4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed Plan on agriculture and forestry resources.

4.2.1 Existing Conditions

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture is a major industry in California, producing a substantial portion of the nation's food supply. The San Diego region plays an important role, ranking 13th among California counties in terms of agricultural production value. San Diego County has more small farms (fewer than 10 acres) than any other county in the United States, with 62% of its 63,134 farms being fewer than 50 acres (San Diego County Farm Bureau 2025a; National Agricultural Statistics Service 2022). Additionally, 94% of farms in the county are family-owned (San Diego County Farm Bureau 2025b). In 2021, the total value of agricultural commodities in San Diego County was approximately $1.8 billion (San Diego County Farm Bureau 2025a).

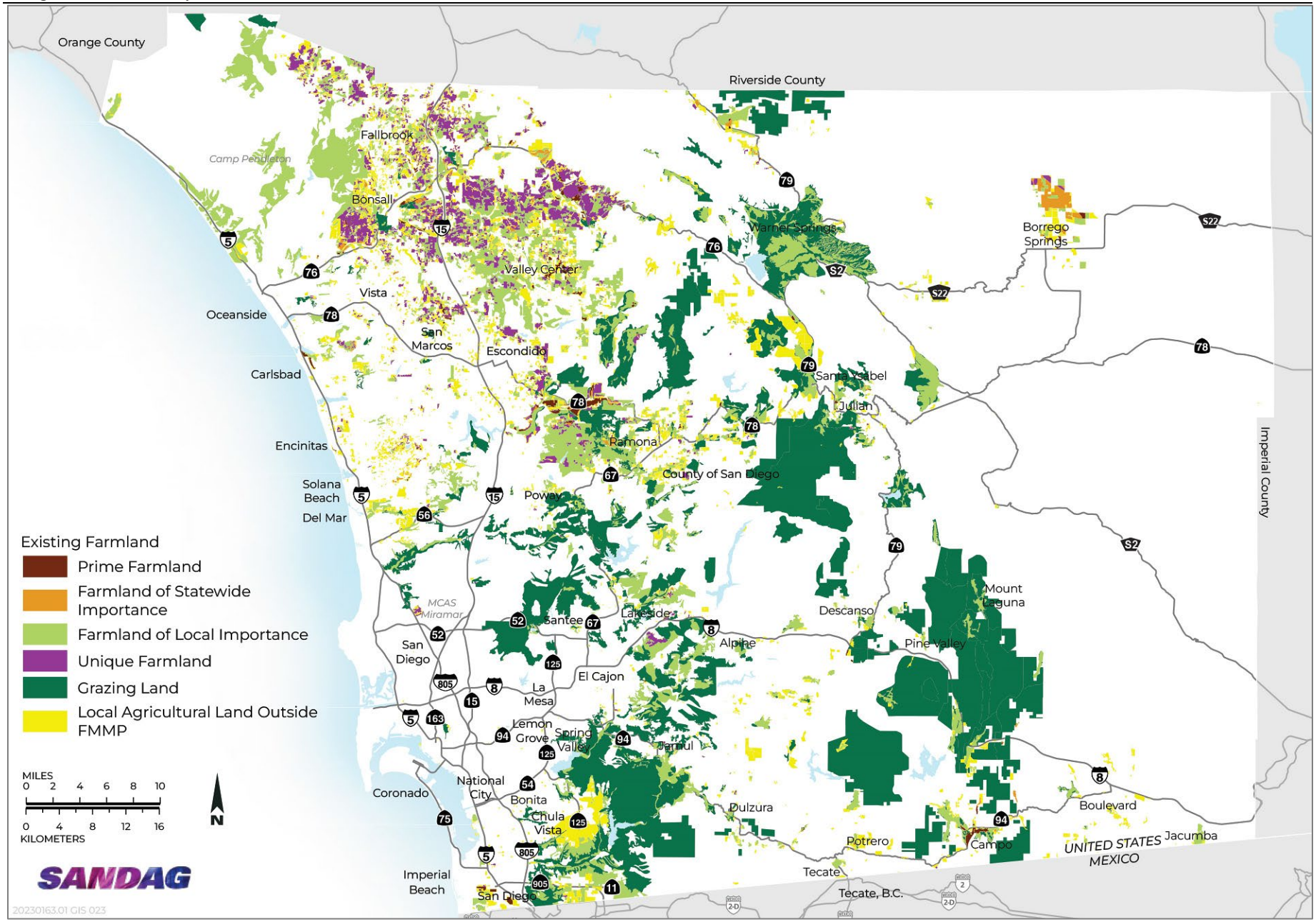
The subtropical climate of the San Diego region supports a diverse range of crops. Key crops include bedding plants, color, perennials, cacti, and succulents, which together account for 24% of the county's agricultural production, followed by ornamental trees and shrubs at 23% (County of San Diego 2023a).

San Diego County also has more certified organic growers than any other county in California, with more than 280 certified organic farms (San Diego County Farm Bureau 2025b). In addition to crop production, agriculture contributes significantly to the local economy, supporting jobs and fostering economic sustainability throughout the region.

Existing Agriculture and Farmlands

SANDAG compiled data available from the sources and years listed below to represent existing conditions for farmland in the San Diego region. Existing agricultural and farmlands parcels of all sizes are identified on Figure 4.2-1.

- SANDAG Land Use, 2025: This set of agricultural data resources includes grazing lands (field crops, grazing lands) and croplands (intensive agriculture, orchards and vineyards, and truck crops) (SanGIS 2025a, SanGIS 2025b).
- San Diego County Agriculture Weights and Measures Agriculture Commodities Data: This database represents field border boundaries of agricultural commodity production sites throughout the region (County of San Diego n.d.).
- State of California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), 2025: These data identify land classified under CEQA as "agricultural land," which includes the following land use categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Lands (DOC 2025b).



Source: Data downloaded from CA Dept of Conservation (FMMP) in 2024; USFS, BLM and SDMMP in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 4.2-1 Existing Agricultural Land and Farmland

As shown in Table 4.2-1, there are approximately 569,804 acres of existing agriculture and farmland in the San Diego region. Grazing lands account for about 283,002 acres (approximately 50%) of agricultural lands and are distributed throughout the San Diego region. General agriculture, field crops, and truck crops tend to be in the northern portion of the San Diego region and in the northeast portions of the unincorporated county. Orchard and vineyards are concentrated in the north along Interstate (I) 15.

Table 4.2-1 Existing Agricultural Lands in the San Diego Region

Agricultural Category	Acreage
Prime Farmland	4,972
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,850
Unique Farmland	38,266
Farmland of Local Importance	159,901
Grazing Lands	283,002
Local agricultural land outside of FMMP	76,813
Total	**569,804**

Note: FMMP = Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

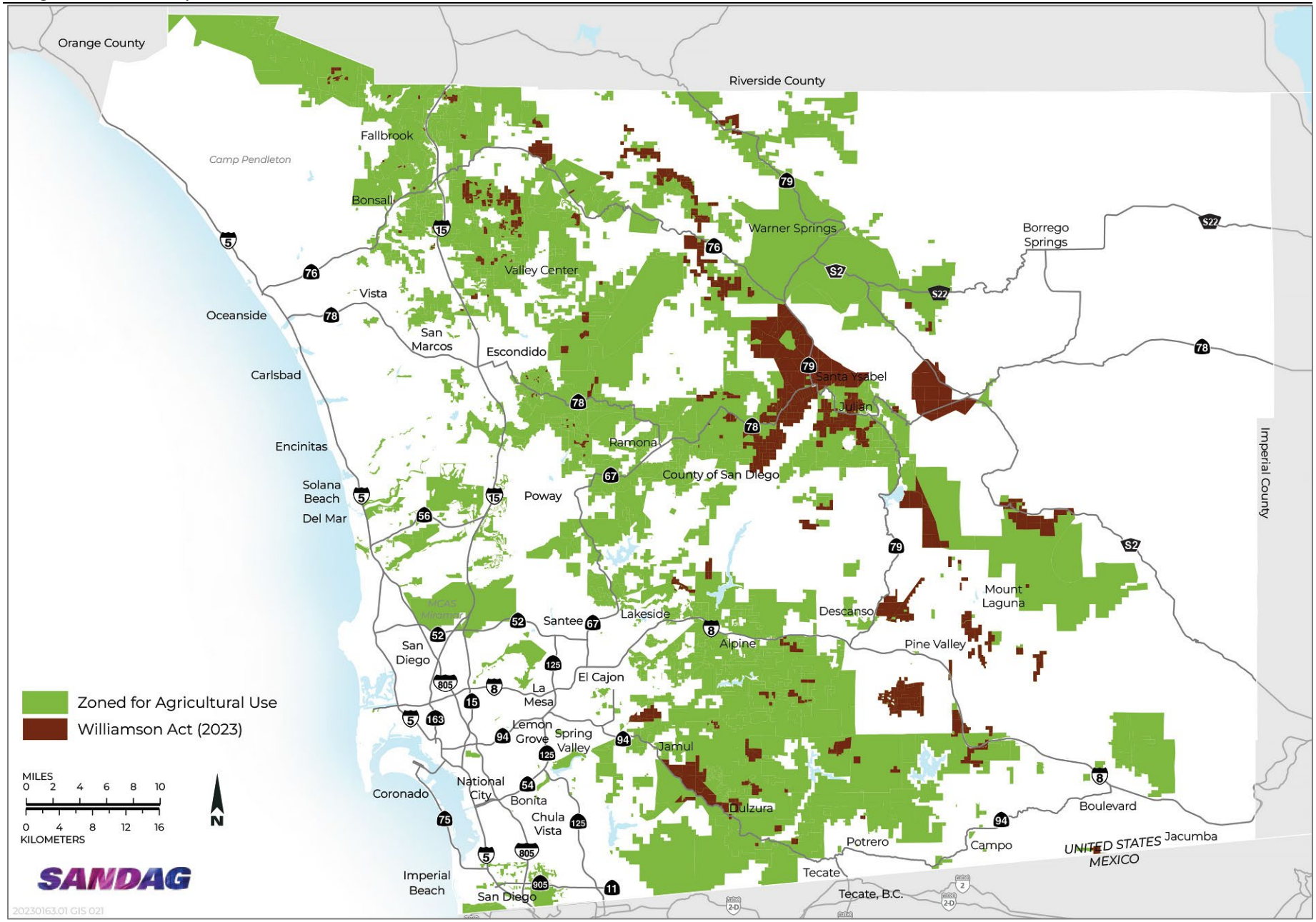
Sources: CA. Dept of Conservation in 2024, SanGIS in 2025, Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Existing Agriculture Zoning and Williamson Act Lands

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. As of 2017, the most recent available data, the San Diego region contains 59,420 acres of lands designated under the Williamson Act (SanGIS 2025a, SanGIS 2025b). Figure 4.2-2 shows Williamson Act–designated lands in the San Diego region (these lands are also zoned for agriculture). As shown on Figure 4.2-2, Williamson Act lands are generally located in the eastern portions of the County of San Diego along State Route (SR) 78, SR 79, and SR 76.

Public agencies may acquire Williamson Act–contracted land for a wide range of public improvements. Common reasons for publicly acquiring contracted land include conversion to wildlife habitat, water resource management, public open space, and schools. Public acquisitions have been the second-leading source of contract termination acreage over the current decade. Before acquiring contracted lands, a public agency must make findings that there is no other noncontracted land reasonably feasible for the purpose, and that the lower cost of contracted land is not a primary factor in its decision.

Agricultural zoning and Williamson Act contracts help preserve agricultural lands in the region. Existing land use information was obtained from applicable general plans, and includes lands allowed for various types of agricultural operations (Figure 4.2-2). San Diego County contains 4,031 farms, covering an area of approximately 179,330 acres. Of these farms, approximately 68% are between 1 and 9 acres. San Diego County produces more than 200 different agricultural products, including strawberries, apples, avocados, livestock, and floriculture products (National Agriculture Statistics Service 2022).



