

## 3.10 Open Space

This section describes open space in the SCAG region, identifies the potential impacts of the RTP on open space, includes mitigation measures for the impacts and evaluates residual impacts. The information contained in this section is based on data and mapping compiled for the Regional Open Space Program.

The information contained in this chapter is a summary of information contained in the Regional Open Space Program Profile of Regional Open Space Resources.<sup>1</sup>

### Environmental Setting

#### Land Uses

The following categories of land uses identified in SCAG's 2005 land use inventory are considered part of regional open space and discussed in this chapter: open space and recreation lands, water, vacant, and agriculture.

In the region as a whole, nearly 23 million acres fit the "open" category. Vacant lands account for more than 20 of the 25 million acres and include the region's national forests, state parks, military installations, other public lands, and various private holdings. Federal and state recreation lands included in the vacant category include lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Los Padres National Forest, Angeles National Forest, Cleveland National Forest, San Bernardino National Forest, Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park, the Mojave Preserve, and Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Military lands included in the vacant category include: Barstow Marine Corps Logistics Base, Edwards Air Force Base, El Centro Naval Air Facility, Fort Irwin, Los Angeles Air Force Base, March Air Reserve Base, Naval Warfare Assessment Station Corona, Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, Point Magu Naval Air Weapons Station, Twenty-nine Palms Marine Corps Combat Center, and Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range. With limited exceptions, the military lands are not open to the public. Farmlands and certain ranch operations account for more than 1 million acres; this excludes large areas of rangelands that are encompassed in the "vacant undifferentiated" category. Approximately 2.1 million acres in the region are developed, including approximately 100,000 acres used for transportation facilities.

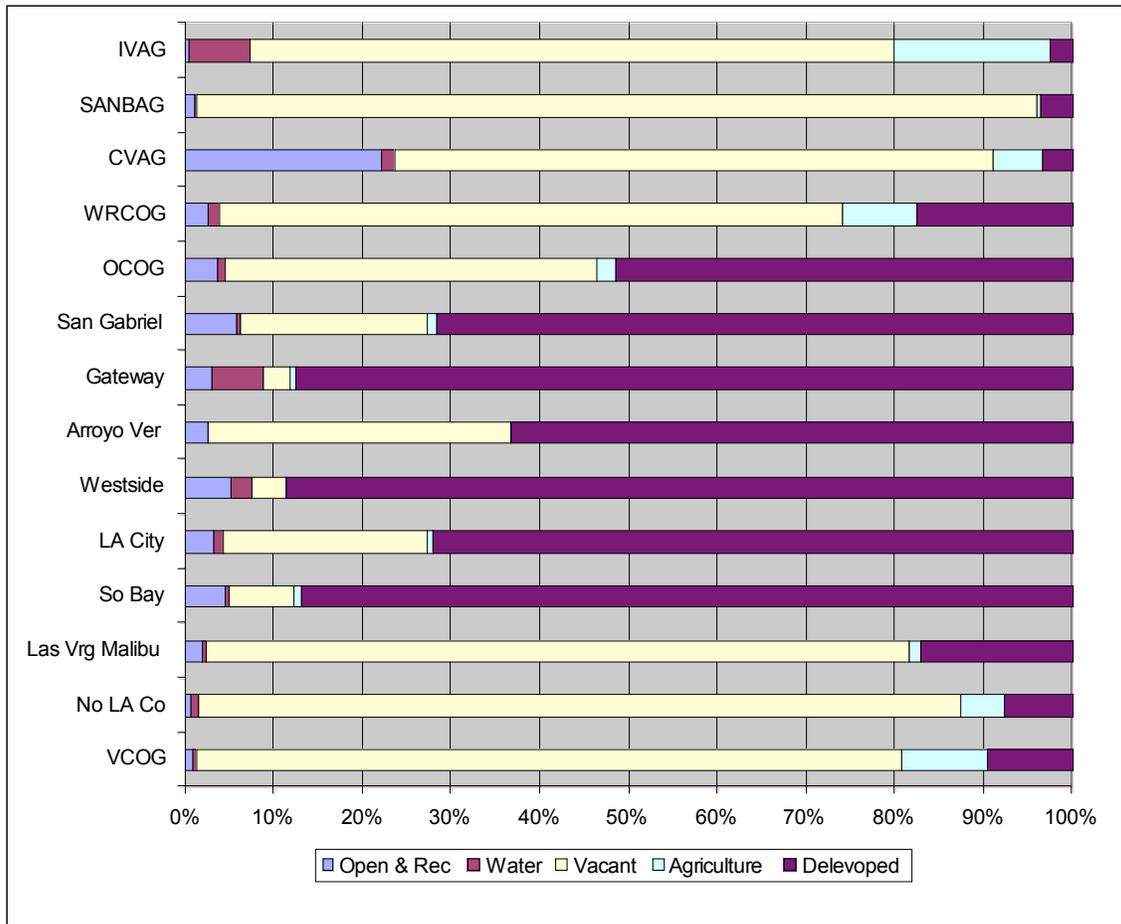
#### General Plan Land Use Categories

In connection with its planning programs, SCAG compiled the general plan land use maps of its member agencies as of 2004, collapsed the land use classifications into 25 categories, and mapped the distribution of the collapsed categories across the region. **Table 3.10.1** indicates the regional totals and subregional distribution (SCAG subregions are shown on **Map 2.1-2**) of the general plan land use categories; **Map 3.10-1** shows the geographic distribution while **Map 3.10-2**

<sup>1</sup> SCAG, 2007; unpublished data.

shows the General Plan land use classifications. **Figure 3.10-1** shows how the subregions vary in terms of the proportion of the open and developed land uses found in each.

**FIGURE 3.10-1  
 "OPEN" AND DEVELOPED USES IN EACH SCAG SUBREGION  
 (PERCENTAGE PER TYPE)**



SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

## Ownership

Based on available data from the California Legacy Project (CLP 2005), nearly 17 million acres in the SCAG region are in public ownership, primarily federal. **Map 3.10-3** shows the general ownership across the region and **Figure 3.10-2** shows ownership by subregion.

**TABLE 3.10-1  
“OPEN” AND OTHER LAND USES BY SCAG SUBREGION (acres)<sup>1</sup>**

Land Use Category	Ventura Co	North LA Co	Las Virgenes Malibu	South Bay Cities	City of LA	Westside Cities	Arroyo Verdugo	Gateway Cities	San Gabriel	Orange Co	Western Riverside	Coachella Valley	San Bernardino Co	Imperial Co	Total
<b>Open Space and Recreation<sup>2</sup></b>															
Beach Parks	603	0	326	322	707	236	0	249	0	1,350	0	0	0	0	3,791
Developed Local Parks and Recreation	2,005	1,098	180	1,362	3,363	399	408	2,421	2,474	6,525	2,978	805	3,341	788	28,145
Developed Regional Parks and Recreation	285	321	155	96	911	51	0	826	1,095	1,409	977	280	1,139	73	7,617
Golf Courses	3,408	1,431	410	1,057	3,924	30	423	1,808	3,133	7,307	6,234	15,412	4,462	329	49,368
Other Open Space and Recreation	1,074	2,544	202	157	361	68	40	233	311	1,185	2,364	1,245	4,548	947	15,280
Specimen Gardens and Arboreta	49	5	0	87	15	1	152	0	367	26	14	2	18	0	736
Undeveloped Local Parks and Recreation	222	92	18	9	0	0	0	0	165	4	9	78	7	17	623
Undeveloped Regional Parks and Recreation	142	4,607	741	92	523	159	0	101	5,259	0	23,681	673,204	122,074	0	830,583
Wildlife Preserves and Sanctuaries	896	571	35	63	448	0	0	16	95	1,009	3,058	1,171	17	11,402	18,780
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>8,685</b>	<b>10,670</b>	<b>2,066</b>	<b>3,245</b>	<b>10,252</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>1,022</b>	<b>5,654</b>	<b>12,897</b>	<b>18,814</b>	<b>39,315</b>	<b>692,197</b>	<b>135,607</b>	<b>13,555</b>	<b>954,924</b>
<b>Water</b>															
Harbor Water Facilities	0	0	0	0	2,249	0	0	10,515	0	117	0	0	0	0	12,882
Marina Water Facilities	215	2	4	43	191	160	0	175	0	294	0	0	131	82	1,298
Water Within a Military Installation	437	5,409	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	58	0	11	44,533	50,458
Water, Undifferentiated	4,931	7,278	284	293	1,085	246	2	754	1,128	3,936	18,805	47,413	20,217	151,728	258,099
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5,583</b>	<b>12,689</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>3,525</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11,444</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>4,358</b>	<b>18,862</b>	<b>47,413</b>	<b>20,359</b>	<b>196,343</b>	<b>322,737</b>
<b>Vacant<sup>3</sup></b>															
Abandoned Orchards and Vineyards	341	370	5	0	19	0	0	0	2	91	966	365	968	155	3,282
Beaches (Vacant)	332	0	102	18	0	0	0	0	0	52	1	0	0	0	505
Former Base Vacant Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,869	2,910	0	2,513	7,283	14,575
Vacant Area	2,769	44,981	0	6	350	0	0	0	0	3,070	1,671	109,531	1,849,285	436,346	2,448,010
Vacant Undifferentiated	929,202	1,325,731	82,477	5,476	73,584	694	13,615	6,297	47,999	208,317	1,070,444	2,008,263	10,335,930	1,630,018	17,738,048
Vacant With Limited	621	1,139	43	61	98	0	3	8	94	353	3,141	2,760	2,161	8,856	19,336

