

## 4.10 Agricultural and Timber Resources

### Introduction

This section of the DEIR addresses potential impacts to agricultural and timber resources in Plumas County. The regulatory setting provides a description of applicable State and local regulatory policies. The environmental setting provides a description of agricultural and timber resources in the County, including Important Farmlands (those lands classified and mapped by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation) and Williamson Act contract lands. A description of the potential impacts of the proposed project is also provided and includes the identification of feasible mitigation (general plan policies) to avoid or lessen the impacts.

The closely-related topics associated with soil resources are addressed in Section 4.7 “Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources” of this DEIR.

### Summary of NOP Comments

Several public comments (including those from several local residents, Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission, and the United States Department of Agriculture) were received during the NOP scoping period suggesting that the DEIR address agricultural impacts and Timber Production Zone conversion.

### Summary of Impact Conclusions

A summary of the agricultural and timber resource impacts described in this section are provided below.

**TABLE 4.10-1  
SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL AND TIMBER RESOURCE IMPACTS**

Impact Number	Impact Topic	Impact Conclusion	Impact After Mitigation
Impact 4.10-1	Loss of Important Farmland or Timber Resource Land s	Potentially Significant	Significant and Unavoidable
Impact 4.10-2	Agricultural Use Zoning, Williamson Act Contracts, or Timberland Production Zones	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant
Impact 4.10-3	Conversion of Farmland/Timber Resource Lands to Non-Agricultural Use	Potentially Significant	Significant and Unavoidable

## Regulatory Setting

### Federal and State Regulations

#### *National Forest Management Act of 1976*

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 is a federal law that is the primary statute governing the administration of national forests. Congress annually establishes the allowable sale

quantity (ASQ) goal for each timber-producing forest. Federal money goes to the Plumas National Forest to administer its ASQ, while additional money that the forest collects in conjunction with timber harvesting activities also provides operating support.

### ***Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act***

This Act is a federal law that is the primary statute covering the implementation of the “Quincy Library Group Community Stability Proposal” (QLG). In addition to funding via its ASQ assigned by Congress, the Plumas National Forest also receives additional funding through the QLG, to implement timber management practices that integrate hazardous fuel reduction.

### ***California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)***

Under the provisions of the Williamson Act (California Land Conservation Act of 1965, Section 51200), landowners contract with the County to maintain agricultural or open space use of their lands in return for reduced property tax assessment. The contract is self-renewing; however, the landowner may notify the County at any time of the intent to withdraw the land from its preserve status. There are two means by which the landowner may withdraw the land from its contract preserve status. First, the landowner may seek to cancel the contract. This takes the land out of the contract quickly with a minimal waiting period but the landowner pays a statutory penalty to the State. Second, the landowner may notice a non-renewal or seek a partial non-renewal of the contract. Land withdrawal through the non-renewal process involves a 9 or 10-year period (depending on the timing of the notice) of tax adjustment to full market value before protected open space can be converted to urban uses. Consequently, land under a Williamson Act contract can be in either a renewal status or a non-renewal status. Lands with a non-renewal status indicate the owner has withdrawn from the Williamson Act contract and is waiting for a period of tax adjustment for the land to reach its full market value. Non-renewal lands are candidates for uses that were previously considered incompatible within the next 10 years or less, depending on when the notice of non-renewal was filed.

### ***California Timberland Productivity Act (TPA)***

The California Timberland Productivity Act (TPA) of 1982 (Government Code Sections 51100 et seq.) was enacted to help preserve forest resources. Similar to the Williamson Act, this program gives landowners tax incentives to keep their land in timber production. Contracts involving Timber Production Zones (TPZ) are on 10-year cycles.

## **Local Regulations**

### ***Plumas County Agricultural Buffer Requirements***

Section 9-4.303 of the Plumas County Code defines Agricultural Buffer. The proposed project designates certain lands as “Agricultural Buffer” to protect existing agricultural uses from incompatible land use conflicts.

