5

AGRICULTURAL, FOREST, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Draft EIR contains discussion regarding the CEQA topic areas of Agricultural, Forest, and Mineral Resources.

AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

Under the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G – Environmental Checklist Form, development of the Project area as proposed would have a significant environmental impact if it were to result in:

1. Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
2. A conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
3. A 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));
4. The loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
5. Changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

1. *Would the project result in conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*
2. *Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*
5. *Would the project result in changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use [or conversion of forest land to non-forest use]?*

"Farmland" (including Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance) is classified and mapped by the California Resources Agency (specifically the State Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection) according to soil quality and irrigation status for the purposes of analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. The latest version of this

map for San Mateo County does not include the Project site in any of the farmland classifications – rather it is a mix of the following non-farmland designations:[1]

Urban and Built-up Land

Urban and built-up land is occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. Common examples include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.

Other land

Other land is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments, brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing, confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities, strip mines, borrow pits, and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as other land.

The proposed development is confined to the previously-disturbed portion of the site and the wooded slope will be maintained in its current state other than required ongoing vegetation management for wildfire risk reduction. The site is not currently being managed for the production of forest or agricultural resources. The entire site is zoned "Residential Estate" and while agricultural uses are generally allowed within residentially-designated areas in Portola Valley, the site is not reserved as agricultural land, forest land or timberland by the zoning or through Williamson Act contracts.

Therefore, the Project would have ***no impact*** on agricultural resources.

FOREST RESOURCES

3. *Would the project 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))?*
4. *Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*
5. *Would the project result in changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in [conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or] conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

Impact Ag-1: **Oak Woodlands**. The Project site contains Oak Woodlands, which while not used as productive forest land, and not under Williamson Act contract, a conservation plan, or conservation easement, and not indicated on state mapping as grazing land, could be considered potential rangeland. The Project is consistent with applicable identified protection opportunities under the state's latest Forests and Rangelands Assessment and applicable provisions of the Oak Woodland Conservation Act related to tree removal permits. This is a ***less than significant*** impact.

[1] State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, *San Mateo County Important Farmland, 2018*, September 2019.

Public Resources Code section 4526: "Timberland" means land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the board on a district basis. The Project site is owned by Stanford University and is neither used for commercial tree crops nor zoned Timberland Production.

Public Resources Code section 12220(g): "Forest land" is land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. . . . (l) "Woodlands" are forest lands composed mostly of hardwood species such as oak.

For over 30 years, state law (PRC 4789) has mandated periodic assessments of California's forest and rangeland resources. In 2008, the Federal Farm Bill added a provision to federal law that required states to do assessments of forest resources. To comply with these requirements, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection prepare periodic assessments of California's Forests and Rangelands, the latest of which is the 2017 Assessment.[2] The 2017 Assessment notes that California's forestland "comprises 32 million acres, almost a third of the state. Forestlands provide a wide range of benefits (e.g. water, recreation, wildlife habitat, forest products, grazing, carbon storage and sequestration) and face numerous threats (e.g. wildfire, development, pests, climate change)…" The 2017 Assessment focuses on productive forest lands (those managed for timber or tree crops) and notes, "Conversion of timberland to urban or agricultural uses is a relatively minor issue in California. However, working forests are also impacted by subdivision of large parcels, which can result in holdings too small to be effectively managed for timber. Conservation easements are an increasingly effective tool for preserving timberlands with important environmental or social values, and for protecting working forests from conversion or being subdivided."

While not active timberland or productive forest land as discussed above, the majority of the Project site outside the Residential Development Area contains Oak Woodlands (totaling 64.55 acres). The Residential Development Area is largely confined to the area currently occupied by the horse boarding facility and considered as developed land under existing conditions. (See Chapter 7: Biological Resources for details).

Oak woodlands are also identified in the 2017 Assessment as a type of rangeland. "California rangelands encompass over 57 million acres of grasslands, savannas, shrublands, deserts, wetlands, and woodlands that are dominated by grasses, grass-like plants, forbs and shrub species... Rangelands are defined (in PRC 4789.2(i)) as '…lands on which existing vegetation, whether it grows naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of domestic livestock for at least a portion of the year.'… Rangelands provide a wide range of benefits (e.g. livestock grazing, water, recreation, open space, wildlife habitat, carbon storage and sequestration) and face numerous threats (e.g. wildfire, development, pests, climate change)… From 1992–2012, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program recorded the net loss of rangelands to urban averaged about 25,000 acres per year statewide." Note that the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program does not identify the Project site as rangeland (which would be a Grazing Land on that map).

