Agricultural Resources Assessment

CHINO PARCEL DELIVERY FACILITY PROJECT PREPARED BY: T&B PLANNING, INC. 2017

Agricultural Resources Assessment for the Chino Parcel Delivery Facility Project

City of Chino, California

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Abstract

The Chino Parcel Delivery Facility Project site is located in the City of Chino, San Bernardino County, California. The Project proposes the construction of industrial land uses on a 74.4-acre property, and is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In this report, the California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model is used as an evaluation tool to determine if the subject property qualifies as an important agricultural resource. Based on the methodology established by the California LESA Model, this report concludes that the Project site is an important agricultural resource.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Document Purpose

The Chino Parcel Delivery Facility Project (hereafter, "Project") proposes to develop an approximately 74.4-acre property that is primarily used for dairy and agricultural land uses. The purpose of this assessment is threefold, to: 1) determine the presence or absence of important agricultural resources on the Project site, 2) assess potential effects to important agricultural resources on the Project site associated with development of the subject property with non-agricultural land uses, and, if important agricultural resources are found to be present, 3) determine the significance of impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) requires that environmental documentation "*identify and focus on the significant environmental effects*" of a proposed project. The CEQA Guidelines definition of environment "means the physical conditions which exist within the area which will be affected by a proposed project" including, but not limited to, effects to land (CEQA Guidelines § 15360). Per the CEQA Guidelines, the Project would result in a significant effect on the environment if the site contains important agricultural resources that would be converted to a non-agricultural use.

1.2 Project Location

The Project site is located in the City of Chino, which is located in the southwestern portion of San Bernardino County, California. Figure 1-1, *Regional Map*, depicts the location of the Project site in its regional setting.

The Project site is located in the southern portion of the City of Chino, approximately 4.0 miles west of Interstate 15 (I-15), approximately 3.3 miles south of State Route 60 (SR-60), and approximately 3.5 miles northeast of State Route 71 (SR-71). The Project site is located south of Merrill Avenue, and west of Flight Avenue (refer to Figure 1-2, *Vicinity Map*). The entire Project site is located within the geographical limits of The Preserve Specific Plan, which is an approximately 5,435-acre area that was historically used as farm and dairy land.

1.3 Existing Physical Site Conditions

The 74.4-acre Project site is relatively flat with elevations ranging from approximately 655 feet above mean sea level (amsl) in the northern portion of the site to approximately 640 feet amsl in the southern portion of the site. As shown on Figure 1-3, *Aerial Photograph*, the property is heavily disturbed by dairy farm operations with two dairy farm enclosures, two existing residential structures, and several ancillary canopies and storage structures. The Project site contains an active dairy with approximately 700 cows/heifers/bulls. The dairy produces about 6,000 gallons of milk per day which is carried by a single truck to the Alta Dena Dairy in the City of Industry (Vauden Heusel, 2017)

Property located to the north of the Project site (north of Merrill Avenue) is within the City of Ontario and is occupied by agricultural dairy operations and fields. This area is designated by the Ontario General Plan as "Business Park" and is expected to be developed with business park uses in the future. Immediately south and west of the Project site include vacant land, and the Chino Airport. Immediately east of the Project site (east of Flight Avenue) are three warehouse buildings. The property located farther east of the three warehouse buildings is approved for the development of eight warehouse buildings as part of the Watson Industrial Park project, which was under construction at the time this report was prepared.

1.4 Project Summary

The Project proposes to construct industrial land uses that would cover the entire Project site. Primary approvals requested from the City of Chino include a General Plan Amendment (PL16-0638), a Specific Plan Amendment (PL16-0639), a Master Site Approval (PL16-0719), a Site Approval, and a Special Conditional Use Permit.



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2.0 AGRICULTURE IN CALIFORNIA

2.1 Williamson Act

In 1965, the California Assembly established the California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, in response to the increasing pressure occurring throughout California during the post-World War II period to convert agricultural lands to urban development. The Williamson Act allows local governments to enter into contracts with landowners to restrict property to agricultural or related open space uses for a minimum of 10 years in exchange for a lower property tax assessment to the landowner. After the initial 10-year contract term, the contract remains in effect until canceled by the landowner or the local government. Once canceled, a contract winds down over a period of 10 years (CDC, 2016).

The Project site does not contain Williamson Act contracted lands (Chino, 2017).

2.2 Farmland Classification

As part of the State's efforts to protect agricultural resources, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established in 1982, to provide data to public, academia, and government entities for the purposes of making informed decisions regarding the use of California's agricultural land resources. The FMMP is required by California Government Code § 65570 to report on the conversion of agricultural lands every two years in the *California Farmland Conversion Report* and maintain the *Important Farmland Maps* database system to record changes in the use of agricultural lands over time. To identify the agricultural importance of different farmland types, the FMMP created four main categories based on soil quality and irrigation status, including (CDC, 2004):

- <u>Prime Farmland:</u> "Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."
- <u>Farmland of Statewide Importance:</u> "Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."
- <u>Unique Farmland</u>: "Farmland of less quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."
- <u>Farmland of Local Importance:</u> "Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and local advisory committee."

As shown on Figure 2-1, *FMMP Map*, the Project site contains "Prime Farmland," and "Other Land" (CDC, n.d.). Because the Project site contains land designated as Prime Farmland, the Project has potential to impact important farmland.

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2.3 Farmland Conversion

Since the FMMP was established in 1982, nearly 1.4 million acres of agricultural land in California were converted to non-agricultural land uses. During the most recent reporting period for which data is available (2010-2012), irrigated farmland in California decreased by more than 91 square miles (58,587 acres). The San Joaquin Valley region had the largest proportion of direct irrigated land to urban land conversion (33% of its total urban increase) (CDC, 2015, p. 1).

As described in the City of Chino General Plan, land under agricultural production in San Bernardino County decreased by 1.2 million acres between 1987 and 2002, to 500,000 acres. Additionally, the City's General Plan indicates that there is an increasing demand for urban uses and decreasing demand for agricultural uses; thus predicting that conversion pressures will continue throughout San Bernardino County (Chino, 2010a, OSC-8).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 LESA Model

The LESA Model is a point-based approach that uses measurable factors to quantify the relative value of agricultural land resources to ultimately determine the significance of agricultural land conversions. Many states have developed LESA Models specific to their local contexts. The California LESA Model was created as a result of Senate Bill 850 (Chapter 812/1993), and provides lead agencies with an optional methodology to ensure that potentially significant effects on the environment associated with agricultural land conversions are quantitatively and consistently considered in the environmental review process (CDC, 1997, p. 4) The California LESA Model is the methodology used by the City of Chino to determine whether or not important agricultural resources are present on a property.

3.2 California LESA Model Scoring System

The California LESA Model is made up of two sets of factors, referred to as the "Land Evaluation" (LE) and "Site Assessment" (SA) factors, which are scored and weighted separately to yield a total LE subscore and SA subscore. The Final LESA Score is the sum of the LE and SA subscores and has a maximum possible score of 100 points. Based on the Final LESA Score, a threshold system is used to determine the significance of a project's impacts on agricultural resources (CDC, 1997, p. 31)

3.2.1 Land Evaluation (LE)

The LE subscore consists of two factors, including the Land Capability Classification (LCC) rating and the Storie Index rating, which were devised to measure the inherent soil-based qualities of land as they relate to agricultural production. The LCC Rating and Storie Index rating scores are based upon the soil map unit(s) identified on a property and the acreage of each soil mapping unit relative to the property's total acreage. Data for the soil map unit(s), LCC, and Storie Index are obtained from soil survey data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). (CDC, 1997, pp. 7-9)

A. LCC Rating

There are eight (8) classes of LCC (I through VIII). Soils designated "I" have the fewest limitations for agricultural production and soils designated "VIII" are least suitable for farmland. The LCC is further divided into subclasses (designated by lowercase letters *e*, *w*, *s*, or *c*) to describe limitations, including a soil's susceptibility to erosion ("e"), limitations due to water in or on the soil ("w"), shallow or stony soils ("s"), or climate ("c"). (USDA, n.d.)

Once the LCC for each soil mapping unit is obtained from the USDA NRCS soil survey, the LCC classification is converted into a numeric score established by the California LESA Model. Table 3-1, *Numeric Conversion of Land Capability Classification Units*, summarizes the LCC numeric conversion scores used by the LESA model.

