4.3 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section addresses agricultural and forestry resources in the project study area. It describes Sacramento County’s agricultural land uses; identifies the acreages of agricultural land, including Important Farmland and Grazing Land in Sacramento County; and describes the factors contributing to the conversion of irrigated agricultural land to nonirrigated uses within the County. This section also determines the significance and quality of agricultural land within the project study area. Additional information on land uses within and adjacent to the project study area is provided in Section 4.14, “Land Use and Planning, and Population, Housing, and Employment.”

Furthermore, this section addresses existing forestry resources in the project study area based on the definition of forestland provided by Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. Section 4.6, “Biological Resources – Terrestrial,” provides further discussion of forestland in the project study area.

4.3.1 REGULATORY SETTING

FEDERAL

No Federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to agriculture and forestry resources apply to the proposed project.

STATE

California Important Farmland Inventory System and Farmland Mitigation and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established by the State of California in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) (now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS], under the U.S. Department of Agriculture). The intent of the SCS was to produce agricultural resource maps, based on soil quality and land use across the nation. The California Department of Conservation (DOC) sponsors the FMMP and also is responsible for establishing agricultural easements, in accordance with California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 10250–10255.

The DOC Important Farmland classifications—Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance—recognize the land’s suitability for agricultural production by considering physical and chemical characteristics of the soil, such as soil temperature range, depth of the groundwater table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth. The classifications also consider location, growing season, and moisture available to sustain high-yield crops.

The DOC FMMP maps are updated every 2 years with the use of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and field reconnaissance. The following list provides a comprehensive description of all the categories mapped by DOC (DOC 2014:6):

► Prime Farmland—Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields.
► **Farmland of Statewide Importance**—Land similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture.

► **Unique Farmland**—Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state’s leading agricultural cash crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California.

► **Farmland of Local Importance**—Land that is of importance to the local agricultural economy, as defined by each county’s local advisory committee and adopted by its board of supervisors.

► **Grazing Land**—Land with existing vegetation that is suitable for grazing.

► **Urban and Built-Up Lands**—Land that is used for residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, and public utility structures and for other developed purposes.

► **Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use**—Land that has a permanent commitment to development but has an existing land use of agricultural or grazing lands.

► **Other Lands**—Land that does not meet the criteria of any of the previously described categories and generally includes low-density rural developments, vegetative and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing, confined-animal agriculture facilities, strip mines, borrow pits, and vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development.

Important Farmland is classified by DOC as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. Prime Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance is located in the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area, Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area, and American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal area.

Under CEQA, the designations for Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland are defined as “agricultural land” or “farmland” (California PRC Sections 21060.1 and 21095, and State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G).

**Williamson Act**

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (the Williamson Act) is one of the State’s primary agricultural conservation tools. Under this law, local governments can enter into contracts with private property owners to protect land (within agricultural preserves) for agricultural and open space purposes. Williamson Act contracts are required to be a minimum initial term of 10 years, and are automatically extended each year for an additional year, unless either party (landowner or the contracting city or county) notifies the other of the intent not to renew the contract. In return, the landowner is guaranteed a relatively stable tax rate, based on the value of the land for agricultural/open space use only, and is unaffected by its development potential. The Riego North site is currently held under Williamson Act Contracts with Sutter County.

The Williamson Act addresses “compatible” uses. Section 51238.1 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), states that uses approved on contracted lands shall be consistent with all of the following principles of compatibility.
The use will not significantly compromise the long-term productive agricultural capability of the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves.

The use will not significantly displace or impair current or reasonably foreseeable agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves.

The use will not result in the significant removal of adjacent contracted land from agricultural or open-space use.

**REGIONAL AND LOCAL**

**Sacramento County General Plan**

Borrow material is expected to be obtained from soil stockpiles on or adjacent to the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCSD) wastewater treatment plant. The environmental impacts for the area proposed for borrow material was previously evaluated as part of the *Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District EchoWater Project* (EchoWater Project DEIR) (SRCSD 2014). The EchoWater Project DEIR determined the effects of the EchoWater project on agricultural resources, in part, based on the following policies from the Agricultural Element of the *Sacramento County General Plan of 2005-2030* (Sacramento County 2011) and the County General Plan’s definition of locally important farmland described below (SRCSD 2014:4.2-2, 4.2-3).

**Policy AG-5:** Projects resulting in the conversion of more than fifty (50) acres of farmland shall be mitigated within Sacramento County, except as specified in the paragraph below, based on a 1:1 ratio, for the loss of the following farmland categories through the specific planning process or individual project entitlement requests to provide in-kind or similar resource value protection (such as easements for agricultural purposes):

- Prime, Statewide Importance, Unique, Local Importance, and Grazing farmlands located outside the USB;
- Prime, Statewide Importance, Unique, and Local Importance farmlands located inside the USB.

The County Board of Supervisors retains the authority to override impacts to Unique, Local, and Grazing farmlands, but not with respect to Prime and Statewide farmlands.

However, if that land is also required to provide mitigation pursuant to a Sacramento County endorsed or approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), then the Board of Supervisors may consider the mitigation land provided in accordance with the HCP as meeting the requirements of this section including land outside of Sacramento County.

Note: This policy is not tied to any maps contained in the Agricultural Element. Instead, the most current Important Farmland map from the Department of Conservation should be used to calculate mitigation. Applies to the analysis of project-related impacts. (Applies to the determination of project-related thresholds.)

**Policy AG-8:** Agricultural zoning district boundaries shall be rational and shall respect parcel boundaries. (Applies to the analysis of project-related impacts.)
In addition to the policies above, Sacramento County protects a broader category of farmland quality than the State in CEQA statute or the guidelines, by also including Farmland of Local Importance in its policy requiring mitigation for conversion. Sacramento County defines locally important farmlands as “lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique designation but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or nonirrigated crops; lands that would be Prime or Statewide designation and have been improved for irrigation but are now idle; and lands which currently support confined livestock, poultry operations, and aquaculture” (Sacramento County 2011:72).

**Sutter County General Plan**

The following policy from the Agricultural Resources Element of the Sutter County General Plan (2011) regarding agricultural resources applies to the proposed project.

- **Policy AG 1.6: Interrelationship with Habitat Conservation.** Permit agriculturally designated lands to be used for habitat conservation and/or mitigation with approval of a development agreement, provided such use does not interfere or adversely affect existing or planned agricultural uses or impact County flood control operations. (Applies to the analysis of project-related impacts.)

**City of Sacramento 2030 General Plan**

No City of Sacramento General Plan policies related to agriculture and forestry resources apply to the proposed project.