**TABLE 3.10-1 (Continued)  
“OPEN” AND OTHER LAND USES BY SCAG SUBREGION (acres)<sup>1</sup>**

Land Use Category	Ventura Co	North LA Co	Las Virgenes Malibu	South Bay Cities	City of LA	Westside Cities	Arroyo Verdugo	Gateway Cities	San Gabriel	Orange Co	Western Riverside	Coachella Valley	San Bernardino Co	Imperial Co	Total
Improvements															
<b>Subtotal</b>	933,264	1,372,221	82,628	5,562	74,050	694	13,618	6,305	48,095	213,752	1,079,133	2,120,920	12,190,857	2,082,658	20,223,756
<b>Agriculture<sup>4</sup></b>															
Dairy, Intensive Livestock, and Associated Facilities	82	139	0	0	0	0	0	6	7	0	3,109	70	6,499	2,830	12,744
Horse Ranches	2,777	2,972	587	72	606	0	50	111	502	649	8,605	2,076	3,175	162	22,344
Irrigated Cropland and Improved Pasture Land	42,419	60,012	233	67	467	0	0	177	439	3,330	34,950	120,171	40,613	486,483	789,361
Non-Irrigated Cropland and Improved Pasture Land	6,636	11,081	31	0	10	0	0	0	0	1,518	48,725	0	1,248	265	69,514
Nurseries	5,624	140	61	443	627	0	1	851	1,275	2,601	3,607	1,411	1,266	153	18,060
Orchards and Vineyards	54,115	2,347	224	15	90	0	0	39	114	2,785	25,048	43,268	8,970	9,127	146,142
Other Agriculture	1,330	1,140	56	0	18	0	0	8	34	254	3,113	4,092	2,058	4,239	16,341
<b>Subtotal</b>	112,985	77,830	1,192	596	1,818	0	51	1,192	2,372	11,137	127,157	171,088	63,829	503,259	1,074,506
<b>Transportation</b>															
Airports	943	981	0	424	3,654	157	532	990	327	584	1,068	1,832	7,136	1,236	19,864
Bus Terminals and Yards	21	54	4	23	282	23	3	125	91	198	50	24	168	24	1,091
Freeways and Major Roads	2,972	3,319	343	1,226	6,820	231	708	3,443	4,192	8,270	6,193	5,275	15,505	6,087	64,584
Harbor Facilities	33	0	0	0	2,587	0	0	2,492	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,112
Park-and-Ride Lots	36	73	0	29	58	1	10	78	66	51	23	0	82	0	505
Railroads	68	70	0	235	976	0	14	1,128	338	290	375	757	2,801	894	7,947
Truck Terminals	81	37	0	77	197	0	0	827	247	180	348	117	1,384	136	3,632
Subtotal	4,154	4,535	347	2,014	14,574	412	1,268	9,082	5,261	9,573	8,056	8,005	27,077	8,377	102,734
All Other Developed Land	109,106	118,700	17,560	62,673	218,103	15,698	24,103	163,643	158,236	253,782	261,439	100,429	438,518	63,990	2,005,979
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,173,776</b>	<b>1,596,644</b>	<b>104,081</b>	<b>74,426</b>	<b>322,323</b>	<b>18,154</b>	<b>40,063</b>	<b>197,321</b>	<b>227,989</b>	<b>511,417</b>	<b>1,533,963</b>	<b>3,140,051</b>	<b>12,876,247</b>	<b>2,868,182</b>	<b>24,684,635</b>

<sup>1</sup> “Open” uses include open space and recreation lands, water, vacant lands in a natural state, and agriculture.

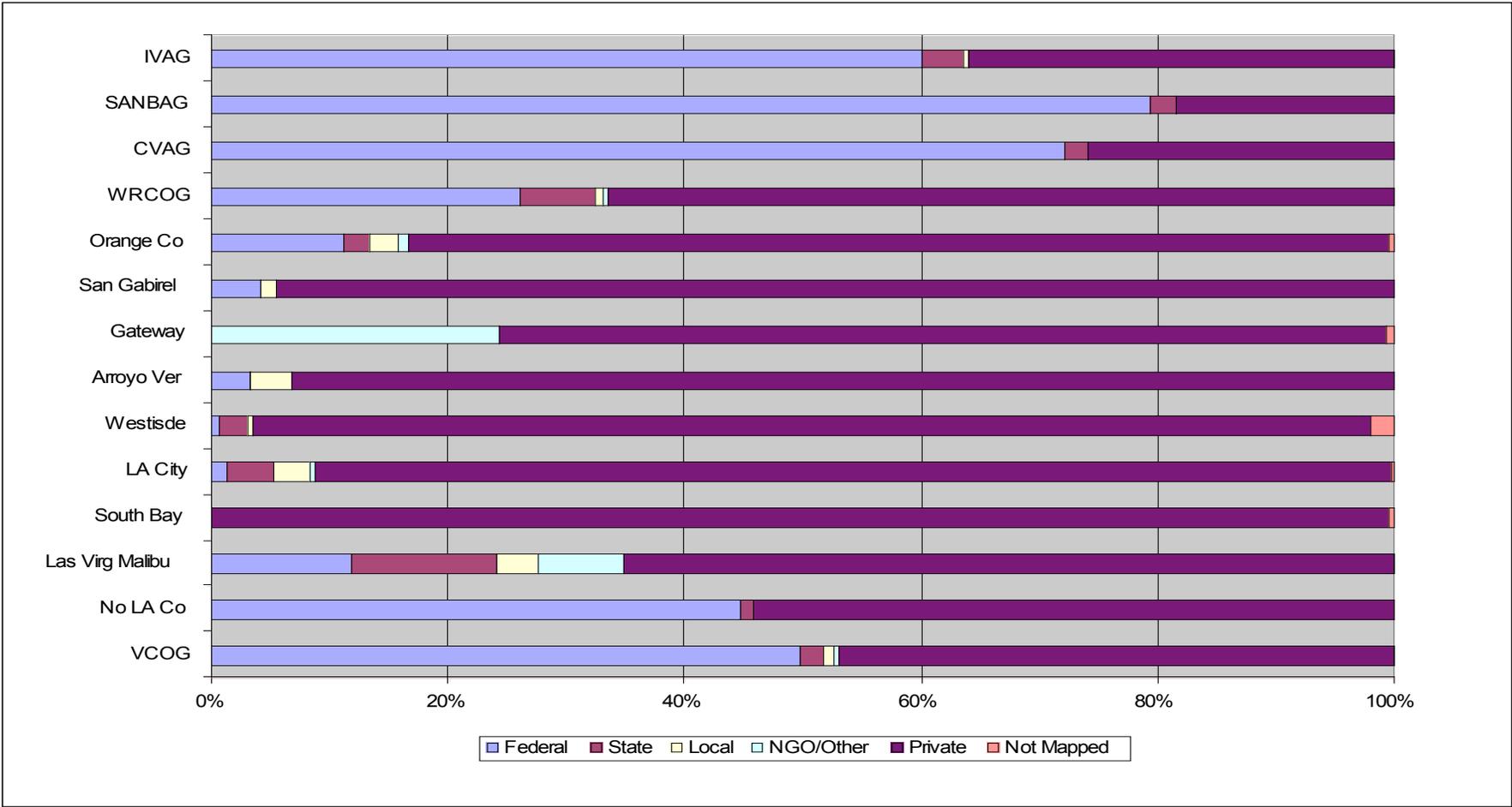
<sup>2</sup> Does not include national forests, state parks, and other federal/state lands that are kept in a natural state and are open to the public for recreation purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Includes national forests, state parks, and other federal/state lands that are kept in a natural state and are open to the public for recreation purposes.

<sup>4</sup> As identified based on aerial imagery interpretation; does not include most grazing lands, which show as “undifferentiated vacant”.

SOURCE: Southern California Association of Governments 2005 Land Use Inventory (2006).

**FIGURE 3.10-2  
 GENERALIZED OWNERSHIP IN EACH SCAG SUBREGION  
 (PERCENTAGE PER TYPE)**



SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

## Natural Lands

Natural lands are areas that are largely undeveloped and in their natural state. This type of open space is characterized by its biological resources and ecological functions. Natural lands generally are classified into three categories: cores, connectors, and fragments.

Cores are blocks of natural lands that are greater than 1,000 acres in area and have minimal edge-to-area ratio.

Two types of connectors are identified: landscape and stepping stone linkages. Landscape linkages are contiguously connected lands that provide biotic connectivity between two or more cores; they typically are narrower than cores and have a higher edge-to-area ratio. Stepping stone linkages are natural lands that run between cores but are broken by small areas of development including major roads; they have a higher edge-to-area ratio than landscape linkages or cores. Some the landscape linkages in the region have been identified further based on studies conducted as part of the statewide and southern California Missing Linkages project and are identified separately as wildlife linkages and linkage design areas.

Wildlife linkages are regional landscape connectors that allow for animal movement and genetic flow necessary to maintain the ecological functions of larger ecosystems. Linkage design areas are wildlife linkages where a conservation strategy has been proposed to maintain a specific configuration of the linkage. The linkages identified in the statewide and regional studies are in locations where existing or proposed development limit options for maintaining and/or threaten to eliminate existing connections between cores. The linkages identified in the statewide and regional studies are in locations where existing or proposed development limit options for maintaining and/or threaten to eliminate existing connections between cores.

Fragments are patches of habitat smaller than 1,000 acres located either within (satellite fragments) or further than one mile (isolated fragments) from a core.

Natural lands also are categorized as protected or unprotected.

Protected lands are areas maintained in their natural state because they are in public ownership and designated for some level of conservation, are subject to easements or other agreements that preclude or limit conversion to other uses, or are subject to legal mandates that preclude their development. The level and type of protection vary widely, as do the allowed uses of the lands.

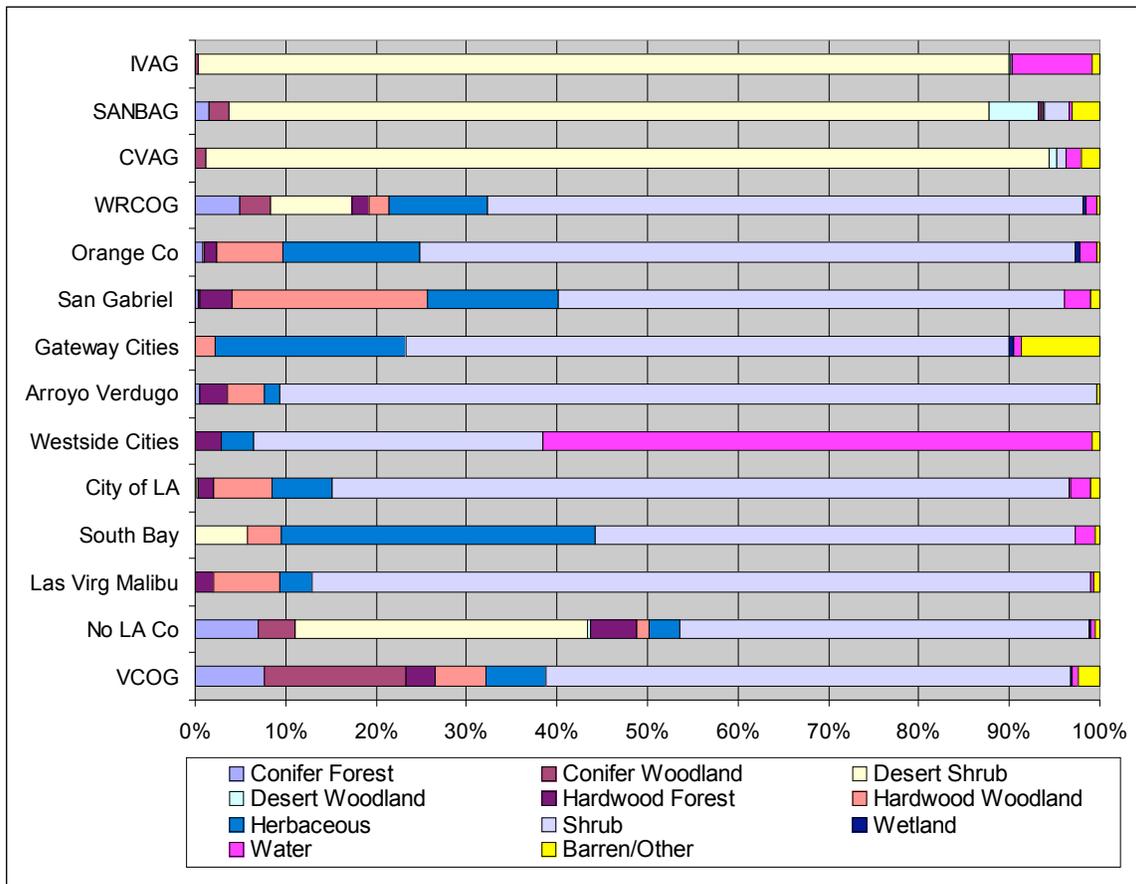
Unprotected lands are areas that are not subject to requirements or arrangements that would keep them in a natural state.

Nearly 21 million acres in the region are considered natural lands as defined in the Regional Open Space Program. This estimate includes more than 20 million acres with various types of vegetation, about 500,000 acres of barren/disturbed lands, and 300,000 acres of water. This section describes the natural lands in terms of their:

- Land cover/vegetation types,
- Biological values and ecological context, and
- Ownership and protection status.

A description of wildlife linkages and linkage design areas is included in the description of biological values and ecological context. An overview of regional-scale conservation programs in Southern California is included in the discussion of ownership and protection status. The data compiled on land cover and vegetation types in the region are primarily from the Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) developed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and USDA Forest Service. Information on land cover and vegetation can be found in **Chapter 3.3 Biological Resources**, of the PEIR. **Figure 3.10-3** shows the proportion of natural lands in each subregion.

**FIGURE 3.10-3  
 NATURAL LANDS IN EACH SCAG SUBREGION (Percentage Per Type)**



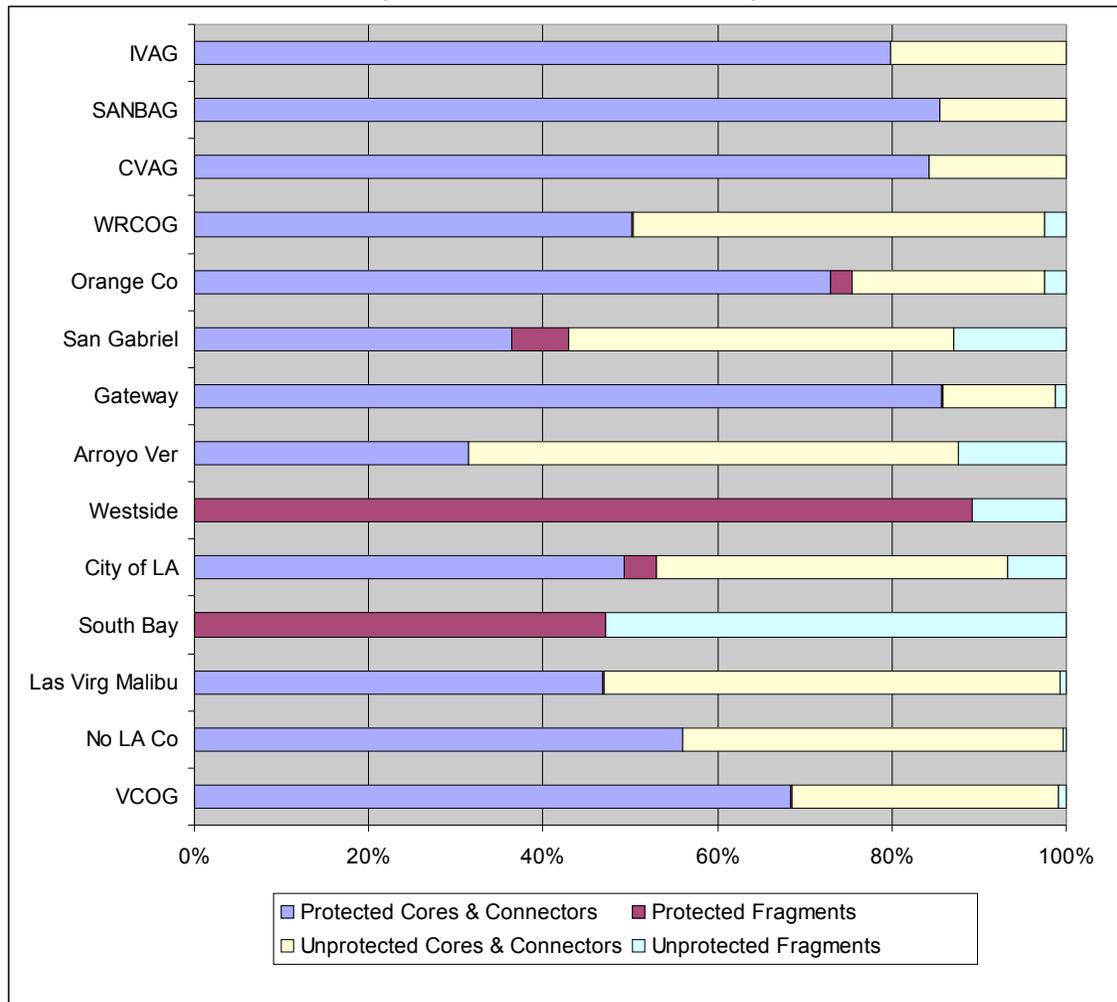
SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

## “Protected” and “Unprotected” Natural Lands

Map 3.10-4 shows the distribution of “protected” and “unprotected” cores, connectors, and fragments within the SCAG region and vicinity. It also shows the location of the protected and unprotected areas in relation to wildlife linkages, linkage design areas, park and recreation areas (from 2005 land use inventory, agricultural lands, and developed lands). Figure 3.10-4 shows the proportion of natural lands in each subregion within the “protected” and “unprotected” categories.

Approximately 80 percent (more than 16 million acres) of natural lands in the SCAG region are in public ownership or in reserves. Nearly 90% of these lands occur in San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties. Los Angeles County has nearly 900,000 acres of public natural lands, largely concentrated in its northern tier. Ventura County and western Riverside County each have more than 500,000 acres; Orange County has 130,000 acres.

**FIGURE 3.10-4**  
**“PROTECTED” AND “UNPROTECTED” NATURAL LANDS IN EACH SCAG SUBREGION**  
**(PERCENTAGE PER CATEGORY)**



SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

Also concentrated in the eastern half of the region are the remaining 20 percent of lands that are in private ownership: 1.7 million acres in San Bernardino County, 950,000 acres in Riverside County, and 440,000 in Imperial County. Los Angeles County has 660,000 acres (mainly in the north), Ventura County has nearly 300,000 acres, and Orange County has about 40,000 acres.

Additional information about conservation efforts in the region is included in the bioregion chapters of the CDFG Wildlife Action Plan (WAP), the South Coast Missing Linkages reports, and CDFG's Natural Community Conservation Program (NCCP) website: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/nccp/index.html>.

## Community Open Space

Community open space includes all forms of open space in or serving the needs of people in the region's communities. This category includes but is not limited to park and recreation areas, community gardens, some private farmlands, some public rangelands, urban forests, greenbelts, and trail systems. In many communities, it also includes natural lands in the form of cores, connectors, and/or fragments.

Community open space traditionally has meant parks and other recreation areas that are located in or near enough to serve local communities. In today's region, community open space includes community gardens, dedicated natural lands, urban forests, greenbelts, trail systems, and bikeways. This new mix of community open spaces is the product of interrelated planning decisions on a local and regional level and a reflection of new and old needs of the region's communities.

To provide a perspective on community open space issues and trends within the region, sixteen SCAG cities were selected as case studies. In addition, summaries were prepared of existing plans and programs that are focused on planning and providing community open space.

### Case Studies

The case study cities include:

- Compton
- Long Beach
- Los Angeles
- Palmdale
- Santa Clarita
- Irvine
- Ontario
- Rialto
- Inglewood
- Torrance
- Azusa
- Pomona
- Ventura
- Culver City
- Moorpark
- Riverside

Each of these cities is a Compass 2% Opportunity Area, and each deals with a different community open space challenge. The types of challenges represented by the cities range from finding ways to add community open space to essentially built-out areas to coordinating park and recreation planning with water quality and watershed management requirements.

