

## 5.2 AGRICULTURE

### 5.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Agricultural information used in this section is derived from field reconnaissance, review of aerial photographs and information provided by a variety of other sources including landowners/dairy operators, the City of Chino, State Department of Conservation, and other referenced sources. Issues addressed in this section include prime agricultural land, farmland classifications, Williamson Act contracts, agricultural productivity, and agricultural land conversion. Land use conflicts with agriculture/dairy uses are addressed in Section 5.1 Land Use.

### 5.2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### Agriculture

The predominant land use within the project area is agriculture, comprising approximately 4,190 acres or about 77 percent of the project area. The agricultural areas are divided into the following components and approximate acres and percentages.

**TABLE 5.2-1  
EXISTING AGRICULTURAL USES**

Land Use	Acreege (Approx.)	Percentage of Project Area
Agricultural Uses		
▪ Fallow	645	11.9
▪ Agriculture (crops)	940	17.3
▪ Dairy and Pasture	2,604	47.9
Subtotal	4,190	77.1
Non-Agricultural Uses		
▪ Developed/Disturbed	496	9.1
▪ Other Open Spaces	749	13.8
Subtotal	1,245	22.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,435</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Agricultural uses occur as a mosaic within the site, with dairies, pasture, and croplands interspersed within the northerly 2/3 of the plan area, and fallow fields, crops and other open space within the southerly 1/3 (see Exhibit 5.1-1). Thirty-one (31) dairies are located within the plan area, with a

combined total of approximately 28,730 milk cows and total herd size of approximately 51,300 bovine animals.<sup>1</sup> Farmland for crop production totals approximately 940 acres, and is focused largely on producing silage to support the dairies. Crops include alfalfa, wheat, oat hay and corn.

**Farmland Classifications**

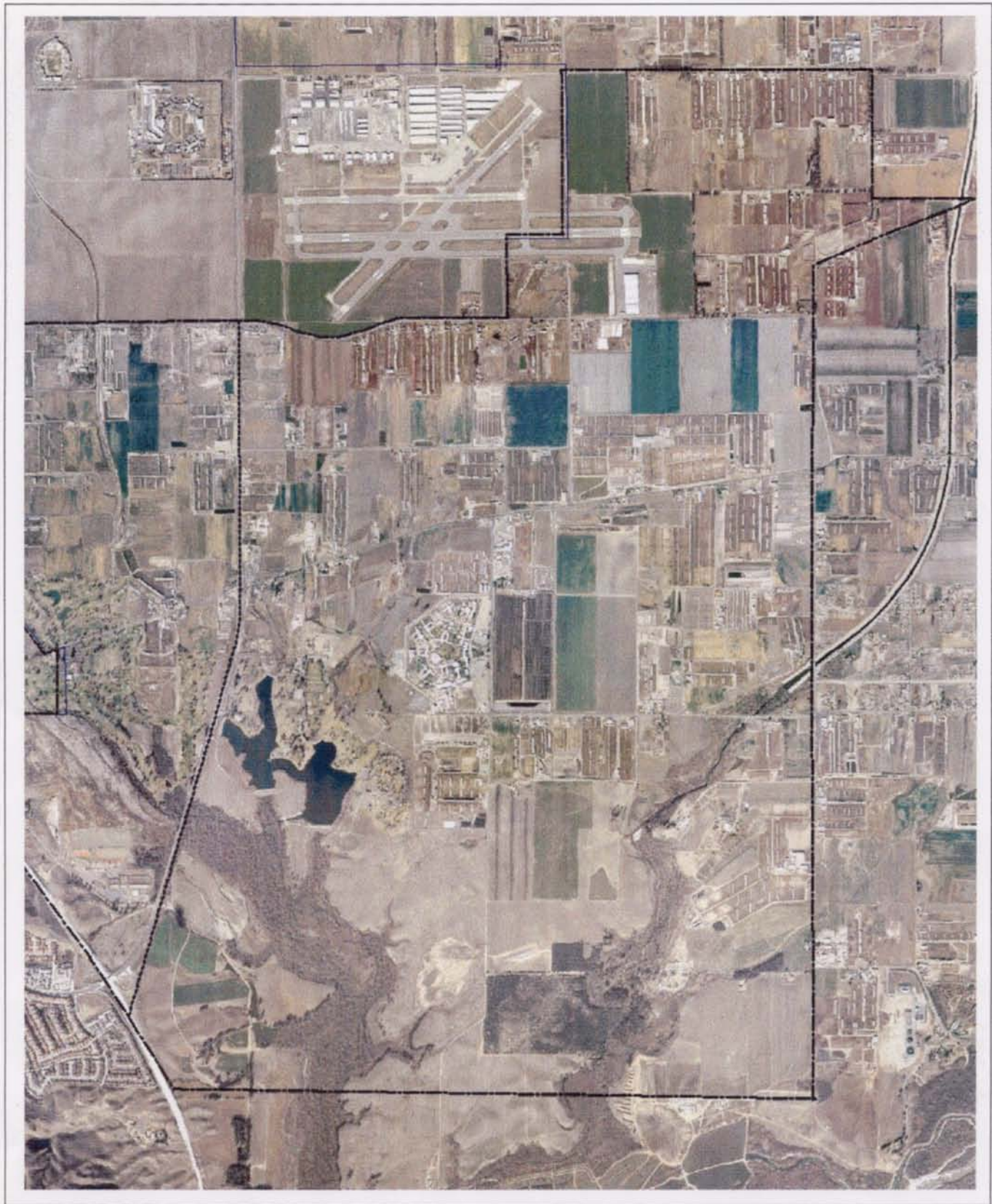
The Department of Conservation has identified six categories of farmland on the project site. These categories include Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other Land. A breakdown of the farmland by acreage is provided in Table 5.2-2. Exhibit 5.2-1 illustrates agricultural use patterns on the site. Exhibit 5.2-2 depicts the farmland classifications on the site.

**TABLE 5.2-2  
FARMLAND BY ACREAGE**

<b>Farmland Categories</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Prime Farmland <sup>1</sup>	2,268	41.7%
Farmland of Statewide Importance <sup>2</sup>	72	1.3%
Farmland of Local Importance <sup>3</sup>	136	2.5%
Grazing Land <sup>4</sup>	442	8.1%
Urban and Built-Up Land <sup>5</sup>	459	8.5%
Other Land <sup>6</sup>	2,058	37.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,435</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Prime Farmland is land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics able to sustain long term production of agricultural crops.  
<sup>2</sup> Farmland of Statewide Importance is land with a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for agricultural production, having only minor shortcomings, such as less ability to store soil moisture, compared to prime farmland.  
<sup>3</sup> Farmland of Local Importance is farmland that includes areas of soils that meet all the characteristics of prime, statewide, or unique and which are not irrigated. These are farmlands not covered by the prime, of statewide importance, or unique categories, but that are of high economic importance to the community. These farmlands include dryland grains of wheat, barley, oats and dryland pasture.  
<sup>4</sup> Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.  
<sup>5</sup> Urban and Built-Up Land is residential land with a density of at least six units per ten-acre parcel, as well as land used for industrial and commercial purposes, golf courses, landfills, airports, sewage treatment and water control structures.  
<sup>6</sup> Other Lands are those that do not meet the criteria of any other category.

<sup>1</sup> Source: City of Chino Community Development Department (3/12/01).



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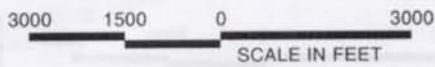
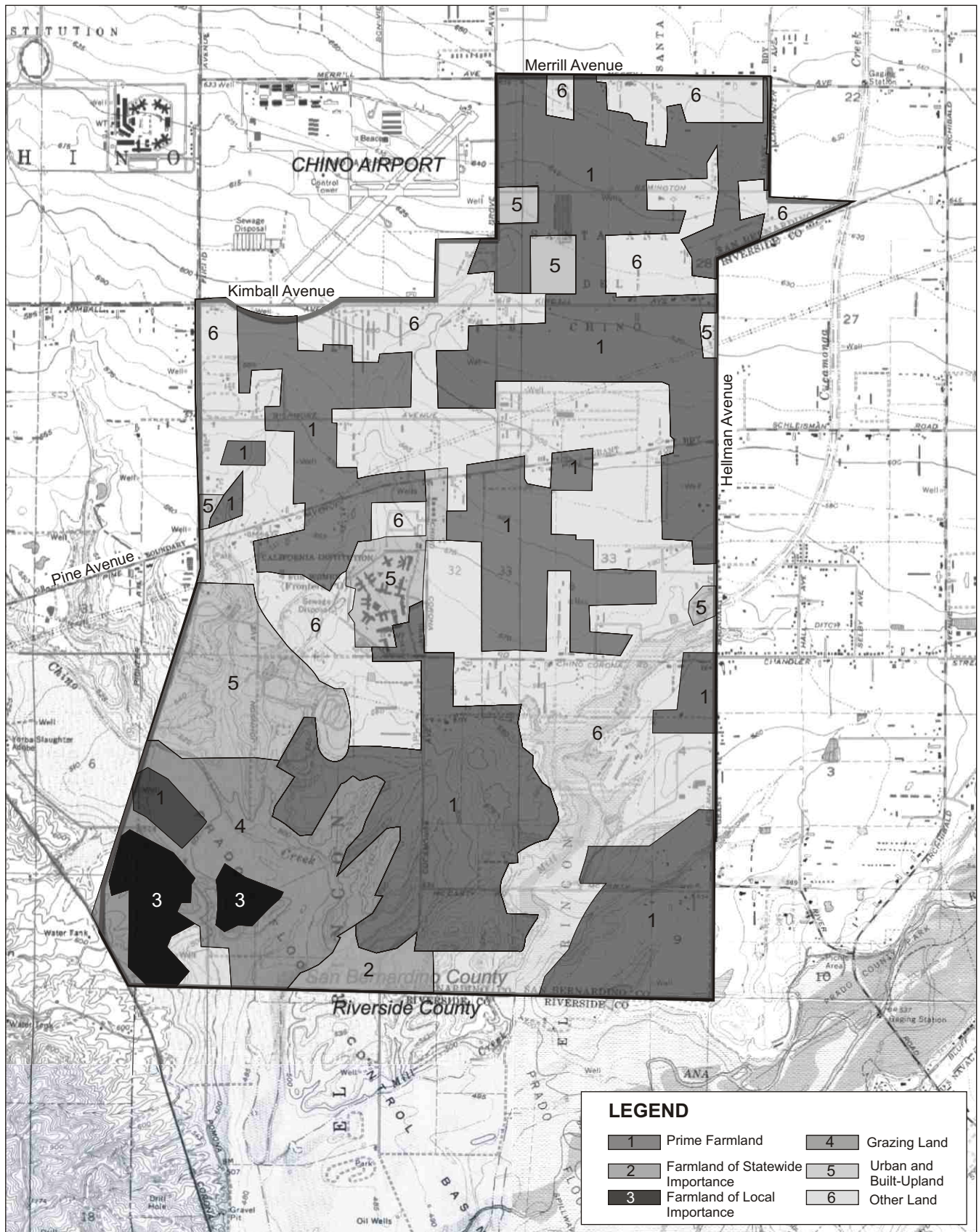


Exhibit **5.2-1**  
Aerial

THE PRESERVE • CHINO SUBAREA 2





SOURCE: State Department of Conservation



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## Exhibit 5.2-2 Important Farmland

THE PRESERVE • CHINO SUBAREA 2



### **Agricultural Soils**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service ‘Soil Survey of San Bernardino County, Southwestern Part, California’ (1/80) includes the project area within three soil associations that qualify as either prime farmland soils or farmland of statewide importance soils. These soil associations are:

- Hanford-Greenfield-San Emigdio association—Defined as nearly level to moderately sloping, well-drained, very deep soils on alluvial valley floors and fans. This association is found in the extreme north-northeast portion of the plan area, encompassing approximately 5% of the total area.
- Grangeville-Chino-Hilmar association—Described as nearly level, somewhat poorly drained, very deep soils in basins and on alluvial flood plains and fans. This association is found through most of the plan area, encompassing approximately 75% of the total area.
- Ramona-Chualar-Sorrento association—Described as nearly level to moderately sloping, well drained, very deep soils on alluvial fans and terraces. This association is found on the plateaus between Chino Creek and Mill Creek in the southerly portion of the plan area generally defined by the 556’ contour elevation, and comprises approximately 20% of the total plan area.