### ***Plumas County Right to Farm Ordinance***

The Right to Farm Ordinance, Article 12.5 of Chapter 2 of Title 9 of the Plumas County Code, was adopted to protect agricultural and timber operations from nuisance claims and to affirm that

neighboring land owners have a responsibility to know the laws, regulations, standards and customs that apply to agricultural or timber operations. The “Right to Farm Ordinance” includes provision for annual publication of a notice advising “neighboring land owners” that agricultural or timber operations have rights under Civil Code Section 3482.5 and the “Right to Farm” ordinance.

## **Environmental Setting**

### **Agricultural Production**

The following information is based on the most current Crop and Livestock Report available for Plumas County (2010) and prepared by the Plumas County Agricultural Commissioner Office.

Agricultural production in Plumas County has contributed significantly to the economic prosperity of the region. According to the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, in 2010 there were 162,000 acres of planted crops with a crop production value of \$20 million, excluding timber. During that time period, the top producing crops in the County were Alfalfa Hay, Meadow Hay, and Grain Hay. Timber added an additional \$10 million for a total agricultural production value of approximately \$30 million. Overall, timber revenues demonstrated an increase for the first time in four years and while the total remains below historical levels there was a 147% increase since the 2007/2008 reporting period.

### ***Timberlands***

The land area of Plumas County is approximately 1.64 million acres, primarily composed of Sierra Mixed Coniferous Forest comprised of Ponderosa Pine, Jeffery Pine and Red Fir. The Plumas County Planning Department identifies approximately 87 percent of Plumas County’s land area as “important timber.” Of this, most is owned by the federal government. In 1994 almost 40 percent of Plumas County timber harvest was on public land. In 2007, only 10 percent of the County’s timber harvest was on public land.

There are 18 “A” licensed timber operators located in Plumas County. There are three timber mills operating in Plumas County, including the two-mill Sierra Pacific Industries complex in Quincy and the Collins Pine Company Mill in Chester. Timber companies are amongst the largest employers in the county, with the Collins Pine Mill employing nearly 200 people and the Sierra Pacific Industries Mill employing approximately 160 people. Nevertheless, the timber industry has experienced declining employment because of labor saving technological changes and reduction in availability of raw materials from public and private timberlands.

Over the last 15 years, forest production in Plumas County has varied significantly. In 1994, timber production was about 105,000 board feet. By 2010, production was about 89,000 million board feet. In the intervening years, production was as high as 176 million board feet in 1999, and as low as 80 million in 2002.

In addition to timber production, an important forest product for Plumas County is biomass for sustainable energy production. Plumas County has two Direct Combustion Biomass facilities.

The Collins Pine facility located in Chester generates roughly 13 megawatts<sup>7</sup> (MW) of power. The Sierra Pacific Industries Quincy Power Plant, located in Quincy, generates roughly 20MW of power. Both plants operate with a combination of mill residue and in-forest biomass feedstock. Some portion of biomass removed from Plumas County forests also feeds the Sierra Pacific Industries Loyaltan Biomass facility, located in Sierra County, generating roughly 10MW. According to the California Biomass Facilities Reporting System biomass electrical generation in Plumas County has the capacity to increase by almost 75% based on existing infrastructure. It is important to note that these amounts are based on availability of feedstock.

## Important Farmlands

The California Department of Conservation has developed the Farmland Monitoring and Mapping Program (FMMP) that classifies the different agricultural lands related to their ability to sustain agricultural crops. Agricultural land is quantified based upon acreage and classified as Prime, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. The FMMP also quantifies the amount of urban land and grazing lands. Every two years, the FMMP inventories the amount of farmland lost and gained and the amount of urban land gained.

