

4.3 AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes existing agricultural and forest resources within the project area, Federal, State and local regulatory setting, and analyzes the potential for project to significantly affect such resources through displacement or conversion of these resources.

4.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed project is located in the Coachella Valley in central Riverside County, within the incorporated cities of Desert Hot Springs, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indio, and La Quinta and in the unincorporated community of Thermal. The ID8 WBA Water Treatment Facility site would be located within an undeveloped, vacant desert area of Desert Hot Springs. The CRRF site would be located on a vacant, disturbed portion of the CVWD's Water Reclamation Plant No. 4 (WRP-4) parcel surrounded by agricultural and developed urban lands.

4.3.2.1 Forest Resources

Section 12220(g) of the California Public Resources Code defines forest land as "land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation and other public benefits." There are no forestry lands within the study area.

4.3.2.2 Agricultural Resources

The study area's potential to affect agricultural lands is limited to existing SBA wells 6805-1 and SBA 6808-1, and the CRRF and its offsite potable water pipeline, 12-inch sanitary sewer, 4-inch treated brine forcemain and 10-inch overflow to WRP-4. All three project sites are located within the unincorporated community of Thermal. None of the remaining project facilities are located on lands mapped as farmland. Per the 2014 Land Conservation Act Status Report and most recent Land Conservation Act Maps, no lands in the study area are enrolled in the Williamson Act program.

Farmland Classifications

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) designates the project sites as Land Capability Class 7. The USDA defines Class 7 as having "very severe limitations that make them less suitable for cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to grazing, forestland, or wildlife." The project sites are therefore not considered optimal for crop farming by the USDA.

The California Natural Resources Agency's Department of Conservation (CDC), Division of Land Resource Protection, maps important farmlands throughout California through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). Established in 1982, Government Code Section 65570 mandates the FMMP to biennially report on the conversion of farmland and grazing land, and to provide maps and data to local government and the public. Important farmlands are classified into the categories listed

below on the basis of soil surveys developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, irrigation status, and current land use.

For environmental review purposes under CEQA, the categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land constitute 'agricultural land' (Public Resources Code Section 21060.1). The "Urban and Built-up Land" and "Other Land" categories are used for reporting changes in land use as required for FMMP's biennial farmland conversion report.

- **Prime Farmland.** This category represents farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for long-term agricultural production. Prime farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed. In addition, the land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production in the last four years to qualify under this category.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** This category is similar to Prime Farmland in that it has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for crop production. The difference is that Farmland of Statewide Importance has minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes and less ability to store moisture.
- **Unique Farmland.** This category represents land that has been used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as found in some climatic zones of California. Unique Farmland must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** This category applies to land of importance to the local agricultural economy, as determined by the county in which it is located. This land is either currently producing crops or has the capability of production, but does not meet the criteria of the preceding categories.
- **Grazing Land.** Grazing Land is land on which the vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.
- **Urban and Built-up Land.** This land is occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures on a 10-acre parcel.
- **Other Land.** This is land that is not included in any of the categories above and may include low density rural developments, brush, timber, wetland, confined livestock areas, strip mines, and gravel pits, among other land types.

Farmland Designations in the Project Study Area

Table 4.3-1 identifies the farmland classifications of the project sites. As shown in the table, the project sites in Desert Hot Springs are all designated Other Land and all of the project sites in the cities of Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage, La Quinta and Indio are designated Urban and Built-up Land.

Only the project sites in the unincorporated community of Thermal are located on land designated Local Importance and Prime Farmland. SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are on CVWD-owned parcels that are adjacent to agricultural land uses designated as Local Importance; both of these parcels are developed with well pumping facilities and do not contain active agricultural production. SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are reached by CVWD staff via an access road located off of Van Buren Boulevard.

The CRRF, associated potable water pipeline, and discharge pipelines from the CRRF to WRP-4 would be located on CVWD-owned lands designated as Local Importance and Prime Farmland. Potable water would be conveyed to the CRRF site by a new 18-inch pipeline that would run from its proposed connection with an existing 24-inch water pipeline in Polk Street to the west, through cultivated land to the CRRF entrance on Fillmore Street. Three different alignments are being considered for this pipeline, all of which would be sited in agricultural land: a 1.5-mile Avenue 62 alignment; a 1-mile Avenue 63 alignment; and a 1.5-mile Avenue 64 alignment (see Figure 3-34 in Chapter 3, Project Description). The CRRF would require three pipelines on the WRP-4 parcel, which is designated as Urban and Built Up Land.

TABLE 4.3-1: FARMLAND DESIGNATIONS OF PROJECT SITES	
CVWD Well/Site No.	Farmland Classification
Desert Hot Springs	
WBA 3405-1, 3408-1, 3409-2, 3410-1	Other Land
ID8 WBA Water Treatment Facility site (including alternative site) and raw/treated water pipeline alignments	Other Land
Palm Desert	
SBA 4610-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 4720-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 4721-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 4722-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5632-2	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5657-2	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5664-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5676-2	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5677-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5678-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5679-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5720-1	Urban and Built-up Land
Rancho Mirage	
SBA 4510-1	Urban and Built-up Land
La Quinta	
SBA 5711-2	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5717-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 5718-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 6701-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 6726-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 6728-1	Urban and Built-up Land
SBA 6734-1	Urban and Built-up Land
WBA 6724-1	Urban and Built-up Land
WBA 6725-1	Urban and Built-up Land
WBA 6723-1	Urban and Built-up Land
La Quinta WBA Water Treatment Facility site and raw/treated water pipeline alignments	Urban and Built-up Land
Indio	
SBA 5719-1	Urban and Built-up Land
Thermal	
SBA 6805-1	Local Importance
SBA 6808-1	Local Importance

TABLE 4.3-1: FARMLAND DESIGNATIONS OF PROJECT SITES	
CVWD Well/Site No.	Farmland Classification
CRRF, potable water pipeline, 12" sanitary sewer, 4" treated brine forcemain and 10" overflow to WRP-4	Prime Farmland
Source: Department of Conservation, California Important Farmland Finder, 2015.	

4.3.3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

4.3.3.1 Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) requires an evaluation of the relative value of farmland that could be affected by decisions sponsored in whole or part by the federal government. The FPPA is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. It assures that, to the extent possible, federal programs are administered to be compatible with State, local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015). For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements includes forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land. The proposed CRRF site, therefore, is not considered optimal for crop farming by the USDA.

4.3.3.2 State

California Land Conservation Act

As noted in Section 4.3.2.1 above, the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is the State's primary program aimed at conserving private land for agricultural and open space use. It is a voluntary, locally-administered program that offers reduced property taxes on lands whose owners place enforceable restrictions on land use through contracts between the individual landowners and local governments.

There are no lands in the study area that are enrolled in the Williamson Act program. Therefore, land use restrictions imposed by the Williamson Act are not applicable to the proposed Project.

4.3.3.3 Regional and Local

Riverside County General Plan/Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan

The Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP) is an extension of the Riverside County General Plan and Vision Statement (Riverside County 2012). The Vision Statement details the physical, environmental, and economic characteristics that the County aspires to achieve by the year 2020. Using the Vision Statement as the primary foundation, the General Plan establishes policies to guide development and conservation within the entire unincorporated County territory, while the Area Plan details standards and policy direction specifically for Eastern Coachella. The ECVAP is set within the southeast portion of the Coachella Valley, south and east of the City of Indio, and east of the City of La Quinta and the Santa Rosa Mountains, stretching to the Imperial County line on the south. The unincorporated community of Thermal is located within the ECVAP area. SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1, and the CRRF and its off-site water pipeline, are located near this community and, therefore, also fall within the ECVAP area.

The ECVAP Land Use Plan depicts the geographic distribution of land uses within the plan area. These land uses derive from the five General Plan Foundation Component land uses: Open Space, Agriculture, Rural, Rural Community and Community Development. The Plan recognizes the importance of preserving the Valley's agricultural resources for their economic, cultural and scenic values and contains the following policies relative to agriculture preservation:

- **ECVAP 5.1:** Retain and protect agricultural lands through adherence to the policies contained in the Agriculture section of the General Plan Land Use Element.
- **ECVAP 8.2:** Discourage industrial uses that may conflict with agricultural or residential land uses either directly or indirectly within the Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan.

Riverside County Land Use Ordinance

The Riverside County Land Use Ordinance (Ordinance 348.4802) provides for land use planning and zoning regulations and related functions of Riverside County. The Land Use Ordinance establishes zoning districts, standards, and regulations to guide development within the County. SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1, and the CRRF and its off-site water pipeline, including all three alignments under consideration, are located on parcels zoned for agricultural uses by the Land Use Ordinance. SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are located on land zoned A-1 Light Agriculture. According to Ordinance Article XIII, Section 13.1, water works facilities, both public and private, intended primarily for the production and distribution of water for irrigation purposes are permitted within this district, as are public utility facilities. The CRRF and its off-site pipeline, including all three alignments under consideration, are located on parcels zoned A-2 Heavy Agriculture. According to Ordinance Article XIV, Section 14.2, water works facilities, both public and private, intended primarily for the production and distribution of water for irrigation purposes are permitted within this district, as are public utility facilities.

