

**California Department of Conservation  
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program**

**2000 FIELD REPORT**

**COUNTY:** Merced

**FIELD MAPPER(S):** Michael Kisko

**PHOTOGRAPHY:**

*source:* NASA-Ames  
*date:* 9/8/99  
*scale:* 1:130,000  
*film type:* CIR Transparency  
*coverage gaps:* filled by use of 2000 SPOT data

**WRITTEN, DIGITAL & ORAL INFORMATION SOURCES:** *Please list which local governments, interest groups, or individuals submitted comments on the 1998 maps. Also list all phone and in-person contacts made or related GIS data referenced while conducting the 2000 update.*

➤ *local review comments*

*cities:* none  
*county:* none  
*others:* UC Cooperative Extension of Merced Co.

➤ *personal contacts:* Bill Cook at DFG, Los Banos Office (209) 826-0463 (wildlife areas)  
Mark Smith at Merced Co. Dept. of Ag. (209) 385-7431 (crop data)

➤ *websites:* Grassland Water Dist: <http://www.grasslandwetlands.com/onlinebro.html>  
San Luis NWR: <http://www.r1.fws.gov/sanluis/refuges.htm>  
U.C. Merced: <http://www.ucmerced.edu>  
Merced County: <http://www.co.merced.ca.us>

➤ GIS data referenced: **Satellite:** 2000 SPOT Hatch and Yosemite Lake tiles

**Scanned Soil Survey Sheets:** Base\_Data\Vector\digital\_soil\_surveys\scanned\Mer\_east

**Reference files:** GISTemp\Agency\_Data\merced\_dfg.dgn, GISTemp\Agency\_Data\merced\_feds.dgn (refuges) and GISTemp\merced\_west\_soil\mer\_west.dgn (soils)

**1998-2000 CHANGES\*:** *Please summarize the most common changes to the maps. List representative locations (quads) of each type of change encountered. Make sure to list and describe particularly large, unusual or notable changes and give estimates of the acreage involved.*

➤ P, S, U → D

There were 31 conversions of farmland to urban land this update, with a majority of the changes occurring on the Turlock (7), Los Banos (6), Atwater (5), and Merced (5)

quads in the communities of Delhi and Hilmar and in the Cities of Los Banos, Atwater, and Merced.

New development was very evident in the community of Delhi along Highway 99 where a new freeway interchange was added along with a new waste treatment facility, 25 acres of new homes, and the new 70-acre Delhi Educational Park with a middle school and adjacent shopping center.

Meanwhile, a large number of new homes were noted in and around the City of Atwater. A 100-acre development of new homes was found just south of the City of Atwater along Highway 140, with two other plots of new homes nearby totaling 25 acres. A further 25 acres of new homes was added adjacent to the Rancho Del Rey Golf Club in the City of Atwater.

Meanwhile, on the Merced quad, 30 acres of homes were added just west of Yosemite Lake and 40 acres of new homes were added in the Merced area, 20 acres in northern Merced and 20 acres just south of the City of Merced.

In the Los Banos area, 80 acres of new homes were found on the northern urban fringe of the City of Los Banos and another 25 acres of new homes were added in and around the City of Los Banos. Also, northeast of the City of Los Banos along the Old Santa Fe Grade, a 175-acre manmade water control structure was noted directly adjacent to an existing 350-acre water control structure.

Finally, 25 acres of new homes were added along the northwestern urban fringe of the City of Gustine on the Newman quad.

➤ L, G, X → D

There were 17 instances of the urbanization of local, grazing, or other land this update, countywide. Most of these conversions were simple boundary adjustments to the urban boundary of cities or small expansions of existing facilities such as golf courses, sewage treatment plants, or landfills.

A notable exception is the addition of 60 acres of new prison facilities inside the former Castle Air Force Base (now closed and being redeveloped) near Atwater in the form of the new Federal Penitentiary at Atwater. Also, 10 acres of new homes were added on the northern urban fringe of the community of Winton nearby the former air base.

In contrast, the City of Merced saw the urbanization of local, grazing, or other lands wholly in the form of new homes. Three 10-acre (30 acres total) additions of new homes occurred in the northern portion of the City of Merced with small areas adjacent to these additions being graded for future development.

A notable conversion for cheese aficionados was the approximately 40-acre Hilmar Cheese Company visitor center and cheese factory just north of the community of Hilmar. This area had been classified as low-density development ("other land") but the operation seems to have been expanded over time and the large visitor center with its manicured grounds, including waterfall, seem to be a fairly new development.