**4.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

**NORTH SACRAMENTO STREAMS LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS**

**Agricultural Resources**

According to the Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner, the total gross valuation for all agricultural commodities produced in Sacramento County in 2013 was approximately $457 million. Wine grapes had the highest crop value ($141 million) and represent almost a third of Sacramento County’s production value. Milk production is the number two commodity at $64.7 million, followed by pears ($42.6 million), poultry ($33.5 million), and corn ($26.1 million) (Sacramento County 2013).

Approximately 60 percent of the Natomas Basin is in some form of developed agricultural or open space use in unincorporated areas of northern Sacramento County. Rice is the most common crop and is generally grown over large areas of contiguous land north of Elkhorn Boulevard, although the amount of land in active rice production has greatly diminished in recent years and many former rice fields are now fallow or support grain crops, such as wheat (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] and SAFCA 2009:3-66).

Within the City of Sacramento, the majority of agricultural lands have been converted to nonagricultural uses. The City is mostly urbanized, with limited amounts of active commercial agricultural lands remaining that support large-scale operations. Agricultural activity is located, to a large extent, in the northwestern portion on the City, north of Interstate 80 and west of Interstate 5, and in the southernmost portion of the City, in the vicinity of the community of Freeport (City of Sacramento 2009).
**Sacramento County Farmland Conversion**

The DOC’s Important Farmland classifications—Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance—recognize the land’s suitability for agricultural production by considering physical and chemical characteristics of the soil, such as soil temperature range, depth of the groundwater table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth. The classifications also consider location, growing season, and moisture available to sustain high-yield crops. (See “Regulatory Setting” below, for detailed descriptions of Important Farmland classifications.)

DOC estimated that Sacramento County had approximately 367,569 acres of agricultural land in 2010, of which approximately 211,745 acres were identified as Important Farmland and 155,824 acres were identified as Grazing Land (DOC 2012a). **Table 4.3-1** summarizes the most recent DOC farmland conversion data, identifies the 2010 and 2012 acreages of agricultural land in Sacramento County, and shows the net change in acreage over the 2-year period. Overall, the total acreage of Important Farmland decreased by approximately 1.0 percent between 2010 and 2012, and the total acreage of agricultural land decreased by 0.9 percent over the 2-year period (**Table 4.3-1**).

**Table 4.3-1. Summary of Agricultural Land Conversion in Sacramento County, 2010–2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Farmland</td>
<td>97,477</td>
<td>93,917</td>
<td>-3,560</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmland of Statewide Importance</td>
<td>45,263</td>
<td>43,580</td>
<td>-1,683</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Farmland</td>
<td>15,076</td>
<td>15,063</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmland of Local Importance</td>
<td>53,929</td>
<td>56,981</td>
<td>3,052</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important Farmland Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>211,745</td>
<td>209,541</td>
<td>-2,204</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazing Land</td>
<td>155,824</td>
<td>154,746</td>
<td>-1,078</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural Land Total</strong></td>
<td>367,569</td>
<td>364,287</td>
<td>-3,282</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DOC 2012a

DOC’s 2012 Field Report for Sacramento County identifies the factors contributing to changes in agricultural land uses during the DOC 2010–2012 farmland conversion update cycle. According to the 2012 Field Report, irrigated Important Farmland (i.e., Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland) was converted to Farmland of Local Importance and grazing land by leaving formerly irrigated land idle for three or more update cycles or conversion of irrigated uses to cultivation of nonirrigated grain crops. Additional Important Farmland was converted to Urban and Built-Up Land because of development of solar facilities located mainly in and around the Cities of Galt and Elk Grove and construction of residential development in the City of Elk Grove. Conversion of Important Farmland to Other Land resulted from land left idle for three or more update cycles, construction of rural residences and commercial uses, and land converted to wetlands and other natural vegetation (DOC 2012b).
Existing Agricultural Uses

The proposed levee improvements along Natomas East Main Drainage Canal (NEMDC)/Steelhead Creek and Arcade Creek would occur within the existing levee footprints and the staging areas adjacent to Arcade Creek that have been used previously to support levee improvements. The remaining staging area is located within the site of Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s (PG&E’s) North Sacramento Gas Underground Storage Facility. Borrow Site 1 consists of soil stockpiles previously excavated during construction of nearby land uses (USACE and SAFCA 2009:3-66). Borrow Site 2, as well as Borrow Site 3 (which is also proposed as Robla Creek Site A as part of the Conservation Strategy) consist of grassland. There are no active agricultural uses present in the vicinity of the levee improvement footprints; staging areas; or Borrow Sites 1, 2, or 3.

In addition to the proposed levee improvements, riparian plantings associated with the Conservation Strategy are proposed on approximately 7 acres of the Novak parcel, located northeast of the intersection of Garden Highway and Powerline Road; on approximately 6 acres of the Riego North site, located on the east side of the Sacramento River near the intersection of Garden Highway and Riego Road; and along Robla Creek either on Site A or Site B, located on the northeast and southwest of Rio Linda Boulevard, respectively. Currently, the approximately 7-acre Novak parcel is undeveloped. The southern and southwestern portions consist of riparian woodland habitat that borders the riparian planting site. The northern portion of the parcel consists of agricultural upland habitat that was created to mitigate for effects of the Natomas Levee Improvement Program (NLIP) on Swainson’s hawk habitat (USACE and SAFCA 2009:2-78). This agricultural upland habitat is being managed in perpetuity by SAFCA.

The Riego North site is located within a parcel owned by The Natomas Basin Conservancy (TNBC) that is currently in alfalfa production, as required by the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan. Active agricultural land uses also occur on parcels north and east of the site. West of the site are residential uses and an existing SAFCA NLIP riparian mitigation site is adjacent to northwest corner of the site and along the south side of Riego Road.

The Robla Creek Site A (i.e., Borrow Site 3) and Site B consist of grassland and there are no active agricultural uses present in the vicinity of these sites.

Exhibit 4.3-1 shows the designated farmland in the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements footprint, borrow sites, and staging areas, and Exhibit 4.3-2 shows the designated farmland in the Novak, Riego North, and Robla Creek woodland habitat sites surrounding areas in Sacramento, Sacramento County, and Sutter County based on the Sacramento County and Sutter County Important Farmland Map, published by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection. The levee improvement footprint, staging areas, and surrounding land within the vicinity of these areas are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land. Land within Borrow Sites 1 and 2 is designated as Grazing Land and Borrow Site 3 and the Robla Creek Site B are designated as Farmland of Local Importance. All of the Novak and Riego North woodland habitat sites are designated as Prime Farmland. Table 4.3-2 summarizes the acres of designated farmland within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area footprint, staging areas, and borrow sites.

None of the land in the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area footprint, staging areas, or borrow sites and none of the land in the Robla Creek woodland habitat sites is held under a Williamson Act Contract (DOC 2013a). The Riego North woodland habitat site is held under a Williamson Act Contract (DOC 2013a, 2013b).
Exhibit 4.3-1. Important Farmland in the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements Area
Exhibit 4.3-2. Important Farmland in Potential Riparian Woodland Habitat Planting Areas

Source: DOC 2012c, adapted by AECOM in 2015
Table 4.3-2. Acres of Designated Farmland within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements Area Footprint, Borrow Sites, Staging Areas, and Conservation Strategy Sites¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Component</th>
<th>Prime Farmland</th>
<th>Farmland of Local Importance</th>
<th>Grazing Land</th>
<th>Urban and Built-Up Land</th>
<th>Other Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levee improvement footprint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staging areas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow Site 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow Site 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow Site 3²</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Strategy Sites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novak</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riego North</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robla Creek³</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
¹ The acreages have been rounded (either up or down) to create a whole number estimate.
² Borrow Site 3 is also proposed as riparian planting Site A along Robla Creek as part of the Conservation Strategy.
³ Important Farmland shown for the Robla Creek sites includes only the acreage of Important Farmland for Site B. The Important Farmland acreage associated with Robla Creek Site A is included in the total acreage for Borrow Site 3.

Sources: Data compiled by AECOM in 2014 and 2015

Agricultural Zoning

None of the levee footprint, staging areas, or Borrow Site 2 are zoned for agricultural uses. Borrow Site 1 and the Novak parcel are zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum). The AG-80 zoning code is used to promote long-term agricultural use, to discourage the premature and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to urban uses, and to encourage the retention of sufficiently large agricultural lots to assure maintenance of viable agricultural units.

Borrow site 3 (which is also Robla Creek Site A) and Robla Creek Site B are zoned by the City of Sacramento as A (Agricultural). The A zoning code is used to restrict the use of land primarily to agriculture and farming and is also considered an open space zone.

The Riego North site is zoned by Sutter County as Agricultural (AG), which is used to establish areas for general farming, low-density uses, and open spaces.

Forestry Resources

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines defines forestland as land that can support 10 percent native tree cover and woodland vegetation of any species—including hardwoods—under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resource—including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation—and other public benefits (California PRC 12220[g]). Within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area, Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland satisfy the requirements of California PRC Section 12220(g). Therefore, the following discussion focuses on those communities.
Approximately 17.2 acres of Fremont cottonwood forest and approximately 49.9 acres of valley oak woodland occur within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area footprint. Fremont cottonwood forest in the project study area is dominated by Fremont cottonwood, Oregon ash, black walnut, western and eastern sycamore, valley oak, black willow, and smaller willow species. Valley oak woodland is dominated by valley oak, white alder, Oregon ash, black walnut, interior live oak, Fremont cottonwood, black willow, and smaller willow species.

Both communities occur on NEMDC/Steelhead Creek and Arcade, Dry, and Robla Creeks, with the majority of the Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland occurring on NEMDC/Steelhead Creek. These communities support 10 percent or more native tree cover, occur under predominantly natural conditions, and provide suitable habitat for many resident and migratory birds and other wildlife species. (See Section 4.6, “Biological Resources–Terrestrial,” for further discussion.)

**Sacramento River East Levee Improvements**

**Agricultural Resources**

The environmental setting of the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area related to Sacramento County farmland conversion is the same as described above for the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area.

The proposed levee improvements along the Sacramento River East Levee would occur within the existing levee footprint and it is anticipated that several staging areas would be developed within City parks and vacant land in urbanized areas. The levee footprint and staging areas are not zoned for agricultural uses and there are no active agricultural land uses or land held under a Williamson Act Contract within or in the vicinity of the levee improvement footprint and staging areas (DOC 2013b).

The SRCSD Borrow Site is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 and this area was once part of the SRCSD’s agricultural leases. It was last leased for agricultural production in 2007 and is currently not in active agricultural use. There are no active agricultural land uses present in the vicinity of the borrow site. None of the land in the borrow site is held under a Williamson Act Contract. (SRCSD 2014:4.2-4, 4.2-6.)

As part of the Conservation Strategy, riparian planting are proposed on an approximately 75-acre parcel north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge located on the landside of the Sacramento River East Levee. This site and lands north of the site are currently in agricultural production. The site is not zoned for agricultural uses and the site is not held under a Williamson Act Contract (DOC 2013a).

**Exhibit 4.3-3** shows the designated farmland in the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements footprint, staging areas, and borrow sites and **Exhibit 4.3-2** shows designated farmland in the Conservation Strategy site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and surrounding areas in Sacramento and the County based on the Sacramento County Important Farmland map, published by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection. **Table 4.3-3** summarizes the acres of designated farmland within the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area. The levee improvement footprint, staging areas, and surrounding land in the vicinity of these areas are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land. Land at the SRCSD Borrow Site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance and lands in the vicinity of the borrow site are designated as Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, and Other Land. The entire site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is designated as Prime Farmland.
Exhibit 4.3-3. Important Farmland in Sacramento River East Levee Improvements Area and American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal Area

Source: DOC 2012c, adapted by AECOM in 2014
### Table 4.3-3. Acres of Designated Farmland within Sacramento River East Levee Improvements Footprint, Staging Areas, Borrow Site, and Conservation Strategy Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Component</th>
<th>Prime Farmland</th>
<th>Farmland of Local Importance</th>
<th>Urban and Built-Up Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levee improvement footprint and staging areas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Strategy site(^2)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>179</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1. The acreages have been rounded (either up or down) to create a whole number estimate.
2. The Conservation Strategy riparian planting site is located on a parcel north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

**Source:** Data compiled by AECOM in 2014

As discussed in the EchoWater Project DEIR, Sacramento County protects a broader category of farmland quality than the State in CEQA Guidelines. Sacramento County defines locally important farmlands as lands which do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique Farmland but are currently used for irrigated crops or nonirrigated crops; lands that have been improved for irrigation but are now idle; or currently support confined livestock, poultry operations, or aquaculture (Sacramento County 2011:72). The EchoWater Project DEIR determined that because the area used for soil stockpiles is no longer farmed; is not irrigated; and does not support livestock, poultry, or aquaculture operations, it does not meet the County’s definition of locally important farmland (SRCSD 2014:4.2-4, 4.2-7).

### Forestry Resources

Approximately 57.5 acres of Fremont cottonwood forest and approximately 49.1 acres of valley oak woodland occur along the Sacramento River within the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements footprint. Most sections of the waterside slope of the east levee are dominated by Fremont cottonwood forest; the waterside of the southernmost reach (Reach 27) and a midsection reach (Reaches 15–19) are characterized by valley oak woodland. Although the habitat within the levee improvement footprint is constrained by the urban environment to the east and agricultural lands to the west, it provides a critical remnant corridor of forest habitat for resident, migratory, and dispersing wildlife.

