



Chapter 13. Prime and Unique Farmlands

13.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the regulatory framework relevant to farmland protection in the vicinity of ARC. It also discusses agricultural zoning and land use designations applicable to ARC and the surrounding region. The information presented in this chapter was drawn from the November 2009 NASA ARC ERD (NASA 2009), local planning documents, and Important Farmland mapping data for Santa Clara County.

13.2 Regulatory Background

13.2.1 Federal Regulations

13.2.1.1 *Farmland Protection Policy Act*

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) requires federal agencies to consider how farmland may be affected by their activities or responsibilities that involve 1) financing or assisting construction of improvement projects or 2) acquiring, managing, or disposing of federal land and facilities. To comply with the provisions of the FPPA, the lead federal agency must consult with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and complete a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) for each affected site or area. The federal lead agency is responsible for coordinating completion of the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (Form AD-1006) with the NRCS as part of the LESA process.

13.2.1.2 *Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program*

The state's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), part of the California Department of Conservation's (DOC's) Division of Land Conservation, is responsible for mapping and monitoring Important Farmlands for most of the state's agricultural areas. These maps are updated every two years based on information that FMMP receives from local agencies. The Important Farmland mapping system defines four categories of farmlands based on various characteristics including physical and chemical features, current use, and irrigation water supplies. These categories are Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Farmland of Local Importance.

13.2.1.3 *National Environmental Policy Act*

NEPA requires federal agencies to include in their decision-making process appropriate and careful consideration of all environmental effects of a proposed action and of possible alternative actions. Measures to avoid or minimize the adverse effects of proposed actions and to restore and enhance environmental quality as much as possible must be developed and discussed where feasible.



13.2.2 Local Regulations

13.2.2.1 City of Mountain View Zoning

Lands zoned for agricultural uses border ARC to the west and south within the City of Mountain View. Regulations pertaining to zoned Agriculture districts are included in the City of Mountain View Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 36, Article III, Division 1. Applicable regulations include permitted, accessory, and conditional uses; height regulations; area lot width and yard requirements; and other requirements.

ARC is not subject to the City's zoning regulations because it is a federal facility; however, it does cooperate with the City on matters of mutual concern and attempts to meet the City's guidelines and standards whenever possible.

13.3 Regional Setting

Despite its rich agricultural history, the area surrounding ARC underwent a rapid transformation in the decades following World War II and has since evolved into a center of industry and innovation. The largely urban landscape that exists today contains a diverse mix of residential, commercial, industrial, public, institutional, and open space uses (see Chapter 4, Land Use). Only a few isolated parcels on ARC's borders in Mountain View are zoned for agricultural uses (City of Mountain View 2013a), although none of these contain active farmland. These include:

- A linear strip of land on the west side of Stevens Creek that conforms to a PG&E transmission line right-of-way
- An undeveloped parcel at the southwest quadrant of Highway 101 and Moffett Boulevard
- A vacant parcel at the northeast quadrant of Highway 101 and Ellis Street that is subdivided by VTA's Winchester-Mountain View Light Rail Line

According to the DOC's Santa Clara County Important Farmland 2010 Map (DOC 2011), none of this land, or any other land on ARC's borders, is designated by the state as Important Farmland (i.e. Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance).

13.4 Existing Site Conditions

Agricultural crops were historically cultivated at ARC in the Bay View and Eastside/Airfield areas; however, these activities were discontinued by the early 1990s and have not resumed since. Currently, no land at ARC is zoned for agricultural uses (Santa Clara County 1994; City of Mountain View 2013a; City of Sunnyvale 2011a).

13.5 Environmental Requirements

There is currently no Important Farmland at ARC, or any such land on ARC's borders; therefore, no measures are needed to address the potential conversion of farmland due to future development activities at ARC.