposed RL (Rural Living) and RLM (Resource/Land Management) land use categories. The RLM category permits agriculture. The RL category permits incidental agriculture; however, intensive commercial agriculture would generally not be permitted in the RL category. Pursuant to Policy NR-7.5, commercial-scale agriculture would only be permitted on limited properties, in the Oak Glen and Mentone community planning areas, and in the Crafton Hills area.

Proposed Countywide Plan Policy NR-7.2 requires applicants seeking to develop 20 or more acres of mapped important farmland (prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland) with nonagricultural uses to prepare an agricultural resource evaluation prior to project approval. If the conversion is deemed significant, the County requires mitigation at a 1:1 ratio of converted to preserved acreage (see Section 5.2.3.2, *General Plan Policies*, for the full text of Policy NR-7.2). Impacts on mapped important farmland in the Valley Region would be less than significant after implementation of Policy NR-7.2.

#### **Mountain Region**

All the 166 acres of mapped important farmland in the Mountain Region are in the Oak Glen CPA. Countywide Plan buildout would involve the development of 56 residential units and 2,451 square feet of nonresidential units in the CPA. Only about 26 acres, or 16 percent of the mapped important farmland in the Oak Glen CPA, are in areas where permitted land uses would change in the Countywide Plan compared to existing land uses. The 26 acres is less than 0.2 percent of mapped important farmland in the County; thus, this impact would be less than significant.

#### **North Desert Region**

No mapped important farmland is present in the Town of Apple Valley SOI in either the Proposed Annexation Area or the Hacienda Fairview Valley Specific Plan area. Thus, Countywide Plan buildout in those two areas would not impact mapped important farmland. The Countywide Plan proposes 1,440 residential units in the remainder of the North Desert Region—most of which would be developed in the Helendale, Phelan/Pinon Hills, and Oak Hills CPAs. The Helendale and Phelan/Pinon Hills CPAs combined contain a total of 159 acres of mapped important farmland (55 acres of Prime Farmland and 104 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance), about 1.6 percent of the mapped important farmland in the North Desert Region.

No mapped important farmland is present in the Oak Hills CPA. The mapped important farmland in the Helendale CPA is active farmland, fallow farmland, or vacant land, and the proposed land use designations on that land are Rural Living and Public Facility. The Rural Living designation permits incidental small-scale non-water intensive agriculture within RL designated areas in the Oak Glen and Mentone community plan areas.,

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and the Public Facility designation permits commercial agriculture and grazing. Thus, the existing farmland uses in the Helendale CPA would be permitted under the proposed Countywide Plan designations. The mapped important farmland in the Phelan/Pinon Hills CPA is active and fallow farmland. The proposed land use designation on mapped important farmland in the Phelan/Pinon Hills CPA is Rural Living, which permits incidental agriculture. Thus, the farmland uses in the Phelan/Pinon Hills CPA would be permitted under the proposed Countywide Plan designation.

Applicants seeking to convert 20 or more acres of mapped important farmland to nonagricultural uses would be required to prepare an agricultural resource evaluation prior to project approval. If the conversion is deemed a significant impact, the County requires mitigation at a 1:1 ratio of converted to preserved acreage. Impacts on mapped important farmland in the North Desert Region would be less than significant after implementation of Policy NR-7.2.

### East Desert Region

There is no mapped important farmland in the East Desert Region.

### Summary

**Level of Significance Before Mitigation:** With implementation of Countywide Plan policies, Impact 5.2-1 would be less than significant.

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**Impact 5.2-2: The Countywide Plan would rezone some areas zoned for agricultural use to zoning districts prohibiting intensive commercial agriculture; and would conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts. [Threshold AG-2]**

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### Williamson Act Contracts

#### *Valley Region*

There are 662 acres of Williamson Act lands in unincorporated areas of the Valley Region—in the Mentone CPA, northeast of the Mentone CPA in the City of Redlands SOI, and in the City of Loma Linda SOI. That is about 14 percent of total Williamson Act lands in unincorporated areas countywide. The proposed land use categories on Williamson Act lands in the Redlands SOI are RL (Rural Living) and LDR (Low Density Residential). Most of the Williamson Act lands in the Mentone CPA are in the proposed RL category, with the balance in the proposed RLM (Resource/Land Management) category; and the proposed category in the Loma Linda SOI is RLM.

The RLM land use category permits agriculture, and the RL category permits incidental agriculture. Proposed Policy NR-7.5, permits commercial-scale agriculture on RL lands in specific areas, including Oak Glen and Mentone community planning areas, and the Crafton Hills. The great majority of the Williamson Act lands in the Mentone CPA and City of Redlands SOI are mapped important farmland that are protected under proposed Countywide Plan policy NR-7.2. Policy NR-7.2 requires applicants seeking to develop 20 or more acres of mapped important farmland (prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland) with nonagricultural uses to prepare an agricultural resource evaluation prior to project approval. If the conversion

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is deemed significant, the County requires mitigation at a 1:1 ratio of converted to preserved acreage. Total projected growth in the Mentone CPA and Loma Linda SOI under the Countywide Plan is 263 housing units and about 278,000 square feet of nonresidential land uses; no growth is projected in the Redlands SOI.

There are no Williamson Act lands in any of the three areas where most development in the Valley Region under the Countywide Plan would occur (Bloomington CPA, City of Fontana SOI [west], and East Valley Area Plan area).

Proposed Countywide Plan Policy NR-7.3 supports tax and economic incentives for conservation of productive agricultural land and other mapped important farmland, including Williamson Act contracts (see Section 5.2.3.2 for the full text of Policy NR-7.3). Impacts in the Valley Region would be less than significant after implementation of proposed Countywide Plan policies NR-7.2 and NR-7.3.

#### *Mountain Region*

The Williamson Act lands in the Mountain Region are in the Oak Glen CPA and just south of the Crest Forest CPA. Little development is projected in the Oak Glen CPA (56 residential units and 2,451 square feet of nonresidential building area). All projected growth in the Mountain Region is in the eight CPAs in the region; thus, Countywide Plan buildout would not impact the Williamson Act lands south of the Crest Forest CPA.

#### *North Desert Region*

There are no Williamson Act lands in the part of the North Desert Region where most growth would occur: two portions of the Town of Apple Valley SOI—the Potential Annexation Area and the Hacienda Fairview Valley Specific Plan area. Williamson Act lands are in the City of Hesperia SOI, City of Apple Valley SOI, Lucerne Valley CPA, and east and west of Barstow. Much of the Williamson Act lands are in the RL land use category, and the remainder are in the RLM category. The RLM category permits agriculture, and the RL does not permit intensive commercial agriculture in the North Desert Region. However, growth in the North Desert Region outside of the Apple Valley SOI under the Countywide Plan would amount to 1,440 housing units and about 170,000 square feet of nonresidential land uses—that is, sparse growth in the 1.18 million acres of the North Desert region under County land use control. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### *East Desert Region*

There are no Williamson Act lands in the East Desert Region.

***Level of Significance Without Mitigation:*** With implementation of regulatory requirements and Countywide Plan policies, impacts to Williamson Act contracts would be less than significant.

#### **Zoning for Agricultural Use**

The Countywide Plan proposes minimal changes to existing zoning for agricultural use. An approximately 37-acre area in the Mentone CPA in the Valley Region would be changed from an existing AG (Agriculture) General Plan/Zoning district to a proposed IN (Institutional) zoning district, which does not permit crop production or animal keeping. The new zoning district will reflect what is on the ground and the conversion of orange

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groves to a 400-acre-foot reservoir by the by the California Department of Water Resources in 2012. The 37 acres is less than 1 percent of the total area with existing zoning permitting agricultural uses (AG and FW zoning districts) in the Valley Region, and less than 0.1 percent of the area with such existing zoning in the entire County (see Table 5.2-5 in Section 5.2.1.2).

Countywide Plan implementation would not change the two agricultural overlays; the overlays will be addressed by a future development code update. No impacts related to the overlays would occur.

***Level of Significance Without Mitigation:*** With implementation of and Countywide Plan policies, impacts to Williamson Act contracts and zoning for agricultural use would be less than significant.

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**Impact 5.2-3 Countywide Plan buildout would not convert substantial areas of forest land to nonforest uses. [Thresholds AG-3 and AG-4]**

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Countywide, 37,473 acres of forest and woodland vegetation are under County jurisdiction, about 14 percent of the approximately 270,704 acres of forests countywide. Forest vegetation is described by vegetation community and distribution by region further in Section 5.2.1.2, *Existing Conditions*.

The following analysis focuses on the Mountain and Desert regions, as there is no forest land within county jurisdiction in the Valley Region (see Table 5.2-4 above). Most of the forest land in the desert regions is in the East Desert Region in the eastern part of the San Bernardino Mountains.