To provide a basis for comparing the cities in terms of their existing community open space, the following information was compiled for each: population, areas, population density, ethnic mix,

**TABLE 3.10-2  
 PARKS/PEOPLE-RELATED INFORMATION FOR THE CASE STUDY CITIES**

City	SCAG Subregion	Total Population	Area (Square Miles)	Population Density (Persons/Square Mile)	% White	% Hispanic	% African-American	% Native American	% Asian	Most recent Open Space Element	# of Parks	Park Acreage	Park Acres/1,000 People
Compton	Gateway Cities	93,493	10.1	9,257	1.02%	56.84%	39.86%	0.18%	0.20%	1991	14	95	1.02
Long Beach	Gateway Cities	461,522	50.4	9,157	33.13%	35.77%	14.48%	0.38%	11.90%	2002	77	2101	4.55
Los Angeles	Los Angeles City	3,694,820	469.1	7,876	29.75%	46.53%	10.88%	0.24%	9.87%	1973	366	20,178	5.46
Palmdale	North LA Co	116,670	105	1,111	41.00%	37.71%	14.10%	0.53%	3.71%	2004	11	243	2.16
Santa Clarita	North LA Co	151,088	47.8	3,161	69.26%	20.50%	1.96%	0.35%	5.13%	1991	22	387	2.56
Irvine	Orange Co	143,072	46.2	3,097	57.04%	7.37%	1.38%	0.11%	29.71%	1999	51	2182	15.3
Ontario	San Bernardino Co	158,007	49.8	3,173	26.61%	59.88%	7.16%	0.30%	3.74%	1998	27	683	4.32
Rialto	San Bernardino Co	91,873	21.9	4,195	21.46%	51.21%	21.72%	0.40%	2.35%	1992	10	236	2.57
Inglewood	South Bay Cities	112,580	9.1	12,371	4.11%	46.04%	46.42%	0.19%	1.08%	1995	10	125	1.11
Torrance	South Bay Cities	137,946	20.5	6,729	52.36%	12.79%	2.11%	0.26%	28.42%	1992	28	319	2.31
Azusa	San Gabriel Valley	44,712	8.9	5,024	24.21%	63.79%	3.52%	0.45%	5.94%	2004	11	217	4.85
Pomona	San Gabriel Valley	39,804	22.8	1,746	17.41%	30.71%	0.90%	0.32%	48.74%	1976	28	446	11.21
Ventura	Ventura Co	100,916	19	5,311	68.09%	24.35%	1.27%	0.63%	2.91%	1989	29	1048	10.39
Culver City	Westside Cities	38,816	5.1	7,611	48.11%	23.70%	11.69%	0.29%	11.93%	1996	12	91	2.35
Moorpark	Ventura Co	31,415	19	1,653	62.43%	27.81%	1.38%	0.26%	5.53%	1986	14	151	4.81
Riverside	Western Riverside	255,166	78.1	3,267	45.56%	38.14%	7.07%	0.55%	5.58%	1994	53	1,155	4.53

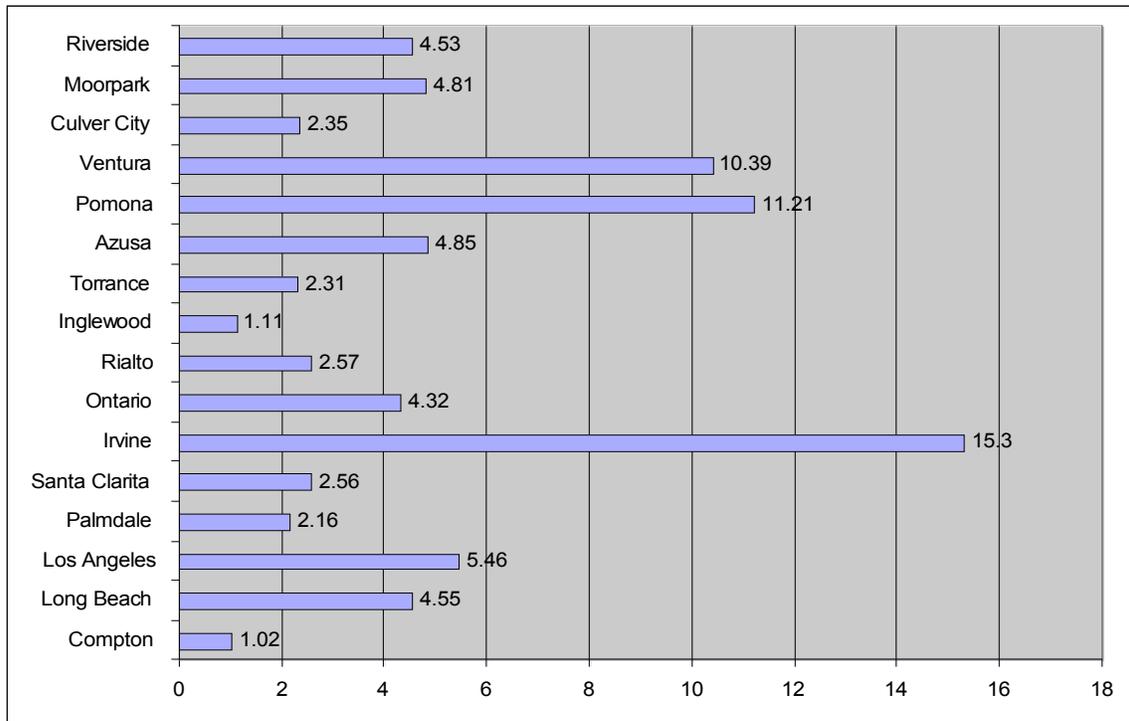
SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

number of parks, and total acres of parks. The ratio of local parks per 1000 residents was then calculated and compared with the ratios recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA 1996). In addition, the proximity of the city to existing regional parks was determined, together with whether the city has community gardens, agricultural lands, greenbelts/greenways, trails and bikeway systems, an urban forestry program, and other relevant open space plans or programs. **Table 3.10-2** shows the relevant park information for the case study cities.

**Figure 3.10-5** shows the parks/people ratio for each city; **Table 3.10-3** indicates the NRPA standards recommended for park types. As measured against NRPA's overall parks/people standard (6.25-10 acres/1000 people), three cities exceed the guidelines (Irvine, Pomona, and Ventura); all others are below the standard. As measured against the NRPA guidelines for community and regional parks (5.0-10.5 acres/1000 people), eight cities meet or come close to the ratio.

Ten of the cities have urban forestry programs, eight have greenway and trails systems, seven are participating in river park and watershed planning projects, and five have community garden programs. Fourteen of the cities have at least one type of active agricultural operation (other than community gardens) within their jurisdictions, and ten are in subregions where the amount of developed land exceeds the remaining amount of open space and farmland.

**FIGURE 3.10-5  
 PARKS-TO-PEOPLE RATIO IN CASE STUDY CITIES  
 (PARK ACRES PER 1,000 PEOPLE)**



SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

**TABLE 3.10-3  
 NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES**

Type of Park <sup>1</sup>	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres/1,000 Population
Mini-Park	>0.25 mile radius	1 acre or less	.25 to .50
Neighborhood Park/Playground	0.25-0.5 mile radius per 5,000 people	15+ acres	1.0 to 2.0
Community Park	1-2 mile radius	25+ acres	5.0 to 8.0
Regional Park	Several communities, within 1-hour drive time	200+ acres	5.0 to 10.0
NRPA Parks/People Standard	---	---	6.25-10.5 acres

<sup>1</sup> NRPA also has developed standards for sports facilities (see NRPA 1996).

SOURCE: National Recreation and Parks Association, Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, 1996.

## Agricultural Lands

Farmlands and rangelands are agricultural lands that are part of the region’s open landscape and entail various types and degrees of modifications to natural lands. Farmlands include irrigated and non-irrigated crop production. Rangelands include any expanse of natural land that is not fertilized, irrigated, or cultivated and is predominately used for grazing by livestock and wildlife.

This section describes the distribution of farmlands and rangelands in the SCAG region and vicinity based primarily on data provided by the California Department of Conservation. It also provides a summary of existing plans and programs in the region to conserve agricultural lands, plus a summary of growth management plans in other states that include provisions for conserving agricultural lands.

Based on 2005 estimates prepared by the California Department of Conservation (CDC), there are approximately 2.2 million acres of agricultural lands in the SCAG region: approximately 856,000 acres of farmland and 1.2 million acres of rangeland. This estimate is substantially higher than the estimate in the 2005 SCAG land use inventory because the latter includes substantial areas of rangeland under the “vacant” category. It also should be noted that the CDC estimate is based on a selective inventory of agricultural lands, and the SCAG inventory is based on aerial imagery interpretation.

As indicated in **Table 3.10-4**, there is substantially more farmland than rangeland in Ventura, Riverside, and Imperial counties and the reverse in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Bernardino counties. Kern County has more farmland than the six SCAG counties combined and also has more total acres of rangeland. **Map 3.10-5** shows the regional distribution of important farmlands and grazing lands. **Figure 3.10-6** shows the proportion of agricultural land types within the SCAG counties and in adjacent Kern and San Diego counties.

Historically, development patterns in the region have been tied as much to the conversion of agricultural lands as to the consumption of natural lands for urban uses. A key issue in the region

today is whether the high rate of farmland conversion in recent years can be slowed to prevent irreversible losses. An estimated 230,000 acres of farmland and grazing land were converted to non-agricultural uses and/or applied for development entitlements between 1996 and 2004. If this trend continues unabated, the existing inventory of agricultural lands could be reduced by 700,000 before 2030.

**TABLE 3.10-4  
 ESTIMATED FARMLANDS AND RANGELANDS IN THE SCAG REGION AND VICINITY (2005 ACRES)**

Farmlands and Rangelands	Ventura Co	Los Angeles Co	Orange Co	Riverside Co	San Bernardino Co	Imperial Co	SCAG Region
Farmland of Local Importance	198,087	8,684	0	244,848	2,928	33,333	454,547
Prime Farmland	16,817	33,218	7,260	134,429	20,316	196,928	212,039
Farmland of Statewide Importance	47,192	1,028	620	48,499	8,776	313,217	106,116
Unique Farmland	34,978	1,120	5,601	38,691	2,653	2,133	83,043
All Farmland	297,074	44,050	13,481	466,467	34,673	545,611	855,745
Grazing	29,075	228,826	35,872	116,029	915,549	0	1,325,351
<b>Total</b>	<b>326,149</b>	<b>272,876</b>	<b>49,353</b>	<b>582,496</b>	<b>950,222</b>	<b>545,610</b>	<b>2,181,096</b>

SOURCE: California Department of Conservation, 2005 estimates.

## Federal Agencies and Regulations

### *The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*

The EPA implements NEPA. NEPA provides information on expected environmental effects of federally funded projects. Impacts on land uses and conflicts with state, regional, or local plans and policies are among the considerations included in the regulations. The regulations also require that projects requiring NEPA review seek to avoid or minimize adverse effects of proposed actions and restore and enhance environmental quality as much as possible.

### *Department of Interior*

#### **United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

The BLM manages approximately 10 million acres of the total SCAG region, primarily in the eastern portion of the region. The California Desert Conservation Area Plan is used to manage BLM controlled areas. The BLM also implements biological resource management policies through its designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

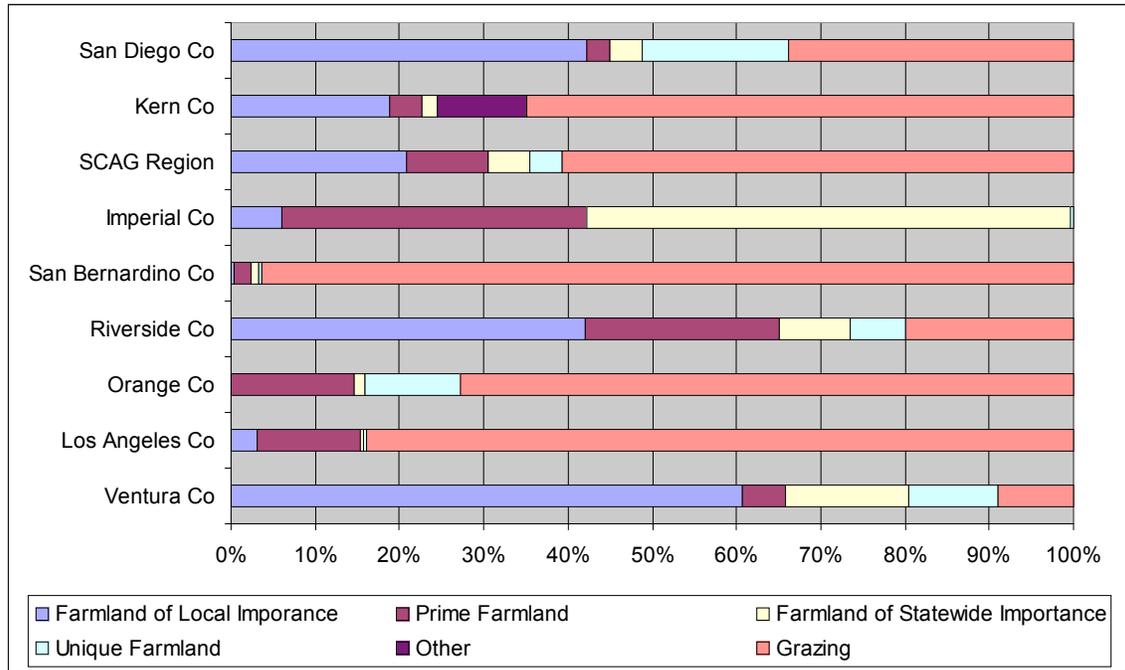
#### **United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

The USFWS administers the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and designates critical habitat for endangered species. The USFWS also manages the National Wildlife Refuges in the SCAG region. These include the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge (in Imperial County) and Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge (in Ventura County).

**National Park Service (NPS)**

The NPS manages national parks and wilderness areas. Two national parks and one wilderness area are located in the SCAG region: Joshua Tree National Park, a portion of Death Valley National Park, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

**FIGURE 3.10-6  
 AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN SCAG COUNTIES AND VICINITY  
 (PERCENTAGE BY TYPE)**



SOURCE: SCAG, 2007

**United States Forest Service (USFS)**

The USFS manages approximately 2.3 million acres of national forests in the SCAG region. The four national forests in the region are the Angeles National Forest, San Bernardino National Forest, Los Padres National Forest, and the Cleveland National Forest.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

The NRCS maps soils and farmland uses to provide comprehensive information necessary for understanding, managing, conserving and sustaining the nation's limited soil resources. The NRCS manages the Farmland Protection Program, which provides funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses.

### ***United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)***

Among its responsibilities, the USACE administers Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), which governs specified activities in waters of the United States, including wetlands. In this role, the USACE requires that a permit be obtained if a project would place structures, including dredged or filled materials, within navigable waters or wetlands, or result in alteration of such areas.

### ***Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)***

The FRPP, also referred to as the Farmland Protection Program (FPP), is a voluntary easement purchase program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. Pursuant to the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) of 1981 Sections 1539-1549, the Secretary of Agriculture is directed to establish and carry out a program to "minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses, and to the extent practicable, will be compatible with state, unit of local government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland." (7 USC 4201-4209 & 7 USC 658).

The program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments and nongovernmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in land. FPP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The NRCS manages the program. Technical Committee, awards funds to qualified entities to conduct their farmland protection programs. Although a minimum of 30 years is required for conservation easements, priority is given to applications with perpetual easements.

### ***Federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)***

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

## **State Agencies and Regulations**

### ***California Department of Conservation***

In 1982, the State of California created the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program within the California Department of Conservation to carry on the mapping activity from the NRCS on a continuing basis. The California Department of Conservation administers the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, for the conservation of farmland and other resource-oriented laws.

### ***California Coastal Commission***

The California Coastal Commission plans for and regulates development in the coastal zone consistent with the policies of the California Coastal Act. The Commission also administers the federal Coastal Zone Management Act in California.<sup>2</sup> As part of the Coastal Act, cities and

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<sup>2</sup> The other federally designated agency is the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) which operates outside of the SCAG region.

counties are required to prepare a local coastal program (LCP) for the portion of its jurisdiction within the coastal zone. With an approved LCP, cities and counties control coastal development that accords with the local coastal plan. If no local coastal plan has been approved, the Coastal Commission controls coastal development.<sup>3</sup>

### ***California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)***

The Caltrans jurisdiction includes right-of-ways of state and interstate routes within California. Any work within the right-of-way of a federal or state transportation corridor is subject to Caltrans regulations governing allowable actions and modifications to the right-of-way.

Caltrans includes the Division of Aeronautics, which is responsible for airport permitting and establishing a county Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for each county with one or more public airports. ALUCs are responsible for the preparation of land use plans for areas near aviation facilities.

### ***California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF)***

The CDF reviews and approves plans for timber harvesting on private lands. In addition, through its responsibility for fighting wildland fires, the CDF plays a role in planning development in forested areas.

### ***California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR)***

The CDPR manages and provides sites for a variety of recreational and outdoor activities. The CDPR is a trustee agency that owns and operates all state parks and participates in land use planning that affects state parkland.

### ***California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)***

The land use mandate of the CDFG is to protect rare, threatened, and endangered species by managing habitat in legally designated ecological reserves or wildlife areas. CDFG reserves located in the SCAG region include the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (Orange County) and Imperial State Wildlife Area (Imperial County).

### ***Public Agencies***

Public agencies are entrusted with compliance with CEQA and its provisions are enforced, as necessary, through litigation and the threat thereof. CEQA defines a significant effect on the environment as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the physical conditions within the area affected by the project. Land use is a required impact assessment category under CEQA.

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<sup>3</sup> Fulton, W. 1999. *Guide to California Planning*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press Books.

### **California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)**

The Williamson Act is the only established program that directly involves state government in an administrative or fiscal capacity. The Act creates an arrangement (contract) whereby private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open space uses under a rolling ten-year contract. In return parcels are assessed for property tax purpose at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value.

**Farmland Security Zone:** August of 1998, the Legislature enhanced the Williamson Act with the farmland security zone (FSZ) provisions. The FSZ provisions offer landowners greater property tax reduction in return for a minimum rolling contract term of 20 years.

### **California Farmland Conservancy Program**

The CFCP seeks to encourage the long-term, private stewardship of agricultural lands through the voluntary use of agricultural conservation easements. The CFCP provides grant funding for projects which use and support agricultural conservation easements for protection of agricultural lands. As of April 2005, the CFCP has funded more than 50 easement projects in California, including nearly 25,000 acres in more than a dozen counties. CFCP has also funded a number of planning grants, including some with regional or statewide value. Within the eight-county study area, CFCP has awarded grants for planning and policy projects within the counties of Kern and Ventura:

## **Local Agencies and Regulations**

### **Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)**

As related to land use, SCAG is authorized to undertake the intergovernmental review for federal assistance and direct federal development pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12,372. Pursuant to CEQA (PRC Sections 21083 and 21087 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15206 and 15125(b)), SCAG reviews projects of regional significance for consistency with regional plans. SCAG is also responsible for preparation of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), pursuant to California Government Code Section 65584(a). SCAG's RHNA provides a tool for coordinating local housing development strategies.

SCAG's *Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG)*<sup>4</sup> is intended to provide a framework for decision making by local governments regarding growth and development. The RCPG includes strategies for local governments to use on a voluntary basis to reconcile local needs with state and federal planning requirements.

### **Land Conservation Trust**

Land conservation trust is another type of organization devoted to protecting open space, agricultural lands, wildlife habitats, and natural resource lands. A land trust is a nonprofit

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<sup>4</sup> Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). March 1999. *Regional Comprehensive Plan and Development Guide*. Los Angeles, CA: SCAG. This document is in the process of being substantially updated.

organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting in land or conservation easement acquisition, or by its stewardship of such land or easements. There are approximately 80 established trusts in California. Local and regional land trusts, organized as charitable organizations under federal tax laws, are directly involved in conserving land for its natural, recreational, scenic, historical and productive values.

### ***Coastal Conservancy***

Since its establishment in 1976, the Coastal Conservancy has completed over 600 projects, with over 300 projects currently active. These projects include construction of trails and other public access facilities, restoration and enhancement of wetlands and other wildlife habitat, restoration of public piers and urban waterfronts, preservation of farmland, and other projects in line with the goals of California's Coastal Act, the San Francisco Bay Plan, and the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy.

### ***Local Agency Formation Commissions***

The local agency formation commission (LAFCO) is the agency in each county that has the responsibility to create orderly local government boundaries, with the goal of encouraging "planned, well-ordered, efficient urban development patterns," the preservation of open-space lands, and the discouragement of urban sprawl.<sup>5</sup> While LAFCOs have no direct land use authority, their actions determine which local government will be responsible for planning new areas. LAFCOs address a wide range of boundary actions, including creation of spheres of influence for cities, adjustments to boundaries of special districts, annexations, incorporations, detachments of areas from cities, and dissolution of cities.