The LCC Score used in the LESA Model is determined by multiplying the LCC Rating for each map unit identified on a property by the corresponding map unit's proportion of the property's total

LCC	Ι	IIe	IIs, w	IIIe	IIIs, w	IVe	IVs, w	V	VI	VII	VIII
Rating	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0
Courses (CDC 1007 Table 2)											

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 2)

acreage. The individual LCC Score(s) for each map unit are summed together for a total, single LCC Score for the property. The LCC Score accounts for 25% of the total California LESA Model Score. (CDC, 1997, p. 7)

B. Storie Index Rating

The Storie Index is a quantitative method of rating the agricultural capability of soils. The Storie Index has been used in California for over 50 years, with the most recent version of the Storie Index being published in 1978. The Storie Index is based on four factors: 1) degree of soil profile development; 2) surface texture; 3) slope; 4) other soil and landscape conditions including drainage, alkalinity, nutrient level, acidity, erosion, and microrelief. Soils are graded on a 100-point scale that represents the relative value of a given soil when used for intensive agricultural purposes. (University of California, 1978, p. 1)

The Storie Index Score is calculated for each soil map unit identified on a property by multiplying the Storie Index rating by the map unit's proportion of the property's total acreage. The individual Storie Index Score(s) for each map unit are added together to provide a single Storie Index Score for the property. The Storie Index Score accounts for 25% of the total California LESA Model Score. (CDC, 1997, p. 12)

3.2.2 <u>Site Assessment (SA)</u>

The SA subscore consists of four factors that measure social, economic, and geographic features that contribute to the overall value of agricultural land. The SA factors include Project Size Rating, Water Resource Availability Rating, Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating, and Protected Resource Land Rating (CDC, 1997, p. 13).

A. Project Size Rating

The Project Size Rating evaluates the potential viability of potential agricultural productivity on a property. Generally, high quality soils (high rate of economic return per acre planted) only need to be present in relatively small quantities on a property to be considered important, whereas lower quality soils (low or moderate rate of economic return per acre planted) need to be present in larger quantities to be considered important.

The Project Size Rating corresponds with the acreage of each LCC Class identified on a property. The LCC Classes are grouped together to form three categories, with numeric scores assigned based on the quality and quantity of soils. Table 3-2, *Project Size Scoring*, summarizes the California LESA Model scores for all soil and acreage combinations. For properties with different map units within the subject property, the mapping unit that generates the highest Project Size Score is used as the final Project Size Score for the project site. The Project Size Score accounts for 15% of the total California LESA Model Score. (CDC, 1997, pp. 13-15)

LCC Class I o	r II soils	LCC Clas	s III soils	LCC Class IV or lower		
Acreage	Points	Acreage	Points	Acreage	Points	
80 or above	100	160 or above	100	320 or above	100	
60-79	90	120-159	90	240-319	80	
40-59	80	80-119	80	160-239	60	
20-39	50	60-79	70	100-159	40	
10-19	30	40-59	60	40-99	20	
Fewer than	0	20-39	30	Fewer than 40	0	
10		10-19	10			
		Fewer than 10	0			

Table 3-2Project Size Scoring

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 3)

B. Water Resources Availability Rating

The Water Resources Availability Rating measures the reliability of a property's water resources that could be used for agricultural production during non-drought and drought years (water availability score) and the proportion of the property served by each water source (weighted availability score). The water availability score established by the California LESA Model is summarized in Table 3-3, *Water Resource Availability Scoring.* The total Water Resource Score is the sum of the weighted availability score(s). The Water Resources Availability score accounts for 15% of the total California LESA Score. (CDC, 1997, pp. 16, 29)

No	on-Drought Yea	ars	Drought Years			
	Restrictions			SCOPE		
Irrigation	Physical	Economic	Irrigation	Physical	Economic	SCORE
Feasible	Restrictions	Restrictions	Feasible	Restrictions	Restrictions	
YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	100
YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	95
YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	90
YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	85
YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	80
YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	75
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	65
YES	NO	NO	NO			50
YES	NO	YES	NO			45
YES	YES	NO	NO			35
YES	YES	YES	NO			30
Irrigated production not feasible, but rainfall adequate for dryland production in both						25
drought and non-drought years						
Irrigated production not feasible, but rainfall adequate for dryland production in non-						
drought years (but not in drought years)						
Neither irriga	ted nor dry land	d production fea	asible			0

Table 3-3 Water Resource Availability Scoring

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 5)

C. Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating

The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating accounts for the potential effect of development on properties containing important agricultural resources that surround a project site. The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating is dependent on the amount of agricultural land or related open space within a project's "Zone of Influence" (ZOI). The ZOI is determined by drawing the smallest rectangle that will completely contain the project site on a map (Rectangle A) and creating a second rectangle that extends 0.25-mile beyond Rectangle A on all sides (Rectangle B). All parcels that are within or intersected by Rectangle B are included within the project's ZOI. (CDC, 1997, pp. 23-25) The ZOI for the Project site is illustrated on Figure 3-1, *Zone of Influence*.