Farmland classifications are as follows:

- **Prime Farmland:** Prime Farmland is defined as soils with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or with less ability to hold and store moisture. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland:** Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climactic zones in California. The land must have been cropped (i.e., harvested) at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance:** Farmland of local importance is defined as land that is imperative in maintaining the local agricultural economy, as determined ultimately by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors has defined all lands that are designated as "Agricultural Preserve" to be Farmland of Local Importance.

While the FMMP does not provide exclusive farmland data for Plumas County, the FMMP does collect and present data for the entire Sierra Valley, which includes portions of Lassen, Plumas,

and Sierra Counties. **Table 4.10-2** provides a breakdown of farmland acreage for the Sierra Valley.

**TABLE 4.10-2  
 FMMP 2010 SIERRA VALLEY FARMLANDS**

Type	2010 Sierra Valley Acreage	1984-2010 Net Acreage Changed	Average Annual Acreage Change (1984 – 2010)
Prime Farmland	6,599	2,534	97
Farmland of Statewide Importance	6,244	377	15
Unique Farmland	3,169	787	30
Farmland of Local Importance	92,964	19,592	754
<b>Subtotal Important Farmland</b>	<b>108,976</b>	<b>23, 290</b>	<b>896</b>
Grazing Land	79,576	-29,346	-1,129
<b>Subtotal All Agricultural Land</b>	<b>188,552</b>	<b>-6,056</b>	<b>-233</b>
Water Area	45	13	1
Other Land	8,164	5,742	221
Urban and Built-Up Land	1,009	300	12
<b>TOTAL Area Inventoried</b>	<b>197,770</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>

SOURCE: California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program, 2012.

As shown in the table, approximately 6,599 acres is designated as Prime Farmland by the FMMP, land with the highest productive soils. Overall, the Sierra Valley includes 188,552 total acres of land designated for all agricultural activities (including grazing land). Over the past several years, the amount of agricultural land has been decreasing; primarily land designated for grazing uses (an estimated 1,129 acres per year on average). However, it is important to note that these changes are due to a number of factors including land conversions, reassessments, and designation changes.

## Impacts and Mitigation Measures

### Methodology

As more fully described in Chapter 3.0, “Project Description”, one of the primary objectives of the proposed project is to focus growth within the various Planning Areas of the County. Consequently, the impact analysis provided below assumes that the majority of impacts to agricultural resources would occur within these areas. Using the significance criteria described below, the following represents a qualitative analysis to determine whether the development and land use activities contemplated by the proposed project would create substantial impact on farm and timber land in Plumas County.

### Significance Criteria

The significance criteria for this analysis were developed from criteria presented in Appendix G, “Environmental Checklist Form”, of the CEQA Guidelines and based on the professional judgment of the County of Plumas and its consultants. The proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would:

- Convert Prime, Unique, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (collectively Important Farmland) to non-agricultural use;
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
- Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g));
- Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, would result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

**Impact 4.10-1: Loss of Important Farmland or Timber Resource Lands**

<b>SU</b>	<b>The proposed project could result in the conversion of Important Farmland or Timber Resource Lands to non-agricultural use.</b>
	<b>Level of Significance Before Mitigation:</b> <i>Potentially Significant</i>
	<b>Required Additional Mitigating Policies and Implementation Measures:</b> <i>No Additional Mitigation Available</i>
	<b>Resultant Level of Significance:</b> <i>Significant and Unavoidable</i>

Implementation of the proposed project could result in a net loss of Important Farmland or Timber Resource Land within the County. As of 2010, there were approximately 108,976 acres of Important Farmland within the entire Sierra Valley (including Plumas County), as currently mapped by the California Department of Conservation, with additional acreages of Forest Land within Plumas County. It is expected that most of the conversion of Important Farmland in the unincorporated county could occur within the Sierra Valley Geographic Area, with some loss of Forest Land within (or adjacent to) the various Planning Areas located within the remaining Geographic Areas of the County. While the exact amount of conversion that would occur by 2035 was not quantified, the potential loss of some Important Farmland or Timber Resource Land is considered significant.

The preservation of agricultural/forest land resources is a key goal of the proposed project, with the dedication of a specific element to these resources. Specifically, several policies (see Policies AG/FOR-8.1.2 through AG/FOR-8.1.4, AG/FOR-8.2.1 through AG/FOR-8.2.8, AG/FOR 8.6.1 through AG/FOR 8.6.8 and AG/FOR 8.8.1 through AG/FOR 8.8.6) call for the continued recognition of agriculture and timber lands as a productive use of resource lands, for the continuation of a diversified economy, for the maintenance of the County’s rural character, for the protection of scenic, natural, and recreational resources, and as a defining characteristic of the County’s quality of life, and the continued use of preservation programs (i.e., the California Land Conservation Act/Williamson Act) to protect existing agricultural lands. Policies from the Land Use element also serve to protect these resources by focusing new growth within established Planning Areas (on non-designated farm/forest lands). Policy LU-1.1.1 “Future Development”

requires future development to be located within or adjacent to these Planning Areas, including those areas identified as Towns, Communities, Rural Areas, or Master Planned Communities on the County's General Plan Land Use Maps. Similarly, policies LU-1.1.2, LU-1.1.3, and LU-1.1.5 also support these land use development patterns and Economic Development Element Policy ECON-5.9.5 "Discouragement of Non-Compatible Land Uses" also requires the County to protect the long-term economic viability of agricultural operations by discouraging the encroachment of non-compatible uses near agricultural uses.

A variety of policies from the Agriculture and Forestry Element (see **Table 4.10-3**, below) have also been developed to protect forest and timberland resources with the County. For example, Policies AG/FOR-8.7.1 through AG/FOR-8.7.3 support continued education and awareness of forestry issues. Policies AG/FOR-8.8.1 through AG/FOR-8.8.6 support the maintenance of a healthy and productive forest by limiting the encroachment of incompatible uses and encourage the development of new markets and services based on forest resources (i.e., bio-mass energy). Other policies (see AG/FOR-8.11.1 and AG/FOR-8.11.2) recognize the important role that forest lands have in addressing carbon sequestration activities. Policy AG/FOR-8.12.1 provides specific guidance on development requirements within lands designed as Timber Resource Lands. This guidance includes having the approving authority make all of the following findings prior to approving any development on these lands:

- The proposed use will not significantly detract from the use of the property for, or inhibit, growing and harvesting timber on that parcel or to adjoining parcels for long-term timber resource production value or conflict with timber resource production in that general area,
- The proposed use will not intensify existing conflicts or add new conflicts between adjoining proposed uses and timber production and harvesting activities,
- The proposed use will not create an island effect wherein timber production lands located between the project site and other non- timber production lands are negatively affected,
- The proposed use will not hinder timber production and harvesting access to water and public roads or otherwise conflict with the continuation or development of timber production harvesting, and
- The proposed use will not significantly reduce or destroy the buffering effect of existing large parcel sizes adjoining timber production lands.