Source: Data downloaded from CA Dept of Conservation in 2024; SanGIS in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 4.2-2 Zoned Agriculture Williamson Act Lands

FORESTRY RESOURCES

Existing Timberland

The California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982 (Government Code Section 51100 et seq.) defines timberland as privately owned land, or land acquired for state forest purposes, that is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, and that is capable of growing an average annual volume of wood fiber of at least 15 cubic feet per acre. A Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) is an area zoned and used for growing and harvesting timber or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses. Compatible uses include those that do not significantly detract from the use of the property for, or inhibit, growing and harvesting timber.

The San Diego region does not contain any land designated as timberland or TPZ (County of San Diego 2023b).

Existing Forest Land

California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 12220(g) defines "forest land" as land that can support 10% 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. Forest vegetation communities in the San Diego region include riparian forest/woodland and upland forest/woodland; these vegetation communities are located mainly in the coastal and montane subregions of the San Diego region respectively.

According to the most recent available vegetation data, the San Diego region contains a number of areas that are considered forest land, totaling 252,402 acres (SDMMP 2025). Figure 4.2-3 shows lands designated as forest land in the San Diego region. A number of state and national parks in the region also contain designated forest land.

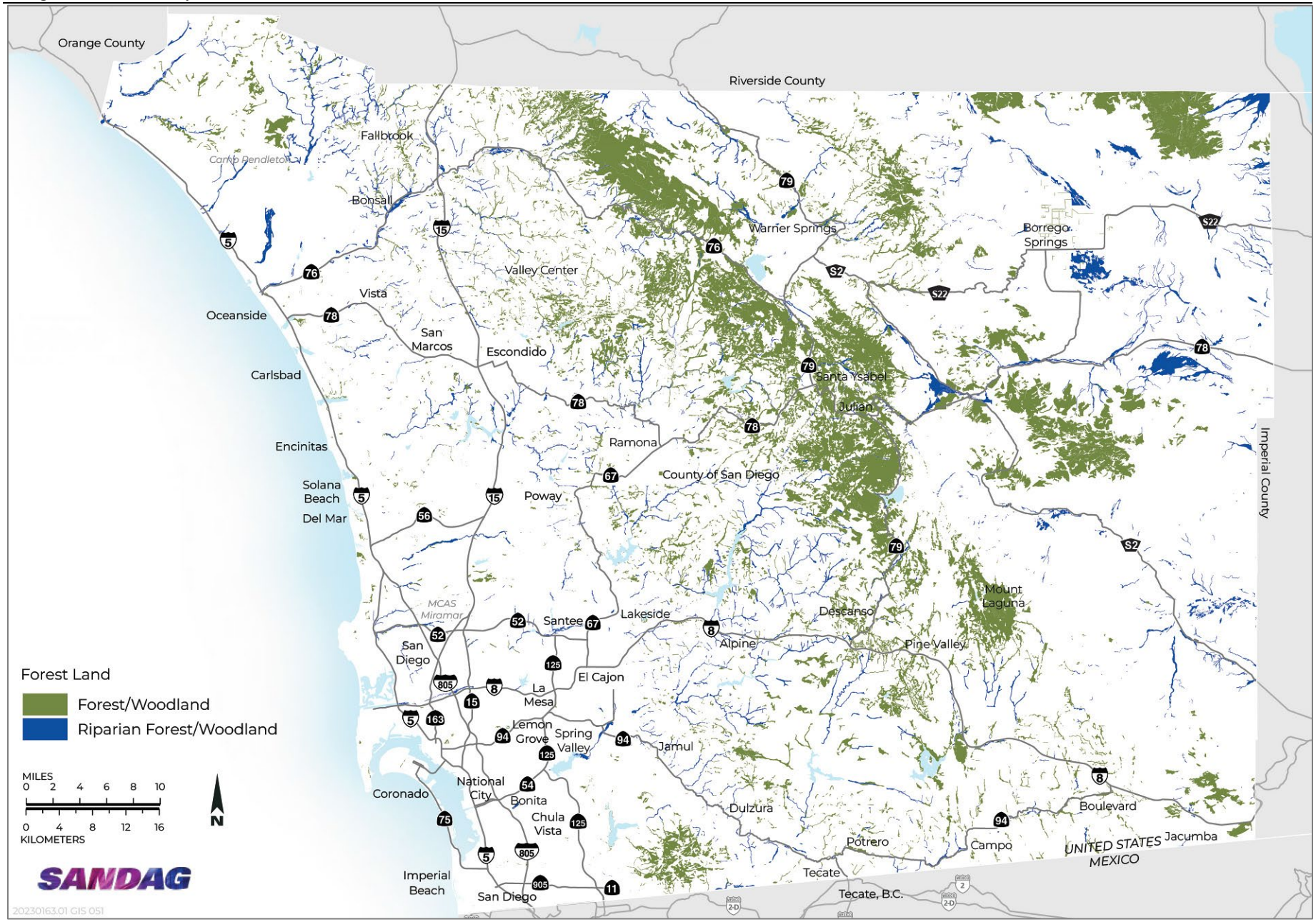
The majority of forest land is located in parks and vacant and undeveloped areas located east of incorporated cities and urbanized communities. A few areas with forest lands are also located near highly urbanized areas. National and state parks with forest resources include the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Cleveland National Forest, Agua Tibia Wilderness, San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, Palomar Mountain State Park, and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. The following sections describe national and state parks or preserved areas that contain designated forest land.

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, located in the city of San Diego, has more than 2,000 acres of rare native Torrey pine forest and southern maritime chaparral. Recreational uses are managed by the California State Parks system. The trees themselves were identified in the mid-1800s as a separate species of pine and one that grows naturally only along a small strip of coast from Del Mar to La Jolla and on Santa Rosa Island, which lies off the coast about 170 miles to the northwest. The Torrey pine is the rarest pine in the United States and one of the rarest pines in the world. All of the natural features in the reserve are protected under the California State Parks PRC, Section 5019.71 (Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve 2025).

The Cleveland National Forest

The Cleveland National Forest is the southernmost National Forest in California. Consisting of 460,000 acres, the forest offers a wide variety of terrain and recreational opportunities. Portions of the Cleveland National Forest span unincorporated areas of San Diego County across three separate regions, as well as parts of Orange and Riverside Counties. Damaging or removing any tree or forest product except as authorized by a special-use authorization, timber sale contract, or federal law or regulation is prohibited (USFS 2025a).



Source: Data downloaded from SDMMP in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 4.2-3 Forest Land

Agua Tibia Wilderness

The Agua Tibia Wilderness is a 17,979-acre protected wilderness area in Riverside and San Diego Counties, mostly within the Palomar Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest (Martin 1990). The Agua Tibia Wilderness consists of 480 acres of bigcone Douglas-fir–canyon live oak forest. The Aqua Tibia Wilderness was set aside for the study of this forest type in the Peninsular Range province and with emphasis on forest succession, long-range ecological changes, and the effects of resource management practices.

San Mateo Canyon Wilderness

The San Mateo Canyon Wilderness contains 39,413 acres in San Diego and Orange Counties and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute et al. 2018). The mountains in the wilderness are primarily covered by chaparral and coastal sage vegetation. The area includes several hiking and horse-riding trails with camping available (USFS 2025b).

Palomar Mountain State Park

Coniferous forests cover much of the 1,862 acres of Palomar Mountain State Park, located in north San Diego County (CSP 2025a). Palomar Mountain State Park has a long history of use as a resort and camping destination. Logging operations existed in the past but have never been fully developed, and there are no current reports of active logging (Beckler and Brueggeman 2014; Brueggeman 2024).

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park is a state park located 40 miles east of San Diego in the Laguna Mountains of the Peninsular Ranges. The park's 26,000 acres feature pine, fir, and oak forests, with meadows and streams that exist due to the relatively high elevation of the area compared to its surroundings. The park includes the 6,512-foot Cuyamaca Peak, the second-highest point in San Diego County (CSP 2025b).

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

Farmland Protection Policy Act

Congress passed the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-98) containing the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) (7 U.S. Code [USC] Section 4202[a]), which is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The objective of the FPPA is to ensure that—to the extent possible—federal programs are administered to be compatible with state and local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland. Federal agencies are required to develop and review their policies and procedures to implement the FPPA every 2 years (USFS 2017).

Federal Forest Legacy Program

The objective of the Federal Forest Legacy Program is to identify and protect environmentally important forest lands that are threatened by present or future conversion to nonforest uses (USFS 2017). Priority is given to lands that can be effectively protected and managed and that have important scenic, recreational, timber, riparian, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and other cultural and environmental values. The program is entirely voluntary. Landowners who wish to participate may sell or transfer particular rights, such as the right to develop the property or to allow public access, while retaining ownership of the property and the right to use it in any way consistent with the terms of the easement. The agency or organization holding the easement is responsible for managing the rights it acquires and for monitoring compliance by the landowner. Forest management activities, including timber harvesting, hunting, fishing, and hiking are encouraged, provided that they are consistent with the program's purpose.

The Federal Forest Legacy Program is not solely a protection program. Eligible properties may be "working forests," where forest land is managed for the production of forest products and traditional forest uses are maintained. These forest uses include both commodity outputs and noncommodity values. The purpose of these easements is to maintain these forests intact to provide traditional forest benefits, such as timber production, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, or open space. These forests remain in private ownership, except for the restrictions on development or other uses conveyed by the conservation easement to the agency selected by the landowner.

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

The Farm and Ranch Land Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) partners with state, tribal, or local governments and nongovernmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50% of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement. To qualify, farmland must be part of a pending offer from a state, tribe, or local farmland protection program; be privately owned; have a conservation plan for highly erodible land; be large enough to sustain agricultural production; be accessible to markets for what the land produces; have adequate infrastructure and agricultural support services; and have surrounding parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service manages the program.

STATE LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

Right to Farm Act

The Right to Farm Act (Civil Code Section 3482.5) is designed to protect commercial agricultural operations from nuisance complaints that may arise when an agricultural operation is conducting business in a "manner consistent with proper and accepted customs." The code specifies that established operations that have been in business for 3 or more years that were not nuisances at the time they began will not be considered a nuisance as a result of a new land use.

California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act requires the protection of agricultural lands within the coastal zone. It does so by directly mandating that the maximum amount of prime agricultural land be maintained in production, and by supporting various techniques to limit threats to agricultural productivity. These include establishing stable urban-rural boundaries, agricultural buffers, development priority on lands not suitable for agriculture, subdivision restrictions, and public service expansion controls (PRC Section 30241).

California Farmland Conservancy Program

The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) (PRC Section 10200 et seq.) was formerly known as the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program, which began in 1995. The CFCP provides grants for agricultural conservation easements with the intent to encourage the long-term, private stewardship of agricultural lands through the voluntary use of agricultural conservation easements. The CFCP provides grants to local governments and qualified nonprofit organizations. Easements funded by the CFCP must be of a size and nature suitable for viable commercial agriculture. An agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary, legally recorded deed restriction placed on a property used for agricultural production. The easements are held by land trusts or local governments. The goal is to maintain agricultural land in active production by removing the development pressures from the land. Such easements prohibit practices that would damage or interfere with the agricultural use of the land. Because the easement is a restriction on the deed of the property, the easement remains in effect even when the land changes ownership. While other benefits may accrue because the land is not developed (scenic and habitat values, for example), the primary use of the land is agricultural.

California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, creates incentives designed to retain agricultural preserves, which can include areas devoted to agricultural use and related open space (Government Code Sections 51200–51297.4). The minimum term for Williamson Act contracts between the local government and participating landowners is 10 years (DOC 2025a). The initial term of 10 years renews automatically each year (local governments can establish initial contract terms for longer periods of time). Generally, any commercial agricultural use will be permitted within any agricultural preserve; however, the Williamson Act also permits land devoted to recreational use and open space, as defined in Government Code Section 51201, within an agricultural preserve. Allowable recreational uses include walking, hiking, picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, or other outdoor games or sports available for public participation.

The Williamson Act also includes Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) provisions. An FSZ is an area created within an agricultural preserve by a local government upon request by one or more landowners. FSZ contracts offer landowners greater property tax reduction in return for an initial contract term of 20 years, with renewal occurring automatically each year. Land restricted by an FSZ contract is valued for property assessment purposes at 65% of its Williamson Act valuation, or 65% of its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower. New special taxes for urban-related services must be levied at an unspecified reduced rate unless the tax directly benefits the land or living improvements. Cities and special districts that provide nonagricultural services are generally prohibited from annexing land enrolled under an FSZ contract. Similarly, school districts are prohibited from taking FSZ lands for school facilities.

Payments under the Open Space Subvention Act, discussed below, intended to provide for the partial replacement of local property tax revenue foregone as a result of participation in the Williamson Act have been suspended since 2010 due to revenue shortfalls.

Reinstated Portions of the Williamson Act, Revenue and Tax Code, and Open Space and Subvention Act

Assembly Bill (AB) 1265 (Chapter 90, Statutes of 2011) was approved by the Governor in summer 2011 and essentially reinstated portions of the Williamson Act, Revenue and Tax Code, and Open Space and Subvention Act that allowed eligible counties to recapture 10% of the property tax benefits provided to their owners of Williamson Act lands by decreasing the duration of the Land Conservation Act and FSZ contracts by 1 and 2 years, respectively. Senate Bill (SB) 1353 (Chapter 322, Statutes of 2014), approved by the governor on September 15, 2014, eliminates the January 1, 2016, sunset date and makes the option for participating counties to recapture portions of foregone tax revenue permanent.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The FMMP produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is classified as Prime Farmland. The maps are updated every 2 years with the use of a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance. The goal of the FMMP is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources (DOC 2025b).

Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. Prime Farmland must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of Statewide Importance is land other than Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at

some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance and that has been used for the production of specific high economic value crops at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high-quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agriculture use.

Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is land of importance to the local economy, as defined by each county's local advisory committee and adopted by its Board of Supervisors. Farmland of Local Importance is either currently producing crops, has the capability of production, or is used for the production of confined livestock. Farmland of Local Importance is land other than Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use. San Diego County defines Farmland of Local Importance as "Land that meets all the characteristics of Prime and Statewide, with the exception of irrigation. Farmlands not covered by the above categories but are of significant economic importance to the county. They have a history of good production for locally adapted crops. The soils are grouped in types that are suited for truck crops (such as tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers, potatoes, celery, squash, romaine lettuce, and cauliflower) and soils suited for orchard crops (avocados and citrus)." (DOC 2025d).

Grazing Land

Grazing lands are lands on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

Urban and Built-Up Land

This category describes land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

Other Land

This category encompasses land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines; borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres.

Water

This category describes perennial bodies of water with an extent of at least 40 acres.

Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973

The Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act (Forest Practice Act) (PRC, Division 4, Chapter 8) established a nine-member board of forestry whose mandate is to ensure the best economic and environmental practices in timber production in California. The board requires that a Registered Professional Forester prepare a timber harvest plan (THP) before harvesting timber on most nonfederal forestland. The goal of the THP is to ensure that the continual productivity of timberlands is sustained and enhanced by the timber harvesting that takes place on the site, and that related resources are protected to the extent feasible, including watersheds, fisheries, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, and employment in the region.

Z'berg-Warren-Keene-Collier Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976 – Timberland Production Zones

Under the Forest Taxation Reform Act (Government Code Section 51110–51119.5), counties must provide for the zoning of land used for growing and harvesting timber as TPZ. A TPZ is a 10-year restriction on the use of timberland, similar to the Williamson Act for agricultural lands. Land use under a TPZ is restricted to growing and harvesting timber or to compatible uses. In return, taxation of timberland under a TPZ will be based only on such restrictions in use.

California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982

The California Timberland Productivity Act (CTPA) (Government Code Sections 51100–51104) describes the powers and duties of local government in protecting timberlands. The law is designed to maintain an optimum amount of timberland, ensuring its current and continued availability by establishing TPZs on all qualifying timberland, which restrict land use to growing and harvesting timber and other compatible uses. The act discourages premature or unnecessary conversion of timberland to urban or other uses and expansion of urban services into timberland, and encourages investment in timberlands based on reasonable expectation of harvest. The CTPA also provides that timber operations conducted in accordance with California forest practice rules shall not be restricted or prohibited due to land uses in or around the location of the timber operations.

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act (Government Code Section 56000 et seq.) establishes procedures for local government changes of organization, including city incorporations, annexations to a city or special district, and city and special district consolidations. This act's policies provide that development or use of land for any purpose other than open space should be redirected from existing prime agricultural lands in open space use toward areas containing nonprime agricultural lands, unless that action would not promote the planned, orderly, efficient development of an area. In the San Diego region, this act is implemented by the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

Oak Woodlands Conservation Act of 2004

The Oak Woodlands Conservation Act of 2004 (SB 1334) (PRC Section 21083.4) provides funding for the conservation and protection of California's oak woodlands. It requires counties, in determining whether CEQA requires an EIR, negative declaration, or mitigated negative declaration, to determine whether a project in its jurisdiction that may result in a conversion of oak woodlands poses a significant effect on the environment. If a potentially significant effect is identified, the act requires implementation of one or more specified mitigation alternatives to mitigate the conversion of oak woodlands.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire and Resource Assessment Program

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) assesses the amount and extent of California's forest and rangelands. The program analyzes their condition and identifies alternative management and policy guidelines. The assessment links together state requirements for natural resource inventories and strategies and the federal government's desire to rely more heavily on these state programs in determining priorities for funding (CAL FIRE 2025a).

Open Space Subvention Act

The Open Space Subvention Act (Government Code Section 16140 et seq.) was enacted on January 1, 1972, to provide for the partial replacement of local property tax revenue foregone as a result of participation in the Williamson Act and other enforceable open space restriction programs. Through 2009, participating local governments received annual payments of foregone property tax revenues on the basis of the quantity (number of acres), quality (soil type and agricultural productivity), and for FSZ contracts, location (proximity to a city) of land enrolled under eligible enforceable open space restrictions (DOC 2025c). However, these payments have been suspended since 2010 due to revenue shortfalls.

California Forest Legacy Act

The California Forest Legacy Act (CFLA) (PRC Section 12200 et seq.) was enacted in 2000 and extended in 2007. The CFLA allows CAL FIRE to acquire conservation easements and permits federal agencies, state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit land trust organizations to hold conservation easements acquired pursuant to the California Forest Legacy Program. The California Forest Legacy Program provides funding for conservation easements, with the objective to protect the forest land base, as well as forest resources, such as fish and wildlife habitat and water quality, while ensuring the continuance of traditional uses and protection of landowners' property rights. Landowners participating in the programs are required to prepare a multi-resource management plan that is the equivalent of, or more extensive than, a forest stewardship plan (per U.S. Forest Service guidelines) (CAL FIRE 2025b).

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) is a component of the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC), developed and implemented under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund within the California Budget Act of 2014. The goal of the AHSC is to "reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through projects that implement land use, housing, transportation, and agricultural land preservation practices to support infill and compact development…" (California Strategic Growth Council et al. 2025: 3) It defines eligible projects to include "the acquisition of easements or other approaches or tools that protect agricultural lands that are under pressure of being converted to nonagricultural uses, particularly those adjacent to areas most at risk of urban or suburban sprawl."

Within the AHSC, the SALCP aims to prevent increases in GHG emissions by "limiting opportunities for expansive, vehicle dependent forms of development in favor of more focused, compact, and transit-oriented development within discrete growth boundaries" (State of California n.d.). In the future, SALCP will also fund programs that promote on-farm conservation strategies that reduce GHG emissions. Furthermore, the SALCP intends to leverage past and current agricultural land conservation programs, such as the California Farmland Conservancy Program, the FMMP, the Williamson Act, Revenue and Taxation Code Sections 421–430.5, and PRC Division 9.

The AHSC program began in 2023, and the most recent guidelines for the AHSC grant program were approved by the Strategic Growth Council in February 2025. The guidelines divide project applications into three grant categories: agricultural conservation capacity and project development, agricultural conservation acquisition, and agricultural conservation planning (California Strategic Growth Council et al. 2025).

LOCAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

Cities in the proposed Plan area and the County of San Diego, when applicable, have adopted general plans and zoning regulations that address agricultural lands and forestry. The local regulations, plans, and policies related to preservation of lands designated for agricultural uses in the region are provided in Appendix B.

Local jurisdictions' adopted general plans, regulations, and policies also address the preservation and use of open space and biological resources, including forest lands. These plans include the County of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and associated municipality MSCP subarea plans, Multiple Habitat Conservation Program, *TransNet* Environmental Mitigation Program, and other local biological resources regulations as described in Section 4.4, "Biological Resources."

4.2.3 Significance Criteria

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines provides criteria for determining the significance of a project's environmental impacts in the form of initial study checklist questions. Unless otherwise noted, the significance criteria specifically developed for this EIR are based on the checklist questions that address the criteria in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. In some cases, SANDAG has combined checklist questions, edited their wording, or changed their location in

the document in an effort to develop significance criteria that reflect the programmatic level of analysis in this EIR and the unique characteristics of the proposed Plan.

Checklist questions for agriculture and forestry resources are provided in Section II of CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. To streamline the analysis, the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G questions have been combined and modified as appropriate. Criterion II (a) of Appendix G is addressed in AG-1, which is expanded to include all farmland, not just farmland mapped by the FMMP. Criteria II (b) and (c) related to Williamson Act lands and lands zoned for agriculture are addressed in AG-2. Criteria II (c) and (d) related to forestry resources are addressed in FR-1. Because no timberlands or timberland production zones exist in the proposed Plan area, this resource is not addressed in the impact analysis below. Criterion II (e), addressing other factors that may result in the conversion of agriculture and forestry resources, is addressed in criteria AG-1, AG-2, and FR-1.

Implementation of the proposed Plan would have a significant agriculture and forestry resources impact if it would:

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, or other agricultural lands, to non-agricultural use.

AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

FR-1 Convert or result in the loss of "forest land" as defined in the California Forest Legacy Act of 2007 (PRC Section 12220[g]).

The analysis discloses impacts to agriculture and forestry resources. There is insufficient evidence to support a meaningful analysis of how the proposed Plan's agriculture and forestry resources impacts would be worsened by climate change. Therefore, a climate change analysis for agriculture and forestry resources impacts is not included in this section.

4.2.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

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, OR OTHER AGRICULTURAL LANDS,TO NON-AGRICULTURAL USE

Analysis Methodology

This section analyzes the impacts on agricultural lands if implementation of the proposed Plan would convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use. A significant impact on agricultural lands would occur if any agricultural lands were converted to nonagricultural use as a result of the regional growth and land use change or transportation network improvements under the proposed Plan. Impacts associated with the conversion of agricultural land are quantified, and conversion projections include agricultural parcels of all sizes. In addition to impacts from direct conversion of land, the analysis also considers indirect effects on the viability of continued agricultural production in areas where regional growth and land use change or transportation network improvements would result in indirect impacts on these resources. Projects near or adjacent to agricultural lands could cause land use conflicts that indirectly result in additional agricultural land conversions. These conflicts include noise, odors, water rights and use, chemicals, and runoff. Urban development near agricultural land increases the value of the agricultural land, which makes land purchase for agricultural expansion difficult and provides more incentive to sell the property for nonagricultural use. Commercial, office, or industrial uses would also be incompatible when abutting lands with agricultural operations.