Lastly, 17 acres of new homes were noted just south of Santa Nella Village, along Highway 207.

➤ P, S, U → L, G

There were a whopping 105 conversions of farmland to local or grazing land this

update with the vast majority of these due to farmland having been fallow for three or more updates. The overwhelming majority of these conversions were Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance that were not currently being cultivated or irrigated and, following the definition of Farmland of Local Importance for Merced County, were converted to Farmland of Local Importance. These conversions were spread out throughout the county with the highest concentration of change occurring on the Atwater (14), Cressey (14), Turlock (11), and Arena (9) quads.

One large conversion which was an exception to the above was an approximately 700-acre parcel of mainly Unique Farmland which was located in the West Bear Creek Unit of the San Luis NWR which had been fallow for three updates and was converted to Grazing Land in accordance with grazing practices in the refuge.

➤ P, S, U → X

The conversion of farmland to “other” land was a big category of conversion this update with 94 conversions taking place countywide. The biggest cause of these conversions was the expansion of existing dairy facilities or the addition of new dairies such as the Martins Bros. Dairy on the Hatch quad or the Foster Farms Milk Made Dairy on the Winton quad. The rest of the conversions between farmland and “other” land came either from Unique Farmland which had been fallow for three or more updates or was due to the addition of areas of ranchettes or farm buildings.

An exception to the above was a conversion of approximately 40 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance to “other” land due to the presence of a large gravel pit run by the Santa Fe Aggregate Winston gravel mining operation along the Merced River on the Winston quad.

➤ L, G, X → P, S, U

There were 81 conversions of local, grazing, or “other” land to farmland in Merced County this update. These conversions were the result of new irrigated pasture or farmland being brought into cultivation or expansions of existing fields. These newly cultivated fields consisted mainly of new orchards (almonds being prevalent), corn, and irrigated pasture.

The first notable addition this update consisted of three large additions to almond orchards south of Turlock Lake, near Keyes Road, totaling approximately 650 acres. Two further additions of almonds occurred on the Winton quad where a 100-acre field was noted north of the Merced River along Oakdale Road and another 200-acre field of almonds was added at the intersection of Oakdale Road and Highway 59.

One final addition of orchards was a large 870-acre field on the Le Grand quad along Baxter Road.

In contrast, one notable conversion not involving orchards was a 300-acre field on the Yosemite Lake quad near the Merced River which was center-pivot irrigated and seemed to be a field of alfalfa.

Other than the changes noted above, many new small fields of corn or irrigated pasture were seen throughout the county this update.

➤ **UNUSUAL:** *Category changes, complications with the Farmland of Local Importance definition, or any other special circumstances in 2000.*

D→X A small (<40 acres) waterski lake on the Planada quad was shifted from D to X for mapping consistency purposes.

G→X An area which seemed to be an aggregate mine on the Owens Res. Quad was shifted from G to X.

**Soil Line Corrections** A large U polygon which had been overlooked in the past (previously S) was added on the Volta quad. Also, two large, center-pivot irrigated fields on the Winton quad underwent pretty extensive soil line corrections. Numerous other minor soil boundary adjustments were made throughout the rest of the county.

**PROBLEM AREAS:** *What locations and map categories need careful checking in 2002? Why?*

There don't seem to be any specific problem areas in this county. The only problem seems to be getting to the majority of the fields you want to check in only a few days in this very dynamic, ever-changing county. Budget your field check time well!

**OUT OF DATE BASE MAPS:** *Please list any base maps used for update or publication of this county which are woefully out of date due to extensive new development, road construction, etc.*

**LABOR ESTIMATE:** *Please estimate the amount of time spent on the following tasks.*

<i>photo interpretation, start date:</i>	7/26/01
<i>photo interpretation, number of days:</i>	12
<i>ground truthing dates:</i>	8/21-8/24
<i># days for map compilation and clean up:</i>	10

\* **Note:** P = Prime Farmland; S = Farmland of Statewide Importance; U = Unique Farmland; L = Farmland of Local Importance; G = Grazing Land; D = Urban and Built-up Land; X = Other Land; W = Water Areas; I = Irrigated Farmland; N = Nonirrigated Farmland

*Further information on the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program can be found at:*

[www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp](http://www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp)