

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

2002 FIELD REPORT

COUNTY: Merced

FIELD MAPPER(S): Kerri Kisko

IMAGERY:

source: NASA-Ames Research Center
date: August 30, 2001
scale: 1 : 130,000
type: CIR Transparencies
coverage gaps: none
additional imagery: Landsat IR 2002

WRITTEN, DIGITAL & ORAL INFORMATION SOURCES: *Please list which local governments, interest groups, or individuals submitted comments on the 2000 maps. Also list all phone and in-person contacts made or related GIS data referenced while conducting the 2002 update.*

➤ *local review comments*

cities:

county:

others: University of California Cooperative Extension, Merced County

➤ *personal contacts:*

Joanne Karlton, Great Valley Grasslands State Park, (209)-826-1197

Bill Cook, Los Banos Wildlife Area Complex, (209)-826-0463

Chris Shoneman, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, (209)-826-3508

➤ *websites:*

County of Merced (www.co.merced.ca.us)

Grassland Water District (www.grasslandwetlands.com)

Kelsey Bass Ranch (www.kelseybassranch.com)

San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex (www.sanluis.fws.gov)

U.C. Merced Planning (www.ucmercedplanning.net)

➤ *GIS data referenced:*

Agency data reference file: refuges.dgn

Merced Digital Soil Survey: ca647_and_ca648_merced_merged.dgn

SWIS landfill/waste facility reference file: SWIS .dgn

2000-2002 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.

➤ **Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land**

There were 38 conversions of irrigated farmland to urban land this update. The majority of these changes took place along the fringes of the cities of Atwater, Los Banos, and Merced. In the City of Atwater the Buhach Colony High School (≈45 acres) and the Ventana Del Rey housing development (≈50 acres) were added along with other small areas of homes. In the City of Los Banos the Avalon Adult Community (≈50 acres), the Vineyard homes (≈35 acres), and other small areas of homes were added. Also the local water treatment plant was expanded by approximately 80 acres. In the City of Merced the Las Brisas housing development (≈30 acres) and the Apostolic Tabernacle church (≈10 acres) were added.

Throughout the rest of the county the development was scattered. The Livingston Middle School (≈20 acres) was added in the City of Livingston. In the Community of Planada, the Cesar E. Chavez Middle School (≈10 acres) was added. In the City of Gustine, the Gustine Elementary School (≈10 acres) was added, as well as some homes (≈20 acres). The Wilbur-Ellis Company added a facility (≈15 acres) near the Community of El Nido. Also, near the town of Ingomar, John B. Sanfillepo and Son, Inc. added a packing facility (≈20 acres).

➤ **Local, Grazing or Other Land to Urban Land**

There were 30 conversions of local, grazing or other land to urban land this update. Most of these changes were small and were scattered throughout the county. Some changes of note include the expansion of the local water treatment plant (≈85 acres) near the City of Gustine, two areas of new homes (≈20 and 25 acres) in the City of Atwater, the Apostolic Assembly church (≈10 acres) and some new homes (≈25 acres) in the City of Merced, and the Ingomar Packing Plant No. 2 (≈40 acres) in the town of Ingomar.

➤ **Irrigated Farmland to Local or Grazing Land**

There were 107 conversions of prime, statewide, or unique farmland to local or grazing land this update. The majority of these changes (94) were due to irrigated farmland being fallow for three or more update cycles. These conversions were scattered throughout the county. Large conversions of 50 acres or more occurred on the Atwater (3), Charleston Peak (1), Ingomar (1), Los Banos (2), Merced (3), Plainsburg (1), Sandy Mush (2), Snelling (1) and Winton (1) quads. The remaining 13 conversions were due to irrigated pasture on lesser quality soils (Unique Farmland). Irrigated pasture is considered farmland of local importance when it occurs on lesser quality soils. These conversions were also scattered throughout the county. Large conversions of 100 acres or larger occurred on the Sandy Mush (1) and Turlock (1) quads.

➤ **Irrigated Farmland to Other Land**

There were 207 conversions of irrigated farmland to other land this update. The majority (113) of these changes were due to the identification of low-density housing (ranchettes). These conversions were scattered throughout the county and were small in

size (\approx 10-20 acres). A sizable amount of these changes (65) were due to the identification of confined livestock. Most of these additions were small, however some large conversions of 50 acres or larger occurred on the Bliss Ranch (2), Cressey (1), El Nido (1), Planada (1), Sandy Mush (1), and Stevinson (1) quads. Other conversions were due to rural commercial, agricultural staging areas, native vegetation, and mining activities.

➤ **Local, Grazing or Other Land to Irrigated Farmland**

There were 162 conversions of local, grazing, or other land to irrigated farmland. These conversions were scattered throughout the county and primarily were in the form of field crops, orchards, row crops, and irrigated pasture. The largest conversions of 200 acres or larger occurred on the Arena (1), Merced (1), San Luis Dam (2), Stevinson (1), Volta (2), Winton (1), and Yosemite Lake (2) quads.

➤ **UNUSUAL:** *Category changes, complications with the Farmland of Local Importance definition, or any other special circumstances in 2002.*

Conversions between Grazing and Other Land: This update the grazing practices of the wildlife areas, wildlife refuges, and state parks in the county were evaluated. I contacted the manager of the Los Banos Wildlife Area Complex, the manager of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, and a spokesperson at the Great Valley Grasslands State Park. The following changes were made due to the information that was received. The Mud Slough Wildlife Area (\approx 730 acres) and the Volta Wildlife Area (\approx 2,760 acres) were converted from grazing land to other land due to the fact that they are being managed as wetland areas and grazing is not allowed. The Great Valley Grasslands State Park (\approx 2,855 acres) was converted from grazing land to other land due to the fact that grazing is not permitted. The Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge (\approx 6,095 acres) was converted from other land to grazing land due to the fact that grazing is allowed and leases exist.

Conversions between Prime, Statewide, and Unique: This update the Merced digital soil survey was used to assess the accuracy of soil lines in the county. Numerous conversions occurred due to this evaluation.

PROBLEM AREAS: *What locations and map categories need careful checking in 2004? Why?*

There were a lot of small dairies (\approx 10-15 acres) added this update, particularly in the northwestern portion of the county near the Hilmar Cheese Factory. These dairies were hard to identify because they resemble areas of ranchettes on the aerial photos. Be careful when checking this northwestern portion of the county next update.

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

photo interpretation, start date: October 21, 2003

photo interpretation, number of days: 9

ground truthing dates: Nov. 17 – 21, 2003

days for map compilation and clean up: 23

* **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