Any nonagricultural growth and land use change within existing agricultural lands is considered a direct impact on these resources. The direct impacts of regional growth and land use change are quantified using geographical information system (GIS) methods by overlaying forecasted regional growth and land use change onto the existing agricultural lands dataset described in Section 4.2.1, "Existing Conditions;" 2025 is used as the baseline year to assess impacts, since this allows a more accurate impact assessment than using NOP conditions in 2022

The analysis quantifies direct impacts on acres of existing agricultural lands using different approaches: (1) growth in land use categories other than Spaced Rural Residential, which is defined as a single-family homes located in rural areas with lot sizes greater than one acre and (2) growth in Spaced Rural Residential. Regional growth and land use change resulting in land categorized as Agricultural, Open Space, Park, and Vacant is assumed to not convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use (SANDAG n.d.).For growth and land use change (other than growth in the Spaced Rural Residential category), an impact on any part of an existing agricultural parcel is considered a 100% conversion of that parcel to a nonagricultural use. Impacts were calculated separately for each subcategory of agricultural land (e.g., orchards and vineyards, field crops). The analysis of growth in the Spaced Rural Residential land use category is based on a conversion factor that assumes subdivision of agricultural lands results in permanent conversion of 1.5 acres of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use per lot.

Transportation network improvements that would convert existing agricultural lands to nonagricultural use are considered 100% conversion, and are calculated for each project that would have a direct impact on existing agricultural lands. Direct agricultural land impacts from transportation network improvements were evaluated through GIS by overlaying transportation improvement project footprints onto the existing agricultural lands baseline dataset described in Section 4.2.1; 2025 is used as the baseline year to assess impacts. Indirect impacts are not anticipated from transportation network improvements because it would not induce population growth, increase development pressure, or change surrounding land use patterns that could lead to further agricultural land conversion. Transportation improvement project impacts were calculated for each project that requires new construction in undeveloped areas. Transportation improvement project footprints are based on what is known about planned transportation network improvements contained in the proposed Plan at the time of analysis (see Section 2, "Project Description" for a list of transportation improvement projects).

The transportation network footprints are estimated through a coordinated effort by SANDAG transportation modeling, GIS, engineering, and planning staff. Buffer-size assumptions are specific to each travel mode and rely on engineering plan estimates from similar project improvements to calculate footprint width using model input geographies. The assumptions for each travel mode were presented at a peer review, and SANDAG staff are in agreement regarding the overall process and assumptions used.

Highway transportation and regional arterial improvement project footprints are defined by buffering line segment project geographies from the SANDAG highway model network. These layers are an early approximation of the dimensions of the planned improvements, which factor in lane width and buffer/movable barrier size assumptions from engineering drawings of similar projects, and the proposed number of lanes and auxiliary lanes from the SANDAG transportation model network. For highways, it was assumed that each travel lane is 12 feet wide, multiplied by the total number of proposed lanes. Shoulder widths added an additional 24 feet, accounting for a 12-foot outer shoulder and 12-foot inner shoulder in the highway footprint. Express Lane buffers are assumed to be 8 feet, or 4 feet in each direction. Where a movable barrier is assumed, another 4-foot buffer is applied. In addition, where there are ramps or connectors, it is assumed that each lane on the ramp or connector is 12 feet wide with an added 8 feet to account for inner and outer ramp shoulders. For regional arterials, each lane is assumed to be 12 feet wide, and a 4-foot buffer in each direction is assumed to account for sidewalks.

Rail transit improvement project footprints, specifically Trolley, Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN), and SPRINTER lines only in areas where there are new extensions or alignment changes, are defined by a rail-width buffer of 50 feet. Bus transit improvement footprints are not developed because routes would use existing or planned road or highway or Express Lane segments. New bikeway footprints (i.e., active transportation elements) are estimated assuming bikeways are 14 feet wide. Bikeway footprints are not developed in situations where they would occur within existing or planned road or highway segments.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Section 2.0, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). The 2035 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-4. Approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increases between 2022 and 2035 are in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). Those same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 71.4% of new housing units in the region between 2022 and 2035, while the cities of San Diego, San Marcos, and Oceanside would accommodate more than 69.5% of new jobs in the region between 2022 and 2035. The City of Oceanside, San Marcos, San Diego, and Chula Vista contain various types of agricultural land, portions of which would be subject to loss due to overlap with project implementation.

Regional growth and land use change between 2025 and 2035 would convert additional agricultural lands to nonagricultural use as shown in Figure 4.2-4. Table 4.2-2 shows that regional growth and land use categories other than Spaced Rural Residential would convert approximately 605 acres to nonagricultural use, including 103 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA (43 acres of Prime Farmland, 1 acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 59 acres of Unique Farmland). Additionally, regional growth in the Spaced Rural Residential land use category would convert an estimated 4,158 acres to nonagricultural use, including about 1,155 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land.

Table 4.2-2 Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Nonagricultural Use from Regional Growth and Land Use Change, 2025–2035

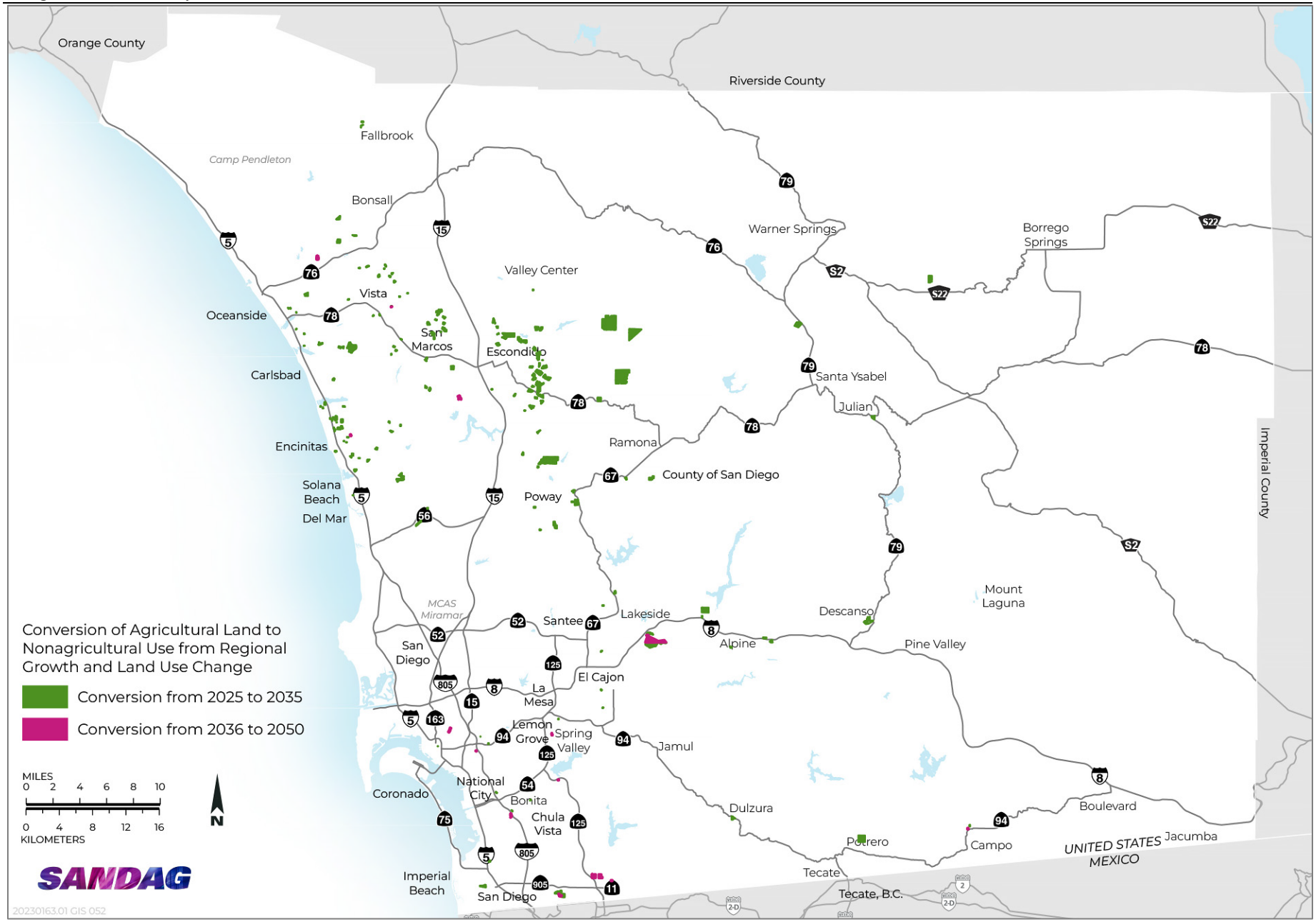
Agricultural Category	2025 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2035 Agricultural Lands (acres)	100 Percent Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Spaced Rural Residential Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)
Prime Farmland	4,972	4,889	43	40	83
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,850	6,755	1	94	95
Unique Farmland	38,266	37,186	59	1,021	1,080
FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA	**50,088**	**48,830**	**103**	**1,155**	**1,258**
Farmland of Local Importance	159,901	158,587	172	1142	1,314
Grazing Lands	283,002	282,015	24	964	987
Local agricultural land outside of FMMP	76,813	75,609	306	898	1,204
Other farmland	**519,716**	**516,211**	**502**	**3,003**	**3,505**
Total	**569,804**	**565,040**	**605**	**4,158**	**4,764**

Note: FMMP =Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Approximately 4,764 acres of existing agricultural land (all parcel sizes) would be converted to nonagricultural uses between 2025 and 2035, including 1,258 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural lands.

As described above, regional growth in proximity to agricultural lands would also cause land use conflicts that would indirectly result in additional agricultural land conversions due to the increase in population and jobs in areas that overlap with agricultural land. Existing laws and programs would protect some agricultural lands and reduce the pressure to convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use. However, the proposed Plan's regional growth and land use changes would still convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, and this impact would be significant.



Source: Data received from SANDAG in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025

Figure 4.2-4 Conversion of Agricultural Land to Nonagricultural Use from Regional Growth and Land Use Change

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2035 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane connectors on SR 15, SR 52, SR 78, SR 125, I-5, I-15, and I-805. The proposed Plan also includes ~~Reversible Managed Lane improvements on SR-75,~~ improvements to rural corridors on SR 67, SR 76, SR 79, SR 94, and I-8, as well as interchange and arterial operational improvements on SR 94 and SR 125. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as tolling equipment and Regional Border Management System investments on SR 11. Upgrades at certain locations on the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor would be implemented during this period. Other major network improvements include grade separations at certain locations on the SPRINTER, Green line, Blue Line, and Orange Line. Double-tracking is also proposed on the SPRINTER. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including rural corridor improvements and ~~Next Gen~~ Rapid projects would overlap with concentrated agricultural areas, resulting in a loss of agricultural land.

Transportation network improvements by 2035 would convert additional agricultural lands to nonagricultural use as shown in Figure 4.2-5. As shown in Table 4.2-3, approximately 308 acres of existing agricultural land would be converted to nonagricultural use as a result of the transportation network improvements and programs planned between 2025 and 2035, including 12 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA (2 acres of Prime Farmland, 1 acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 9 acres of Unique Farmland). The proposed Plan's transportation network improvements and programs would convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, and this impact would be significant.

Table 4.2-3 Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Nonagricultural Use from Planned Transportation Network Improvements and Programs, 2025–2035

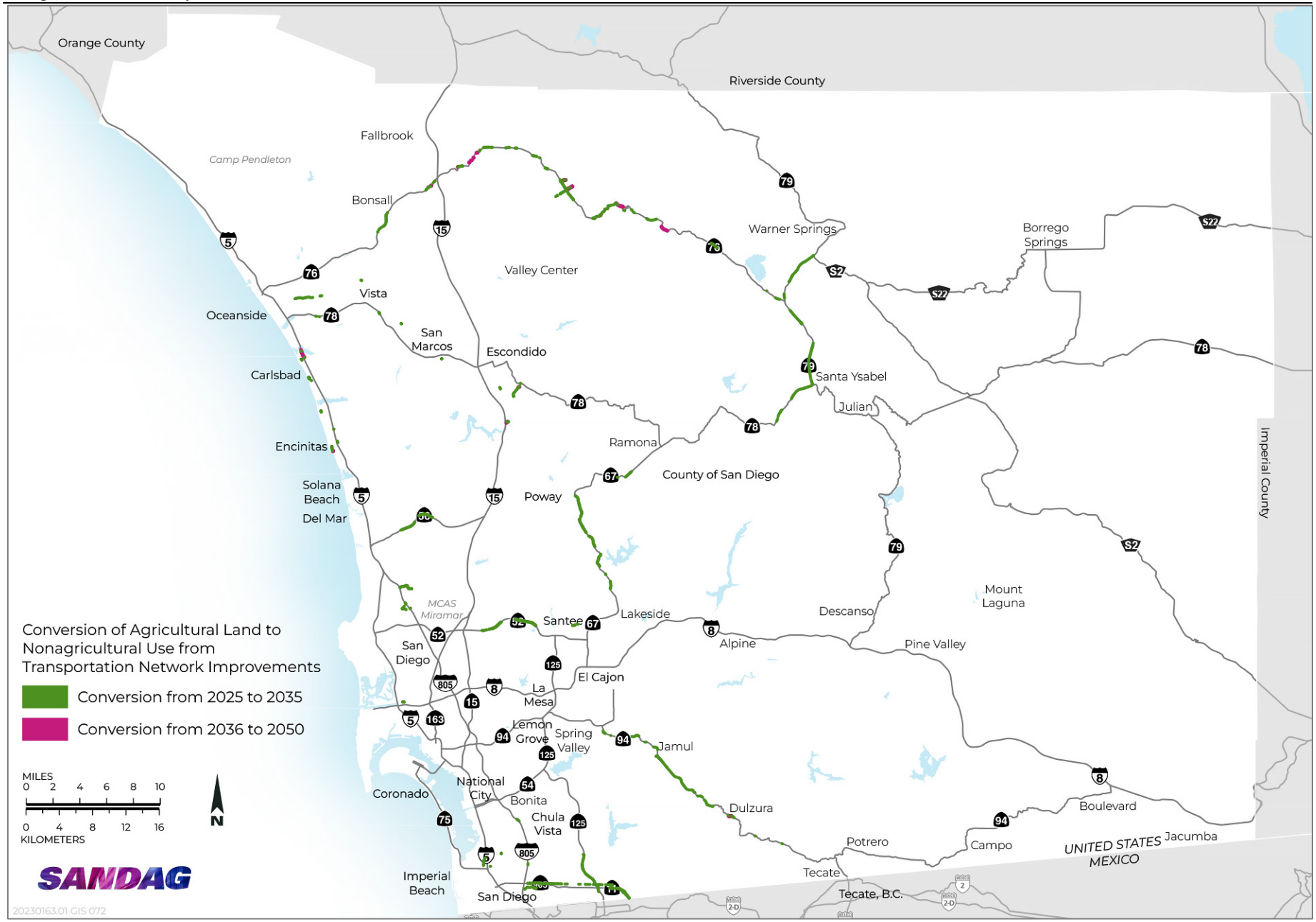
Agricultural Category	2025 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2035 Agricultural Lands (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)
Prime Farmland	4,972	4,970	2
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,850	6,849	1
Unique Farmland	38,266	38,257	9
FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA	**50,088**	**50,076**	**12**
Farmland of Local Importance	159,901	159,792	109
Grazing Lands	283,002	282,857	145
Local agricultural land outside of FMMP	76,813	76,770	43
Other farmland	**519,716**	**519,419**	**297**
Total	**569,804**	**569,496**	**308**

Notes: Decimals of the land data are omitted in the table, which may result in differences in total number. FMMP =Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

2035 Conclusion

Implementation of forecasted regional growth and land use change and planned transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan would convert approximately 5,072 acres of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, including about 1,270 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural lands under CEQA. In addition, growth and land use change near agricultural lands would indirectly decrease the viability of agriculture production on those lands. Therefore, this impact (AG-1) in the year 2035 is significant.



Source: Data received from SANDAG in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 4.2-5 Conversion of Agricultural Land to Nonagricultural Use from Transportation Network Improvements

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1 in Section 2.0 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, the region is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), increase by 65,577 housing units (4.8%), and increase by 103,460 jobs (6.2%). The 2050 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units would be developed in the City of San Diego (51.6%), City of Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Similarly, these same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 70.3% of new jobs between 2036 and 2050. The cities of San Diego, Chula Vista, and incorporated San Diego County, projected to experience the most significant growth, would also overlap with agricultural lands, leading to associated land loss.

Regional growth and land use change between 2036 and 2050 would convert additional agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, as shown in Figure 4.2-4. Table 4.2-4 shows that regional growth and land use categories other than Spaced Rural Residential would convert approximately 735 acres to nonagricultural use, though no FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA would be affected. Regional growth in the Spaced Rural Residential land use category would not convert additional agricultural land. Impacts between 2036 and 2050 are distributed in the northern half of the county.

Approximately 337 acres of existing agricultural land (all parcel sizes) would be converted to nonagricultural uses between 2036 and 2050, with 151 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural lands under CEQA being affected. Between 2025 and 2050, about 5,101 total acres of existing agricultural land would in total be converted to nonagricultural use, including 1,409 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land by regional growth and land use change under the proposed Plan.

As described above, regional growth in proximity to agricultural lands would also cause land use conflicts that would indirectly result in additional agricultural land conversions. Existing laws and programs would protect some agricultural lands and reduce the pressure to convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use. However, the proposed Plan's regional growth and land use changes would still convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, and this impact would be significant.

Table 4.2-4 Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Nonagricultural Use from Regional Growth and Land Use Change, 2036–2050

Agricultural Category	2036 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2050 Agricultural Lands (acres)	100 Percent Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Spaced Rural Residential Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	100 Percent Total 2025-2050 (acres)	Spaced Rural Residential Total 2025-2050 (acres)	Total 2025-2050 (acres)
Prime Farmland	4,889	4,883	5	0	5	48	40	88
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,755	6,749	7	0	7	8	94	101
Unique Farmland	37,186	37,047	0	139	139	59	1,160	1,219
FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA	**48,830**	**48,679**	**12**	**139**	**151**	**115**	**1,294**	**1,409**
Farmland of Local Importance	158,587	158,444	76	67	143	248	1,210	1,457

Agricultural Category	2036 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2050 Agricultural Lands (acres)	100 Percent Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Spaced Rural Residential Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	100 Percent Total 2025-2050 (acres)	Spaced Rural Residential Total 2025-2050 (acres)	Total 2025-2050 (acres)
Grazing Lands	282,015	282,013	1	0	1	25	964	989
Local agricultural land outside of FMMP	75,609	75,567	41	1	42	348	899	1,246
Other farmland	**516,211**	**516,024**	**118**	**69**	**187**	**620**	**3,072**	**3,692**
Total	**565,040**	**564,703**	**130**	**208**	**337**	**735**	**4,366**	**5,101**

Note: FMMP =Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, ~~SR 75,~~ SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as expansion of and improvements to existing port of entry facilities, which will continue during this period. Upgrades at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor would continue during this period. Grade separations on the SPRINTER, Blue Line, Green Line, and Orange Line, as well as double-tracking on the SPRINTER would also continue during this period. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including managed lanes, active transportation, and rural corridor improvements projects would overlap with concentrated agricultural areas, resulting in a loss of agricultural land.

Transportation network improvements by 2050 would convert additional agricultural lands to nonagricultural use as shown in Figure 4.2-5. As shown in Table 4.2-5, approximately 9 acres of existing agricultural land would be converted to nonagricultural use as a result of the transportation network improvements and programs planned between 2036 and 2050, including 4 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA (1 acre of Prime Farmland, and 3 acres of Unique Farmland). Impacts between 2036 and 2050 would primarily be caused by active transportation projects (including the I-805 connector, the San Luis Rey River Trail, the SR 125 connector, and in the SR 905 corridor), Complete Corridor Managed Lanes projects (including along SR 125, SR 94, I-15, I-5, I-805 and SR 905), and commuter rail projects (including Regional Rail 398 and 598). Between 2036 and 2050, about 9 total acres of existing agricultural land would in total be converted to nonagricultural use, including 4 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA. The proposed Plan's transportation network improvements would convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, and this impact would be significant.

Table 4.2-5 Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Nonagricultural Use from Planned Transportation Network Improvements and Programs, 2036–2050

Agricultural Category	2036 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2050 Agricultural Lands (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Total 2025-2050 (acres)
Prime Farmland	4,970	4,969	1	3
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,849	6,849	0	1
Unique Farmland	38,257	38,254	3	12
FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA	**50,076**	**50,072**	**4**	**16**
Farmland of Local Importance	159,792	159,791	1	110

Agricultural Category	2036 Agricultural Lands (acres)	2050 Agricultural Lands (acres)	Total Conversion to Nonagricultural Use (acres)	Total 2025-2050 (acres)
Grazing Lands	282,857	282,857	0	145
Local agricultural land outside of FMMP	76,770	376,767	3	46
Other farmland	**519,419**	**519,415**	**4**	**301**
Total	**569,496**	**569,487**	**9**	**317**

Note: Decimals of the land data are omitted in the table, which may result in differences in total number. FMMP =Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

2050 Conclusion

Implementation of planned transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan from 2036 to 2050 would convert approximately 346 acres of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, including approximately 155 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA. Between 2025 and 2050, about 5,418 total acres of existing agricultural land would in total be converted to nonagricultural use by regional growth, land use change, and transportation network improvements, including 1,425 acres of FMMP-designated agricultural land under CEQA. In addition, growth and land use change near agricultural lands would indirectly decrease the viability of agriculture production on those lands. Therefore, this impact (AG-1) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AG-1 CONVERT AGRICULTURAL LANDS TO NONAGRICULTURAL USE

2035, 2050

AG-1a Preserve Existing Agricultural Lands.

During project design and project-level CEQA review of transportation network improvements or development projects, SANDAG shall—and other transportation project sponsors, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should—preserve existing agricultural lands by avoiding agricultural land conversion when feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, measures to reduce conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use consist of the following:

- Acquire or dedicate agricultural conservation easements (minimum acreage ratio of 1:1 of comparable quality land). If feasible, locate the easement within or close to areas in which the conversion occurs. Where conversion occurs within the coastal zone, locate the easement within the coastal zone, if feasible. If a project requires cancellation of a Williamson Act contract, acquire or dedicate agricultural conservation easements (minimum acreage ratio of 1:1 of comparable quality land). If feasible, locate the easement within or close to the same city or community in which the cancellation occurs. Where the cancellation occurs within the coastal zone, locate the easement within the coastal zone, if feasible.
- Where agricultural conservation easements are acquired or dedicated, consider the suitability of a specific proposed easement based on its ability to avoid or reduce fragmentation of agricultural land to enhance overall production value and operation viability.
- Where project-specific mitigation described above is not feasible, use other commensurate solutions, such as payment of an agricultural resource impact fee made pursuant to an approved in-lieu fee program. Possible programs include the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program established by the County of San Diego where the PACE Mitigation Bank can be used to offset impacts.

AG-1b Reduce Transportation Network Improvement and Development Conflicts with Agricultural Operations. During project design and project-level CEQA review of transportation network improvements or development projects, SANDAG shall—and other transportation project sponsors, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should—reduce conflicts with agricultural operations. These conflicts shall be reduced through the implementation of project design features and mitigation measures to protect surrounding agriculture, consisting of, but not limited to, the following:

- Provide buffers, berms, setbacks, fencing, or other project design measures to protect surrounding agriculture, topographic features, and open space, and to reduce conflict between transportation network improvements or developments and farming.
- Minimize severance and fragmentation of agricultural land by constructing underpasses and overpasses at necessary intervals to provide property access.
- Align corridors, incorporate buffer zones and setbacks, and design berms and fencing to avoid agricultural lands and to reduce conflicts between transportation projects and agricultural lands.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of the proposed Plan would result in significant impacts on agricultural lands in 2035 and 2050. Although Mitigation Measures AG-1a and AG-1b would reduce direct and indirect impacts associated with the conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use, there is no assurance that the impacts of all development and transportation network improvement projects and programs included in the proposed Plan would be reduced to less-than-significant levels as conversion of agricultural land from implementation of the proposed Plan may still occur. Therefore, agricultural land conversion impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

AG-2 CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR AGRICULTURAL USE OR A WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT

Analysis Methodology

This section analyzes conflicts with lands zoned for agricultural use and lands under Williamson Act contracts. A significant impact would occur under AG-2 if any existing lands zoned for agricultural use or with a Williamson Act contract would be designated for a nonagricultural land use as a result of the regional growth and land use change or transportation network improvements under the proposed Plan. The baseline year used for the lands zoned for agricultural use and lands under Williamson Act contracts is 2025, which reflects the existing conditions. The method for identifying conflicts is the same as described for physical conversion under AG-1, except that for AG-2, 100% of the existing land zoned for agricultural use or under Williamson Act contract that would be redesignated as Spaced Rural Residential ~~if it~~ is identified as a conflict ~~or has~~ and a direct impact. Indirect impacts are analyzed qualitatively and occur when growth near agricultural zoned uses would cause land use conflicts. For determining conflicts with Williamson Act contract lands, the analysis assumes that the existing boundaries of these contracts would remain constant during the life of the proposed Plan, through 2050.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Section 2.0, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). The 2035 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-4. Approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increases between 2022 and 2035 are in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). Those same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 71.4% of new housing units in the

region between 2022 and 2035, while the cities of San Diego, San Marcos, and Oceanside would accommodate more than 69.5% of new jobs in the region between 2022 and 2035. These growth areas overlap with lands zoned for agricultural use but have minimal to no lands under Williamson Act contracts.

As shown in Table 4.2-6, regional growth land use change between 2025 and 2035 would conflict with an estimated 3,290 acres of land zoned for agricultural use, and would not conflict with Williamson Act contract lands. These impacts are scattered around the northern part of the county, with one concentrated area along SR 79, north of SR 52. See Figure 4.2-6 for locations of these conflicts.

Table 4.2-6 Conflicts with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use or Williamson Act Contracts from Regional Growth and Land Use Change, All Years (Acres)

Agricultural Category	Conversion by Phase Years 2025–2035	Conversion by Phase Years 2036–2050	Total Impacts 2025-2050
Land Zoned for Agricultural Use	3,290	96	3,386
Williamson Act land	0	0	0

Source: CA Dept of Conservation in 2024; SanGIS in 2025, Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Regional growth that occurs in proximity to agricultural-zoned lands (as well as lands under Williamson Act contracts) would also cause land use conflicts. These conflicts include, but are not limited to, noise, odors, water rights and use, chemicals, and runoff. Additionally, urban development near agricultural land increases the value of the agricultural land, which makes land purchase for agricultural expansion difficult, and provides more incentive to sell the property for nonagricultural use. Commercial, office, or industrial uses would also be incompatible uses when abutting lands with agricultural operations.

State and local policies and regulations described in Section 4.2.2, "Regulatory Setting," such as the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, the Williamson Act, and policies outlined in the general plans of local jurisdictions, may reduce conflicts between regional growth and land use change, and land zoned for agricultural use or under Williamson Act contract. However, these policies and regulations would be of limited effectiveness in substantially reducing these conflicts because they are often subject to local government decisions and programs such as LAFCO.

As described above, regional growth in proximity to agricultural lands (as well as lands under Williamson Act contracts) would also cause land use conflicts that would make land purchase for agricultural expansion difficult and would provide more incentive to sell the property for nonagricultural use. State and local policies and regulations may reduce conflicts between regional growth and land use change, and lands zoned for agricultural use or under Williamson Act contract. However, these policies and regulations would be of limited effectiveness in substantially reducing these conflicts because they are subject to terms that require contracts between the local government. Therefore, the designation of lands currently zoned for agricultural use or under a Williamson Act contract for nonagricultural uses as a result of regional growth and land use change is a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2035 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane connectors on SR 15, SR 52, SR 78, SR 125, I-5, I-15, and I-805. The proposed Plan also includes ~~Reversible Managed Lane improvements on SR-75,~~ improvements to rural corridors on SR 67, SR 76, SR 79, SR 94, and I-8, as well as interchange and arterial operational improvements on SR 94 and SR 125. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as tolling equipment and Regional Border Management System investments on SR 11. Upgrades at certain locations on the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor would be implemented during this period. Other major network improvements include grade separations at certain locations on the SPRINTER, Green line, Blue Line, and Orange Line. Double-tracking is also proposed on the SPRINTER. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including managed lanes projects would overlap with concentrated agricultural areas, resulting in conversion of lands zoned for agricultural use and lands under Williamson Act contracts.

As shown in Table 4.2-7, the planned transportation network improvements and programs between 2025 and 2050 would conflict with an estimated 54 acres of existing lands zoned for agricultural use, and would not conflict with lands with Williamson Act contracts. See Figure 4.2-6 for locations of these conflicts. Therefore, the designation of lands currently zoned for agricultural use or under a Williamson Act contract for nonagricultural uses as a result of transportation network improvements is a significant impact.

Table 4.2-7 Conflicts with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use or Williamson Act Contracts from Planned Transportation Network Improvements, All Years (Acres)

Agricultural Category	Conversion by Phase Years 2025–2035	Conversion by Phase Years 2036–2050	Total Impacts 2025-2050
Land Zoned for Agricultural Use	54	176	230
Williamson Act land	0	1	1

Source: CA Dept of Conservation in 2024; SanGIS in 2025, Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

2035 Conclusion

Between 2025 and 2035, regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements and programs associated with the proposed Plan would conflict with approximately 3,344 acres of lands zoned for agricultural use and would have no conflict with Williamson Act contracts. This impact (AG-2) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

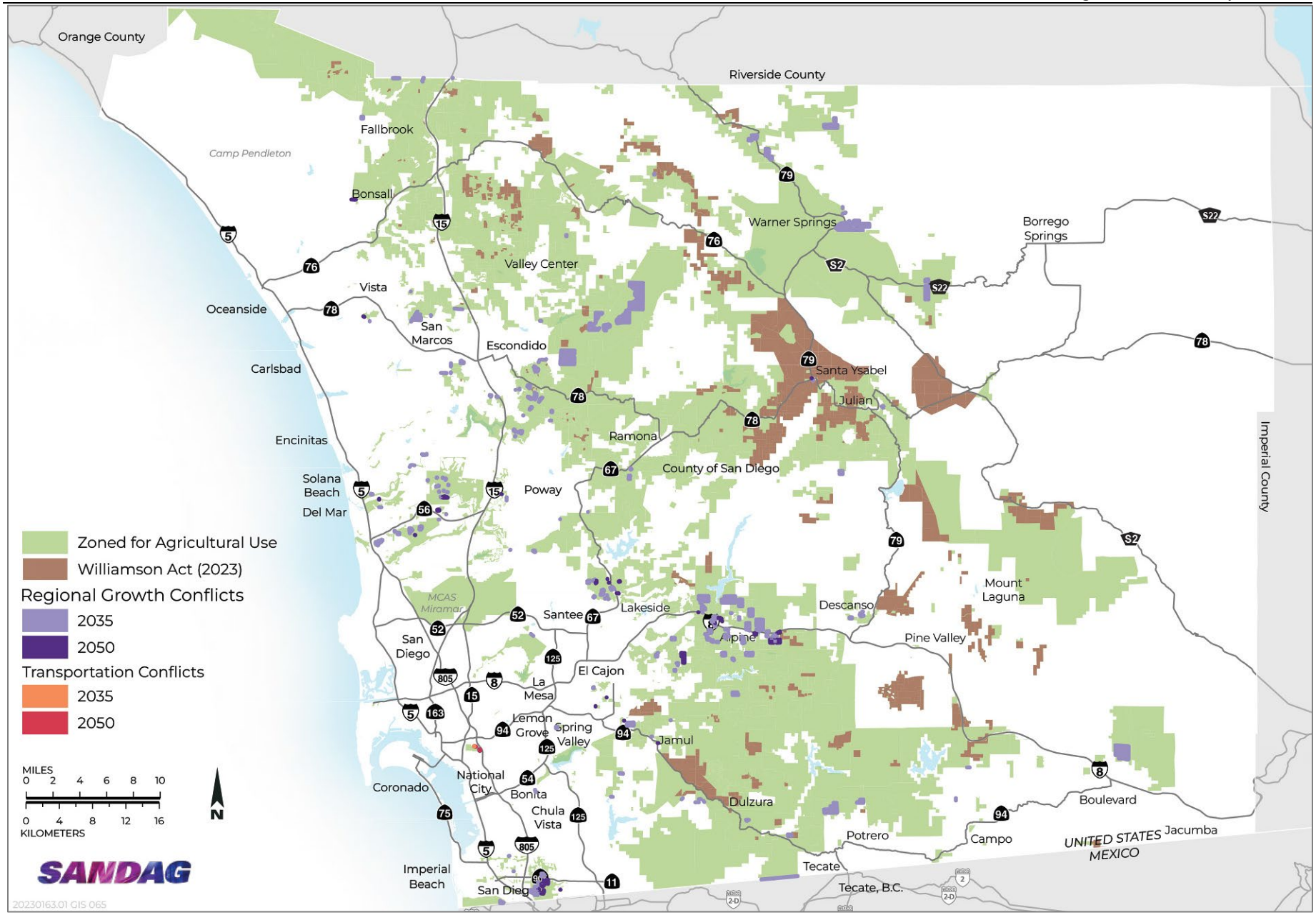
As shown in Table 2-1 in Section 2.0 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, the region is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), increase by 65,577 housing units (4.8%), and increase by 103,460 jobs (6.2%). The 2050 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units would be developed in the City of San Diego (51.6%), City of Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Similarly, these same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 70.3% of new jobs between 2036 and 2050. These growth areas overlap with lands zoned for agricultural use and have lands under Williamson Act contracts.

As shown in Table 4.2-6, regional growth and land use change between 2036 and 2050 would conflict with an estimated 96 acres of land zoned for agricultural use and would not conflict with Williamson Act. Between 2025 and 2050, the proposed Plan's regional growth and land use changes would in total conflict with about 3,386 total acres of land zoned for agricultural use but would not conflict with Williamson Act contract lands.

As described above, regional growth in proximity to agricultural lands (as well as lands under Williamson Act contracts) would also cause land use conflicts that would make land purchase for agricultural expansion difficult and would provide more incentive to sell the property for nonagricultural use. State and local policies and regulations may reduce conflicts between regional growth and land use change, and lands zoned for agricultural use or under Williamson Act contract. However, these policies and regulations would be of limited effectiveness in substantially reducing these conflicts. Therefore, this is a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, ~~SR 75,~~ SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as expansion of and improvements to existing port of entry facilities, which will continue during this period. Upgrades at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor would continue during this period. Grade separations on the SPRINTER, Blue Line, Green Line, and Orange Line, as well as double-tracking on the SPRINTER would also continue during this period. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including regional active transportation projects would overlap with concentrated agricultural areas, resulting in a conflict of lands zoned for agricultural use and lands under Williamson Act contracts.



Source: Data downloaded from CA Dept of Conservation in 2024; SanGIS in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025

Figure 4.2-6 Conflicts with Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts from Regional Growth and Land Use Change or Transportation Network Improvements

As shown in Table 4.2-7, the planned transportation network improvements and programs between 2036 and 2050 would conflict with an estimated 176 acres of existing lands zoned for agricultural use and 1 acre of lands with Williamson Act contracts. See Figure 4.2-6 for locations of these conflicts. Between 2025 and 2050, the proposed Plan's transportation network improvements would in total conflict with about 230 total acres of land zoned for agricultural use and 1 acre of land with Williamson Act contracts. This impact is significant.