### AMERICAN RIVER AND BEACH LAKE LEVEES HIGH-HAZARD LEVEE ENCROACHMENT AND VEGETATION REMOVAL

#### American River

### Agricultural Resources

Encroachment and vegetation removal activities would occur along the American River from approximately Arden Way west to the confluence with the Sacramento River. The American River Levee is not zoned for agricultural uses and there are no active agricultural land uses or land held under a Williamson Act Contract within or in the vicinity of the levee (DOC 2013b).

An approximately 7-acre portion of the approximately 270-acre Woodlake site and an approximately 7-acre portion of the approximately 9.5-acre Camp Pollock site, both of which are in the American River Parkway,
would provide opportunities for riparian woodland planting as part of the proposed Conservation Strategy. The Woodlake site is undeveloped and is covered with grasses, shrubs, and tall trees and is adjacent to urban uses and the Camp Pollock site is used as a group campground and picnic area.

Exhibit 4.3-3 shows designated farmland along the American River Levee and Exhibit 4.3-2 shows designated farmland in the Woodlake and Camp Pollock sites and surrounding areas in Sacramento County based on the Sacramento County Important Farmland maps, published by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection. The American River Levee where encroachment and vegetation management removal activities would occur is designated as Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land. Approximately 190 acres of the Woodlake site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance and the remainder of the site is designated as Other Land. The approximately 9.5-acre Camp Pollock site is designated as Other Land.

**Forestry Resources**

With regards to forestry resources, the banks of the American River within the American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal area provide riparian woodlands that include Fremont cottonwood, valley oak, and willow, with occasional white alder, box elder, Oregon ash, and western and eastern sycamore. The value of habitat on the southern side of the American River is limited by the narrow riparian corridor and its adjacency to the densely populated urban development of the City. The northern side of the river, in contrast, supports a relatively wide corridor of woodland associated with the American River Parkway. The Lower American River provides important habitat for resident wildlife species and a pathway and connection to the Sacramento River corridor for migratory and dispersing wildlife. In addition, this forest habitat contributes to scenic views and the high-quality visual character of the American River Parkway.

**Beach Lake**

**Agricultural Resources**

Encroachment and vegetation removal would also take place along the Beach Lake Levee (near Morrison Creek). The lands adjacent to the Beach Lake Levee consist of grasslands and patches of riparian woodlands. Agricultural land uses and the SRCSD wastewater treatment plant are located to the south and east of the levee. None of the land in the Beach Lake Levee is held under a Williamson Act Contract (DOC 2013b). The Beach Lake Levee is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum).

As part of the Conservation Strategy, a riparian planting area is proposed on approximately 20 acres within the Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area (in the Bufferlands) that is owned and managed by SRCSD. This site is undeveloped and consists primarily of scattered grasses. There are no active agricultural uses present in the vicinity of the site and the site is not held under a Williamson Act Contract (DOC 2013a). The Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum).

Exhibit 4.3-3 shows designated farmland along the Beach Lake Levee and Exhibit 4.3-2 shows designated farmland in the Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site and surrounding areas in Sacramento County based on the Sacramento County Important Farmland maps, published by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection. The Beach Lake Levee where encroachment and vegetation management removal activities would occur is designated as Other Land. The entire Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance.
Forestry Resources

Morrison Creek, which flows south of the Beach Lake Levee through the Bufferlands along the north and west sides of the SRCSD wastewater treatment plant, is vegetated with mixed riparian forest, including Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland.

NATOMAS EAST MAIN DRAINAGE CANAL/STEELHEAD CREEK CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Activities associated with the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek Corridor Management Plan (CMP) would take place from Dry Creek at the D-15 pump plant and extend eastward to the Rio Linda Boulevard Bridge crossings over Dry and Robla Creeks and to Hagginwood Park on Arcade Creek. The environmental setting for the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP activities in these areas related to agricultural and forestry resources would be the same as described above for the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements.

The Dry Creek Restoration Project, proposed as part of the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP, would take place within the Ueda Parkway. Land within this area is designated by the DOC as Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land. This area is zoned by the City of Sacramento as A-OS (Agricultural-Open Space), which is intended to preserve agricultural and open space land and prevent the premature development of land to urban uses. There are no active agricultural land uses or land held under a Williamson Act Contract within or in the vicinity of areas proposed for restoration (DOC 2013b).

4.3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the potential impacts of the proposed project on agricultural and forestry resources was based on field and aerial photographic review and the following planning documents pertaining to the project study area:

► Sacramento County General Plan of 2005–2030 (Sacramento County 2011),
► Sutter County General Plan (Sutter County 2011),
► City of Sacramento General Plan 2030 Master Environmental Impact Report (City of Sacramento 2009), and
► Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District EchoWater Project (SRCSD 2014).

The Important Farmland Maps for Sacramento and Sutter Counties, produced by the DOC Division of Land Resource Protection (2012c), was used to evaluate the agricultural significance of the lands within the project study area. Geographic information system data were used to determine the potential acreage of designated farmland affected by implementation of the proposed project. Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines focuses the analysis on conversion of agricultural land on Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland; therefore, any conversion of these lands would be considered a significant impact under CEQA.

As discussed above, Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines defines forestland as land that can support 10 percent native tree cover and woodland vegetation of any species—including hardwoods—under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resource—including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife,
biodiversity, water quality, recreation—and other public benefits (California PRC 12220[g]). The Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland that occur on NEMDC/Steelhead Creek and Arcade, Dry, and Robla Creeks; the Sacramento River East Levee; and the American River and Beach Lake Levees satisfy the requirements of California PRC Section 12220(g). These communities support 10 percent or more native tree cover, occur under natural conditions, provide suitable habitat for many resident and migratory birds and other wildlife species, and contribute to scenic views and the high-quality visual character of the Sacramento and American Rivers. Therefore, evaluation of impacts on forestry resources is based on the potential for the proposed project to substantially reduce native tree cover or affect suitable habitat for birds and other wildlife or scenic values. See Section 4.6, “Biological Resources – Terrestrial,” for a detailed description of the methodology used to identify forestry resources.

**SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

The thresholds for determining the significance of impacts for this analysis are based on the environmental checklist in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, as amended. The proposed project would have a significant impact on agriculture and forestry resources if implementation of the proposed project would:

- convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use;

- conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract;

- conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in PRC Section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by PRC Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104[g]);

- result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to nonforest use; or

- involve other changes in the existing environment that, because of their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to nonforest use.

In addition, Sacramento County has adopted a significance threshold defining the conversion of over 50 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural uses as a significant environmental effect (Sacramento County 2011: Agricultural Element, page 9). This threshold is considered in the analysis of potential conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural use for proposed project elements in Sacramento County in Impact AG-1.

**ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER IN THIS EIR**

**Conflict with a Williamson Act Contract**—None of the land in the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area or the American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal area is held under a Williamson Act Contract. Within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area, the Riego North site is held under Williamson Act Contract. Use of the proposed approximately 6 acres of the Riego North site for riparian plantings would not be substantial relative to the total acreage of these parcels and no cancellation of a Williamson Act Contract would be required. In addition, Section 51238.1 of the CCR states that uses on parcels under Williamson Act Contracted-land cannot compromise the long-term productive agricultural capability of the parcel, displace or impair current or reasonably foreseeable agricultural operations, or result in the removal of adjacent contracted land from agricultural use. Because the riparian plantings on the Riego North
site would not preclude the continuation of agricultural activities on the remainder of the parcel or on properties adjacent to the parcel, no conflicts with an existing Williamson Act Contract would occur. Thus, the proposed project would not conflict with the existing Williamson Act Contract or result in the cancellation of a Williamson Act Contract. Therefore, this impact is not evaluated further in this EIR.

Conflict with Existing Zoning for, or Cause Rezoning of, Forest Land, Timberland, or Timberland Zoned Timberland Production—The project study area is not zoned as forestland, timberland, or a Timberland Production Zone. Thus, implementing the proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestry resources and this impact is not evaluated further in this EIR.

**IMPACT ANALYSIS**

**IMPACT**  
**AG-1 Conversion of Agricultural Land, including Important Farmland, to Nonagricultural Uses.** There are no active agricultural land uses within or in the vicinity of areas where proposed levee improvements and associated borrow and staging activities, encroachment removal, vegetation management, or NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP activities would occur. Furthermore, proposed project activities would not conflict with Sacramento County, Sutter County, or City of Sacramento zoning codes. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant** throughout the project study area. Implementing riparian plantings as part of the Conservation Strategy in the North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements areas could potentially temporarily disrupt existing agricultural operations, remove land from agricultural production, and result in a temporary loss in agricultural productivity. In addition, woodland mitigation would be preserved as habitat in perpetuity, permanently affecting long-term agricultural productivity at the Riego North site and the Important Farmland designations of the Novak parcel, Riego North site, the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge site. Therefore, this impact would be **significant** for the North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements areas.

**North Sacramento Streams Improvements**

Important Farmland mapping for the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area is shown in **Exhibit 4.3-1**. Lands within the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area where levee reconstruction and associated borrow site and staging area activities, and encroachment removal would occur are designated by the DOC as Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other Land. The conversion of these lands would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines.

Because there are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of where levee improvements and associated borrow site and staging area activities, or encroachment removal would occur, implementation of these project elements would not result in other changes in the physical environment that could result in the conversion of agricultural land, including Important Farmland, to nonagricultural uses. Therefore, these proposed project elements would have **no impact**.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Removal of the soil stockpiles at Borrow Site 1 and reclamation of Borrow Site 3 for construction of a seasonal wetland would not conflict with agricultural zoning for those borrow sites. Borrow Site 1 is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum). The AG-80 zoning designation is intended to promote long-term agricultural use, to discourage the premature and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to urban uses,
and to encourage the retention of sufficiently large agricultural lots to assure maintenance of viable agricultural
units. If Borrow Site 1 was selected, the existing soil stockpiles would be reduced in size or removed altogether
and the borrow site would be reseeded with native vegetation. There are no agricultural land uses within the
vicinity of the Borrow Site 1 and removal of the soil stockpiles would not result in changes in land use that would
conflict with the County’s AG-80 zoning code.

Borrow Site 3 is zoned by the City of Sacramento as A (Agricultural). The A zoning code is intended to restrict
the use of land primarily to agriculture and farming but is also considered an open space zone. Reclamation of
Borrow Site 3 may include construction of a seasonal wetland up to about 10 acres in size. The created wetland
would be considered open space and would not conflict with the City’s A zoning code.

For the reasons described above, removal of the soil at the three borrow sites and establishment of wetlands at
Borrow Sites 2 or 3 would not conflict with Sacramento County or City of Sacramento zoning. Therefore, this
proposed project element would have a less-than-significant impact.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

Conservation Strategy activities along Arcade Creek would occur within the existing levee footprints and this area
is designated by the DOC as Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other
Land (Exhibit 4.3-1). Riparian plantings proposed as part of the Conservation Strategy at Robla Creek Site A
(i.e., Borrow Site 3) and Site B are designated as Farmland of Local Importance (Exhibit 4.3-2). The conversion
of these lands would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines. In addition, there
are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of the Arcade Creek or Robla Creek where
Conservation Strategy activities would occur.

However, the Conservation Strategy also includes riparian plantings at the Novak parcel and the Riego North site.
The Novak parcel is undeveloped and the southern and southwestern portion of the parcel consists of riparian
woodland habitat that borders the riparian planting site. The environmental impacts for the northern portion of the
Novak parcel were previously evaluated as part of the NLIP. This portion of the parcel consists of Agricultural
Upland habitat that was created to mitigate for effects of NLIP on Swainson’s hawk habitat and this habitat is
being managed in perpetuity by SAFCA (USACE 2010:2-78). The Novak parcel is zoned by Sacramento County
as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum). Because no agricultural land uses occur on the Novak parcel, riparian
plantings on the site would not result in the conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses. Therefore,
riparian plantings on the Novak parcel would not conflict with Sacramento County’s AG-80 zoning code.

The Riego North site consists of a narrow corridor that runs from north to south along the western boundary of the
TNBC parcel that is currently in alfalfa production. The Riego North site is zoned by Sutter County as
Agricultural (AG). Riparian planting on the Riego North site would be consistent with Sutter County’s policy to
permit agriculturally designated lands to be used for habitat conservation and/or mitigation, provided such use
does not interfere or adversely affect existing or planned agricultural uses (Policy AG 1.6). The riparian area
would be considered open space and would not conflict with Sutter County’s AG zoning code for the site.
Riparian plantings on the Riego North parcel would directly and permanently convert approximately 7 acres of
fallow field designated by the DOC as Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use (Exhibit 4.3-3).

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would not result in other changes in the physical
environment that could directly or indirectly result in the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural
uses. Removal of agricultural land uses on the Riego North site would not preclude the continuation of agricultural activities on the remainder of the TNBC parcel outside of the Riego North site. The riparian planting would not transect or encroach upon the remainder of the parcel such that the parcel would become fragmented, reduced in size, or irregularly shaped to such a degree that continuing agricultural land uses would be difficult or infeasible. Finally, riparian plantings on the Novak parcel would not preclude the continuation of agricultural activities on the northern portion of the parcel or result in activities that would cause continuation of agricultural land uses difficult or infeasible.

