California Department of Conservation

FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

2014 FIELD REPORT

COUNTY: Merced

FIELD MAPPER(S): Troy Dick

IMAGE DATA USED:

Source: National Agricultural Imagery Program, USDA
Acquisition date: Summer 2014
Data description: True color mosaic, 1 meter resolution
Coverage gaps: None
Additional imagery used: None

WRITTEN, DIGITAL & ORAL INFORMATION SOURCES:

The following entities and individuals provided information used to conduct 2014 mapping.

Local Review Comments (submitted by cities, counties, & others on 2012 maps)
None
Personal Contacts
None
Websites Used for Reference
Google Earth, Street View: http://maps.google.com
GIS Data Used for Reference
California City Boundary Layer Merced County Base Map

2012-2014 CHANGE SUMMARY:

Changes made during the map update are summarized by type and location. Particular attention is paid to large or unusual changes and their estimated acreages. Please note that land use type, size of land use unit, soil quality, and Farmland of Local Importance definition (if any) determines the final Important Farmland (IFL) category. See definitions at bottom of table.

Conversions to Urban Land	
Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land	9 changes

The majority of these changes occurred in the Los Banos, Volta and Le Grand areas. The largest conversions occurred adjacent to the City of Los Banos where approximately 40 acres were converted for a water storage pond. Meanwhile, adjacent to the town of Volta approximately 10 acres converted for water storage ponds. In and adjacent to the town of Le Grand, approximately 10 acres converted for water storage ponds and a small solar facility.

Nonirrigated Land Uses and Other Land to Urban Land	19 changes

The majority of the urbanization this update was due to the expansion of urban development in or adjacent to the cities of Merced and Atwater and the San Luis Dam. The largest conversions occurred in or adjacent to the City of Merced where approximately 80 acres were converted for El Capitan High School, Pristine Sun Solar Energy Project, and existing homes dense enough to be considered urban.

Meanwhile, high resolution (1 meter) imagery assisted in improved delineation of the San Luis Dam. This resulted in the conversion of approximately 70 acres to urban land.

Furthermore, in or adjacent to the City of Atwater, approximately 60 acres were converted for new homes in Claremont Reserve, the Neves Family Memorial Park, a solar facility, new buildings, paved parking lots, and other new homes.

Conversions from Irrigated Farmland aside from urbanization	
Irrigated Farmland to Nonirrigated Land Uses	84 changes

Conversion of irrigated farmland to nonirrigated land uses was primarily due to either irrigated farmland having been fallow for three or more update cycles or the production of nonirrigated crops on formerly irrigated land. Many of these converted acres will be classified as Farmland of Local Importance due to the presence of high quality soils or nonirrigated crop production. The remainder will be converted to Grazing Land.

The majority of these changes were due to plots of irrigated land having been fallow for three or more update cycles. Most of the changes in this category occurred on the Volta quad with approximately 200 acres going out of production. This was followed by the Los Banos quad with approximately 160 acres going out of production.

Finally areas of irrigated farmland were identified that were no longer being irrigated but, instead, were being used for the cultivation of nonirrigated crops. The largest changes due to nonirrigated crop production occurred on the Merced quad (240 acres) followed by the Cressey quad (150 acres).

Irrigated Farmland to Other Land	29 changes

The majority of these conversions were due to a combination of irrigated farmland having been fallow for three or more update cycles which had been graded for development, or conversions to a highway interchange, a highway overpass, or confined livestock. The use of high resolution (1 meter) imagery helped delineate areas of rural residential land, and low-density commercial areas throughout the county. The majority of these conversions happened on the Plainsburg quad with approximately 110 acres converting to vacant or disturbed land for a new highway interchange, a new highway overpass, and a low-density commercial area. This was followed by the Atwater and Volta quads both with approximately 40 acres converting to Other Land.

Conversions to Irrigated Farmland	
Nonirrigated Land Uses and Other Land to Irrigated Farmland	156 changes

The most notable addition of irrigated farmland occurred on the Winton quad with approximately 1,480 acres being converted to irrigated farmland for new orchards and row crops. This was followed by the Snelling and Dos Palos quads with approximately 460 and 370 acres, respectively, converting to irrigated farmland.

Unusual Changes

(Types of change not already described or special circumstances during the 2014 update.)

Conversion between Irrigated Farmland categories: There were 22 conversions between irrigated farmland categories. These changes were due to either irrigated pasture being replaced by irrigated crops or irrigated crops being replaced by irrigated pasture. These changes may result in conversions between Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance.

Areas of Concern for Future Updates

(Locations or map categories noted as needing careful checking during 2016 update, and reasons.)

None

Definitions:

Irrigated Farmland includes most irrigated crops grown in California. When combined with soil data, these farmed areas become the Important Farmland (IFL) categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance & Unique Farmland. Because of the nature of the IFL definitions, some irrigated uses, such as irrigated pastures or nurseries, may not be eligible for all three IFL categories.

Nonirrigated land uses include grazing areas, land used for dryland crop farming, and formerly irrigated land that has been left idle for three or more update cycles.

These uses are frequently incorporated into county Farmland of Local Importance definitions.

Other Land includes a variety of miscellaneous uses, such as low density rural residential development, mining areas, vacant areas and nonagricultural vegetation. Confined animal agriculture facilities are mapped as Other Land unless incorporated into a county Farmland of Local Importance definition.

Urban Land includes residential, industrial, recreational, infrastructure and institutional uses.

For more on map categories, including Farmland of Local Importance definitions, visit the FMMP web site.

LABOR ESTIMATE:

Time estimates for conducting the 2014 update.

Image interpretation, start date: March 6, 2015
Image interpretation, number of days: 20
Ground truth dates: May 18 – 21, 2015
Number of days for post-ground truth clean-up: 4

Further information on the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program can be found at:
http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/Index.aspx