2050 Conclusion

Between 2036 and 2050, implementation of growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements and programs associated with the proposed Plan would conflict with approximately 272 acres of lands zoned for agricultural use and 1 acre of land with Williamson Act contracts. Between 2025 and 2050 the proposed Plan would in total conflict with about 3,616 total acres of land zoned for agricultural use and 1 total acre of lands with Williamson Act contracts. This impact (AG-2) by the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AG-2 CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR AGRICULTURAL USE OR A WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT

2035, 2050

Implement Mitigation Measures AG-1a and AG-1b, as described above.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of the proposed Plan would result in significant impacts by causing conflicts with lands with existing zoning for agricultural use, or under Williamson Act contract, in 2035 and 2050. Although implementation of Mitigation Measures AG-1a and AG-1b would reduce these impact, there is no assurance that the impacts of all development and transportation network improvement projects implementing the proposed Plan would be reduced to less-than-significant levels as conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act Contract from implementation of the proposed Plan may still occur. Therefore, conflicts with lands with existing zoning for agricultural use and under Williamson Act contract would remain significant and unavoidable.

FR-1 CONVERT OR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF "FOREST LAND" AS DEFINED IN THE CALIFORNIA FOREST LEGACY ACT OF 2007 (PRC SECTION 12220[G])

Analysis Methodology

This section analyzes the conversion or loss of "forest land," as defined in the California Forest Legacy Act of 2007 (PRC Section 12220[g]), that would directly or indirectly result from the proposed Plan. The baseline year used for forest land is 2025, which reflects the existing conditions. A significant impact on forest land would occur where existing forest lands are designated as land that would be developed as a result of the regional growth and land use changes or developed with a transportation network improvement under the proposed Plan. Forest land includes riparian forest/woodland and upland forest/woodland. Direct impacts are those resulting in damage to or death of vegetation from the direct actions of regional growth and land use changes or transportation network improvements. The methods for estimating conversion or loss of forest land are the same as described for AG-2: 100% of existing forest land that would be designated for development, including Spaced Rural Residential, or developed with a transportation network improvement, is considered a loss of forest land. Indirect impacts are analyzed qualitatively and occur when growth near forest land would cause land use conflicts.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Section 2.0, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). The 2035 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-4. Approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increases between 2022 and 2035 are in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). Those same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 71.4% of new housing units in the region between 2022 and 2035, while the cities of San Diego, San Marcos, and Oceanside would accommodate more than 69.5% of new jobs in the region between 2022 and 2035. The growth regions overlap with areas that would experience loss of forest land.

As shown in Table 4.2-8, between 2025 and 2035, regional growth and land use change would result in loss of approximately 1,588 acres of forest lands. The majority of these impacts are located along SR 79 north of SR 52. See Figure 4.2-7 for locations of these impacts. Although adherence to the Federal Forest Legacy Program and the FRAP—as well as additional existing laws, regulations, and programs discussed in Section 4.2.2, "Regulatory Setting"—would reduce impacts on forest land by guiding conservation efforts and informing policy decisions, regional growth and land use changes would still decrease the acreage of, and have adverse indirect impacts on, forest lands. Indirect impacts may occur on forest lands in proximity to areas converted from undeveloped to developed land uses from regional growth and land use change. Changes in hydrology, runoff, sedimentation, fugitive dust, and edge effects (e.g., exotic plant invasion, parasites, disturbance from human activities, pesticides, fuel modification) are examples of indirect impacts which can degrade forest lands. This is a significant impact.

Table 4.2-8 Loss of Forest Land from Regional Growth and Land use Change, All Years

Agricultural Category	Conversion by Phase Years 2025–2035 (Acres of Loss)	Conversion by Phase Years 2036–2050 (Acres of Loss)	Total Impacts 2025-2050 (Acres of Loss)
Forest Land	1,588	48	1,636

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2035 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane connectors on SR 15, SR 52, SR 78, SR 125, I-5, I-15, and I-805. The proposed Plan also includes ~~Reversible Managed Lane improvements on SR 75,~~ improvements to rural corridors on SR 67, SR 76, SR 79, SR 94, and I-8, as well as interchange and arterial operational improvements on SR 94 and SR 125. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as tolling equipment and Regional Border Management System investments on SR 11. Upgrades at certain locations on the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor would be implemented during this period. Other major network improvements include grade separations at certain locations on the SPRINTER, Green line, Blue Line, and Orange Line. Double-tracking is also proposed on the SPRINTER. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including regional managed lanes and ~~Next Gen~~ Rapid projects would overlap with concentrated forest land areas, resulting in a loss in forest lands.

The proposed Plan includes a variety of network improvements and programs between by 2035. Although many of the proposed transportation improvements would occur within already established transportation corridors, ground-disturbing activities, such as brush clearing, grading, trenching, excavation, or soil removal of any kind, associated with transportation improvements would impact forest lands. As shown in Table 4.2-9, between 2025 and 2035, transportation network improvements would result in a loss of approximately 0.2 acres of forest lands. Year 2035 impacts would be from local roadway projects, freeway projects and trail projects throughout the county. See Figure 4.2-7 for locations of these impacts. This is a significant impact.

Table 4.2-9 Loss of Forest Land from Transportation Network Improvements and Programs, All Years

Agricultural Category	Conversion by Phase Years 2025–2035 (Acres of Loss)	Conversion by Phase Years 2036–2050 (Acres of Loss)	Total Impacts 2025-2050 (Acres of Loss)
Forest Land	0.2	11	11.2

Source: Compiled by Ascent in 2025.

2035 Conclusion

Between 2025 and 2035, regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements and programs associated with the proposed Plan would result in a direct loss of approximately 1,588 acres of forest land. This impact (FR-1) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

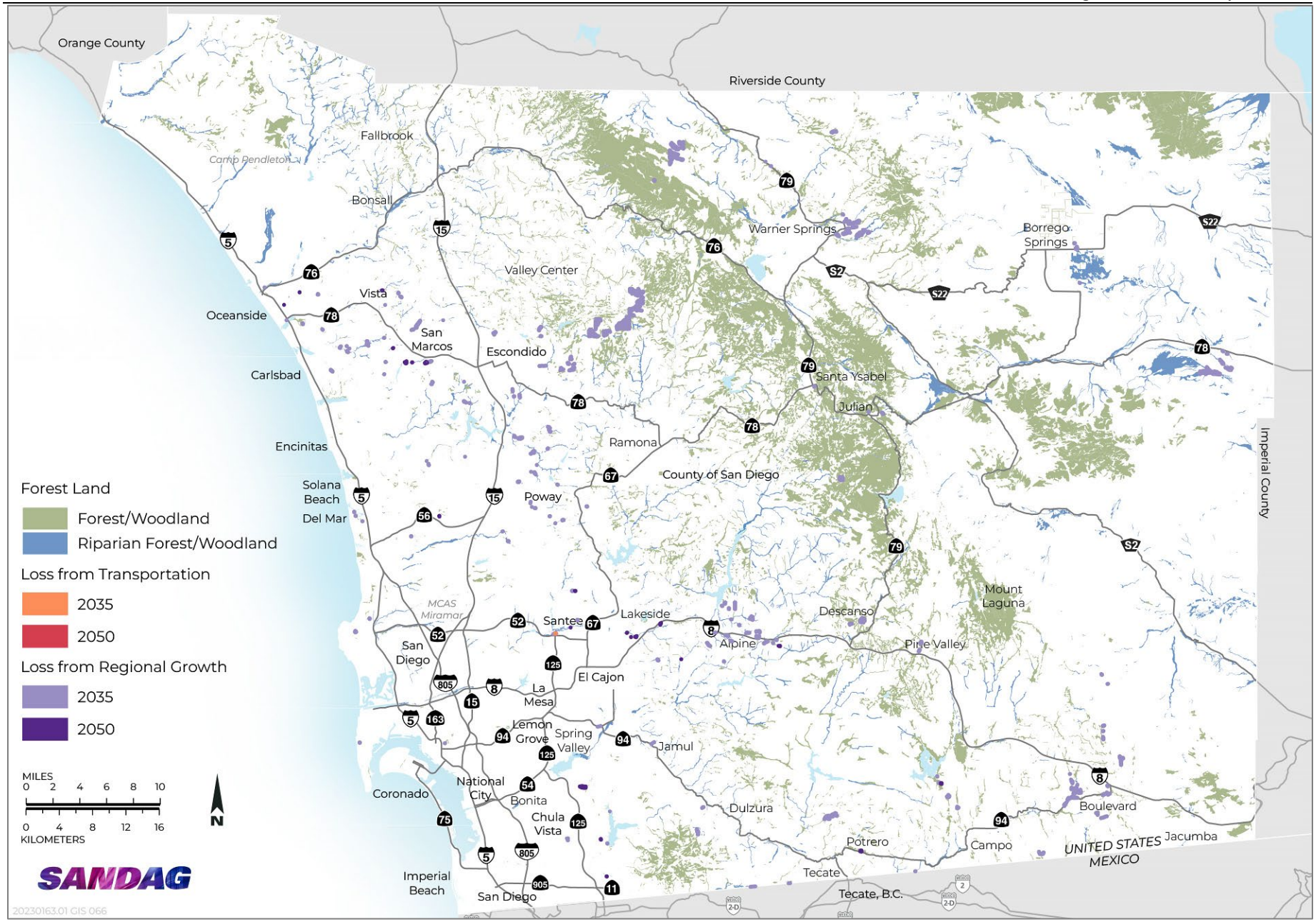
As shown in Table 2-1 in Section 2.0 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, the region is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), increase by 65,577 housing units (4.8%), and increase by 103,460 jobs (6.2%). The 2050 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units would be developed in the City of San Diego (51.6%), City of Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Similarly, these same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 70.3% of new jobs between 2036 and 2050. The growth regions overlap with areas that would experience loss of forest land.

As shown in Table 4.2-8, between 2036 and 2050, regional growth and land use change would result in loss of approximately 48 acres of forest lands. Between 2025 and 2050, about 1,636 total acres of forest land would in total be lost. See Figure 4.2-7 for locations of these impacts. As discussed above, adherence to existing laws, regulations, and programs would reduce impacts, both direct and indirect, on forest lands upon implementation of the proposed Plan. However, it cannot be concluded at the current level of analysis that all impacts would be fully avoided or reduced to a level below significance because loss of forest land from implementation of the proposed Plan may still occur. This is a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, ~~SR 75,~~ SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as expansion of and improvements to existing port of entry facilities, which will continue during this period. Upgrades at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor would continue during this period. Grade separations on the SPRINTER, Blue Line, Green Line, and Orange Line, as well as double-tracking on the SPRINTER would also continue during this period. See Tables 2-7 through 2-10 for a full list of proposed projects by subregion. Transportation network improvements projects including regional active transportation projects would overlap with concentrated forest land areas, resulting in a loss in forest lands.

The proposed Plan includes a variety of network improvements and programs between 2036 and 2050. As discussed above, construction activities associated with transportation improvements would impact forest lands and other vegetation communities. Between 2036 and 2050, transportation network improvements would result in a loss of approximately 11 acres of forest lands. Year 2050 impacts would be from commuter rail projects, freeway projects, and trail projects throughout the county. See Figure 4.2-7 for locations of these impacts. Between 2025 and 2050, approximately 11.2 total acres of forest land would in total be lost due to transportation network improvements. This is a significant impact.



Source: Data downloaded from SDMMP in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025

Figure 4.2-7 Loss of Forest Land due to Regional Growth and Land Use Change or Transportation Network Improvements Loss

2050 Conclusion

Between 2036 and 2050, regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements and programs associated with the proposed Plan would result in the loss of approximately 59 acres of forest land. Between 2025 and 2050, in total approximately 1,647 total acres of forest land would be lost. This impact (FR-1) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

FR-1 CONVERT OR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF "FOREST LAND" AS DEFINED IN THE CALIFORNIA FOREST LEGACY ACT OF 2007 (PRC SECTION 12220[G])

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1a, Implement Design, Minimization, and Avoidance Measures for Sensitive Natural Communities and Regulated Aquatic Resources, BIO-1b, Provide Compensatory Mitigation, and BIO-1e, Implement Best Management Practices to Avoid Indirect Impacts discussed in Section 4.3, Biological Resources, would also reduce impacts on forest lands.