### **Agricultural Preserve Contract Status**

The proposed project is located within the County of San Bernardino Agricultural Preserve. Many of the properties in the project area are currently under the Williamson Act (Land Conservation Act of 1965) contracts with the County of San Bernardino. These contracts remain in effect for 10 years and are automatically renewed annually unless the property owner files for a notice of non-renewal with the County of San Bernardino. There is also a provision in the law that allows the local planning jurisdiction to initiate non-renewal by notifying the property owner.

The Williamson Act provisions are intended to assist the long-term preservation of prime agricultural land in the state by providing the property owner with a substantial property tax break for keeping land in agricultural use. When under contract, the landowner no longer pays property tax for an assessed valuation based upon the property’s urban development potential. The Act stipulates that for properties under Williamson Act land conservation contracts “the highest and best use of such land during the life of the contract is for agricultural uses”. Therefore, property under contract is assessed and taxed based upon its agricultural value.

In addition to the 10-year non-renewal process for taking properties out of Williamson act contracts, contracts can also be canceled upon the mutual agreement of the landowner and the local land use planning jurisdiction. Unlike non-renewals, cancellations can only be initiated by the landowner. Per

Government Code Section 51283(b), such cancellations require the land owner to pay the local jurisdiction a cancellation fee in an amount equal to 12½ percent of the assessed valuation of the property for its “highest and best use.” Cancellation fees must be deposited in the State of California General Fund (Section 51283[d]). If it is found by the local jurisdiction to be in the public interest to do so, and it is approved by the California Secretary of the Resources Agency, a full or partial fee waiver or an extension of time for fee payment is permitted.

Cancellations require a hearing and formal approval by the local land use jurisdiction, in this case the County of San Bernardino, up until such time as the City of Chino formally annexes the project area. Upon annexation, the responsibility for administering the preserve shifts to the City of Chino, including the rights to enlarge, diminish, or disestablish that portion of the preserve in its jurisdiction

The Williamson Act specifies that contract cancellations can only be approved if specific findings are made that the cancellation is not inconsistent with the purposes of the Act, and that the cancellation is in the public interest.

Exhibit 5.2-3 depicts current Williamson Act contract properties for the plan area. As of January 2001, a total of 1,563.7 acres within the plan area were under Williamson Act contracts.<sup>2</sup> Of these contracts, notices of non-renewal had been filed on 415.7 acres. Of these 415.7 acres, approximately 358.5 acres have contracts that will expire by the year 2003.

### **Southern California Agricultural Land Foundation (SoCalf) Properties**

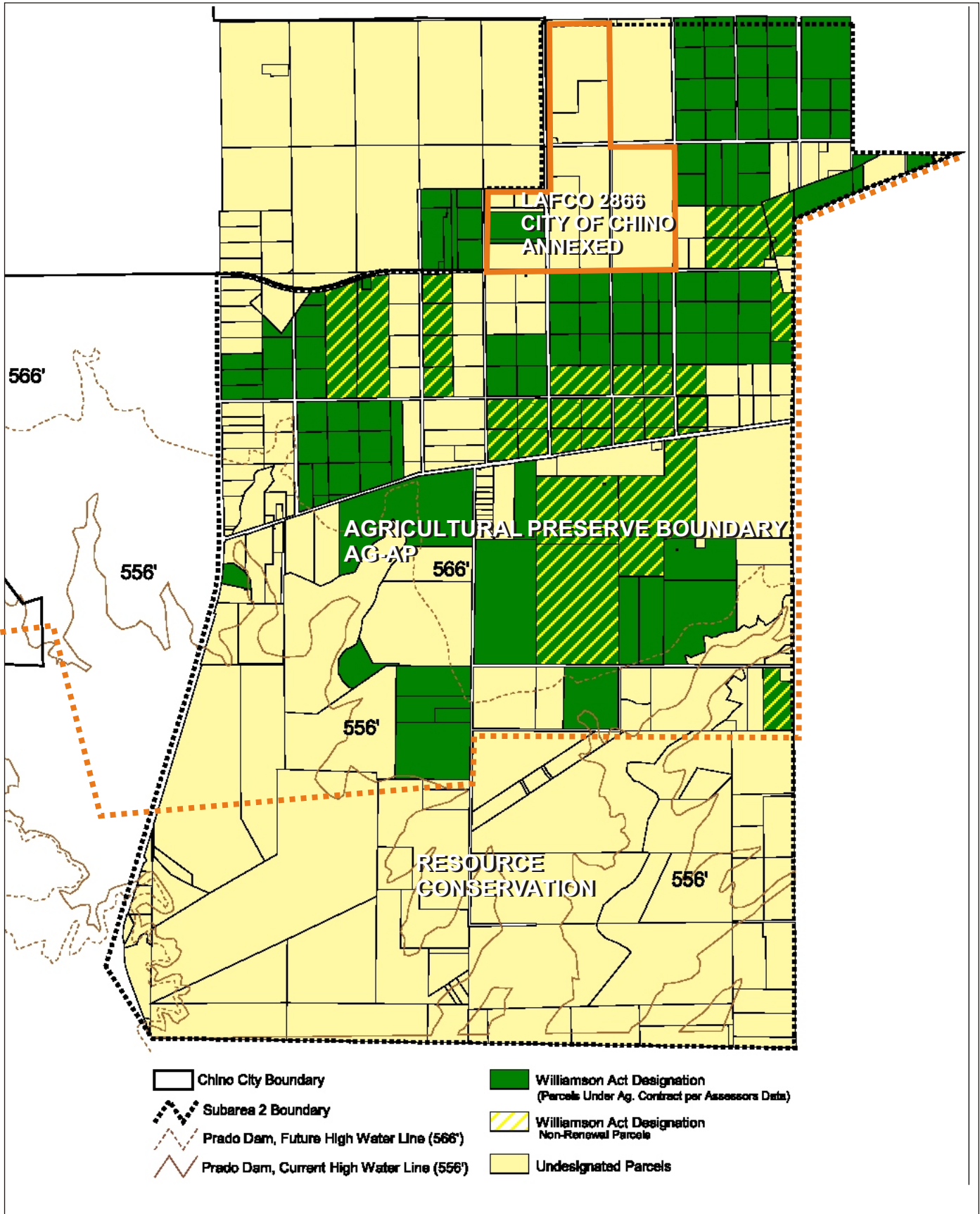
The Southern California Agricultural Land Foundation (SoCalf) manages approximately 167.5 acres of land within the northeast sector of the plan area as a permanent agricultural land trust. The majority of the SoCALF properties are prime agricultural land owned by the County of San Bernardino and leased to dairy and farming operators.

### **Agricultural Productivity**

Economic reports and discussions with persons associated with agricultural operations in the plan area, including dairy owners/operators, the planning departments of the City of Chino and County of San Bernardino, and staff of the Milk Producers’ Council, indicate the economic viability of agricultural operations in the plan area and Southern California has declined in recent years. For example, the study ‘Dairy Farm Operating Trends’ (Frazer and Torbet 1995) shows that Southern California dairies had the lowest net income based on average amounts per hundredweight of milk and average amounts on a per head basis of all the six study areas (Southern California, San Joaquin

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<sup>2</sup> Source: City of Chino, Williamson Act Parcels by Contract Number; 2/14/01(Appendix H).



SOURCE: Psomas



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# Exhibit 5.2-3 Williamson Act

THE PRESERVE • CHINO SUBAREA 2



Valley, Arizona Holtsteins, Arizona Jerseys, Idaho, and New Mexico) for the first nine months of 1995. The study also shows that the average net income of Southern California area dairies has declined more than the other five study areas from 1993 to 1995.

This study attributes the lower net income for Southern California dairies to an increase in operating costs, particularly related to feed, without a corresponding increase in price. This trend is anticipated to continue as a result of tough competition from the Central Valley and other states, and increasing costs associated with dairy waste management and runoff controls. As there are approximately 270 dairies in the Chino Basin Dairy Area (CBDA), and approximately 30 of these are located within the proposed plan area, the plan area could account for approximately 11% of the gross agricultural economic productivity of the CBDA (if dairy herd sizes within the plan area are representative of those found within the CBDA as a whole).

According to the Milk Producers' Council<sup>3</sup>, the estimated value of the dairy crop (milk and milk by-products) produced within the 40 square mile Chino Basin Dairy Area (CBDA) in 2000 was approximately \$ 0.75 billion. The total economic value attributable to the dairy industry within the CBDA in 2000 was estimated at \$1 billion.<sup>4</sup>

Actual year 2000 milk production values for dairies within the proposed project area are not readily available. However, using statewide factors an estimated milk value at the farm of approximately \$88,000,000 is obtained.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, crop values are not readily obtained within the plan area, partly due to the varying crop patterns and prices. A typical annual cropping pattern might involve a single alfalfa crop on one-half of the farmable acreage, and a double crop of corn and wheat on the remainder. Utilizing this pattern for the principal farming operations in the area, an annual crop value in excess of \$1 million is obtained.<sup>6</sup>

### **5.2.3 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Pursuant to Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA), a project would typically have a potentially significant impact on agricultural resources if it would result in one or more of the following:

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Milk Producers' Council (MPC); 6/2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid MPC; includes estimated direct plus indirect economic activity attributable to dairy industry.

<sup>5</sup> Source: California Department of Food and agriculture 1998 Dairy Information Fact Sheet; based on statewide milk production value per cow of \$3,070 and 28,730 milk cows within the project area.

<sup>6</sup> Approximately 700 acres are farmed by the principal farm operations in the plan area (Durrington Farms, Steuve Bros./ Altadena, Rohrs, Barthelemy, Van Vliet, and Aphessetche properties). Assumes single cropping of alfalfa (\$1,300/ac.) on half of the acreage, and double cropping of corn (\$750/ac.) and wheat (\$900/ac.) on the remainder.

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract;
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use (i.e. indirect impacts on Farmland).

Though not specifically addressed in CEQA Appendix G, for purposes of this analysis a project would also be expected to have a potentially adverse impact if it would:

- Impair the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land

#### **5.2.4 PROJECT IMPACTS**

##### **Prime Agricultural Land**

Implementation of the proposed plan would result in the conversion of approximately 1,265 acres of prime farmland to non-agricultural use. This represents approximately 56% of the total 2,268 acres of prime farmland within the plan area, and is considered a significant impact.

The remaining prime farmland and all other important farmlands are located within planned open space in the Agricultural (AG), Agricultural and Open Space-Natural (AG/OS-N), and Open Space-Natural (OS-N) categories. These agricultural lands total approximately 1,653 acres and are not planned for conversion to urban uses.

The rate of conversion of prime farmland would be affected by the extent and timing of Williamson Act contract non-renewals and cancellations. This cannot be precisely predicted since the decision is up to the property owner and can involve a variety of factors. As described in Section 5.1 Land Use, approval of the proposed project and the introduction of residential and other urban uses within the plan area will accelerate the conversion of prime farmlands.

##### **Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use and Williamson Act Contracts**

The proposed project would require annexation of the site by the City of Chino and rezoning consistent with the proposed Specific Plan and City Zoning Code. Existing County of San Bernardino Agriculture-Agriculture Preserve (AG-AP) zoning designations on the site would be removed. These actions were contemplated in LAFCO's 1994 inclusion of this portion of the dairy preserve within the City's sphere of influence, and do not in and of themselves represent a significant adverse impact.

The proposed plan includes 862 acres in Agricultural and Agricultural/Open Space-Natural designations that are otherwise consistent with County agricultural zoning. The proposed plan retains the existing regional park and public facilities (i.e. CIW-Chino, Chino Airport) in designations that are otherwise consistent with County zoning.