**TABLE 4.10-3  
MITIGATING POLICIES**

Land Use(LU), Economics(ECON), Conservation/Open Space (COS), and Agriculture and Forestry (AG/FOR) Elements			
Policies designed to minimize this impact by promoting future development patterns that focus growth within established Planning Areas include the following:			
LU-1.1.1	Future Development	LU-1.5.1	Use of Existing Infrastructure
LU-1.1.2	Infill Development	LU-1.5.2	Cost Effective Land Use Pattern
LU-1.1.3	Increased Housing Density	ECON-5.9.5	Incentives for Use of Existing Infrastructure
LU-1.1.4	Land Divisions	ECON-5.1.4	Discouragement of Non-Compatible Land Uses
LU-1.1.5	Community Plans		
Policies designed to minimize this impact through the conservation of productive agricultural lands for both resource and economic related benefits include the following:			
AG/FOR-8.1.1	Broad Range of Agricultural Uses	AG/FOR-8.4.1	Healthy Local Food Supply
AG/FOR-8.1.2	Maintain Land in Agricultural Use	AG/FOR-8.4.2	Promote Use of Local Foods and Products
AG/FOR-8.1.3	Local Food Supply		
AG/FOR-8.1.4	Right to Farm	AG/FOR-8.5.1	Water for Agricultural Uses
AG/FOR-8.1.5	Public and Private	AG/FOR-8.6.1	Groundwater Recharge Areas
AG/FOR-8.2.1	Maintain Agricultural Production	AG/FOR-8.6.2	Preserve Water Resources
AG/FOR-8.2.2	Agricultural Preserve and Agriculture and Grazing Areas	AG/FOR-8.6.3	Conservation of Productive Agricultural Lands
AG/FOR-8.2.3	Clustering of Farm Dwellings	AG/FOR-8.6.4	Soil Conservation
AG/FOR-8.2.4	Maintain Large Lot Zoning	AG/FOR-8.6.5	Habitat Protection
AG/FOR-8.2.5	Conversions	AG/FOR-8.6.6	Habitat Enhancement
AG/FOR-8.2.6	Non-Agriculture Uses	AG/FOR-8.6.7	Agriculture's Role in Mitigating Climate Change
AG/FOR-8.2.7	Limit Extension of Services and Infrastructure	AG/FOR-8.6.8	Renewable Energy from Agricultural Byproducts
AG/FOR-8.2.8	Historic Ranches and Farms		
AG/FOR-8.3.1	Agriculture District Overlay	AG/FOR-8.7.1	Value of Working Landscapes
AG/FOR-8.3.2	Uses that Support Agriculture and Timber Resources	AG/FOR-8.7.2	Creating Partnerships
		AG/FOR-8.7.3	Creating Partnerships
AG/FOR-8.3.3	Protect Agriculture and Timber Resources Infrastructure	COS-7.1.4	Conservation Easements
Policies designed to minimize this impact through the maintenance of a healthy productive forest and through the protection of forest lands for a variety of economic and resource values include the following:			
AG/FOR-8.8.1	Commercial Timber Production Lands	AG/FOR-8.9.3	Utilization of Wood Waste
AG/FOR-8.8.2	Avoiding Adverse affects on Timber Production	AG/FOR-8.9.4	Forest Thinning and Fuels Management
		AG/FOR-8.9.5	Community Stability
AG/FOR-8.8.3	Protect Timberlands from Incompatible Uses	AG/FOR-8.10.1	Forestland Management Policies and Coordination
AG/FOR-8.8.4	Support Innovative Forest and Rangeland Programs	AG/FOR-8.11.1	Forestlands as Locations for Carbon Sequestration
AG/FOR-8.8.5	Support Innovative Forest and Rangeland Programs	AG/FOR-8.11.2	GHG Emissions Mitigation
		AG/FOR-8.12.1	Development Application Findings for Timber Resource Lands
AG/FOR-8.8.6	Inclusion of New Lands into Timber Resource Lands	AG/FOR-8.13.1	Resource Transportation Routes
AG/FOR-8.9.1	Minimum Parcel Size for Timber Resource Lands	AG/FOR-8.13.2	Land Available for Forest Products Manufacturing
AG/FOR-8.9.2	Multiple Use Purpose for Timber Resource Lands	AG/FOR-8.13.3	Fire Protection Programs

