California Department of Conservation
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

2006 FIELD REPORT

COUNTY: Merced

FIELD MAPPER(S): Michael Kisko

IMAGERY:

source: National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP), USDA
date: summer 2006
scale: 2 meter resolution
film type: true color mosaic
coverage gaps: none
additional imagery: 2005 NAIP imagery (1 meter); Landsat 7 Infrared Imagery from summer 2005, 15-meter resolution

WRITTEN, DIGITAL & ORAL INFORMATION SOURCES: *Please list which local governments, interest groups, or individuals submitted comments on the 2004 maps. Also list all phone and in-person contacts made or related GIS data referenced while conducting the 2006 update.*

- *local review comments*: none
  cities:
  county:
  others:

2004-2006 CHANGES*: *Please summarize the most common changes to the maps. List representative locations (quad or city) 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.*

- **Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land: 42 changes**

Conversions of Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land were primarily due to the addition of new homes in cities and towns throughout the county. For example, approximately 250 acres of new homes were added in the City of Merced, including portions of the "Bellevue Ranch" (~50 acres), "Summer Creek" (~40 acres), and "Sandcastle" (~40 acres) developments. In Atwater, approximately 100 acres of new homes were added, including the "Las Casas" (~30 acres) development. Meanwhile, approximately 120 acres of new homes were in evidence in Livingston, including "Parkside" (~30 acres) and the "Mansionettes in Livingston" (~30 acres). Further, Los Banos saw the addition of approximately 220 acres of new homes such as the "Teal Landing" (~30 acres), "Meadown Glen" and "Meadow Vista" developments (~60 acres). A new satellite campus of the "Merced College" was an approximately 20-acre addition in Los Banos. Finally,

conversions of Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land due to new homes were also seen in smaller cities and towns throughout Merced County such as Hilmar (~10 acres), Delhi (~30 acres), Winton (~30 acres), Planada (~20 acres), and Dos Palos (~10 acres).

- **Local, Grazing or Other Land to Urban Land: 29 changes**

New homes and the addition of existing homes due to increased density or the use of higher-resolution imagery (1 meter) were the primary causes of the conversion of Local, Grazing or Other Land to Urban Land. The City of Merced led the way with approximately 250 acres of new homes. A large, approximately 200-acre addition was made in northwestern Merced that included the "Shadow Creek, Cottages at Compass Pointe, and University Park" home developments. The City of Atwater also saw the addition of approximately 110 acres of new homes. Lesser additions of new homes were made in Winton (~30 acres), Los Banos (~20 acres), and South Dos Palos (~10 acres). Lastly, areas of existing homes throughout the county (~190 acres) were converted from Local, Grazing or Other Land to Urban Land due either to increased density from infill construction or to the use of higher-resolution imagery.

- **Irrigated Farmland to Local or Grazing Land: 134 changes**

Conversion of Irrigated Farmland to Local or Grazing Land was primarily due to Irrigated Farmland having been fallow for three or more update cycles. These conversions occurred throughout the county with most being less than 30 acres in size. Large conversions of 100 acres or more occurred on the San Luis Dam (1), Ingomar (1-1,400 acre change), San Luis Ranch (1-1,000 acre change), Turner Ranch (1), El Nido (2), Plainsburg (1), Le Grand (1-900 acre change), Santa Rita Bridge (1), and Ortigalita Peak NW (1-600 acre change) quads.

A lesser cause for the conversion of Irrigated Farmland to Farmland of Local Importance was due to former areas of Irrigated Farmland that are no longer being irrigated and are now producing nonirrigated grain crops. This was the case in 16 of the 134 conversions made in this category of change. The largest of these types of conversion occurred on the Howard Ranch (~1,200 acres), San Luis Dam (~700 acres), and Volta (~600 acres) quads.

- **Irrigated Farmland to Other Land: 76 changes**

The identification of areas of low-density housing in the form of ranchettes and farmsteads accounted for the majority of Irrigated Farmland to Other Land conversions (45). Many of these areas of low-density housing were not new but were able to be identified due to the higher resolution imagery (1 meter) used this update. New dairies and poultry operations as well as the expansion of existing dairies accounted for 13 more conversions of Irrigated Farmland to Other Land. The remaining conversions were primarily due to the identification of small farm ponds, mining activity, and natural vegetation.

- **Local, Grazing or Other Land to Irrigated Farmland: 53 changes**

These additions of new Irrigated Farmland occurred throughout the county, primarily in the form of new orchards, many being almond orchards, with lesser additions of field and row crops. The largest addition of Irrigated Farmland was made on the Le Grand quad

where three additions of primarily orchards were made, totaling approximately 3,700 acres. Other notable additions of orchards occurred on the Turlock Lake (~350 acres), Winton (~125 acres), and Yosemite Lake (~500 acres) quads. On the other hand, field crops made a showing on the Volta quad where one large addition was made (~200 acres). Finally, two large additions of irrigated pasture were made on the Yosemite Lake (~200 acres) and Turner Ranch (~125 acres) quads.

➢ **UNUSUAL**: *Category changes, complications with the Farmland of Local Importance definition, or any other special circumstances in 2006.*

Water to Grazing Land: Two water bodies on the Delta Ranch and Los Banos quads that had been dry for multiple update cycles were shifted to Grazing Land.

PROBLEM AREAS: *What locations and map categories need careful checking in 2008? Why?*

Areas of nonirrigated grain on the Volta quad, west of Interstate 5, should be field checked if fields are accessible.

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

photo interpretation, start date: August 9, 2007
photo interpretation, number of days: 15
ground truthing dates: September 11-14, 2007
 # days for map compilation and clean up: 10

*** *Note*: Irrigated Farmland** = Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland; **Local** = Farmland of Local Importance

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

www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp