

3.10 AGRICULTURE

3.10.1 Existing Conditions

The existing project site is leased by GPS RiverRock Products, California. The existing project site encompasses about 80 acres, consisting of following two parcels (see Figure 2-2): APN 149-170-036 and APN 149-210-011. Access to the site is provided along an 800-foot long, 16-foot wide gravel road that extends from Highway 33 to the northeast corner of the existing 80-acre site. The proposed replacement pit area of mining operations consists of a 20-acres west and a little south of the existing mine in the Cuyama River bed that is part of an 1,800-acre parcel, (APN 149-210-022). The 20-acre portion is leased by GPS RiverRock (Figure 2-2). The land status and current uses of these parcels are summarized in Table 3.10-1.

**TABLE 3.10-1
SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL PARCELS AND USES**

	Parcel 149-210-022	Parcel 149-210-011	Parcel 149-170-036
Total Acres	1,800	40	40
CUP Acres	20	40	40
General Plan	A-II (Agricultural)	A-II (Agricultural)	A-II (Agricultural)
Zoning	U (Unlimited Agricultural)	U (Unlimited Agricultural)	U (Unlimited Agricultural)
Agricultural Preserve?	Yes	No	No
Current uses	None. The 20 acres of this parcel are located in the river channel.	None. The majority of this parcel is located in the river channel.	Over 30 acres located in existing Processing Area.
Proposed Use During Mining	Mining of only 20 acres in the river channel unsuitable for agriculture.	Mining and vacant land.	Mining (processing) and vacant land.
Will mining displace agriculture?	No	No	No

Mining began on the existing 80-acre mine site before 1969. The existing Processing Area occupies about 30 acres in APN 149-170-36 above the river bank. This area was formerly in native habitat and vacant land but may have been grazed. Agricultural fields border this parcel to the north and east. The lower 10 acres of this parcel were mined in Phase I. The Cuyama River channel borders this parcel to the west. The remaining acreage is river bank and bed. Most of parcel APN-149-210-011 is river bed or bank and was not in agricultural production prior to the start of mining operations. A residence in the northeast corner is still present. Land to the east of this parcel above the river bank is in agricultural use as an orchard.

3.10.2 Potential Impacts

3.10.2.1 Significance Criteria

The Environmental Checklist in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G provides guidance on identifying significant impacts. A project would typically result in a significant impact if it would:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use

The Santa Barbara County Environmental Thresholds and Guidance Manual provides guidance on assessing impacts to agricultural lands. A development project would have a significant impact on agricultural lands if it:

- Converted a viable agricultural use of a parcel to a non-agricultural use, and precluded viable agricultural use of any undeveloped land
- Substantially disrupted surrounding agricultural operations

The County manual provides a methodology to determine agricultural viability of a parcel before and after development, taking into account parcel size, water availability, soils, adjacent land uses, and other factors. As a general rule, an agricultural parcel is considered viable if it is of sufficient size and capability to support an agricultural enterprise independent of another parcel.

3.10.2.1.1 Displacement of Agriculture. The existing 30-acre Processing Area is a permitted use and existing condition. The replacement pit area mining would continue to use the Processing Area for up to another 10 years. Upon completion of mining the 30-acre Processing Area would be removed, the land leveled, ripped to 18 inches, topsoil restored, and the area disked and tilled. Based on the current Mine Reclamation Plan, the post-mine land uses will be the same as they were prior to mining. The uses include open rangeland, which is periodically grazed, and native habitat where native species can re-establish themselves (RAM September 2003:13). To allow establishment of native species and to retain open space along the river, grazing would not occur below the OHWM. Therefore the 30-acre Processing Area formerly in open rangeland would be restored to its former condition as vacant grazing land which is consistent with the A-II (Agricultural) General

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Plan and U (unlimited Agricultural) zoning designations. The remaining acreage of the existing 80-acre project site would be naturally reclaimed as active riverbed and bank.

The proposed 20-acre replacement pit area is in the active Cuyama River channel and is unsuitable for farming. The 1,800-acre parcel of which this is a portion is under the Williamson Act. This parcel is vacant, unused land in which the gravel mining is a compatible use. The 20-acre replacement pit area would only be temporarily mined for an estimated 4 to 5 years. After mining it would be naturally reclaimed by the river and provide open space. The vacant, open land along the river channel and banks is compatible with continued grazing or other agricultural uses on the adjacent lands above the river banks. About 3 acres on the west side would be actively reclaimed and revegetated as alluvial scrub terrace. Therefore the replacement pit area would have no significant impact on agriculture and only a temporary impact on the vacant land along the river channel within the Williamson Act parcel.

Based on the above information, the proposed project would not permanently displace agriculture from the project site. The displacement of 20 acres of former open rangeland is an existing condition which would be temporary in the future – that is, for the 10 year permit period or less. The reclamation plan requires that the Processing Area be returned to the same prior use (vacant land, available for agricultural use) at the end of the permit. There would be no loss of agricultural production. Hence, the direct impacts of mining to agricultural production are considered **less than significant (Class III)**.

3.10.2.1.2 Disturbance of Adjacent Agriculture. The replacement pit area is approximately 1,350 feet from agricultural field to east of the processing area and from the orchard east of the existing mine area. The existing mining area and proposed replacement pit area are not located adjacent to actively cultivated fields. As such, fugitive dust from mobile equipment is not expected to be conveyed to nearby fields. In contrast, the processing area and access road from the mine to the processing area are located directly adjacent to cultivated fields. There is a potential for fugitive dust to be deposited on these fields, particularly if there are high winds. This impact is expected to be **less than significant (Class III impact)** due to the daily watering of working areas and material stockpiles at the processing area which reduce dust emissions to the extent practicable (see Section 2.3.1 of the Project Description). The Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District (APCD) Permit to Operate requires that all sources of dust emissions in the processing area be controlled with water spray. GPS complies with this requirement.

3.10.3 Mitigation Measures

Native rangeland and native revegetation are consistent with the General Plan and Zoning for the processing area, existing mined area and replacement pit area. These uses will be

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compatible with current and future agricultural uses in the area, and will not adversely affect agricultural uses. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.