

# Appendix B

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Agricultural Viability Screening Analysis



## AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY SCREENING ANALYSIS Arctic Cold DVP/CUP (Rev 09/22/20)

### Project Description

The proposed project consists of an application for a Conditional Use Permit and Development Plan to allow development of a 436,647sf freezer/processor facility (449,248 sf Gross Floor Area) development on a 40 acre development envelope to be located at 1750 East Betteravia Road in the Santa Maria area. The existing parcels total @108.76 acres (110.72 acres gross) and the site is zoned AG-II-40. Assessor's Parcel Numbers 128-097-0001 (98.96 acres) and 128-097-002 (9.80 acres). Acreage of analysis is based on the net acreage as this is the acreage under production.

### Site Characteristics

The site has been agriculturally leveled to provide for agricultural production. The area is dominated by Class III/IV soils (81.8% of site). The site maintains some acreage in Class I soils located in the northern portion of the property. For the entire property, @ 94 acres are under agricultural production with the remaining 16 acres consisting of the existing Midcoast Cooler facility and two oil well platforms. No ponds, streams, or trees are located on the site. A portion of the property is identified either as Farmland of Statewide Importance or Prime land if irrigated.

Soil	Permeability	Erosion Hazard	Acres	Capability Class
<b>BmA</b> – Betteravia loamy sand	Very slow	Slight	73.46	III/IV
<b>OcD</b> – Oceano sand	Rapid	Moderate	10.2	IV
<b>OcD3</b> – Oceano sand, severely eroded	Rapid	Moderate	5.3	IV
<b>PnA</b> – Pleasanton sandy loam	Moderately Slow	Slight	19.8	I (Irrigated) III (Non irrigated)

The parcel is a legal parcel in the AG-II-40 Zone District. The parcels are not under an Agricultural Preserve contract. Two agricultural wells are located on the property, one to provide irrigation water to the existing crops and one that was permitted for use by Midcoast Cooler and not part of this project. The project area is @ 40 acres in size and located in the northeast corner of the property. Soils that would be disturbed as a result of the project would be @ 27 acres of BmA; Betteravia loamy sand and @ 13 acres of PnA; Pleasanton sandy loam. The remainder of the site would not be impacted, and agricultural production continued.

Figure 1. Soil Map of APNs 128-097-001, -002<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: Soil Survey of Northern Santa Barbara Area, California, USDA Soil Conservation Service 2020.

## **Current/Historic Use**

The parcel has consistently been used historically for agricultural production and oil development. The site has been shown as intensively farmed going back until at least the 1960s.

Numerous Unocal wells are located on the property and have gone through a series of abandonments since the 1960s. As part of this application three of the wells will need to be reabandoned and a portion of a retired pipeline.

Midcoast Cooler was permitted in 2005 (05CUP-00015) and is in the southwestern corner of the property. The permit was for improvements of an existing cooler operation that, according to County records existed since the 1980s.

### *County Points System Calculation and Discussion*

## **Points System Methodology**

The "Points System" in the County's Agricultural Resources Guidelines found in the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual, is used as a preliminary screening tool to measure a sites conduciveness to sustained agricultural operations. It provides limited insight into the potential agriculturally viability of an existing parcel and whether any proposed parcels created from that existing parcel could support a self-sustaining agricultural operation in themselves as required in the Agricultural Element. The Points System cannot measure the productivity of a parcel or its use but serves as a bellwether to assess the conditions of an area and whether new parcels created from a previously viable parcel could be supported for further agricultural use.

There are nine categories in the analyses that serve as the characteristics to measure existing and proposed parcels. According to the Threshold Manual, should an existing parcel total 60 or more cumulative points, it can be considered agriculturally viable for the purpose of analysis. If an existing parcel maintains a cumulative score above 60, each newly created parcel, therefore, would be required to score either above 60 points or not deviate from the original score significantly. Should a proposed parcel score below 60 or be substantially lower than the existing, it would give the planner an indication there may be a significant impact to agricultural resources and further analysis would be necessary.

If the existing parcel score less than 60, the existing parcel would not be considered agriculturally viable for the purposes of analysis and no significant impact to agricultural resources would be anticipated from development on the parcel.

As part of this analysis, both parcels are included as one element on the analysis. APN 128-097-002 is a legal nonconforming parcel of 9.80 acres and, if evaluated alone would not be considered a viable parcel agricultural either before or after evaluation.

### Points System Calculations for Existing and Proposed Project Parcel

Criteria	Point Range	Existing Parcel Condition	Parcel with Proposed Project
Parcel Size	11-12 (100-500 Acres)	11	11
Soil Classification	5-15 (Class I-VII Soils)	9	5
Water Availability	12-15 (Wells)	15	15
Agricultural Suitability	8-10 (Highly Suited)	10	10
Existing & Historic Land Use	5 (Active)	5	5
Comprehensive Plan Designation	5 (A-II)	5	5
Adjacent Land Uses	9-10 (Adjacent Ag Uses)	10	10
Agricultural Preserve Potential	1-5 (Qualify)	5	5
Combined Farming Operations	0-4 (If Combined with Other Operation)	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57-83</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>68</b>

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#### Points Allocation Discussion for Existing Parcel (74 Points)

**1. Parcel Size.** The existing parcel was given 11 out of 12 possible points for a parcel between 100-500 acres. Points were allocated due to the combined parcels being slightly over 100 acres.

**2. Soil Classification.** Potential points range from 6 to 15 points due to the variability of soils onsite in Classes I-IV. Approximately 94 acres are currently under agricultural production on the site Class III-IV soils dominate the site at 81.8% of the parcel. Class I soils on site constitute approximately 18.2% of the 108.76 acres. As the site maintains a substantial but minor portion of the property in Class I soils the number of points assigned was given the value of 9 out of 15 possible points.

Existing Property			
Soil Type	Soil Class	Existing Parcel Acreage	% of Total Acreage
PnA	I	19.8	18.2
<i>Class I Subtotal</i>		<i>19.8</i>	<i>18.2</i>
BmA	III	73.46	67.4
<i>Class III Subtotal</i>		<i>73.46</i>	<i>67.4</i>
OcD	IV	10.2	0.6
OcD	IV	5.3	5.1
<i>Class IV Subtotal</i>		<i>15.5</i>	<i>14.4</i>

TOTAL	108.76	100%
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**3. Water Availability.** The site maintains an active well for agricultural use. The project was assigned a maximum point value of 15, as there is a developed water source onsite.

**4. Agricultural Suitability.** Historic agriculture on site has been crop production. Soils onsite are highly suited for rotational crops. The site was considered highly suitable for that agricultural use and was assigned the maximum score of 10.

**5. Existing and Historic Land Use.** The site has a record of row crop production and oil development. Since the oil development has ceased in the past and the wells abandoned, the project was assigned a maximum score of 5 to reflect current use of the site.

**6. Comprehensive Plan Designation.** The site is designed AG so was given a maximum score of 5. A score of 5 was calculated reflecting the A-II designation proposed.

**7. Adjacent Land Uses.** The area around the project has both agricultural with some ranchette uses to the south. Adequate services are available and no conflict exists between the two uses. The parcel also has Midcoast Cooling on site and Central City Cooling to the north which are major supportive facilities for agricultural production in the region. Cooler and agricultural processors need to be near agricultural production to serve its clients during harvest as delays in processing the raw product would lead to waste. Parcel was given a score of 10 which is the maximum for a surrounded operation with adequate services.

**8. Agricultural Preserve Potential.** The site is zoned AG-II-40 and could qualify for a prime contract if desired as the parcel size is over 40 acres and has as part of its component Class I acreage (19.8 acres). The point tabulation for this component is a 5 since the potential to qualify for a prime contract. An actual contract is not located on the site.

**9. Combined Farming Operations.** The site is not associated with a combined farming operation in proximity and is separately operated but is a holding within an agricultural operation with other properties in the west Santa Maria Valley so was given a score of 3 since it is separately managed but still important.

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*Points System Allocation Discussion for Parcel with Proposed Project (70 Points)*

**1. Parcel Size.** The combined 108.76 acres parcel was given 11 points out of 12 possible points for being between 100 and 500 acres in size.

**2. Soil Classification.** Potential points range from 1 to 15 points due to the variability of soils onsite with the Parcel with the Proposed Project receiving a lower score of 5 due to the loss of 40 acres of farmed lands. @ 94 acres are currently under agricultural production on the site. The proposed project will require the removal of @ 13 acres of Class I soil and @ 27 acres of Class III/IV soils to develop the facility and its associated infrastructure (@ 42% of farmed land). The site will still maintain @ 6.7 acres of prime soils and 46.6 acres of Class III/IV which is still considered a significant and viable crop production capability for high value row crops. Additionally, the landowner maintains other holdings in the Santa Maria Valley and can shift the 40-acre loss of production onto other properties with minimal impact to cumulative agricultural production in the region.

Existing Property			
Soil Type	Soil Class	Existing Parcel Acreage	% of Total Acreage
PnA	I	19.8	18.2
<i>Class I Subtotal</i>		<i>19.8</i>	<i>18.2</i>
BmA	III	73.46	67.4
<i>Class III Subtotal</i>		<i>73.46</i>	<i>67.4</i>
OcD	IV	10.2	0.6
OcD	IV	5.3	5.1
<i>Class IV Subtotal</i>		<i>15.5</i>	<i>14.4</i>
TOTAL		108.76	100%

**3. Water Availability.** The site maintains an active well for potable and agricultural use. The project proposes to install a new permitted water system to serve the project. The project was assigned a maximum point value of 15, as it is demonstrated through analysis from a Geohydrologist and data from the existing well, adequate water is available to serve the project. The project will be required to permit the water system as well as a non-transient non-community water system prior to approval of permits. The existing well will continue to serve the continued crop production.

**4. Agricultural Suitability.** Historic agriculture on site has been crop production and grazing. Soils onsite are highly suited for rotational crops and agricultural production will continue on the site after the project is completed. The site is still considered highly suitable for agricultural use, the proposed use is a vital support to the agricultural industry so was assigned the maximum score of 10.

**5. Existing and Historic Land Use.** The site has a record of productivity and will continue after the completion of the project. Agricultural processors are deemed as essential support facilities for agricultural production. The project was assigned the same score of 5 as the existing parcel to reflect existing use of the site focusing on intensification of agriculture.

**6. Comprehensive Plan Designation.** The site is designed AG so was given a maximum score of 5. A score of 5 was calculated reflecting the A-II designation proposed

**7. Adjacent Land Uses.** All adjacent uses will remain the same and in operation. The proposed project will not impact those uses. The installation of this facility will be a support operation to the existing agricultural production. Since the status quo is not only maintained but enhanced due to this project a maximum score of 10 is issued.

**8. Agricultural Preserve Potential.** The site is zoned AG-II-40 and would still qualify for a prime contract if desired as the parcel size is over 40 acres and has still has as part of its component some Class I acreage (6.7 acres). The point tabulation for this component is a 5 since the potential to qualify for a prime though an actual contract is not located on the site.

**9. Combined Farming Operations.** The site is not associated with a combined farming operation in proximity and is separately operated but is a holding within an agricultural operation with other properties in the Santa Maria Valley. It is anticipated the 40 acres removed from production will be shifted to other properties so was given a score of 2 since it is separately managed but is still important to the landowners combined operations.

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## Results

Based on the calculations that were completed, the existing parcel scored a cumulative total of 73, with the Parcel with Proposed Project scoring 68. The Points Threshold indicate the existing parcel is a significant agricultural property (73 points) and the Parcel after Proposed Project remains significant (68 points) since both score well more than 60 points which is the threshold of significance and only a 7% reduction in total viably likewise not significant. For environmental review purposes, the proposed project does not constitute a significant impact (Class I) to agricultural resources per CEQA methodology and adopted thresholds.

## Discussion

Irrigated farming exhibits high yields on crops that are higher in value maximizing economic viability on less acreage. The site provides high productivity soils, characteristic of the Santa Maria Valley, a major agricultural region. Such high productivity requires sufficient support capacity for production.

Historic crop production is evidentiary in the high production capacity of the site, aerial photographs dating back to the 1960s show the site under continual agricultural production. High yield cash crops have historically been produced on site including strawberries, cauliflower, and broccoli. The remainder of the parcel, minus the development area, would still constitute a viable and economic production operation maintaining its existing infrastructure.

Agriculture is the largest industry in Santa Barbara County, providing over 25,000 jobs and contributing over 2.8 billion dollars annually based on revenues and multiplier effects according to the County's Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Row crops and strawberries constitute the largest industry share of revenues @ 750 million dollars according to the last tally in the 2018 Crop Report.

The addition of the processor/freezer facility is a regional improvement providing much needed support to the agricultural industry leading to regional intensification potential. A major limitation to intensification of an agricultural industry is the availability of processing and cold storage to ensure viability of the product before it can be made available at market. It is necessary to maintain such facilities close to the agricultural fields to ensure the product is processed especially when appropriately zoned and or compatible land in any nearby urban lands is scarce such as in the case of the Santa Maria Valley.

## Agricultural Element Consistency

The following policies are applicable to the project.

Policy IA. The integrity of agricultural operations shall not be violated by recreational or other non-compatible uses.

- *The proposed project is a permitted use in the AG-II-zone district and is considered a vital support facility without which area farmers would not be able to process their product locally. The use is not only compatible but vital to agriculture in the region.*



Policy I.B. The County shall recognize the rights of operation, freedom of choice as to the methods of cultivation, choice of crops or types of livestock, rotation of crops and all other functions within the traditional scope of agricultural management decisions. These rights and freedoms shall be conducted in a manner which is consistent with: (1) sound agricultural practices that promote the long-term viability of agriculture and (2) applicable resource protection policies and regulations

- *A processor/freezer facility is necessary to allow area farmers to better choose types of crops to be grown. It is a vital step in the development of agricultural products and provides better flexibility in the harvest/processing stage of agricultural production.*

Policy I.E. The County shall recognize that the generation of noise, smoke, odor, and dust is a natural consequence of the normal agricultural practices provided that agriculturalists exercise reasonable measures to minimize such effects.

- *The policy protects areas farms from nuisance complaints in this Right to Farm County. Nearest receptors for potential nuisance are over 2,000 feet away so the site chosen for the facility is ideal to minimize nuisance complaints*

Policy I.G. Sustainable agricultural practices on agriculturally designated land should be encouraged in order to preserve the long-term health and viability of the soil.

- *The site utilizes @ 40 acres of a portion of an existing @109-acre site with a use necessary to support existing regional agricultural operations. The remaining acreage will continue to be a viable agricultural site for production. Having this facility helps ensure continued production and farmers will maintain their properties having suitable support facilities to process their harvest.*

Policy II.D. Conversion of highly productive agricultural lands whether urban or rural, shall be discouraged. The County shall support programs which encourage the retention of highly productive agricultural lands.

- *The proposed project would remove out of production @ 40 acres of the 94 acres of currently farmed lands, 13 acres of which are prime soils if irrigated. The policy endeavors to preserve as much of productive farmland acreage as possible., the improvement, however, is not just a benefit for the immediate parcel but regional to the entire agricultural industry of Santa Barbara County thereby improving production in the area. Policies also encourage the creation of such facilities to support operations within a reasonable distance which makes the site a logical location.*

Policy V.A. Santa Barbara County shall permit on-farm supportive installations for product handling and selling as prescribed in the Uniform Rules of the County's Agricultural Preserve Program.

- *Though the parcel is not in a Williamson Act contract, the proposed use is compatible IAW the Uniform Rules.*

Policy V.B. Santa Barbara County should allow areas for supportive agricultural services within reasonable distance and access to the farm user.

- *The proposed facility meets Policy V.B by providing vital processing services in close proximity to area farms in the Valley and adjacent areas on a designated truck route access close to Highway. It is critical to process raw product as quickly as possible after harvesting.*