4.3.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.3.4.1 Significance Criteria

The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether the project's impacts to agricultural resources would be significant environmental effects. Resources including the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation, have been used in assessing impacts of the proposed project on agriculture and farmland. In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant impact on agriculture and forest resources if it would:

- a. 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.
- b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- c. 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)).
- d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

- e. 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.

4.3.4.2 Approach to Analysis

Agricultural Resources

This analysis evaluates the potential for project facilities to result in adverse effects related to the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use and whether these impacts are significant. Agricultural impacts are evaluated by comparing anticipated direct temporary and permanent ground disturbance areas associated with the project facilities to farmland mapped on CDC's FMMP Important Farmland Series Maps as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, and to maps of Williamson Act contracts and zoning maps for the study area. Direct impacts are also evaluated based upon the size, shape and location of the subject agricultural lands, whether they are near or a part of a different planned land use, whether they are a fragment of farmland, and how location and shape affect the cost-effectiveness of long-term cultivation. Indirect effects related to potential incompatibilities between agricultural uses (such as access for agricultural vehicles, and dust/air/noise from agricultural operations) and the CRRF are also evaluated. Because of CVWD's status as a Special District, the analysis also considers the requirements imposed on it to comply with regulations mandated by the State for water quality and water treatment.

Forest Resources

There are no forest resources in the project study area. Therefore, the evaluation of forest resources is identified as an Area of No Project Impact, discussed below.

Areas of No Project Impact

The project primarily involves retrofitting existing wells and associated facilities, with new development in agricultural areas being limited to the facilities located in the Thermal area and inclusive of the CRRF and its associated water lines. With the possible exception of these components of the chromium-6 project, which are discussed further below, the project would not result in significant impacts to agricultural resources. These significance criteria and potential project impacts are briefly discussed below:

- a. **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.**

With the exception of existing SBA wells 6805-1 and SBA 6808-1, and the CRRF and its offsite potable water pipeline, 12-inch sanitary sewer, 4-inch treated brine forcemain and 10-inch overflow to WRP-4, none of the remaining project facilities are located on or in the vicinity of land mapped as Farmland. No conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance would take place on these sites. Therefore, this criterion is only applicable to SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1, and the CRRF and its offsite water pipelines, including all three alignments under consideration, which are discussed in Section 4.3.4.2 below.

b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

None of the project sites are subject to a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, this portion of the criterion is not applicable to the proposed project and is not discussed further. The project facilities are considered public facility utilities which are permitted uses under the Riverside County zoning designations for SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 and the CRRF and its offsite water pipeline. Therefore, the project facilities would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use and this criterion is not discussed further.

c and d. 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)) or result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

No land in the study area is zoned for forestry or meets the definition of forest land. Therefore, these criteria are not applicable to the proposed project and are not discussed further.

e. 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.

There is no forest land within the project study area, and the proposed project would not affect other forest land outside of the study area due to the nature and location of proposed construction and operations. Therefore, this portion of the criterion is not applicable to the project and is not discussed further.

With regard to conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use, SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are mapped as Farmland of Local Importance. However, these sites are existing developed CVWD well sites and will continue to operate as well sites; no Farmland conversion is associated with these sites. The CRRF site is mapped as Prime Farmland and would result in conversion of land to a non-agricultural use. The proposed CRRF site is already subject to the effects of surrounding development, including the existing WRP-4 facilities, WRP-4 access along the north and the existing Fillmore Street on the west. The CRRF site is more influenced by the existing WRP-4 use than the prevailing off-site agricultural land use. Temporary disruption to agricultural lands or uses during construction of the CRRF offsite water pipeline, 12-inch sanitary sewer, 4-inch treated brine force main, and 10-inch overflow to WRP-4 are addressed in Section 4.3.4.3 below, and long-term operational impacts to agricultural land uses in the vicinity of the CRRF are discussed in Section 4.3.4.4 below.

4.3.4.3 Construction Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact 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. (Less Than Significant)

The existing SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are reached by CVWD staff via an access road located off of Van Buren Boulevard. The access road is directly adjacent and south of these two well

sites, and provides direct access to the well site gates. The access road separates the CVWD well sites from agricultural land to the south. This same road would be used for construction vehicles and would not require the use or conversion of any agricultural land adjacent to the road. All staging and construction activities would be located on the well sites, and would not disrupt surrounding agricultural operations. No land in the vicinity of SBA 6805-1 and 6808-1 would be temporarily or permanently converted to a non-agricultural use during construction.

At the proposed CRRF site, all construction staging is anticipated to occur on the CRRF site itself. Access to the CRRF site would be from Fillmore Street utilizing the existing WRP-4 access road. Construction activities would not require the use or conversion of any agricultural land adjacent to the site, and would be conducted to minimize or avoid disruption to surrounding agricultural operations. No land in the vicinity of the CRRF would be temporarily or permanently converted to a non-agricultural use during construction.

Potable water would be brought to the CRRF site by a new 18-inch pipeline that would run from its proposed connection with an existing 24-inch pipeline in Polk Street. Three alignments are being considered for the proposed pipeline, would be located on private property currently under agricultural production, and would be built in one of three locations, all of which have been analyzed:

- south of the Avenue 62 alignment,
- along the unimproved Avenue 63 alignment, and
- along the unimproved Avenue 64 alignment

CVWD would need to acquire a permanent easement for installation of the pipeline in these locations, and a temporary easement for construction staging along whichever alignment is chosen. This land is mapped as Prime Farmland. Construction of the 12-inch sanitary sewer, 4-inch treated brine forcemain and 10-inch overflow to WRP-4 would take place in close proximity to the CRRF. These alignments would be located below-grade and transfer wastewater from the CRRF to WRP-4. This land is also mapped as Prime Farmland. Temporary conversion and use of this farmland would be required for project construction. Land overlying the potable water line would be returned to agricultural production after construction is completed. Land overlying the three pipes adjacent to the CRRF would not be precluded from returning to agricultural use. However, there are currently no plans to do so.

In addition, placement of a potable water pipeline underground beneath land in agricultural production does not constitute a permanent conversion of farmland because the land would continue to be available for cultivation. Irrigation and other pipelines are routinely located underneath agricultural fields, without impact to cultivation activities above these facilities. The placement of pipelines adjacent to the CRRF does not constitute a permanent conversion of farmland because the land would continue to be available for cultivation.

Construction of the CRRF would constitute the greatest impact to important farmlands. The CRRF and its adjacent evaporation ponds would result in the permanent conversion of approximately 14 acres of prime agricultural land to a public infrastructure use (water treatment facility). The site is also adjacent to and the proposed use would be compatible with an existing CVWD water reclamation plant.

Also important is consideration of the level or extent of the loss of agricultural lands. According to the CVWD 2014 Crop Report, the irrigable lands within the CVWD service area totals 76,354 acres (CVWD 2014). The 14 acres of CVWD-owned land proposed for removal from agricultural production constitute 0.00018% of the total irrigable acreage. As previously noted, the proposed CRRF site is already subject to the fragmenting effects of surrounding development, including the existing WRP-4 facilities, WRP-4 access along the north and the existing Fillmore Street on the west. The CRRF site is more influenced by the existing WRP-4 use than the prevailing off-site agricultural land use. Conversion of the subject 14 acres to the proposed CRRF use would have a less than significant impact on important farmlands in the Coachella Valley.

Therefore, the proposed chromium-6 project will have a less than significant impact on important farmland in the Coachella Valley.

4.3.4.4 Operation Impacts and Mitigation

Impact AG-2: Implementation of the CRRF component of the project would result in the permanent conversion of Prime Farmland to a non-agricultural use. (Less Than Significant)

The CRRF parcel is designated as Prime/Local Importance Farmland and is located within the larger WRP-4 parcel owned by CVWD, which is designated Urban and Built Up Land. In the early 1980s, CVWD purchased approximately 700 acres in this area, and set aside 50 acres of this land for wastewater treatment facilities. Most of the remaining land was leased by CVWD for agricultural production. These lands are generally bounded by Fillmore Street on the west, the Coachella valley Stormwater Channel on the east, Avenue 62 on the north and Avenue 64 on the south. Over the years, CVWD has expanded the WRP-4 to accommodate an increase in wastewater treatment demands. The first of these expansions required a two-acre increase of development on the existing WRP-4 parcel. The second expansion occurred in 2007 on the southernmost side of the facility, for construction of three replacement drying beds.

While agricultural land conversion would occur, this conversion is considered less than significant based on several factors including: 1) the County's zoning designation of A-2 Heavy Agriculture, which allows for public utility facilities; and 2) the Federal classification of the site as having "very severe limitations that make them less suitable for cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to grazing, forestland, or wildlife." The CRRF site is therefore not considered optimal for crop farming by the USDA.

As noted above, the proposed CRRF and its adjacent evaporation ponds would result in the permanent conversion of approximately 14 acres of prime agricultural land to a non-agricultural use. These lands are already constrained by the effects of surrounding development, including the existing WRP-4 facilities, WRP-4 access along the north and the existing Fillmore Street on the west. The CRRF site is more influenced by the existing WRP-4 use than the prevailing off-site agricultural land use. Furthermore, the 14 acres of CVWD-owned land proposed for removal from agricultural production constitute 0.00018% of the total irrigable acreage. Therefore, the operation of the proposed chromium-6 project will have a less than significant impact on important farmland in the Coachella Valley.

Impact AG-3: Operation of the CRRF and outdoor evaporation ponds are not expected to result in changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. (Less than Significant)

All operations related to the CRRF are anticipated to occur within the CRRF building, or outside in the evaporation ponds if that brine treatment method is used. All treatment would occur onsite with no disturbance occurring to agricultural operations on adjacent parcels. Evaporation ponds, should they be used, would be permitted per South Coast Air Quality Management District requirements and would not result in long term changes to surrounding agricultural lands. Trucks entering and exiting the WRP-4 parcel would use the existing WRP-4 access road from Fillmore Street. The potable water line would remain at a sub-surface level and would not interfere with ongoing agricultural operations east of the WRP-4 parcel.

For the reasons discussed above, operation of the CRRF would not result in significant changes to the existing environment but would result in the conversion of 14 acres of prime farmland to non-agricultural use. This impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

4.3.5 SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As discussed above in Section 4.3.4, neither the construction nor the operation of the proposed chromium-6 facilities will have a significant impact on important agricultural lands or resources in the Coachella Valley. The project will result in a less than significant conversion of prime farmlands, it will not conflict with local zoning or any Williamson Act contract, will have no effect on forest lands, and will not involve other changes that due to their location or nature would result in conversion of agricultural lands.

4.3.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

There are no forest resources in the project study area. Therefore, the chromium-6 treatment project does not contribute to any cumulative projects related to forest resources.

The geographic scope for cumulative impact analysis related to agricultural resources consists of Riverside County and all agricultural land owned and leased by CVWD. With the exception of SBA wells 6805-1 and SBA 6808-1, and the CRRF and its offsite water pipeline, none of the remaining project facilities are located on or in the vicinity of land mapped as farmland. Further, although SBA wells 6805-1 and 6808-1 are mapped as Prime Farmland, they are currently developed and used by CVWD for the potable water pumping and distribution. Therefore, no agricultural land conversion would occur at those sites, and they would not contribute to any cumulative impacts related to agricultural resources.

CVWD's Fillmore Street Irrigation Ditch project is being installed to protect the WRP-4 site from flooding, and to convey overland flows from nearby irrigated lands to the CVSC, and will result in approximately 50 acres within the WRP-4 parcel being removed from agriculture. However, it should be noted that there is incompatibility in regards to Federal and State mapping of these lands for agricultural use insofar as the USDA's classification of the site is not considered optimal for crop farming.

In addition, the CRRF and all pipeline alignments under consideration are located on parcels zoned A-2 Heavy Agriculture by the County of Riverside. According to the County's Zoning Ordinance, Article XIV,

Section 14.2, water works facilities, both public and private, intended primarily for the production and distribution of water for irrigation purposes, are permitted within this zoning district, as are public utility facilities. Construction of the CRRF pipeline would temporarily disrupt agricultural uses in designated prime farmland along the three proposed alignments. After construction, the land would be returned to agricultural production. The County's Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP), which has policies in place to retain and protect agricultural lands, seeks to reduce impacts related to the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. The ECVAP also discourages industrial uses that may conflict with agricultural land uses either directly or indirectly within the ECVAP. Based on the policies within the ECVAP and the existing use of the WRP-4 parcel, the CRRF would not contribute to any cumulative impacts related to agriculture.

Also important is consideration of the level or extent of the loss of agricultural lands. The irrigable lands within the CVWD service area totals 76,354 acres (CVWD's Farmland Report, 2014). The 14 acres of CVWD-owned land proposed for removal from agricultural production constitute 0.00018% of the total irrigable acreage. As previously noted, the proposed CRRF site is already subject to the fragmenting effects of surrounding development, including the existing WRP-4 facilities, WRP-4 access along the north and the existing Fillmore Street on the west. The CRRF site is more influenced by the existing WRP-4 use than the prevailing off-site agricultural land use. Conversion of the cumulative acreage would have a less than significant impact on important farmlands in the Coachella Valley

4.3.7 REFERENCES

- California Department of Conservation. 2015. *California Land Conservation Act website*.
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