4.2 Agricultural Resources

This section evaluates the Project's potential to impact agricultural resources within and adjacent to the Project area. This section also describes the environmental setting, regulatory setting, identifies the applicable significance thresholds for impacts, assesses potential impacts of the Project, and recommends measures to mitigate any significant impacts, if applicable. The section also provides a discussion of cumulative impacts. Alternatives are discussed in Chapter 5.0, Alternatives.

As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the Project would include the demolition and remediation of the site followed by soil stabilization or revegetation of disturbed areas and restoration of hardscapes, with some minor long-term operations associated with remediation.

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

4.2.1.1 Regional Setting

The County of San Luis Obispo (County) encompasses an area of approximately 3,300 square miles along the central coast of California and is characterized by a Mediterranean climate, with warm, dry summers and cooler, relatively damp winters. Due to the moderating influence of the Pacific Ocean, mild temperatures occur along the coast with temperatures ranging from 42 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to 76 °F year-round (Weather Spark 2023). Based on monitoring data recorded between 2006 and 2022, the average annual rainfall along the coast is 14.09 inches (County 2022). The County provides ideal growing conditions for various crops (i.e., fruits, vegetables, wine grapes, etc.) due to the County's rich soils, temperate weather, and diverse microclimates (County Department of Agriculture 2022).

Farmland Conversion

Based on the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) *California Farmland Conversion Report 2014–2016*, irrigated farmland in California decreased by 11,165 net acres between 2014 and 2016. The highest-quality farmland, known as Prime Farmland, decreased by 18,312 net acres, coupled with a Farmland of Statewide Importance decrease of 26,557 net acres. Partially offsetting these losses was the addition of 33,704 net acres of irrigated crops on lesser-quality soils, mapped as Unique Farmland (CDOC 2023a). In the County, due to an increase in irrigated land resulting from orchard and vineyard planting, there was an upward trend of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland between 2014 and 2016; however, there was a decrease in Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land (CDOC 2023a).

In 2022, crop values recorded for the County reached a record high, as the total value of agricultural produce sold to consumers was $1,084,332,000. This is the third time that the County's annual agricultural value has exceeded one billion dollars, and it represents a one percent increase in total value over 2021 (County Department of Agriculture 2022). Table 4.2.1 shows the County's 2020 and 2021 crop values.

Table 4.2.1 2020 and 2021 Crop Values in San Luis Obispo County

Year	Animal	Field	Nursery	Fruit & Nut	Vegetable	Total
2020	$46,509,000	$20,217,000	$75,883,000	$603,283,000	$232,783,000	$978,675,000
2021	$43,108,000	$14,889,000	$76,503,000	$713,904,000	$233,548,000	$1,081,952,000
2022	$48,247,000	$20,056,000	$98,041,000	$624,332,000	$293,656,000	$1,084,332,000

Source: County of San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture 2022

Within the County's South County Coastal Planning Area (South County Coastal Area), agriculture has historically been, and still is, the most widespread land use. According to the *South County Coastal Area Plan*, the South County supports 56,041 acres of agricultural land, which is approximately 57 percent of the area's land use (County 2018b). According to the *County's Coastal Zone Framework for Planning*, the Agriculture (AG) land use designation is assigned to land where a combination of soil types, topography, water supply, existing parcel sizes and good management practices will result in the protection of agricultural land for agricultural uses (County 2018a).

Natural Resources Conservation Service Capability Classes

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has completed soil surveys for the northern and coastal portions of the County. Each NRCS soil survey report contains a general soil map that depicts a range of soil units that support a distinct pattern of soils and/or other components (i.e., water, sand, outcroppings, etc.) that represent a unique natural landscape. Soils in the Project area are included in the Soil Survey of San Luis Obispo County, California, Coastal Part (USDA SCS 1984).

The NRCS identifies eight soil capability classes that are based on the characteristics of soils that influence their use and management. Soil capability classes are designated by a progressive numbering system in which a higher number indicates greater limitations. The eight NRCS soil capability classes are described below (USDA NRCS 2014):

- **Class I.** These soils have few limitations that restrict their use and are typically used for vegetables, seed crops, orchards, and other irrigated specialty crops and irrigated field crops;
- **Class II.** These soils have minor to moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require moderate conservation practices. Uses are very similar to those found on Class I soils;
- **Class III and IV.** These soils have moderate to severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices, or both. In some situations, the Class III soils may be used for some of the crop types that are typically found on Class I and II soils, but are more typically used for specialty crops, forage lands, mixed croplands, and dryland field crops. Irrigated Class IV soils are commonly used for vineyards;
- **Class V.** These soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use mainly to pasture, rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat;
- **Class VI.** These soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuitable for cultivation, and they have commonly been used for rangeland and dryland grain production;

- **Class VII.** These soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuitable for cultivation, and these lands are primarily used as rangelands for grazing; and
- **Class VIII.** These soils and landforms have limitations that nearly preclude their use for commercial crop production; however, some grazing occurs on these lands.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The CDOC Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP) developed the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) to identify farmland designations throughout that state to assist in analyzing potential impacts to agricultural land. Land designations include the following categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, and Other Land. The following technical definitions are defined by the FMMP for the identified land use designations (CDOC 2023b):

- **Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser-quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.
- **Urban and Built-up Land.** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land.** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines or borrow pits; and waterbodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

County of San Luis Obispo General Plan

Agriculture Element

According to the *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Agriculture Element*, the different types of agricultural lands in the County include the following (County 2010a):

- **Row Crops Terrain and Soils.** These areas support farming operations that involve labor-intensive use of equipment and chemicals and much vehicle traffic. They are often close to populated areas because these lands have historically been the easiest to develop. These lands are characterized by various types of vegetables, seed crops, orchards, and other specialty crops. The topography in these areas typically consists of nearly level valley bottom lands. Soils typically include Classes I and II, and occasionally Class III.
- **Specialty Crops and Forage Lands.** These lands are characterized by irrigated orchards and vineyards such as wine grapes, avocados, citrus, and apples. Irrigated uses (i.e., alfalfa and pasture) may also be found in these areas. Typical topography includes gently rolling to rolling on 5% to 30% slopes. Soils generally include Classes III and IV.
- **Dry Farm Lands.** Dry land farming covers a broad range of properties that are primarily cultivated for an annual crop, but also may include some orchard operations. Dry farm lands are divided into two types of croplands, mixed croplands and dry croplands, described below.
- **Mixed Croplands.** One type of mixed cropland is found in valleys with good soils but insufficient water for major irrigated uses. Such areas are characterized by mixed agricultural uses such as dry farm grain and hay and scattered irrigated crops. The other type of mixed cropland is found in areas of higher-than-average rainfall, such as the easterly slopes of the Santa Lucia Range, where dry farm orchards and some vineyards occur. Mixed croplands are characterized by dry farm orchards and vineyards and specialty or high-value field crops. The topography of these cropland areas typically ranges from flat to rolling on slopes between 0% and 30%. The soils consist mainly of Classes III and IV.
- **Dry Croplands.** These areas are characterized by grain and hay production that is widespread in the northeastern part of the county. Barley, wheat, and oat hay are the principal crops; other crops include dry beans and safflower. Dry croplands may also include grain stubble fields and intervening non-cultivated areas that provide seasonal forage for livestock. The topography of these areas is generally flat to rolling on slopes between 0% and 30%. The soils consists mainly of Classes III and IV. Class VI land has also been commonly used for grain production.
- **Rangelands for Grazing.** Grazing lands account for a large percentage of privately owned land in the county. Cattle ranching is the predominant use on these lands. The topography is mainly rolling and on steep slopes between 30% and 75%. Rangelands may also include small intervening valleys and ridgetops that have limited use or potential as farmland. The soils consist mainly of Classes IV, VI and VII, but may also contain small intervening areas of other land capability classes.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element* (COSE) identifies important agricultural soils mapped by the NRCS throughout the region (County 2010b). Table SL-2 of the COSE organizes soil types into four categories that are based on

NRCS soil classifications, including Prime Farmland (Class I), Farmland of Statewide Importance (Class II), Other Productive Soils (Classes III and IV), and Highly Productive Rangeland Soils (Class V). The differing productivity levels of these soils are used to justify differing levels of protection by the County.

4.2.1.2 Project Area Setting

The parcels make up an approximately 1,642-acre property owned by Phillips 66 situated between the coastal dunes and the Nipomo Mesa to the northeast. The Santa Maria Refinery (SMR) site (Project site) occupies an area that includes the access road parking and the Refinery within a 218-acre portion of the property. The remaining portion of the Phillips 66 property surrounding the site supports grazing activities.

The fenced SMR Project site is on portions of two Assessor's parcels located in the Industrial (IND) land use designation; the remaining parcels under Phillips 66 ownership are designated Agriculture with Industrial overlay (AG/IND) to the south, and Open Space (OS) to the northwest, with the Union Pacific Railroad fee-owned corridor separating the Open Space from the Project site. Surrounding land use designations include Residential Suburban (RS) and IND to the north, IND to the east, OS and Recreation (REC) to the west, AG to the southwest, and AG, and REC and Residential Rural (RR) to the south and southeast.

Developed land uses surrounding the property include golf course and residential development to the northeast, the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area to the west, and agricultural cropland to the south. Several commercial and light industrial uses such as auto-dismantlers and storage yards are found immediately north of the property. The Project area is not subject to a Williamson Act contract. Lands to the south, southwest, and southeast of the Project area are currently subject to Williamson Act contracts.

Soil Setting
According to the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey (USDA NRCS 2023), the Project area is underlain by the following soil types:

- **Camarillo sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, cool MAAT, Major Land Resource Area 14** – This soil type is somewhat poorly drained and has a low runoff class, meaning there is low potential for surface runoff during wet conditions (i.e., rain, snowmelt, etc.). This soil type is comprised of sandy loam and stratifies sandy loam to silty clay loam. This soil is considered Prime Farmland if irrigated and drained by the NRCS and has a soil classification of II (irrigated) and III (non-irrigated). As identified in Table 4.2.2, this soil is also considered Prime Farmland and Highly Productive Rangeland Soils by the County's COSE. This soil has a low potential for water erosion and moderate potential for soil blowing (USDA SCS 1984).
- **Dune land** – The majority of the Project area is underlain by dune land, which consists of fine sand. Dune land is not considered a soil type.
- **Oceano sand, 0 to 9 percent slopes** – This soil type is excessively drained and has a negligible runoff class, meaning there is negligible potential for surface runoff during wet

conditions (i.e., rain, snowmelt, etc.). This soil type is comprised solely of sand. This soil is considered Farmland of Statewide Importance by the NRCS and has a soil classification of IV. As identified in Table 4.2.2, this soil is also considered Farmland of Statewide Importance by the County's COSE. This soil is susceptible to drought and soil blowing (USDA SCS 1984).

- **Oceano sand, 9 to 30 percent slopes –** This excessively drained soil has a very low runoff class; therefore, there is low potential for surface runoff during wet conditions. This soil type is comprised of sand. This soil has a classification of VI and is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS. As identified in Table 4.2.2, this soil is considered Other Productive Soil by the County's COSE. This soil is susceptible to drought and soil blowing (USDA SCS 1984).

The classifications of soil types at the Project area are summarized in Table 4.2.2 and shown in Figure 4.2-1.