Construction activities that occur on active farmland (i.e., land currently being prepared or used for agricultural production) could indirectly and temporarily disrupt existing agricultural operations, remove land from agricultural production, and result in a temporary, short-term loss in agricultural productivity. In addition, riparian plantings on the Novak parcel and Riego North site would directly and permanently convert approximately 7 acres and 6 acres, respectively, of land designated by the DOC as Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use (Exhibit 4.3-2). Woodland mitigation would be preserved as habitat in perpetuity, permanently affecting the long-term agricultural productivity and status as Important Farmland of the Novak parcel and the Riego North site.

The conversion of Prime Farmland on the Riego North site would not be substantial compared to the total acreage of Prime Farmland in Sutter County; however, Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines states that conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use establishes a significant environmental effect. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a significant impact. Mitigation Measure AG-1, described below, has been identified to address this impact.

Mitigation Measure AG-1: Avoid Disruption of Existing Agricultural Operations During Construction Activities and Minimize Important Farmland Conversion to the Extent Feasible.

SAFCA shall implement the measures listed below with regard to Prime Farmland to minimize construction-related impacts on these lands:

- Construction activities shall be undertaken in an expedient fashion, and associated construction equipment storage and staging areas shall be located outside of the agricultural fields to the extent possible.
- If it is necessary to locate staging areas on active farmland, the construction contractor shall coordinate with the agricultural landowners in the areas that will be temporarily disturbed to determine a location and time where construction could occur to minimize damage to agricultural operations.
- If damage or destruction does occur to active farmland, these areas shall be returned to preconstruction conditions. This could include activities such as soil preparation, regrading, and reseeding.
- To the extent practicable and feasible, when Conservation Strategy activities occur on agricultural land, the most productive topsoil shall be salvaged and redistributed to less-productive areas that may benefit from introduction of good-quality soil. By agreement between the implementing agencies or landowners of affected properties and the recipient(s) of the topsoil, the recipient(s) shall be required
to use the topsoil for agricultural purposes. SAFCA shall implement all terms and conditions of agreements.

- By agreement between SAFCA and Sacramento County for woodland planting sites within unincorporated Sacramento County and the TNBC for the Riego North site, acquire agricultural conservation easements at a 1:1 ratio (i.e., 1 acre on which easements are acquired to 1 acre of Important Farmland removed from agricultural use) that provide in-kind or similar resource value protection. These lands will be held by land trusts or local governments who will be responsible for maintaining these lands in agricultural use.

**Timing:** Minimize loss of Important Farmland and reuse topsoil before the start of construction activities and acquire conservation easements after the acreage of Important Farmland permanently converted has been determined.

**Responsibility:** Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the significant impact associated with the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses, but not to a less-than-significant level because no new farmland would be made available and the productivity of existing farmland would not be improved. Consequently, full compensation for loss of Important Farmland would not be achieved and a net loss of Important Farmland would still occur as a result of conversion of the Riego North site for a mitigation planting site in the North Sacramento Streams Improvements area. Therefore, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

**Sacramento River East Levee Improvements**

Important Farmland mapping for Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area is shown in Exhibit 4.3-3. Lands within the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area where levee improvements, encroachment removal, and vegetation management activities would occur are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land. The conversion of these lands would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines.

Because there are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of where the levee improvements and associated borrow site and staging area activities, encroachment removal, and vegetation management activities would occur, implementation of these project elements would not result in other changes in the physical environment that could result in the conversion of agricultural land, including Important Farmland, to nonagricultural uses. Therefore, these proposed project elements would have no impact.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Borrow material for levee improvements is expected to be obtained from soil stockpiles on or adjacent to the SRCSD wastewater treatment plant. This land is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum), which intended to promote long-term agricultural use, to discourage the premature and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to urban uses, and to encourage the retention of sufficiently large agricultural lots to assure maintenance of viable agricultural units. The existing soil stockpiles would be reduced in size or removed altogether and the borrow site would be reseeded with native vegetation. There are no agricultural land uses within the vicinity of the borrow site and removal of the soil stockpiles would not result in changes in land...
use that would conflict with the AG-80 zoning code (SRCSD 2014:4.2-6). Therefore, this proposed project element would have a **less-than-significant impact.**

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy along Sacramento River East Levee would occur on land designated as Urban and Built-Up Land (Exhibit 4.3-2). The conversion of this land would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines. In addition, there are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of Sacramento River East Levee where Conservation Strategy activities would occur.

However, additional riparian plantings as part of the Conservation Strategy are proposed on an approximately 75-acre parcel located on the landside of Sacramento River East Levee, just north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. This site is currently in agricultural production and agricultural uses are also located north of the site. The site is not zoned for agricultural uses.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would not result in other changes in the physical environment that could directly or indirectly result in the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses. Removal of agricultural land uses on the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge would not preclude the continuation of agricultural activities on the parcel north of the site. The riparian planting would not transect or encroach upon the remainder of the parcel such that the parcel would become fragmented, reduced in size, or irregularly shaped to such a degree that continuing agricultural land uses would be difficult or infeasible.

Construction activities that occur on active farmland (i.e., land currently being prepared or used for agricultural production) could indirectly and temporarily disrupt existing agricultural operations, remove land from agricultural production, and result in a temporary, short-term loss in agricultural productivity. In addition, riparian plantings on the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge would directly and permanently convert approximately 75 acres of active agricultural land designated by the DOC as Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use (Exhibit 4.3-3). Woodland mitigation would be preserved as habitat in perpetuity, permanently affecting the long-term agricultural productivity and status as Important Farmland of the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

Although conversion of Prime Farmland on the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge would not be substantial relative to the total acreage of Prime Farmland in Sacramento County, Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines states that conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use establishes a significant environmental effect. In addition, Sacramento County has adopted a significance threshold that defines the conversion of over 50 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural uses as a significant environmental effect. Furthermore, Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines states that conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use establishes a significant environmental effect. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a **significant impact.** Mitigation Measure AG-1, described below, has been identified to address this impact.
Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure AG-1 (Avoid Disruption of Existing Agricultural Operations during Construction Activities and Minimize Important Farmland Conversion to the Extent Feasible).

**Timing:** Minimize loss of Important Farmland and reuse topsoil before the start of construction activities and acquire conservation easements after the acreage of Important Farmland permanently converted has been determined.

**Responsibility:** Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the significant impact associated with the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses, but not to a less-than-significant level because no new farmland would be made available and the productivity of existing farmland would not be improved. Consequently, full compensation for loss of Important Farmland would not be achieved and a net loss of Important Farmland would still occur. Therefore, this impact would remain **significant and unavoidable.**

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**American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal**

Removal of levee encroachments and high-hazard trees would occur at various locations along the Lower American River (most of which are located within the American River Parkway), and along the Beach Lake Levee. There is no land designated as Important Farmland in the vicinity of areas proposed for encroachment removal or vegetation management activities. Therefore, these proposed project elements would have **no impact.**

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would involve riparian plantings at the Woodlake site, Camp Pollock site, and Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site. Plantings of valley oaks and other native riparian trees and shrubs would occur on approximately 7 acres of the approximately 270-acre Woodlake site and on approximately 7 acres of the approximately 9.5-acre Camp Pollock site. The Woodlake site is undeveloped and is covered with grasses, shrubs, and tall trees and the Camp Pollock site is used as a group campground and picnic area. The Woodlake and Camp Pollock sites are not zoned for agricultural uses and there are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of the sites.

The Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site is undeveloped and consists primarily of scattered grasses. The site consists primarily of scattered grasses and is zoned by Sacramento County as AG-80 (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum). Because there are no agricultural land uses within or in the vicinity of the site, the riparian plantings would not conflict with the AG-80 zoning code.

Land within the Woodlake site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other Land; land within the Camp Pollock site is designated as Other Land; and land within the Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance (*Exhibit 4.3-3*). The conversion of these lands would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines. Therefore, this proposed project element would have **no impact.**

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.
Activities associated with the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP would take place from Dry Creek at the D-15 pump plant and extend eastward to the Rio Linda Boulevard Bridge crossings over Dry and Robla Creeks and to Hagginwood Park on Arcade Creek and along the Ueda Parkway. These areas are designated by the DOC as Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other Land. The conversion of these lands would not be considered a significant impact under the State CEQA Guidelines.

Areas proposed as part of the Dry Creek Restoration Project, as part of the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP, are zoned by the City of Sacramento as A-OS (Agricultural-Open Space). The A-OS zoning code is intended to preserve agricultural and open space land and prevent the premature development of land to urban uses. Proposed restoration along the Dry Creek stream corridor, including planting of clusters of mixed riparian forest and scrub species and creation of a lightly grazed riparian pasture, are considered open space uses and would not conflict with the City’s A-OS zoning code.

Because there are no agricultural land uses present within or in the vicinity of where NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP activities would occur, other changes in the physical environment that could result in the conversion of agricultural land, including Important Farmland, to nonagricultural uses would not occur. Therefore, this proposed project element would have no impact.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

**IMPACT AG-2 Conversion of Forestland to Nonforest Uses.** Encroachment removal throughout the project study area would not require removal of Fremont cottonwood forest of valley oak woodland. Thus, there would be no impact. Implementation of the levee improvements in the North Sacramento and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements areas would result in the loss of existing forest land. This impact would be potentially significant. The amount of forestland that would be lost as a result of vegetation management activities throughout the project study area would be relatively small compared to the amount of existing forestland. Thus, this impact would be less than significant. The Conservation Strategy and the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP include enhancement and creation of various riparian woodlands throughout the project study area that would provide an overall long-term benefit to forestry resources. Therefore, this impact would be beneficial.

**North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements**

Encroachment removal along Arcade Creek would occur in the upstream reaches of the levee improvements area, where the creek corridor is very narrow and high-density residential development occurs immediately adjacent to the levees. Removal of additional encroachments on the waterside of the levees would not affect forestry resources because no trees associated with Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland would be removed. Therefore, this proposed project element would have no impact.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed levee improvements along Arcade Creek is anticipated to result in the conversion of approximately 0.65-acre of Fremont cottonwood forest and approximately 1.1 acres of valley oak woodland that meets the definition of forestland of California (California PRC Section 12220[g]). The amount of forestland
that would be lost as a result of levee improvements represents approximately 3.8 percent of the existing Fremont cottonwood forest (approximately 0.65 acre of an estimated 17.2 acres total) and 2.2 percent of valley oak woodland (1.1 acres of an estimated 49.9 acres) in the North Sacramento Streams Levee Improvements area. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a potentially significant impact.

### Mitigation Measure AG-2a: Implement Conservation Strategy Enhancements of Arcade Creek Habitats.

SAFCA shall plant native shade trees along the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek channel banks to mitigate for the habitat value of the approximately 0.65 acre of Fremont cottonwood forest and approximately 1.1 acres of valley oak woodland lost. The NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP revegetation plan will involve planting two parallel rows of large tree species, primarily valley oaks, on both banks of the low-flow channel in locations within NEMDC/Steelhead Creek where shallow ponds and mudflats of water primrose have been drained and shrub thickets of sandbar willow and red sesbania have been removed to reduce roughness.

**Timing:** Upon restoration of the low-flow channel in NEMDC/Steelhead Creek.

**Responsibility:** Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Plantings would create new riparian forest to replace the less than approximately 2 acres of forestland that would be lost with implementation of this proposed project element, reducing the conversion of forest to nonforest land impacts to a less-than-significant level in the North Sacramento Streams Improvements area.

Vegetation management along Arcade Creek would occur in the upstream reaches of the levee improvements area, where the creek corridor is very narrow and high-density residential development occurs immediately adjacent to the levees. The vegetation management element would entail the removal of an estimated 7 high-hazard nonnative trees along the Arcade Creek levee: three along the landside of the levee and four along the waterside of the leevle, between Marysville and Rio Linda Boulevards. Most of the trees are located on the waterside of the Arcade Creek Levees and are interspersed with valley oak woodland habitat. The removal of these trees would result in an estimated loss of 0.2 acre of tree canopy along Arcade Creek, which represents a relatively small amount of loss of tree canopy within associated valley oak woodland habitat. In addition, high-hazard tree removal would not affect forestland that provides habitat for birds and other wildlife. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a less-than-significant impact.

### Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would improve and expand native riparian habitat along Arcade Creek within the reach between Rio Linda Boulevard and Marysville Boulevard by planting one row of large riparian tree species (e.g., valley oak) along each bank of the low-flow channel, and riparian plantings are proposed on approximately 6 acres at Robla Creek Site A or 7 acres at Robla Creek Site B. Additionally, riparian plantings on the Novak parcel and on the Riego North site would provide connections to existing SAFCA riparian mitigation sites that are adjacent to these parcels.

For the reasons described above, implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would result in an overall improvement in riparian woodland habitat, connect and expand existing riparian woodlands, and result in an
overall long-term benefit to forestry resources. Therefore, these proposed project elements would have a beneficial impact.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

Sacramento River East Levee Improvements

Encroachment removal along Sacramento River East Levee would occur mainly on the landside of the levees in association with residences and would not require the removal of Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. Therefore, this proposed project element would have no impact.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

Levee improvements along Sacramento River East Levee would result in the permanent loss of about 0.46 acre of Fremont cottonwood forest and about 4.9 acres of valley oak woodland that meets the definition of forestland (California PRC Section 12220[g]). The amount of woodland habitat that would be lost as a result of levee improvements represents 0.8 percent of the existing Fremont cottonwood forest (approximately 0.46 acre of an estimated 57.5 acres) and 10 percent of the existing valley oak woodland (approximately 4.9 acres of an estimated 49.1 acres) in the Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measure AG-2b: Implement Conservation Strategy Enhancements of Sacramento River Riparian Habitats.