[2] State of California, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Fire and Resource Assessment Program, *California's Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment*, August 2018.

Oak woodlands are described in the 2017 Assessment as follows: "Oak woodland is an iconic vegetation type that many residents consider symbolic of California. The vegetation type has consequently received a significant amount of educational, research and regulatory attention. Most oak woodlands are privately owned and most are utilized for livestock grazing. The primary threats to oak woodland include disease and insects (sudden oak death, gold spotted oak borer and polyphagous shot borer) and land development. Lack of adequate regeneration has also been identified as an issue affecting sustainability of some oak woodlands."

The 2017 Assessment identifies opportunities to improve the sustainability of rangeland production and ecosystem services including use of Williamson Act contracts to reduce development pressure, funding for rangeland conservation easements to improve profitability of working rangeland, strategic scheduling of available rangeland, augment livestock processing facilities, support for niche marketing of rangeland products, funding for rangeland watering infrastructure, and targeted grazing to control invasive plants, reduce fuel loads and meet other land-owner objectives. The majority of these opportunities are not applicable to the Project site, which does not involve the processing of livestock or marketing of livestock products and isn't under Williamson Act contract or conservation easements. Consistent with the last objective, as part of the Vegetation Management Plan, the Project proposes targeted grazing by goats to manage wildfire risk at the site. While not under requirements of a Williamson Act Contract or conservation plan or easement, the Project proposes to conserve the majority of the site outside of the Residential Development Area as open space.

In response to development threats, the Oak Woodland Conservation Act was passed in 2004. Oak woodland management plans can be adopted at the county level to help conserve oak woodlands and to qualify them for conservation funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board; however, no such plan has been adopted by San Mateo County. This act also requires permits for removal of qualifying oak trees, which have been incorporated into Portola Valley's requirements under Municipal Code 15.12.275: Protection of Significant Trees (see Chapter 7: Biological Resources).

The 2017 Assessment also identifies opportunities to protect forest and rangelands from impacts of population growth and development, including: funding for Williamson Act contracts and conservation easements, promotion of "smart growth" type high-density development, promotion of fire-wise development, addition of conservation plans as needed to address newly listed threatened or endangered species. The Project site is not under Williamson Act contract or a conservation plan or easement. While not high-density, consistent with these opportunities, the Project proposes clustering of units to create a more compact "smart growth" type of development and allow for preservation of the majority of the site as open space while incorporating wildfire reduction measures (see Chapter 18: Wildfire).

In summary, the Project site is not used as timberland or productive forestland, but it does include oak woodlands, which is indicated in the 2017 Assessment as a land type appropriate for rangeland (grazing) but which does not include restrictions on conversion or requirements for mitigation. Additionally, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program does not designate the site as Grazing Land. As discussed above, while most of the identified opportunities to project forestland and rangeland are not applicable to the particulars of the Project site and use, the Project would be consistent with applicable opportunities and would comply with applicable requirements for permits to remove any oaks under the Town's requirements. Therefore, the Project impact with respect to forest resources would be ***less than significant***.

MINERAL RESOURCES

Under the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G – Environmental Checklist Form, development of the Project site as proposed would have a significant environmental impact if it were to result in:

1. Loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of future value to the region and the residents of the state; or.
2. Loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Mineral resources of concern include metals, industrial minerals (e.g., aggregate, sand and gravel), oil and gas, and geothermal resources that would be of value to the region and residents of the state.

Loss of mineral resources would primarily be the result of conversion of lands underlain by these resources to other uses, or within close proximity to the resources, such that the construction and occupancy of the Project would restrict or eliminate sage and environmentally sound measures to implement extractive operations. Loss of access could also be the result of changes in land ownership.

Important mineral resource areas are recognized at the federal and state levels through environmental resource management plans and adopted mineral resource mapping, and at the local level through land use planning documents such as General Plans that incorporate such information.

Mineral resources in the region include gold, silver, lead, mercury, magnesium, and aggregate (traprock), but there are no known mineral resources at the Project site close enough as to cause interference. [3] The Project site has not been delineated as a locally important mineral recovery site on the City of Portola Valley General Plan, on any specific plan, or on any other land use plan. Therefore, the proposed Project would have ***no impact*** on mineral resources.

[3] USGS, Mineral Resources Data System, last updated 2011, available at http://tin.er.usgs.gov/mrds/.

This page intentionally left blank.