- Of the total 1,563.7 acres under Williamson Act contract, notices of non-renewal have been filed on 415.7 acres. The project would accelerate Williamson Act contract non-renewals and/or cancellation notices on the remaining 1,148 acres under contract within the plan area. This is considered a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

Lands owned/managed by SoCALF and the County of San Bernardino for permanent agricultural preservation in the northeast portion of the plan area presumably would remain under Williamson Act contracts to be administered by the City of Chino.

### **Indirect Impacts on Farmland**

Buildout of the proposed plan will place the new local resident population near farmlands and agricultural uses that choose to locate within the AG and AG/OS-N designated areas within the plan area (i.e. northeast corner and below the 566' elevation). Without managed access, buffers and other measures to protect these remaining farmlands, conflicts may arise that would ultimately lead to their conversion to non-agricultural use. The proposed Specific Plan includes Right-to-Farm provisions and requirements for use compatibility findings that would promote continued agricultural use on areas specifically designated for long-term agricultural use. The application of these provisions and requirements would reduce these impacts to less than significant levels. (See Section 5.1-4, Land Use Project Impacts, for discussion of land use compatibility and transitional impacts.)

### **Agricultural Productivity**

Among the factors leading to the relocation of dairies out of the Chino Basin Dairy Area are 1) competition from other milk-producing regions, and 2) recently adopted requirements from the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board that require both retention and control of drainage, and reductions in the amount of stockpiled manure allowed within the basin. Other factors include land use conflicts and rising land values associated with surrounding new urban development. Market forces resulting from the adoption of the proposed project may also result in an increase in the rate of conversion of agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses and a corresponding decline in long-term agricultural productivity.

Development of the project area will accelerate the relocation of dairies from the CBDA and plan area, resulting in an annual milk production value loss to the region of approximately \$88 million. Approximately 700 acres of cultivated cropland will be converted, although some of these farming

operations may choose to relocate to AG and AG/OS-N designated areas within the plan area. New dairies and expansions of existing dairies within these designated areas are prohibited under the proposed Specific Plan. As such, the proposed project will result in a significant impact on agricultural productivity.

### **5.2.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

The proposed project will contribute to significant cumulative losses of prime farmlands and other important farmlands within the Chino Basin Dairy Area. The project will accelerate the conversion of prime agricultural lands to urban uses within the plan area. Ultimately, with other approved annexations and master planned development within the CBDA (i.e. Ontario, other Chino, Eastvale/Riverside County, Corona), in excess of 23,000 acres may be removed from agricultural preserve status.

Agricultural productivity associated with dairies and milk production will be displaced to other parts of the state and nation. Although the project retains approximately 862 acres within the Agricultural (AG) and Agricultural/Open Space-Natural designations that will be available for farming activities, the project's contribution to the loss of croplands in the CBDA is still considered cumulatively significant. The project will contribute to the cumulative loss of agricultural productivity within the CBDA region.

### **5.2.6 MITIGATION MEASURES**

Project design features that reduce significant impacts to agricultural resources include retention of approximately 862 acres in agricultural-related use designations, and Specific Plan right-to-farm provisions. The following measures are also recommended to reduce the significant agricultural and farmland conversion impacts of the proposed project.

#### **AG-1 Agricultural Land Preservation**

The City of Chino will propose to participate in the Williamson Act Easement Exchange Program (WAEPP) and any plan that may be adopted pursuant to SB 831.

#### **AG-2 Agency Coordination and Planning for Agricultural Uses**

The City of Chino shall participate in a coordinated multi-agency planning program for sustainable agricultural uses within the Lower Chino/Prado Basin. This program should involve the principal public landowners within the basin, including but not limited to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Orange County Flood Control District, and County of San Bernardino. Components of this program

may include an agricultural feasibility study, acquisitions plan, and management plan for sustainable agricultural uses within the basin.

### **5.2.7 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

The proposed project will accelerate the conversion of prime agricultural land and prime farmland to urban uses. This is a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project. This impact is also cumulatively significant within the greater Chino Basin Dairy Area. The loss of agricultural productivity is cumulatively significant from a regional perspective.