**Significance Determination**

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the development of new urban uses and infrastructure within the various Planning Areas of the County. Additional development would occur on individual lots, but on a more limited basis which could result in some conversion of Important Farmlands or Timber Resource Land to non-production uses. These development activities could result in the significant and unavoidable conversion of some Important Farmland

or Timber Resource Land to non-agricultural/forest land uses. Implementation of the policies identified above would ensure that conversion of Important Farmland or Timber Resource Land is minimized to the maximum extent possible through (1) land use concepts such as farm dwelling clustering (see Policy AG/FOR 8.2.3 “Clustering of Farm Dwellings”) and Planning Area centered growth, and (2) programs that promote the conservation of viable agricultural land (including the use of conservation easements – see Policy COS-7.1.4 “Conservation Easements”). State planning law and housing element provisions require the County to provide sufficient development sites to meet its regional housing share. Growth planned for the various Planning Areas demonstrates that the County is meeting this state requirement. The County cannot prohibit new development, which would be the only way to reduce important farmland/forest land conversion impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, no mitigation is available to reduce the significance of this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this is a ***significant and unavoidable*** impact.

**Significance Conclusion**

Overall, policies included as part of the proposed project have been developed to avoid and minimize adverse impacts on important farmlands/forest lands to the maximum extent practicable. However, the possible conversion of some important farmlands/timber lands adjacent to or outside of County growth areas would be an irreversible consequence associated with implementation of the proposed project through the 2035 Planning Horizon. No feasible mitigation is available to reduce the significance of this impact to a level of less than significant. Therefore, this remains a ***significant and unavoidable*** impact.

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**Impact 4.10-2: Agricultural Use Zoning, Williamson Act Contracts, or Timberland Production Zones**

<b>LTS</b>	<b>The proposed project could result in conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use, Williamson Act contracts, or Timberland Production Zones.</b>
	<b>Level of Significance Before Mitigation:</b> <i>Less than Significant</i>
	<b>Required Additional Mitigating Policies and Implementation Measures:</b> <i>None</i>
	<b>Resultant Level of Significance:</b> <i>Less than Significant</i>

It can be assumed that some future development subsequent to the proposed project will occur on lands currently subject to a Williamson Act contract or a Timberland Production Zone. Implementation of the proposed project could result in a conflict with existing zoning, a Williamson Act contract, or a Timberland Production Zone if incompatible uses are considered for these lands. Consideration of allowable compatible uses on Williamson Act lands would not result in a conflict, nor would the termination of Williamson Act contracts in accordance with the procedures for termination set out in the Williamson Act. Plumas County does not allow non-compatible uses within lands under Williamson Act contract.

One of the functions of the Williamson Act is to encourage orderly development while discouraging premature development of agricultural lands (with active Williamson Act contracts). This land use concept is a key objective of the proposed project, which contains policies to focus future growth within established Planning Areas in an effort to minimize the conversion of important farmlands (see policies listed above under Impact 4.10-1, Table 4.10-3).

**Significance Determination**

Development resulting from implementation of the proposed project would result in the eventual conversion of agricultural zoned or timberland areas to nonagricultural uses. This is expected to occur where future planned development would be in close proximity to agricultural lands, including areas in or around the Planning Areas of the County or on individual lots. Adoption and implementation of the policies and implementation measures under the proposed project would ensure that conversion of agriculturally zoned land, timberland areas or Williamson Act farmland to nonagricultural uses is minimized to the greatest extent possible through the use of land use concepts such as Planning Area centered growth and with a variety of programs that promote the conservation of viable agricultural land (including the use of conservation easements – see Policy COS-7.1.4 “Conservation Easements”. Additionally, any termination of Williamson Act contracts would be undertaken consistently with the provisions of the Williamson Act.

This impact is considered *less than significant*. No additional mitigation measures are required.

**Significance Conclusion**

Implementation of the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to agriculturally zoned, Williamson Act, or Timberland Production Zone lands and therefore associated impacts would be *less than significant*.

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**Impact 4.10-3: Conversion of Farmland/Timber Resource Lands to Non-Agricultural Use**

<b>SU</b>	<b>The proposed project could involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.</b>
	<b>Level of Significance Before Mitigation:</b> <i>Potentially Significant</i>
	<b>Required Additional Mitigating Policies and Implementation Measures:</b> <i>No Additional Mitigation Available</i>
	<b>Resultant Level of Significance:</b> <i>Significant and Unavoidable</i>

Implementation of the proposed project could result in an increase in population growth and economic development that would create additional pressure to fallow or convert additional lands to nonagricultural or non-productive uses. Examples include land use conflicts between urban land uses (i.e., nuisance complaints related to dust, noise, pesticides, etc.) and agricultural activities and competition for water supplies. It can be expected that most of these secondary

conversion of farm or forest lands effects would occur on lands adjacent to the various Planning Areas of the County.

As described above under Impact 4.10-1 (see Table 4.10-3), the proposed project a variety of policies exist to address the preservation of agricultural/forest land resources. Specifically, several policies (see Policies AG/FOR-8.1.2 through AG/FOR-8.1.4, AG/FOR-8.2.1 through AG/FOR-8.2.8, AG/FOR 8.6.1 through AG/FOR 8.6.8 and AG/FOR 8.8.1 through AG/FOR 8.8.6) call for the continued recognition of agriculture and timber lands as a productive use of resource lands, for the continuation of a diversified economy, for the maintenance of the County's rural character, for the protection of scenic, natural, and recreational resources, and as a defining characteristic of the County's quality of life, and the continued use of preservation programs (i.e., the California Land Conservation Act/Williamson Act) to protect existing agricultural lands. Policies from the Land Use element also serve to protect these resources by focusing new growth within established Planning Areas (on non-designated farm/forest lands). Policy LU-1.1.1 "Future Development" requires future development to be located within or adjacent to these Planning Areas, including those areas identified as Towns, Communities, Rural Areas, or Master Planned Communities on the County's General Plan Land Use Maps. Similarly, policies LU-1.1.2, LU-1.1.3, and LU-1.1.5 also support these land use development patterns and Economic Development Element Policy ECON-5.9.5 "Discouragement of Non-Compatible Land Uses" also requires the County to protect the long-term economic viability of agricultural operations by discouraging the encroachment of non-compatible uses near agricultural uses.

Additionally, the County is a strong advocate for highlighting the agricultural heritage of Plumas County and for promoting the benefits of local agricultural activities. For example, Policy AG/FOR-8.2.8 encourages the maintenance, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic era ranches and farms. Additionally, Policy PHS-6.8.3 requires the County to support local organic and grass-fed agricultural operations and Policy PHS-6.8.4 requires the County to support small-scale or community garden row crop production that addresses local food security concerns and promotes local economic activities.

### **Significance Determination**

Development resulting from implementation of the proposed project would result in increased pressures to convert some farm/forest lands to non-agricultural uses. However, as discussed above under Impact 4.10-1, the proposed project emphasizes policies that support the long-term preservation of agriculture and timber in Plumas County and ensure that development pressures are avoided to the maximum extent feasible. For example, the proposed project emphasizes compatibility between land uses and discourages the introduction of incompatible uses. The proposed polices also allow for the implementation of land use planning tools such as buffers to reduce the impacts between urban and agricultural land uses where these edges do occur and supports the use of conservation easements to ensure the long-term protection of important agricultural/timber resource land practices. Finally, the proposed policies promote the recognition of the County's historic agricultural/timber heritage and promote the economic benefits of local agricultural operations. However, because the proposed project provides for additional residential development as required under State Planning Law, implementation of the proposed project

would create development pressures that would result in some conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. The County cannot prohibit new development, which would be the only way to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, no mitigation is available to reduce the significance of this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, this is a *significant and unavoidable* impact.

**Significance Conclusion**

Overall, policies included as part of the proposed project have been developed to avoid and minimize adverse impacts on farm/forest lands to the maximum extent practicable. However, the possible conversion of some farm/forest lands adjacent to or outside of the Planning Areas would be an irreversible consequence associated with implementation of the proposed project through the 2035 Planning Horizon. No feasible mitigation is available to reduce the significance of this impact to a level of less than significant. Therefore, this remains a *significant and unavoidable* impact.

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