The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating is determined by the proportion of land within a project's ZOI that is currently being used for agricultural production. The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating score established by the California LESA Model is summarized in Table 3-4, *Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating*. Data for surrounding agricultural land can be obtained from the Department of Conservation's Important Farmland Map Series, the Department of Water Resources' Land Use Map Series, locally derived maps, and/or inspection of the site. The surrounding agricultural land score accounts for 15% of the total California LESA Model Score. (CDC, 1997, pp. 26, 29)

Percent of Project's ZOI in Agricultural Use	Surrounding Agricultural Land Score
90 - 100%	100 Points
80 - 89	90
75 – 79	80
70 - 74	70
65 - 69	60
60 - 64	50
55 - 59	40
50 - 54	30
45 - 49	20
40 - 44	10
40 <	0

Table 3-4Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 6)

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D. Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating

Similar to the Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating, the California LESA Model considers the potential effect of development on protected resource lands surrounding a project site. Protected resource lands include Williamson Act contracted lands, publicly owned lands maintained as park, forest, or watershed resources, and lands with natural resource easements (e.g. agricultural, wildlife habitat, open space).

The Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating is determined by the proportion of protected resource lands within a project's ZOI. The Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating scoring system established by the California LESA Model is summarized in Table 3-5, *Surrounding Protected Resource Land*. The Surrounding Protected Resource Land Score accounts for 5% of the total California LESA Score. (CDC, 1997, pp. 28-29)

Percent of Project's ZOI Defined as Protected	Surrounding Protected Resource Land Score
90 - 100%	100 Points
80 - 89	90
75 – 79	80
70 - 74	70
65 - 69	60
60 - 64	50
55 - 59	40
50 - 54	30
45 - 49	20
10 - 44	10
40 <	0

 Table 3-5
 Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 7)

4.0 **PROJECT SITE EVALUATION**

In this section, the California LESA Model is applied to the Project site to evaluate whether or not the Project site contains important agricultural resources.

4.1 Land Evaluation (LE)

As discussed in Subsection 3.2.1, the LE subscore measures the agricultural suitability of soils identified on a property by using the LCC Rating and Storie Index for each soil map unit. The Project site contains three (3) soil map units including: Chino Silt Loam (Cb), Delhi Fine Sand (Db), and Hilmar Loamy Fine Sand (Hr) (USDA, n.d.). Figure 4-1, *Soils Map*, indicates the size and location of each soil map unit within the Project site.

4.1.1 Land Capability Classification

As shown in Table 4-1, *Land Capability Classification Score*, the total LCC score for the Project site is 67.49.

Soil Map Unit	Project Site Acres	Proportion of Project Site	LCC1	LCC Rating	LCC Score
Cb	58.0	0.780	IIIe	70	54.6
Db	2.3	0.031	IVe	50	1.55
Hr	14.1	0.189	IIIs	60	11.34
Totals	74.4	1.000			67.49

Table 4-1Land Capability Classification Score

¹Source: (USDA, n.d.)

4.1.2 Storie Index

As shown in Table 4-2, *Storie Index Score*, the total Storie Index Score for the Project site is 62.05

Soil Map Unit	Project Site Acres	Proportion of Project Site	Storie Index ¹	Storie Index Score
Cb	58.0	0.780	69.7	54.37
Db	2.3	0.031	55.2	1.71
Hr	14.1	0.189	31.6	5.97
Totals	74.4	1.000		62.05

Table 4-2Storie Index Score

¹Source: (UC Davis, n.d.)

City of Chino



4.2 Site Assessment (SA)

As previously noted, the SA subscore measures the agricultural suitability of the Project site based on the subject property's size, water resources availability, surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource lands.

4.2.1 Project Size

As mentioned in Subsection 3.2.2, the Project Size Rating corresponds with the acreage of each soil type's LLC Class identified on a property. According to Table 4-3, *Project Size Score*, the Project site has a Project Size Score of 70.

Soil Type	Project Site Acreage					
5011 Type	LCC Class I-II ¹	LCC Class III ¹	LCC Class IV-VIII ¹			
Cb	0.0	58.0	0.0			
Db	0.0	0.0	2.3			
Hr	0.0	14.1	0.0			
Total Acres	0.0	72.1	2.3			
Project Size Scores ²	0	70	0			
Highest Project Size Score		70				

Table 4-3Project Size Score

¹Source: (USDA, n.d.)

²Refer to Table 3-2 for Project Size Scoring, which is based on LCC Class and acreage.

4.2.2 <u>Water Resource Availability</u>

Under existing conditions, water is available to the Project site from domestic water lines installed beneath Merrill Avenue. Therefore, water is considered to be readily available to the entire Project site under non-drought and drought-conditions. As shown in Table 4-4, *Water Resources Availability Score*, the Water Resources Availability score for the Project site is 100.

	Water Source	Proportion of Project Site	Water Availability Score	Weighted Availability Score
	City of Chino	100%	100	100
	Water Utility			
Totals		100%		100

 Table 4-4
 Water Resources Availability Score

4.2.3 <u>Surrounding Agricultural Land</u>

The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating is dependent on the Project site's ZOI. As shown on Figure 4-2, *Surrounding Agricultural Land*, approximately 278.2 acres of land under active agricultural production, including dairies, are located within the Project site's approximately 548.6-acre ZOI (50.7%). Because the percentage of active agricultural land in the Project site's ZOI is between 50-54%, the Project's Surrounding Agricultural Land score is 30 (refer to Table 4-5, *Surrounding Agricultural Land Score*).

Zone o	of Influence		
Total Acres	Acres in	Percent in	Surrounding
	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agricultural Land Score
548.6	278.2	50.7	30

Table 4-5	Surrounding Agricultural Land Score
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4.2.4 <u>Surrounding Protected Resource Land</u>

Approximately 38.0 acres of protected resource land is located in the Project site's ZOI (refer to Figure 4-3, *Surrounding Protected Resource Land*). Based on numeric conversion factors contained in the California LESA Model, the Project's Surrounding Protected Resources Land score is zero because the percentage of surrounding protected land is less than 40%, as summarized in Table 4-6, *Surrounding Protected Resource Land Score*.

Table 4-6	Surrounding Protected Resource Land Score
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	Zone of Influence		
Total Acres	Acres of Protected	Percent Protected	Surrounding Protected
	Resource Land	Resource Land	Resource Land Score
548.6	38.0	6.9%	0

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4.3 Total LESA Score

The total LESA Score is calculated by summing the Project site's LE and SA subscores. As summarized in Table 4-7, *Total LESA Score Sheet*, the Project site has a total LESA Score of 62.38.

	Factor Scores	Factor Weight	Weighted Factor Scores
LE Factors			
LCC	67.49	0.25	16.87
Storie Index	62.05	0.25	15.51
LE Subtotal		0.50	32.38
SA Factors			
Project Size	70	0.15	10.50
Water Resource Availability	100	0.15	15.00
Surrounding Agricultural Land	30	0.15	4.5
Protected Resource Land	0	0.05	0
SA Subtotal		0.50	30.00
Final LESA Score			62.38

Table 4-7Total LESA Score Sheet

5.0 **CONCLUSION**

The Project site received a total LESA Score of 62.38. The Project site's LE subscore equals 32.38 points and its SA subscore equals 30.00 points. As summarized in Table 5-1, California LESA Model Scoring Thresholds, because the Project site's LESA Score is between 60 and 79 and its LE and SA subscores are both greater than 20 points, the Project site is determined to be an important agricultural resource. Thus, conversion of the Project site from an agricultural to non-agricultural land use would be a significant impact under CEQA.

Total LESA Score	Scoring Decision
0 to 39	Not Considered Significant
40 to 59	Considered Significant only if LE and SA subscores are each greater than or equal to 20
	points
60 to 79	Considered Significant <u>unless</u> either LE <u>or</u> SA subscore is <u>less</u> than 20 points
80 to 100	Considered Significant
Source: (CDC 1	

Source: (CDC, 1997, Table 9)

6.0 **REFERENCES**

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