SAFCA shall plant valley oaks and other native riparian trees and shrubs in close proximity to the Sacramento River in up to 10 acres of existing wild oat grassland which cause gaps in the woodland canopy on high benches between the waterside levee slope and the upper banks of the Sacramento River to mitigate for the loss of approximately 5.4 acres of Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. SAFCA shall increase the overall patch size of existing, isolated riparian and oak woodland groves by enlarging the contiguous size of one or more groves, and by creating connecting woodland corridors across gaps between existing groves.

Timing: Upon completion of levee accreditation improvements along levee reaches.

Responsibility: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

Significance after Mitigation: Plantings would increase existing patch size and add up to 10 acres of riparian habitat. This would reduce the impact of the loss of cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland to a less-than-significant level because additional habitat would be created to replace the lost acreage of forestland. Implementation of the vegetation management element includes removal of approximately 588 native and nonnative high-hazard trees along Sacramento River East Levee. Native high-hazard tree species may include valley oak, Fremont cottonwood, black walnut, and willows, and most of the nonnative high-hazard trees are all likely interspersed with Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. The removal of these high-hazard trees would result in an estimated loss of approximately 16.0 acres of tree canopy along Sacramento River East Levee, which, relative to the amount of woodland along the Sacramento River, represents a relatively small
amount of loss of trees. In addition, high-hazard tree removal would not affect forestland that provides habitat for birds and other wildlife. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a **less-than-significant impact**.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy element in Sacramento River East Levee Improvements area would occur along the waterside of Sacramento River East Levee, at the erosion repair and bank stabilization sites, as well as along other areas along the levee where additional riparian woodlands could be established. Additional riparian plantings on the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge would enhance and expand existing degraded woodland adjacent to that site. In the long term, implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would result in an improvement in riparian woodland habitat and result in an overall benefit to forestry resources. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a **beneficial impact**.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

**American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal**

Encroachment removal along the American River would occur on the landside of the levees, in association with residences, and would not require the removal of Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. Therefore, this proposed project element would have **no impact**.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the vegetation management element includes removal of an estimated 150 high-hazard trees that are growing within the levees would occur at various locations along the Lower American River (primarily on the south side of the river), within the American River Parkway. High-hazard native tree species may include Fremont cottonwood, black walnut, and willows, and most of the nonnative high-hazard trees are all likely interspersed with Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. The removal of these trees would result in an estimated loss of about 4.3 acres of tree canopy along the American River, which, relative to the amount of woodland along this river, represents a relatively small amount of loss of trees. In addition, high-hazard tree removal would not affect forestland that provides habitat for birds and other wildlife.

In addition, implementation of the vegetation management element includes removal of an estimated 90 native and nonnative high-hazard trees along the Beach Lake Levee. Native high-hazard tree species may include valley oak, Fremont cottonwood, black walnut, and willows, and most of the nonnative high-hazard trees are all likely interspersed with Fremont cottonwood forest and valley oak woodland. The removal of these trees would result in a total loss of approximately 2.5 acres of tree canopy along the Beach Lake Levee, which, relative to the amount of woodland along the levee, represents a relatively small amount of loss of trees. In addition, high-hazard tree removal would not affect forestland that provides habitat for birds and other wildlife. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a **less-than-significant impact**.

**Mitigation Measure:** No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the proposed Conservation Strategy would involve planting valley oaks and other native riparian trees and shrubs on an estimated 7 acres of in the approximately 270-acre Woodlake site and on approximately 7 acres in the approximately 9.5-acre Camp Pollock site to mitigate for the small amount of impact.
expected to be caused by high-hazard tree removal along the American River levees. Additional riparian plantings on the Upper Beach Lake Wildlife Area site would enhance and expand existing degraded woodland adjacent to that site. This project element would result in an overall improvement in riparian woodland habitat and an overall long-term benefit to forestry resources. Therefore, this proposed project element would have an overall long-term beneficial impact.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

Natomas East Main Drainage Canal/Steelhead Creek Corridor Management Plan

Riparian planting proposed as part of the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP would improve, expand, and connect existing native riparian habitat along the Dry Creek, Robla Creek, and NEMDC/Steelhead Creek corridors. Proposed restoration along the Dry Creek stream corridor includes installing 12,000 linear feet of livestock exclusion fencing on the north and south sides of the Dry Creek channel enclosing a riparian woodland corridor and planting clusters of mixed riparian forest and scrub species in select locations distributed along approximately 1.7 miles of Lower Dry Creek where there are gaps in the woodland canopy shading the stream. The NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP revegetation plan would involve planting two parallel rows of large tree species, primarily valley oaks, on both banks of the low-flow channel in locations within NEMDC/Steelhead Creek. Therefore, the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP would result in an overall improvement in riparian woodland habitat, connect and expand existing riparian woodlands, and result in an overall long-term benefit to forestry resources. Therefore, this proposed project element would have a beneficial impact.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation is required.

RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Impacts within the North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements areas associated with agricultural resources related to levee improvements and associated borrow and staging activities, encroachment removal, vegetation management, and the NEMDC/Steelhead Creek CMP activities are either considered less than significant or no impact would occur. Therefore, no residual significant impacts would occur.

Impacts within the American River and Beach Lake Levees High-Hazard Levee Encroachment and Vegetation Removal area associated with agricultural resources related to encroachment removal, vegetation management, and Conservation Strategy activities are either considered less than significant or no impact would occur. Therefore, no residual significant impacts would occur.

Impacts associated with forestry resources for the North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements would be potentially significant, reduced to a less-than-significant level through implementation of Mitigation Measures AG-2a and AG-2b. Other forestry resource impacts are either considered less than significant or no impact would occur. Therefore, no residual significant impacts would occur.

Conservation Strategy activities in the North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements areas would create woodland mitigation that would be preserved as habitat in perpetuity, permanently affecting long-term agricultural productivity on the Riego North site and affecting the Important Farmland status the Riego North site, and the site north of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 would reduce the significant impact associated with the conversion
of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses, but not to a less-than-significant level because no new farmland would be made available and the productivity of existing farmland would not be improved. Consequently, full compensation for loss of Important Farmland would not be achieved and a net loss of Important Farmland would still occur. Therefore, Impact AG-1 would remain significant and unavoidable.