### ***General Plans***

The most comprehensive land use planning for the SCAG region is provided by city and county general plans, which local governments are required by state law to prepare as a guide for future development. General plans contain goals and policies concerning topics that are mandated by state law or which the jurisdiction has chosen to include. Required topics are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Other topics that local governments frequently choose to address are public facilities, parks and recreation, community design, and growth management, among others. City and county general plans must be consistent with each other. County general plans must cover areas not included by city general plans (i.e., unincorporated areas).

### ***Specific and Master Plans***

A city or county may also provide land use planning by developing community or specific plans for smaller, more specific areas within their jurisdiction. These more localized plans provide for focused guidance for developing a specific area, with development standards tailored to the area, as well as systematic implementation of the general plan.

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<sup>5</sup> Governor's Office of Planning and Research. 1997. *LAFCOs, general plans, and city annexations*. Sacramento, CA: Author.

## **Zoning**

City and county zoning codes provide the set of detailed requirements that implement general plan policies at the level of the individual parcel. Zoning codes present standards for different uses and identifies which uses are allowed in the various zoning districts of the jurisdiction. Since 1971, state law has required the city or county zoning code to be consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan.

## **Growth Control**

Local growth control endeavors to manage community growth by various methods, including tying development to infrastructure capacity, limiting the number of new housing units, setting limits on the increase of commercial square footage, and the adoption of urban growth boundaries, among others.

## **Methodology**

This section summarizes the methodology used to evaluate the expected impacts of implementation of the proposed 2008 RTP on existing open space and existing plans and policies.

## **Comparison with the No Project**

The analysis of land use includes a comparison of the expected future conditions with the 2008 RTP to the expected future conditions if no Plan were adopted. This evaluation is not included in the determination of the significance of impacts (which is based on a comparison to existing conditions); however, it provides a meaningful perspective on the effects of the 2008 RTP.

## **Determination of Significance**

This analysis evaluates land uses most likely to be affected by the construction and operation of the highway, freight rail, and transit projects in the proposed Plan and implementation of transportation and urban form policies and programs included in the Plan. GIS was used to overlay proposed Plan highway, freight rail, and transit alignments and the associated growth projection onto 2005 aerial photography of the existing land uses for the SCAG region. In addition to this GIS analysis, land use effects of arterial investments and undefined alignments were also considered. The significance criteria below were applied to determine if resulting changes in land use would be significant. The methodology for determining the significance of these impacts compares the future Plan conditions to the existing setting, as required in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a). In addition, general plan maps submitted by SCAG member cities and counties were analyzed to evaluate potential conflicts with General Plan land uses.

### **Significance Criteria**

A significant impact is defined as “a substantial or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment” (Public Resource Code § 21068). The proposed 2008 RTP would have a significant impact if implementation would:

- Result in a substantial loss or disturbance of existing prime farmland, grazing land, open space, or recreation land;
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan;
- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial deterioration of the facilities would occur; or
- Result in a cumulatively considerable impact on open space and/or agricultural lands.

### **Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Implementation of the 2008 RTP would affect open space and agricultural lands in the region by the addition of new facilities in areas that currently undisturbed/vacant or through the expansion of existing facilities such that habitat would be fragmented or could no longer sustain itself as open space. Expected significant impacts include a loss of prime farmlands, grazing lands, open space and recreation lands, and cumulatively considerable changes to land use and the intensity of land use.

Short-term construction related impacts and long-term or offsite impacts from new facilities would potentially occur as a result of implementation of the 2008 RTP. Below are descriptions of the types of direct impacts foreseeable from new transportation projects proposed in the 2008 RTP. Indirect impacts from the changes in population distribution expected to occur due to the 2008 RTP's transportation investments and transportation and land use policies also are discussed under cumulative impacts. SCAG used GIS analysis to analyze where major freeway, rail, and transit projects identified in the 2008 RTP intersect areas used for agriculture. A 300-foot buffer (150 feet on either side) was drawn around the freeway, rail, and transit projects in the 2008 RTP to compute the number of agricultural acres potentially affected by the projects in the 2008 RTP. The results of the analysis are discussed below. The 2008 RTP includes arterial investments and goods movement capacity enhancements that were not included in the GIS analysis. The alignments of these improvements have not been developed to the point that they can be reliably overlaid onto agricultural lands using GIS. These projects would potentially cause additional adverse effects on open space and agricultural lands.

All mitigation measures should be included in project-level analysis as appropriate. The project proponent or local jurisdiction shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures prior to construction. For regionally significant projects SCAG shall be provided with documentation of compliance with mitigation measures through its Intergovernmental Review Process in which all regionally significant projects, plans, and programs must be consistent with regional plans and policies.

On-going and subsequent planning work being pursued by SCAG will comprehensively address open space conservation. This work will go beyond the necessary mitigation for the Regional Transportation Plan to design approaches to achieve defined sustainability targets.

**Impact 3.10-1: Implementation of the proposed 2008 RTP could result in substantial disturbance and/or loss of prime farmlands and/or grazing lands, throughout the six-county SCAG region.**

Implementation of the 2008 RTP could result in long term impacts to agricultural lands in the region, by adding transportation infrastructure to parts of the region that currently serve as agricultural lands.

**Figure 3.10-1: General Land Use Patterns and Figure 3.10-6 Prime Agricultural Farm Land** show the general distribution of agricultural lands in the six-county SCAG region. These areas are interspersed throughout urban areas and are also located in less developed portions of the counties. Where there would be new facilities constructed outside of the urbanized areas, undisturbed/vacant land could be utilized for transportation purposes. Those lands may have historically been farmed or may currently be used for agriculture. Some lands may be planned for Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plans (MSHCP) or Natural Community Conservation Program (NCCP) open space preserves. Depending upon the characteristics of the surrounding preserves, the underlying soils and the particular roadway improvements, there may be impacts to agricultural and/or open space resources. The GIS analysis prepared for the PEIR indicated that construction and operation of freeway, rail, and transit projects in the 2008 RTP could affect up to 850 acres of prime farmland and up to 7,000 acres of grazing lands.

Transit improvements included in the 2008 RTP are generally located in urbanized areas and therefore are not likely to result in significant impacts to agricultural lands. Several other types of projects identified in the 2008 RTP would have the potential to create a significant impact on agricultural lands. Proposed projects that could result in a significant impact include construction of roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for busways, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV connectors in areas that currently serve as agricultural.

The initial operating segment (IOS) of the HSRT system, as currently planned, would run from West Los Angeles/LAX to Ontario International Airport, with stations at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles and West Covina. Further extensions to be completed by 2035 include an extension to San Bernardino, a potential Anaheim to Ontario line, and a freight spur connecting the San Pedro ports to the IOS. Neither the exact alignment of the HSRT routes nor the location of the stations has been finalized. In total, the proposed HSRT route in 2035 would be approximately 276 miles, some of which could traverse through prime agricultural lands and grazing lands. However, the final alignment is expected to follow existing transportation right-of-way, thus minimizing adverse effects on agricultural lands. The HSRT system would have approximately fourteen stations and would also require land for maintenance and power generation of its approximately fourteen stations. The location of the stations and other facilities associated with operating the HSRT system potentially would consume or disturb agricultural land.

Additional agricultural lands would be affected by the growth associated with the 2008 RTP. The effect of growth and urban development on agricultural lands is addressed in the Cumulative Impacts section of this chapter.

The loss and disturbance of agricultural lands would be **significant**.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

- MM-OS.1:** Individual projects must be consistent with federal, state, and local policies that preserve agricultural lands and support the economic viability of agricultural activities, as well as policies that provide compensation for property owners if preservation is not feasible.
- MM-OS.2:** For projects in agricultural areas, project implementation agencies shall contact the California Department of Conservation and each county's Agricultural Commissioner's office to identify the location of prime farmlands and lands that support crops considered valuable to the local or regional economy. Impacts to such lands shall be evaluated in project-specific environmental documents. The analysis shall use the land evaluation and site assessment (LESA) analysis method (CEQA Guidelines §21095), as appropriate. The project implementation agencies or local jurisdictions shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures prior to construction. Mitigation measures may include conservation easements or the payment of in-lieu fees.
- MM-OS.3** For those projects that require federal funding, the federal agency evaluates the effects of the action to agricultural resources using the criteria set forth in the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The FPPA is administered by the NRCS, which determines impacts to farmland that could occur due to the proposed project. The determination is made through coordination between the federal agency proposing or supporting the project and NRCS. The assessment of potential impacts to farmland from corridor type projects, which is typical of transportation projects analyzed in this PEIR, will require completion of Form NRCS-CPA-106, Farmland Conservation Impact Rating for Corridor Type Projects. NRCS will make a determination, using set thresholds, as to whether additional project specific mitigation would be required.
- MM-OS.4:** Project implementation agencies shall consider corridor realignment, buffer zones and setbacks, and berms and fencing where feasible, to avoid agricultural lands and to reduce conflicts between transportation uses and agricultural lands.
- MM-OS.5:** Prior to final approval of each project and when feasible and prudent, the implementing agency shall establish conservation easement programs to mitigate impacts to prime farmland.

- MM-OS.6:** Prior to final approval of each project, the implementing agency shall to the extent practical and feasible, avoid impacts to prime farmlands or farmlands that support crops considered valuable to the local or regional economy.
- MM-OS.7:** Prior to final approval of each project, the implementing agency shall encourage enrollments of agricultural lands for counties that have Williamson Act programs, where applicable.
- MM.OS-8** SCAG shall support policies that preserve and promote the productivity and viability of agricultural lands, including promoting the availability of locally grown and organic food in the region.
- MM-OS.9:** SCAG shall use its IGR process to review projects with potentially significant impacts to important farmlands and recommend impact avoidance and mitigation measures.
- MM-OS.10:** SCAG shall work with member agencies and the region's farmland interests to develop regional guidelines for buffering farmland from urban encroachment, resolving conflicts that prevent farming on hillsides and other designated areas, and closing loopholes that allow conversion of non-farm uses without a grading permit.
- MM-OS.11:** Development and local governments should submit for IGR review projects with potentially significant impacts to important farmlands. Project should include mitigation measures to reduce impacts and demonstrate project alternatives that avoid or lessen impact to agricultural lands. Mitigation should occur at a 1:1 ratio.

#### **Significance after Mitigation**

It is anticipated that impacts to agricultural land would not be able to be mitigated in every instance. Therefore, this impact would remain **significant**.

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#### **Impact 3.10-2: Implementation of the projects included in the 2008 RTP would result in a substantial loss or disturbance of existing open space and recreation lands.**

The 2008 RTP includes projects that would require the acquisition or development of previously undisturbed/vacant or designated open space potentially resulting in a significant impact.

**Map 3.10-1** Existing Open Space, Recreation and Agricultural Land Uses and **Map 3.10-4** Open Space Resources show the location of open space throughout the region. Open spaces vary in size and location as described in the Environmental Setting and generally include public parks, recreational facilities, and areas planned for such uses. Some open spaces also provide critical habitat, as discussed in Chapter 3.3 Biological Resources. Where new transportation facilities would be constructed it is possible that impacts could occur to open spaces, either through the

acquisition of land or through development of previously undisturbed/vacant land that is currently considered open space.

Transit improvements included in the 2008 RTP are generally located in urbanized areas and therefore are not likely to result in significant impacts to vacant/undisturbed lands or large tracts of land designated as open space. However, several other types of projects identified in the 2008 RTP would have the potential to create a significant impact open space. Proposed projects that could result in a significant impact include construction of roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for busways, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV connectors in areas that currently serve as open space or agricultural lands. Corridor projects in particular would be expected to result in impacts to open spaces due to large acquisition of large amounts of land for roadway widening and construction and also due to degrading existing habitat by adding transportation infrastructure to areas that previously had habitat value. These include projects that would be expected to include substantial widening to accommodate large increases in traffic, such as the High Desert Corridor and projects such as SR-241 that are located in areas designated as open space would be expected to result in significant impacts.

In addition, the 2008 RTP includes arterial investments, goods movement capacity enhancements, and the HSRT system, which were not included in the GIS analysis summarized above. The alignments of these improvements have not been developed to the point that they can be reliably overlaid onto open space and recreation lands using GIS. However, these projects would potentially cause additional adverse effects on open space and recreation lands.

As with agricultural lands, SCAG used GIS to analyze where major freeway, rail, and transit projects in the 2008 RTP intersect areas designated for open space and recreation lands. A 300-foot buffer (150 feet on either side) was drawn around the freeway, rail, and transit projects in the 2008 RTP to compute the number of open space and recreation lands potentially affected by the projects in the 2008 RTP. The results of this analysis (Maps 3.10-1 and 3.10-5) show that the 2008 RTP would directly affect approximately 800 acres of open space and recreation lands. Additional open space lands would be affected by the growth associated with the 2008 RTP. The effect of growth and urban development on agricultural lands is addressed in the Cumulative Impacts section of this chapter.

The loss and disturbance of open space and recreation lands would be **significant**.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

**MM-OS.12:** Project implementation agencies shall ensure that projects are consistent with federal, state, and local plans that preserve open space.

**MM-OS.13:** Project implementation agencies shall consider corridor realignment, buffer zones and setbacks, and berms and fencing where feasible, to avoid open space and recreation land and to reduce conflicts between transportation uses and open space and recreation lands.

- MM-OS.14:** Project implementation agencies shall identify open space areas that could be preserved and shall include mitigation measures (such as dedication or payment of in-lieu fees) for the loss of open space.
- MM-OS.15:** Prior to final approval of each project, the implementing agency shall conduct the appropriate project-specific environmental review, including consideration of loss of open space. Potential significant impacts to open space shall be mitigated, as feasible. The project implementation agencies or local jurisdiction shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures prior to construction.
- MM-OS.16:** For projects that require approval or funding by the USDOT, project implementation agencies shall comply with Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act.
- MM-OS.17:** Future impacts to open space and recreation lands shall be avoided through cooperation, information sharing, and program development as part of SCAG's ongoing regional planning efforts.
- MM-OS.18:** SCAG shall establish criteria for evaluating impacts to regionally significant open space resources, and will recommend mitigation measures for significant impacts to regional resources. These recommendations will be included in SCAG's Regional Open Space Guidance.
- MM-OS.19:** SCAG shall develop and implement coordinated mitigation programs for regional projects, with an emphasis on regional transportation projects.
- MM-OS.20:** SCAG shall produce and maintain a list/map of potential conservation opportunity areas. These conservation opportunity areas may be used by local governments and project sponsors as priority areas for mitigating impacts to open space resources. SCAG's forthcoming regional open space guidance document will include additional information on conservation opportunity areas.
- MM-OS.21:** SCAG shall use its IGR process to review projects with potentially significant impacts to open space and recommend impact avoidance and mitigation measures.
- MM-OS.22:** Project sponsors should ensure that transportation systems proposed in the RTP avoid or mitigate significant impacts to natural lands, community open space and important farmland, including cumulative impacts and open space impacts from the growth associated with transportation projects and improvements.
- MM-OS.23:** Project sponsors should ensure that at least one acre of unprotected open space is permanently conserved for each acre of open space developed as a result of growth that accompanies transportation projects/improvements.

**MM-OS.24:** Individual projects submitted for IGR review should either avoid significant impacts to regionally significant open space resources or mitigate the significant impacts through measures consistent with regional open space policies for conserving natural lands, community open space and farmlands. All projects submitted for IGR review shall demonstrate consideration of alternatives that would avoid or reduce impacts to open space.

**MM-OS.25:** Individual projects should include into project design, to the maximum extent practicable, mitigation measures and recommended best practices aimed at minimizing or avoiding impacts to natural lands, including, but not limited to FHWA's Critter Crossings, and Ventura County Mitigation Guidelines.

### **Significance after Mitigation**

It is anticipated that impacts to open space and recreational lands would not be able to be mitigated in every instance. Therefore, this impact would remain **significant**.

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**Impact 3.10-3 Implementation of the 2008 RTP could increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial deterioration of the facilities would occur; or could result in a decrease in performance objectives for existing parks.**

Implementation of the 2008 RTP would affect population and households in the region. Chapter 3.11 Population, Housing and Employment includes a discussion of the growth inducing impacts associated with the 2008 RTP. The total population is expected to increase by approximately 5.14 million for the Plan (and each alternative). Although the overall regional estimates of population would not change, the RTP includes projects, programs and strategies that would induce growth in certain areas of the region. As a result of increased population growth certain areas could experience increased use and deterioration of existing neighborhood and regional parks. As discussed under impact 3.10-2 above, the 2008 RTP also includes projects that could result in the acquisition of public lands currently used for open space purposes, resulting increased use at remaining facilities. Figure 3.10-9 indicates that many parts of the region currently have parks-to-people ratios below the NRPAA standards. Further reductions in the ratio of parks-to-people, through the loss of existing parkland or through an increase in population that outpaces open space availability would be a significant impact.

### **Mitigation Measures**

**MM-OS.26:** SCAG, in collaboration with its member agencies, shall work to enhance community open space and its accessibility.

**MM-OS.27:** SCAG shall continue to work with the state to develop approaches for evaluating environmental impacts within the Compass Blueprint program, particularly energy, air quality, water, and open space and habitat.

- MM-OS.28:** SCAG shall support local jurisdictions and other service providers in their efforts to develop sustainable communities and provide, equally to all members of society, accessible and effective services such as: public education, housing, health care, social services, recreational facilities, law enforcement, and fire protection.
- MM-OS.29:** SCAG shall encourage member jurisdictions to work as partners to address regional outdoor recreation needs and to acquire the necessary funding for the implementation of their plans and programs.
- MM-OS.30:** SCAG shall encourage member jurisdictions that have trails and trail segments determined to be regionally significant to work together to support regional trail networks. SCAG shall encourage joint use of utility, transportation and other rights-of-way, greenbelts, and biodiversity areas
- MM-OS.31:** Local governments should prepare a Needs Assessment to determine the level of adequate community open space level for their areas.
- MM-OS.32:** Local governments should encourage patterns of urban development and land use, which reduce costs on infrastructure and make better use of existing facilities.

#### **Significance after Mitigation**

Even with mitigation, implementation of the 2008 RTP would induce population in areas that are currently underserved by recreational facilities. This impact would remain **significant**.

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**Cumulative Impact 3.10-4: Urbanization in the SCAG region will increase substantially by 2035. The 2008 RTP, by increasing mobility and including land-use-transportation measures, influences the pattern of this urbanization. The 2008 RTP's influence on growth patterns contributes to regional cumulatively considerable impacts to open space and result in a loss of open space and agricultural lands in the region.**

The construction and operation of the transportation projects in the 2008 RTP would affect a number of land uses, including open space and agricultural lands. **Table 3.10-5** shows the estimated acreage of different land use categories that occur within 150 feet of either side of the reasonably foreseeable transportation alignments included in the Plan and the No Project Alternative. The land uses affected by the No Project Alternative are discussed in the Comparison with the No Project section of this chapter.

**TABLE 3.10-5  
 LAND USES WITHIN 150 FEET OF MAJOR HIGHWAY, TRANSIT,  
 AND FREIGHT RAIL PROJECTS IN THE 2008 RTP**

Land Use	Plan Approximate Acres Affected	No Project Alternative Approximate Acres Affected
Commercial	4,600	4,700
Extraction	200	40
Grazing Land	7,000	2,000
Industrial	3,000	1,000
Low Density Residential	500	100
Medium to High Residential	5,700	2,400
Open Space and Recreation	800	300
Prime Farmland	850	400
Public Facilities and Institutions	1100	1,000
Rural Density Residential	267	40
Transportation and Utilities	10,800	6,700
Vacant	11,700	3,200
Water and Floodways	60	10

SOURCE: SCAG GIS Analysis, 2007, SCAG Land Use, 2005.

In addition to these direct impacts on land use, **Table 3.10-6** indicates the total acreage of open space and vacant land that would be expected to be consumed due to urbanization of the region with the 2008 RTP. As indicated in **Table 3.10-5** the 2008 RTP could directly impact up to 7,000 acres of grazing land, up to 850 acres of prime farmland, up to 800 acres of open space and up to 11,700 acres of vacant land. The total amount of urbanized acres (either vacant, open space or agricultural) that is anticipated to be affected by growth between now and 2035 would be approximately 200,000 acres under the Plan (see **Table 3.10-6**).

**TABLE 3.10-6  
 LAND USE CONSUMPTION (AREA IN ACRES)**

County	Lu2005 (Revised)	2008 RTP			
		Sum Of Area (Acres)	Impacted	Urban	Grand Total
Imperial	Agriculture		2,440	3,863	6,304
	Open Space and Recreation		0	200	200
	Vacant		947	3,149	4,095
<b>Imperial Total</b>		<b>3,387</b>	<b>7,212</b>	<b>10,599</b>	
Los Angeles	Agriculture		56	939	995
	Open Space and Recreation		246	2,518	2,764
	Vacant		7,779	20,702	28,481
<b>Los Angeles Total</b>		<b>8,081</b>	<b>24,159</b>	<b>32,240</b>	
Orange	Agriculture		0	1,331	1,331
	Open Space and Recreation		0	496	496
	Vacant		0	2,850	2,850
<b>Orange Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>4,677</b>	<b>4,677</b>	

**TABLE 3.10-6 (Continued)  
 LAND USE CONSUMPTION (AREA IN ACRES)**

Sum Of Area (Acres)		2008 RTP		
County	Lu2005 (Revised)	Impacted	Urban	Grand Total
Riverside	Agriculture	22,722	6,589	29,311
	Open Space and Recreation	2,651	2,446	5,097
	Vacant	43,830	25,720	69,550
<b>Riverside Total</b>		<b>69,202</b>	<b>34,755</b>	<b>103,958</b>
San Bernardino	Agriculture	34	6,929	6,963
	Open Space and Recreation	40	1,748	1,788
	Vacant	2,074	35,319	37,393
<b>San Bernardino Total</b>		<b>2,147</b>	<b>43,996</b>	<b>46,143</b>
Ventura	Agriculture	36	2,060	2,096
	Open Space and Recreation	62	697	759
	Vacant	184	3,762	3,946
<b>Ventura Total</b>		<b>282</b>	<b>6,519</b>	<b>6,801</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>83,099</b>	<b>121,319</b>	<b>204,419</b>

SOURCE: SCAG GIS Analysis, 2007, SCAG Land Use, 2005.

The 2008 RTP includes policies that would influence the distribution of the growing population. The land use measures included in the 2008 RTP would encourage use of underutilized land (land built at a density less than permitted by general plans), and in some cases would help increase the intensity of the use to achieve mobility and other benefits. However, stable single family neighborhoods would be protected, regardless of whether or not they were built at the maximum allowable density, as indicated by general plans. Implementation of the strategies and policies included in the 2008 RTP could result in changes in land uses by changing concentrations of development throughout the six-county region.

The contribution of the 2008 RTP to impacts on existing land use would be cumulatively significant, as it would result in changes to existing land use, including prime farmlands, grazing lands, and open space and recreational lands.

**Mitigation Measures**

The Mitigation measures listed above for impacts 3.10-1 through 3.10-3 shall be applied to Tier 2 projects (General and Specific plans and individual development projects) in the region. In addition to these measures, the following mitigation measures would be applied to Tier 2 and 3 projects (General and Specific plans and individual development projects) in the SCAG Region.

**MM.OS-33:** SCAG’s Compass Blueprint program and other ongoing regional planning efforts will be used to build a consensus in the region to support changes in land use to accommodate future population growth while maintaining the quality of life in the region.

**MM-OS.34:** Project level mitigation for significant cumulative and growth-inducing impacts on open space resources will include but not be limited to the conservation of natural lands, community open space and important farmland through existing programs in the region or through multi-party conservation compacts facilitated by SCAG.

**MM-OS.35:** Local governments should establish transfer of development rights (TDR) programs to direct growth to less agriculturally valuable lands (while considering the potential effects at the sites receiving the transfer) and ensure the continued protection of the most agriculturally valuable land within each county through the purchase of the development rights for these lands. Local governments should also consider the following:

- Tools for the preservation of agricultural lands such as eliminating estates and ranchettes and clustering to retain productive agricultural land.
- Easing restrictions on farmer's markets and encourage cooperative farming initiatives to increase the availability of locally grown food.
- Considering partnering with school districts to develop farm-to-school programs

**MM-OS.36:** Local governments should avoid the premature conversion of farmlands by promoting infill development and the continuation of agricultural uses until urban development is imminent; if development of agricultural lands is necessary, growth should be directed to those lands on which the continued viability of agricultural production has been compromised by surrounding urban development on the loss of local markets.

**MM-OS.37:** SCAG shall support local jurisdictions and other service providers in their efforts to develop sustainable communities and provide, equally to all members of society, accessible and effective services such as: public education, housing, health care, social services, recreational facilities, law enforcement, and fire protection.

**MM-OS.38:** SCAG shall consider consistency with ongoing regional open space planning in funding opportunities and programs administered by SCAG.

**MM-OS.39:** Local governments should consider the most recent annual report on open space conservation in planning and evaluating projects and programs in areas with regionally significant open space resources.

**MM-OS.40:** Local governments should encourage patterns of urban development and land use, which reduce costs on infrastructure and make better use of existing facilities. Strategies local governments should pursue include:

- Increase the accessibility to natural areas lands for outdoor recreation.

- Promote infill development and redevelopment to revitalize existing communities
- Utilize "green" development techniques
- Promote water-efficient land use and development.

**MM-OS.41:** Project sponsors and local governments should increase the accessibility to natural areas lands for outdoor recreation.

**MM-OS.42:** Project sponsors and local governments should promote infill development and redevelopment to revitalize existing communities.

**MM-OS.43:** Project sponsors should incorporate and local governments should include land use principles, such as green building, that use resources efficiently, eliminate pollution and significantly reduce waste into their projects, zoning codes and other implementation mechanisms

**MM-OS.44:** Project sponsors and local governments should promote water-efficient land use and development.

**MM-OS.45:** Project sponsors and local governments should encourage multiple use spaces and encourage redevelopment in areas where it will provide more opportunities for recreational uses and access to natural areas close to the urban core.

#### **Significance after Mitigation**

In order to accommodate the anticipated growth in the region by 2035, substantial changes in vacant, agricultural and open space lands will occur. The cumulative impact would remain **significant**.

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### **Comparison with the No Project Alternative**

Under the No Project alternative the population of the SCAG region would grow by 5.14 million people, however no regional transportation investments would be made above the existing programmed projects.

#### **Direct Impacts**

The No Project Alternative includes fewer transportation projects than the 2008 RTP. Thus, the No Project Alternative would be expected to directly consume or disturb fewer acres of agricultural lands and open space than the Plan Alternative. The No Project Alternative potentially would affect 400 acres of prime agricultural land and 2,000 acres of grazing land, compared with 850 acres of prime agricultural land and 7,000 acres of grazing land under the Plan Alternative. The open space that would be affected under the No Project Alternative would 300 acres, compared with 800 acres of open space in the Plan Alternative.

*The Plan would have a greater impact than the No Project Alternative for Impacts 3.10-1 through 3.10-3.*

**Indirect Impacts**

The No Project Alternative is expected to accommodate the same increase in total population as the proposed Plan Alternative. However, the Plan Alternative includes land use measures that would help reduce the consumption and disturbance of agricultural lands, vacant lands, open space, and recreation lands. These mitigation measures are potentially absent in the No Project Alternative (although individual jurisdictions are likely to adopt some of the Compass growth strategies independently of the RTP). **Table 3.10-7** indicates that under the No Project Alternative, up to approximately 655,000 acres of vacant, open space and agricultural lands would be consumed, compared to 200,000 under the Plan.

**TABLE 3.10-7  
 NO PROJECT LAND USE (AREA IN ACRES)**

County	(Acres)		2008 RTP	
	Land Use 2005 (Revised)	Impacted	Urban	Grand Total
Imperial	Agriculture	5,617	5,413	11,030
	Open Space and Recreation	71	190	261
	Vacant	2,369	3,526	5,895
<b>Imperial Total</b>		<b>8,057</b>	<b>9,129</b>	<b>17,186</b>
Los Angeles	Agriculture	1,551	2,277	3,828
	Open Space and Recreation	946	2,896	3,842
	Vacant	50,389	44,927	95,316
<b>Los Angeles Total</b>		<b>52,886</b>	<b>50,100</b>	<b>102,986</b>
Orange	Agriculture	280	2,023	2,303
	Open Space and Recreation	562	1,121	1,683
	Vacant	3,282	7,147	10,429
<b>Orange Total</b>		<b>4,124</b>	<b>10,291</b>	<b>14,414</b>
Riverside	Agriculture	15,770	23,112	38,882
	Open Space and Recreation	2,881	6,086	8,967
	Vacant	87,593	145,835	233,428
<b>Riverside Total</b>		<b>106,244</b>	<b>175,033</b>	<b>281,277</b>
San Bernardino	Agriculture	2,841	4,891	7,733
	Open Space and Recreation	920	1,385	2,306
	Vacant	134,820	85,097	219,917
<b>San Bernardino Total</b>		<b>138,581</b>	<b>91,374</b>	<b>229,955</b>
Ventura	Agriculture	245	1,130	1,375
	Open Space and Recreation	398	387	785
	Vacant	4,150	3,023	7,173
<b>Ventura Total</b>		<b>4,793</b>	<b>4,540</b>	<b>9,332</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>314,684</b>	<b>340,467</b>	<b>655,152</b>

SOURCE: SCAG 2007

The proposed Plan includes additional transportation improvements that facilitate access to agricultural lands, vacant lands, open space, and recreation lands that would be less accessible

with the No Project Alternative. This improved accessibility under the Plan Alternative would help facilitate population and economic growth in areas of the region that are currently not developed. However, land use policies would seek to strictly limit development outside targeted areas.

The No Project Alternative is expected to accommodate the same increase in total population as the proposed Plan Alternative. However, the Plan Alternative includes land use measures that would help reduce the consumption and disturbance of agricultural lands, vacant lands, open space, and recreation lands. These mitigation measures are potentially absent in the No Project Alternative. Without coordinated regional growth strategies, outlying areas could continue to be developed due to inexpensive land prices. These areas would likely include agricultural lands and open spaces or lands adjacent to agricultural lands and open spaces. The total vacant land consumed under the Plan would be less than under the No Project.

*The Plan Alternative's cumulative impacts to land use would be less than those of the No Project Alternative.*

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