

3.2 Farmland

3.2.1 Types of Farmland

The study area includes thousands of hectares (acres) of farmland used for orchards and grain crops, raising livestock and poultry, grazing, and dairy operations. Agricultural land throughout western Riverside County is under increasing pressure of conversion to urban use. This analysis focuses on potential impacts to three important types of farmland, hereinafter referred to as “designated” farmland. The summarized definitions below are from the California Department of Conservation, and are different from general agricultural land discussed in Sections 3.1 and 4.1 (Figure 3.2.1):

- C *Prime Farmland* has the best combination of characteristics for producing crops. It produces sustained high yields when properly managed, and is not in or committed to urban development.
- C *Unique Farmland* is other than prime farmland but capable of producing high-value crops.
- C *Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance* does not qualify as Prime or Unique Farmlands, but is irrigated land determined to be important by State and local governments.

3.2.2 Alternatives

3.2.2.1 Alternative 1a

Alternative 1a includes 158 ha (391 ac) of Prime Farmland, 100 ha (247 ac) of Unique Farmland, and 513 ha (1,267 ac) of Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance. Most of the existing designated farmland is along Ramona Expressway east of I-215, an area dominated by grain crops near the interstate and by dairies and related farms closer to San Jacinto. Three large dairy operations are located within this alternative. West of I-215, parcels of farmland tend to be smaller, and small portions of several orchards are located along Sobrante Road.

3.2.2.2 Alternative 1b

The designated farmland characteristics of Alternative 1b are nearly the same as Alternative 1a, with minor differences, because its southerly course avoids a large area of orchards. This alternative includes 148 ha (366 ac) of Prime Farmland, 108 ha (268 ac) of Unique Farmland, and almost 516 ha (1,274 ac) of Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance.

3.2.2.3 Alternative 4a

Alternative 4a includes 80 ha (198 ac) of Prime Farmland, 3 ha (8 ac) of Unique Farmland, and 397 ha (981 ac) of Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance. Most of the designated farmland is along the route shared by all versions of Alternative 4, from