### Mountain Region

Of the approximately 77,583 acres in the Mountain Region under County jurisdiction (that is, about 13 percent of the region), 33,989 acres—that is, about 44 percent of the area under County jurisdiction—would be designated Open Space (OS) or Resource/Land Management (RLM) compatible with forest cultivation and harvesting. The balance of land in County jurisdiction in the Region would be designated for development with residential, commercial, industrial, and public facilities uses incompatible with forestry. However, nearly half of the area that would be designated for development—18,913 acres—would be designated Rural Living (RL), where the maximum density would be one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres. Thus, it is expected that most of the forest land in that designation would be retained as the land was developed. Much of the land that would be designated for development is already developed. Little new development is proposed in the Mountain Region: 702 housing units and about 162,000 square feet of nonresidential uses. Countywide Plan development would not convert large areas of forest land to nonforest use, and impacts would be less than significant.

### Desert Regions

All of the proposed growth in the East Desert Region would be in three CPAs: Homestead Valley, Joshua Tree, and Morongo Valley. There is no forest vegetation in the Homestead Valley and Joshua Tree CPAs, and only minimal forest vegetation along the northwest boundary of the Morongo Valley CPA. That portion of the Morongo Valley CPA would be designated Open Space under the Countywide Plan, compatible with forest cultivation and harvesting. Therefore, no adverse impact to forest land in the desert regions would occur.

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**Impact 5.2-4 Countywide Plan implementation would not cause other changes in the environment which could cause conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses or forest land to nonforest uses. [Threshold AG-5]**

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#### Farmland

Countywide Plan buildout is not expected to cause other changes in the environment that could cause conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use. Outside of the Valley Region, most mapped important farmland in unincorporated areas of the County is in relatively remote rural areas—largely in the Mojave River Valley east and west of the City of Barstow SOI—where buildout would involve very little to no growth. In the Valley Region, most mapped important farmland in unincorporated areas is in the Mentone CPA. There is no other mapped important farmland close enough to that in the Mentone CPA such that conversion of farmland in the Mentone CPA would contribute to conversion of farmland elsewhere. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### Forest Land

The eight CPAs in the Mountain Region where all growth under the Countywide Plan would occur are surrounded by land in the San Bernardino National Forest outside of County jurisdiction. Thus, Countywide Plan buildout would not cause other changes to the environment causing conversion of forest land in the Mountain Region to nonforest uses. The analysis of impacts to forest land in the Desert regions discussed in Impact 5.2-3, applies to this impact as well. Therefore, Countywide Plan implementation would not cause other changes in the environment which could convert forest land to nonforest use.

*Level of Significance Without Mitigation:* With continued implementation of regulatory requirements (Williamson Act contracts) and Countywide Plan policies, impact 5.2-4 would be less than significant.

### 5.2.5 Cumulative Impacts

The area considered for cumulative impacts to agriculture and forestry resources is San Bernardino County.

#### Mapped Important Farmland, Williamson Act Contracts, and Agricultural Zoning

Projects in incorporated cities and towns could convert some mapped important farmland in those areas to nonagricultural uses. About 7,642 acres of mapped important farmland, or 39 percent of such farmland in the County, is in incorporated cities and towns; 96 percent of that amount is in the Valley Region. No substantial cumulative impact to lands subject to Williamson Act contracts would occur, as about 98 percent of such lands in the County are in unincorporated areas.

Implementation of the proposed Countywide Plan would not result in agricultural resource impacts that would combine with Countywide impacts to result in significant, cumulative impacts. Impacts would be less than significant in the other regions.

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### Forest Resources

Countywide, 86 percent of the conifer forest and woodland vegetation in the County is in areas outside of County jurisdiction—much of that in the San Bernardino National Forest (SBNF) in the Mountain Region (see Table 5.2-4 above). Most of the forest and woodland vegetation in the County is in areas that are protected for purposes including conservation of forest resources—such as the SBNF. It is therefore unlikely that other agencies with land use authority over forest and woodland would permit removal of large amounts of such vegetation. There has been no timber harvest in San Bernardino County since 2005 (CBOE 2017). No significant cumulative impact to forest resources would occur, and Project impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

*Level of Significance Without Mitigation:* Cumulative impacts to agriculture and forestry resources would be less than significant.

### 5.2.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

With the implementation of Countywide Plan policies, the following impacts would be less than significant: 5.2-1, 5.2-2, 5.2-3, and 5.2-4.

### 5.2.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

### 5.2.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

### 5.2.9 References

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