FR-1 Reduce Impacts on Forest Lands. During project planning, design, and project-level CEQA review of transportation network improvements or development projects, SANDAG shall—and other transportation project sponsors, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should—preserve forest lands by avoiding conversion of such lands when feasible and, if not feasible, by implementing measures to reduce impacts on forest lands, consisting of the following:

- Implement Compensatory Mitigation of Forest Lands

Provide compensatory mitigation using mitigation ratios as specified through consultation with resource agencies and in approved natural community conservation plans and habitat conservation plans. Compensatory mitigation outside the coastal zone would be provided either through the purchase of credits at an existing authorized mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program, or through project-specific mitigation. Authorized programs include the San Vicente or San Miguel Conservation Banks, or in-lieu fee options approved under the County's MSCP, depending on habitat type and service area availability (County of San Diego 2025). Compensatory mitigation for impacts inside the coastal zone may not be satisfied through in-lieu fee programs and is required to be located within the coastal zone close to the impact. To the extent allowed by the above plans and ordinances, project-specific mitigation would be provided through on site restoration of temporary impacts, on site or off-site preservation of existing habitats, or off-site restoration.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of the proposed Plan would result in significant forest lands impacts. While implementation of Mitigation Measures FR-1, BIO-1a, BIO-1b, and BIO-1e would reduce direct and indirect impacts on forest lands, there is no assurance that the impacts of all development and transportation network improvement projects implementing the proposed Plan would be reduced to less-than-significant levels as loss of forest land from implementation of the proposed Plan may still occur. Therefore, direct and indirect impacts on forest lands would remain significant and unavoidable.

4.2.5 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

C-AG-1 MAKE A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE CONTRIBUTION TO ADVERSE EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

The area of geographic consideration for cumulative impacts on agriculture and forestry resources is the state of California. Agriculture as a whole in California is important because the successful production of many crops is due to the distinctive climates found in the state. Although variable by region, the state of California supports an extensive range of agricultural operations and opportunities.

A hybrid approach for cumulative analysis of agriculture and forest resources allows for an overarching discussion of regional loss of agricultural lands and forest resources associated with general patterns of regional urbanization, growth, and land use changes while also allowing for specific consideration of any projects with known impacts on agriculture. A significant cumulative impact on agriculture and forestry resources would occur if the proposed Plan would result in incremental effects that are considered cumulatively significant when considered in combination with the impact projections in adopted plans, and impacts on agriculture and forest resources resulting from probable future projects. Significant cumulative impacts related to agriculture resources would occur if there were a cumulative loss of existing agriculture resources, including conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use and conflicts with Williamson Act contracts and lands zoned for agricultural use. Significant cumulative impacts related to forest lands would occur if there were a cumulative loss or conversion of forest land as defined in the CFLA of 2007 (PRC Section 12220[g]).

There is an ongoing trend of decreased acres of land in agricultural production in California. The most recent *California Farmland Conversion Report* (2016–2018) issued by the California Department of Conservation found that irrigated farmland in California decreased by 56,186 acres between 2016 and 2018, of which 3,616 acres were in the San Diego region (DOC 2025d). In the San Diego region, land in commercial agricultural crop production decreased from more than 312,000 acres in 2008 to less than 304,000 acres in 2012 (County of San Diego 2013). In the nearby Imperial Valley, areas of crop production served by the Imperial Irrigation District decreased from 463,824 acres in 2021 to 431,809 acres in 2023 (IID 2023).

This cumulative impact assessment considers and relies on the impact analysis within this EIR for the proposed Plan and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) Final EIR (SCAG 2024) for the Southern California region, including Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside, and San Bernardino County. The SCAG 2024-2050 RTP/SCS planning horizon is 2050.

Impacts of the Proposed Plan

The forecasted regional growth and land use change and planned transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan would convert agricultural lands to nonagricultural use between 2025 and 2035 (5,072 acres), and between 2036 and 2050 (346 acres), for a total of 5,418 acres cumulatively between 2025 and 2050, as detailed in Section 4.2. Implementation of the proposed Plan would also decrease the viability of agriculture on agriculturally designated land. This would be a significant impact on agricultural resources in 2035 and 2050 (Impact AG-1).

Additionally, regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements would conflict with lands zoned for agriculture (6,726.1 acres between 2025 and 2035, and 254.8 acres between 2036 and 2050, for a cumulative total between 2025 and 2050 of 6,980.9 acres) and lands under Williamson Act contract (0 acres between 2025 and 2035, and 0.6 acre between 2036 and 2050, for a cumulative total between 2025 and 2050 of 0.6 acres). This would be a significant impact on agricultural resources in 2035 and 2050 (Impact AG-2).

Regional growth and land use change would result in new development that would result in the loss of existing forest lands. Proposed transportation network improvements also would require ground-disturbing activities such as brush clearing, grading, trenching, excavation, and/or soil removal that would result in the loss of forest lands. Development associated with regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements together would result in a direct loss of forest land between 2025 and 2035 (1,588.2 acres), and between 2036 and 2050 (59 acres), for a cumulative total between 2025 and 2050 of 1,647.2 acres. This would be a significant impact (Impact FR-1).

Impacts of Related Projects

Other related regional projects, such as the California High Speed Rail Train (HST), would have similar types of impacts as identified for the proposed Plan transportation improvements. The programmatic environmental document for the HST identified a significant impact related to agriculture and forest resources for the planned segments planned. Implementation of the HST is ongoing and being conducted in phases (HSRA 2005). The EIRs for the SDIA Airport Development Plan Project and the Navy Old Town Campus Revitalization Project did not evaluate agricultural impacts as this resource area was determined to not be significant (SCDRAA 2019).

Other land development and infrastructure projects throughout the region and state, such as petroleum pipeline transportation infrastructure, and freight rail infrastructure, and energy generation and transmission corridors, would also impact agriculture and/or forest resources if these projects expand the right-of-way (ROW) of highway or rail lines and convert agricultural uses or forest lands to other uses.

Impacts of Projections in Adopted Plans

The EIR prepared for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS identified impacts related to the loss of agricultural and forest lands due to new transportation infrastructure and associated land development, particularly those constructed outside of urbanized areas where new urban uses could be located on agriculture or forest lands. Additionally, the EIR found that the contribution of the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS to agriculture and forest impacts would be cumulatively considerable, as the conversion of agricultural land resulting from changes in regional land use patterns has the potential to set a precedent that would affect areas outside the region resulting in the conversion of agricultural lands (SCAG 2020). The 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS planning horizon is 2045. This document and analysis do not account for year 2050 impacts.

Adopted land use plans for local jurisdictions throughout the state of California may enact land pattern changes and zoning amendments that encourage and facilitate new urban development. Some of the land use changes would convert agriculture or forest resources to other uses. Additionally, adopted plans for improvements to arterial networks that widen streets or add or expand transportation facilities, especially those in new or nonurbanized areas, would also convert agriculture or forest resources to other uses.

Cumulative Impacts and Impact Conclusions

2035

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, or other agricultural lands, to non-agricultural use

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans within California were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. As described above, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2035 would significantly impact agricultural resources through the conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use.

As discussed above, significant impacts on agriculture resources have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other related infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on agriculture resources in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into areas of agriculture use. When the proposed Plan's impacts are added to the direct impacts from individual projects and adopted plans, cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state of California by 2035 due to the increased conversion of agricultural land would be significant.

Because cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state by 2035 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are also cumulatively considerable in 2035 (Impact C-AG-1).

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

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans within California were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. As described above, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2035 would significantly impact agriculture resources if the Plan conflicts with existing zoning agricultural uses and Williamson Act contracts.

As discussed above, significant impacts on agriculture resources have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other related infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on agriculture resources in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into areas of agriculture use. The combination of the direct impacts from individual projects and adopted plans, together with the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state of California by 2035 due to the increased conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act Contract.

Because cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state by 2035 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are cumulatively considerable and thus significant in 2035 (Impact C-AG-1).

Convert or result in the loss of "forest land" as defined in the California Forest Legacy Act of 2007 (PRC Section 12220[g])

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans within California were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. As described above, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2035 would significantly impact forest resources through the conversion of forest lands to nonforest use.

As discussed above, significant impacts on forest resources have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other related infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on forest resources in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into areas of forest use. The combination of the direct impacts from individual projects and adopted plans, together with the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative impacts on forest resources throughout the state of California by 2035 due to the increased loss of forest land.

Because cumulative impacts on forest resources throughout the state by 2035 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on forest resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on forest resources are cumulatively considerable and thus significant in 2035 (Impact C-AG-1).

2050

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, or other agricultural lands, to non-agricultural use

Similar to the analysis for 2035, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2050 would significantly impact agriculture resources through the conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural use.

As noted above, significant impacts on agricultural resources have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other associated infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on agricultural lands in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into agricultural lands such as Sacramento Area Council of Government's 2025 Blueprint which would result in the conversion of agricultural land (SACOG 2025). The combination of these impacts,

together with the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative impacts on agricultural resources throughout the state of California by 2050 by converting agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.

Because cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state by 2050 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are cumulatively considerable and thus significant in 2050 (Impact C-AG-1).

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

Similar to the analysis for 2035, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2050 would significantly impact agriculture resources if the Plan conflicts with existing zoning agricultural uses and Williamson Act contracts. As noted above, significant impacts on agriculture have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other associated infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on agriculture and forest resources in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into areas of agriculture use such as Sacramento Area Council of Government's 2025 Blueprint which would result in conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act Contract (SACOG 2025). The combination of these impacts, together with the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state of California by 2050 by conflicting with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act Contract.

Because cumulative impacts on agriculture resources throughout the state by 2050 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on agriculture resources are cumulatively considerable and thus significant in 2050 (Impact C-AG-1).

Convert or result in the loss of "forest land" as defined in the California Forest Legacy Act of 2007 (PRC Section 12220[g])

Similar to the analysis for 2035, implementation of the regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan in 2050 would significantly impact forest resources through the conversion of forest lands to non-forest use.

As noted above, significant impacts on forest resources have been identified in project-specific environmental documents such as the HST project EIR/EIS and also in the environmental analysis for the 2020-2045 SCAG RTP/SCS. Other associated infrastructure projects and land use plans across the state may also contribute to substantial impacts on forest resources in a manner similar to the proposed Plan through the expansion of urban uses into areas of forest use such as Sacramento Area Council of Government's 2025 Blueprint which would result in the loss of forest land (SACOG 2025). The combination of these impacts, together with the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative impacts on forest resources throughout the state of California by 2050 by the loss of forest land.

Because cumulative impacts on forest resources throughout the state by 2050 would be significant, and because the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on forest resources are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental impacts on forest resources are cumulatively considerable and thus significant in 2050 (Impact C-AG-1).

MITIGATION MEASURES

C-AG-1 MAKE A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE CONTRIBUTION TO ADVERSE EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

The implementation of Mitigation Measures AG-1a, AG-1b, ~~and~~ FR-1, BIO-1a, BIO-1b, and BIO-1e, as discussed above, would protect existing agricultural land and avoid the conflicts between regional growth and land use change, and transportation network improvements, with existing agricultural and forestry land to reduce impacts on resources when avoidance is not feasible. However, as outlined above, these mitigation measures would not guarantee that all proposed Plan impacts on agricultural and forestry land would be less than significant. Therefore, the proposed Plan's incremental contributions to cumulative impacts on known agricultural and forestry resources in the years 2035 and 2050 would remain cumulatively considerable post mitigation.