



- OS 5.7 Where land is prohibited from development due to its retention as natural floodways, floodplains and water courses, incentives should be available to the owner of such land including density transfer and other mechanisms as may be adopted. These incentives will be provided for the purpose of encouraging the preservation of natural water courses without creating undue hardship on property owners. (AI 60)



**Wetlands** are the link between water and land, or the collective term for areas between dry land and bodies of water. In wetlands, the surface of the water, called the water table, is usually at, above, or just below the land surface for enough time to restrict the growth of plants to those that are adapted to wet conditions and promote the development of soils characteristic of a wet environment. Wetlands also act as natural filters, thereby enhancing overall water quality and protecting sources of drinking water.

A **wetland buffer** is land that provides a buffer area of an appropriate size to protect the environmental and functional habitat values of the wetland, which are integrally important in supporting the full range of the wetland and adjacent biological community. In wetland buffer areas, permitted uses can include access paths, improvements necessary to protect adjacent wetlands, and all uses permitted in wetland areas.

### Wetlands

Wetlands in Riverside County might typically occur in low-lying areas that receive fresh water at the edges of lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. Wetlands provide habitat for a wide variety of plants, invertebrates, fish, and larger animals, including many rare, threatened, or endangered species. The plants and animals found in wetlands include both those that are able to live on dry land or in the water and those that can live only in a wet environment. Wetlands in Riverside County may include vernal pools, palm oases or desert washes.

#### Policies:

- OS 6.1 During the development review process, ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act's Section 404 in terms of wetlands mitigation policies and policies concerning fill material in jurisdictional wetlands. (AI 3)
- OS 6.2 Preserve buffer zones around wetlands where feasible. (AI 61)
- OS 6.3 Consider wetlands for use as natural water treatment areas that will result in improvement of water quality. (AI 56)

### Agricultural Resources

Agriculture is given special recognition as a Foundation Component of the General Plan because of its high socioeconomic value to Riverside County. The two major conservation rationales are to maintain the viability of the agricultural industry, a critical component of the County's economy, and to preserve the resource represented by farmland—its productive soils and its secondary role as an open space amenity. Soil classifications and the Williamson Act are described below because of their importance in defining agricultural resources.

#### Soil Classifications

The Countywide Agricultural Resources Map (see Figure OS-2) identifies several classifications of important agricultural lands, as established by state and federal agencies. The four mapped classifications of important farmland are based on criteria for soil characteristics, climatic conditions, and water supply. The criteria include soil type, moisture content, water supply, soil temperature, acidity, salinity, depth, drainage, water table, flooding, slope, erodibility, permeability, rock content, rooting depth, growing season, crop type and value, and other economic factors. The four classifications of important farmlands shown on the Agricultural Resources Map are described as follows.