Table 4.2.2 Project Area Soil Classifications

Symbol	Soil Name	Approximate Percentage of Project Area	NRCS Important Farmland Classification	NRCS Capability Class (Irrigated)	NRCS Capability Class (Non-Irrigated)	COSE Important Agricultural Soil Designation
111	Camarillo sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, cool MAAT, Major Land Resource Area 14	0.3%	Prime Farmland if irrigated and drained	IIw-2	IIIw-2	Prime Farmland; Highly Productive Rangeland Soils
134	Dune land	89.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
184	Oceano sand, 0 to 9 percent slopes	1.7%	Farmland of Statewide Importance	IVe-1	VIe	Farmland of Statewide Importance
185	Oceano sand, 9 to 30 percent slopes	8.7%	Non-prime	N/A	VIe	Other Productive Soils

Source: USDA NRCS 2023

Farmland Setting

According to the FMMP, the Project area is primarily designated as Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land. The Project area also includes small areas of land along the northern boundary designated as grazing land and land along the southern boundary designated as Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Potential. The 100-foot buffer surrounding the Project site includes designations for Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Potential, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Prime Farmland (CDOC 2022). FMMP designations are shown in Figure 4.2-2.

Figure 4.2-1 NRCS Soil Map

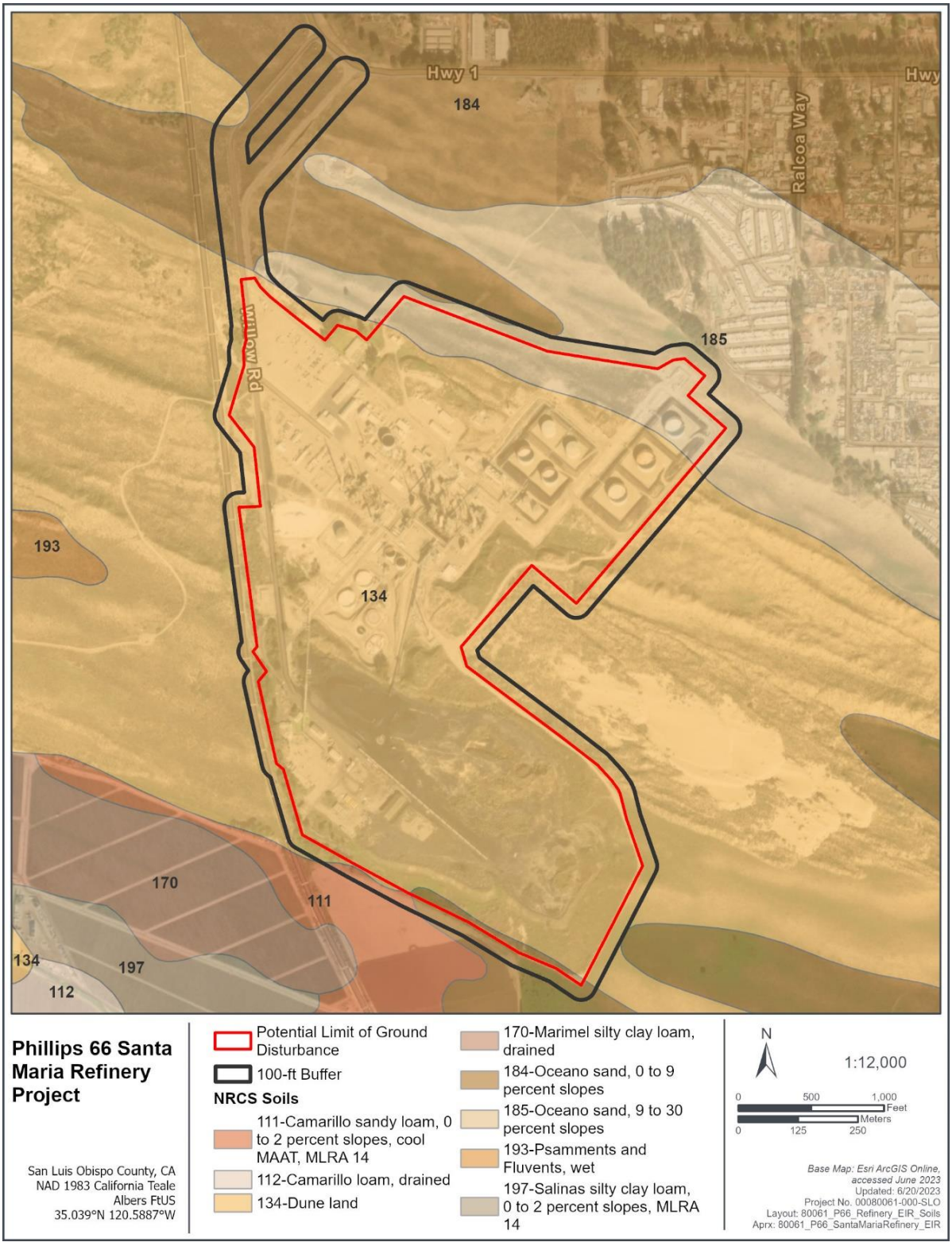
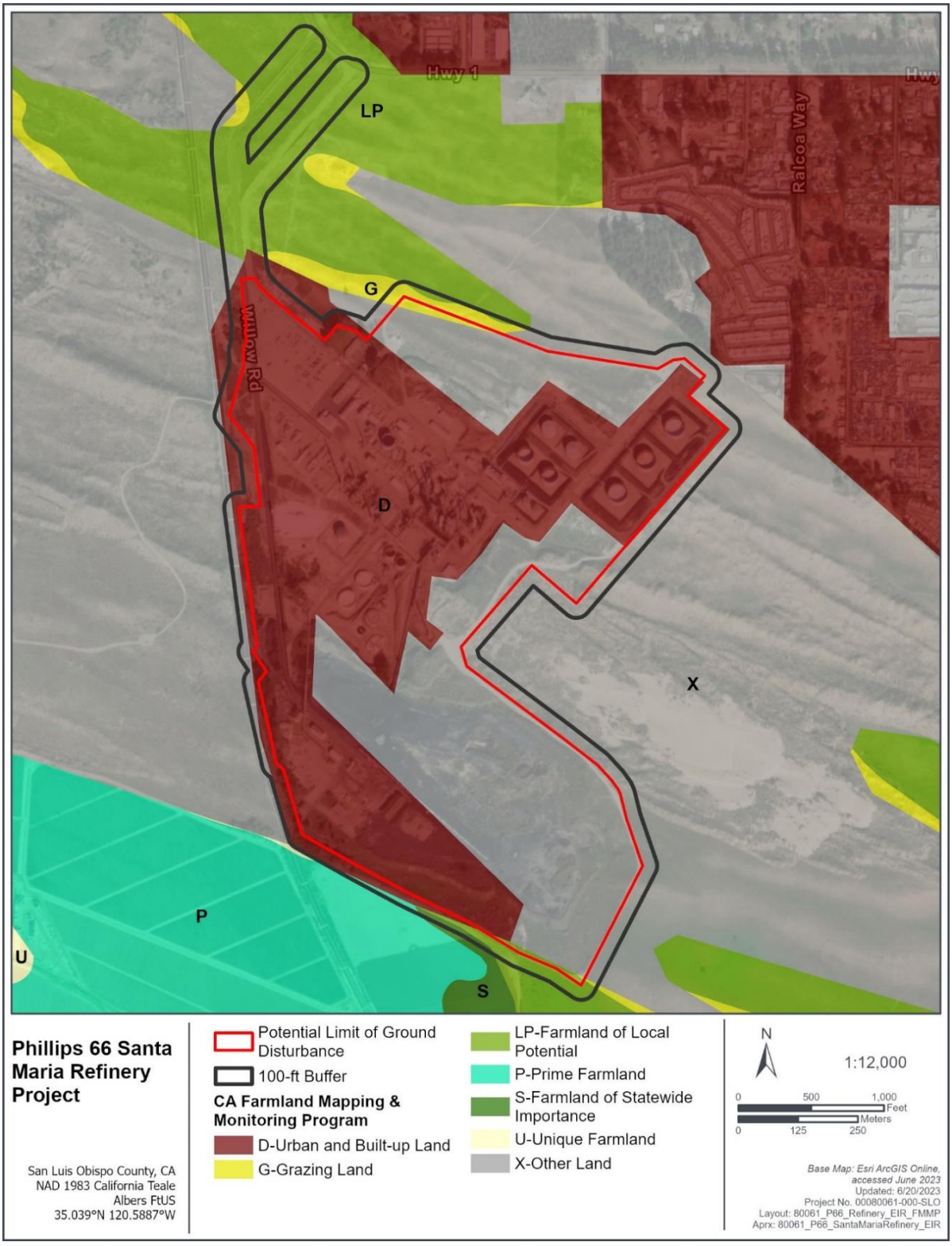


Figure 4.2-2 FMMP Designations



Surrounding land is designated as:

- Farmland of Local Potential, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Other Land to the north;
- Other Land to the east and west; and
- Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Potential, and Grazing Land to the south and southwest (CDOC 2022).

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

4.2.2.1 Federal Regulations

Farmland Protection Policy Act
The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) of 1981 is governed by the NRCS and is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the permanent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural land uses. The policy assures that to the extent feasible, federal programs are administered to be compatible with state and local units of government as well as private programs and policies to protect farmland. For the purpose of the FPPA, farmland includes Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Land of Statewide or Local Importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland; it can be forestland, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land.

4.2.2.2 State Regulations

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
The purpose of the FMMP, which is authorized by the CDOC DLRP, is to produce maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Through this program, agricultural land is rated according to soils quality and irrigation status. Maps are updated every two years using a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance.

The FMMP has several land designations based on the criteria identified above. FMMP designations include, but are not limited to, Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Importance, Farmland of Local Potential, Urban and Built-up Land, and Other Land, which are described in Section 4.2.1.1, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The designations for Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland are defined together under the terms "Agricultural Land" and "Farmland" in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21060.1 and State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G).

Williamson Act
The Williamson Act, also known as the Land Conservation Act of 1965, allows local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners in order to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural or open space uses. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments

that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open space uses rather than full market value (CDOC 2023b). The CDOC assists all levels of government and landowners in interpretation of the Williamson Act.

California Assembly Bill 1492

Assembly Bill (AB) 1492, also referred to as the Laird Bill, provides further clarifications to development on land under a Williamson Act contract or other agricultural land conservation contract. According to AB 1492, any commercial, industrial, or residential building that is unrelated to agricultural use and is constructed on a parcel subject to an agricultural land conservation contract that is not permitted by the contract or by local rules or ordinance is a material breach of contract. Following the breach of contract, the CDOC would be required to inform the local government and require the landowner to cease the operation(s) that caused the breach of contract. In some cases, financial reimbursement may be required.

4.2.2.3 Local Regulations

County Of San Luis Obispo General Plan

Agriculture Element

The County's Agriculture Element is a planning document that has the purpose of protecting agricultural resources within the County by creating policies for promotion of the agricultural industry and preservation of open space within agricultural lands. The goals, policies, and implementation measures of the Agriculture Element address the protection of agricultural resources as well as the protection of open space resources on lands zoned for Agriculture (AG) and on other lands used for production agriculture.

- **Goal AG2. Conserve Agricultural Resources.**

- **Goal AG3. Protect Agricultural Lands.**

- **Policy AGP3. Right-to-Farm Ordinance.**

    a. This element reaffirms the County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance, Title 5 of the County Code, as an effective means to let the public know that the use of real property for agricultural operations is a high priority and favored use. The Right-to-Farm Ordinance requires disclosure statements between sellers and buyers of properties at the time of property transfer and through inclusion of disclosure statements on all discretionary land use permit applications administered by the County Department of Planning and Building.

    b. Encourage the County Agriculture Department to: (1) maintain an outreach information program to make the local real estate industry and the public aware of the Right-to-Farm Ordinance and the disclosure provisions on property transactions, and (2) continue mediating issues relating to the Right-to-Farm Ordinance.

- **Policy AGP9. Soil Conservation.**

  a. Encourage landowners to participate in programs that reduce soil erosion and increase soil productivity. Promote coordination between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation Districts, Consolidated Farm Services Agency, Morro Bay State and National Estuary, and other agencies and organizations.

  b. Emphasize the long-range benefits of proper drainage control and tillage, cropping, soil amendment, and grazing techniques to minimize soil erosion.

  c. Assure that roads and drainage systems on County-controlled properties and facilities do not negatively impact agricultural lands and that the roads and systems are properly maintained.

- **Policy AGP17. Agricultural Buffers.** Protect land designated Agriculture and other lands in production agriculture by using natural or man-made buffers where adjacent to non-agricultural land uses in accordance with the agricultural buffer policies adopted by the Board of Supervisor (see Appendix C of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Agriculture Element).

- **Policy AGP24. Conversion of Agricultural Land.** Discourage the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses through the following actions:

  1. Work in cooperation with the incorporated cities, service districts, school districts, the County Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Advisory Liaison Board, Farm Bureau, and affected community advisory groups to establish urban service and urban reserve lines and village reserve lines that will protect agricultural land and will stabilize agriculture at the urban fringe.

  2. Establish clear criteria in this plan and the Land Use Element for changing the designation of land from Agriculture to non-agricultural designations.

  3. Avoid land redesignation (rezoning) that would create new rural residential development outside the urban and village reserve lines.

  4. Avoid locating new public facilities outside urban and village reserve lines unless they serve a rural function or there is no feasible alternative location within the urban and village reserve lines.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The County's COSE provides goals, policies, and implementation measures for the protection of natural resources and open space areas throughout the region. The Open Space Element and Agriculture Element were originally a part of the same document; however, based on the growing need for policies that specifically protect agricultural resources, the two elements were divided into separate elements. Therefore, the County's COSE also identifies some policies and implementation measures for agricultural resources.

- **Policy SL 3.1. Conserve Important Agricultural Soils.** Conserve the Important Agricultural Soils mapped in Figure SL-1 and listed in Table SL-2 of the *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element*. Proposed conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses shall be evaluated against the applicable policies in this COSE and in the Agriculture Element, including policies such as Policies AGP18 and AGP24.

South County Coastal Area Plan
The South County Coastal Area Plan, included in Part II of the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE), serves as a guide for future development with the goal of balancing the social, economic, environmental, and governmental resources and activities to create a better quality of life within the South County Coastal planning area. While the South County Coastal Area Plan does not include specific goals or policies, it provides a framework for long-term planning and identifies general needs of the area. In regard to the agricultural land use within the South County Coastal Planning Area, the South County Coastal Area Plan identifies the need to avoid any appreciable loss of viable farmland and to maintain agricultural preserves established in the region (County 2018b).

Right-to-Farm Ordinance
The County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance is codified County's Land Use Ordinance (LUO) Title 5, Chapter 16. The Right-to-Farm Ordinance has a purpose of enhancing and encouraging agricultural operation within the County and minimizing the loss of agricultural lands due to incompatible land use issues. According to the Right-to-Farm Ordinance, pre-existing agricultural processing and other operations shall not be considered nuisances due to a change in the area surrounding the operations (Section 5.16.030 and 5.16.031).

4.2.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of Project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the County. Specifically, the Project would be considered to have a significant effect on agriculture and forestry resources if the Project would:

a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;

b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;

c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g));

d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or

e. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.2.5, Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures, below.

4.2.4 Impact Assessment Methodology

For the purposes of this analysis, relevant database information was reviewed to identify designated Farmland, including Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance within the Project region. Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance are protected under PRC Section 21060.1. Projects that would result in the direct or indirect conversion of designated farmland would have a significant impact on the environment.

4.2.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The following sections discuss the Project's potential to result in adverse environmental effects to agricultural resources based on the thresholds identified above.

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
AG.1	Threshold a): Would the Project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	Class III

The Project includes the demolition of several buildings, structures, and tanks associated with the SMR and remediation of the site where necessary. The SMR encompasses an approximately 218-acre area. According to the FMMP, the SMR is underlain by land that is primarily designated as Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land. In addition, small areas of land along the northern boundary are designated as Grazing Land and small areas of land along the southern boundary are designated as Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Potential (CDOC 2022). The 100-foot buffer surrounding the Project site includes designations for Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Potential, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Prime Farmland (CDOC 2022). In addition, the Project site is underlain by soils that are designated as Prime Farmland if irrigated and drained and Farmland of Statewide Importance by the NRCS and Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide importance by the County's COSE (see Table 4.2.2).

The Project includes the demolition of the SMR, including the demolition of existing aboveground facilities with the exception of essential infrastructure and utilities required to be kept in place by regulatory authorities and features retained for site security or for potential use by subsequent site occupants. The Project also includes remediation of soil at the Project site to meet applicable risk-based industrial standards. Existing hardscapes (e.g., concrete, asphalt,

compacted base/gravel, and asphalt emulsion coating) would remain intact where feasible and would be replaced in areas where they may be demolished or removed for proposed remediation activities.

Per PRC Section 21060.1, projects that would result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance designated by the FMMP would be considered to have a significant impact on the environment. Although portions of the Project area are underlain by land that is designated by the FMMP, NRCS, and County as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Prime Farmland, the Project would remove existing buildings, structures, and other features associated with SMR from the Project site and would remediate the soils at the Project site to remove potential soil contaminants. Therefore, the Project would ultimately restore soils at the Project site. The proposed replacement of hardscapes at the Project site would be limited to the footprint of the existing on-site hardscapes and would not extend into previously undeveloped areas in a manner that could result in the conversion of soils on the site to non-agricultural use. Further, the Project does not include the construction of new buildings, structures, roadways, or other uses that could otherwise result in the conversion of soils on the site to non-agricultural use.

Based on the nature of the Project and required compliance with the County's General Plan Agriculture Element and COSE, the Project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use, and impacts would be **less than significant (Class III).**

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
AG.2	Threshold b): Would the Project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	Class III

The Project site is located in the IND land use designation and is not zoned for Agricultural uses or subject to a Williamson Act contract. Surrounding land use designations include RS and IND to the north, IND to the east, OS to the west, AG to the southwest, and IND with an AG overlay to the south and southeast. In addition, lands to the south, southwest, and southeast of the Project area are currently subject to Williamson Act contracts. However, the Project would be limited to the 218-acre Project site and would not extend onto surrounding parcels in a manner that could conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract, and impacts would be **less than significant (Class III).**

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
AG.3	Thresholds c & d): Would the Project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g) or result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	Class III

The Project site and surrounding area does not include land use designations or zoning for forest land or timberland. Further, the Project site does not contain 10 percent native tree cover and does not meet the definition of forestland as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g). Therefore, any tree removal required for the Project would not result in the loss of forestland and the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for forest land or timberland or result in the loss or conversion of forestland, and impacts would be **less than significant (Class III).**

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
AG.4	Threshold e): The Project could involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.	Class II

The Project site is located within the South County Coastal Area, which supports 56,041 acres of agricultural land, which is approximately 57 percent of the area's land use (County 2018b). There is agricultural cropland located directly to the south and southwest of the Project site and approximately 0.6 mile east of the Project site. As previously stated, the Project includes the demolition of the aboveground infrastructure at the SMR, remediation of the site, and replacement of existing hardscapes where necessary, which would not result in direct conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use. Other changes to the environment, such as an increase in fugitive dust could nominally adversely affect nearby cropland.

Construction of the Project would result in construction-related emissions, including fugitive dust. Fugitive dust has the potential to affect plant growth by reducing light interception and the ability to perform photosynthesis (Ferguson 1999). Proposed demolition and soil remediation activities located in the southern portion of the Project site would have the potential to disturb existing cropland through an increase in fugitive dust emissions. However, mitigation measure AQ.1-1 has been identified in Section 4.3, Air Quality, to reduce fugitive dust emissions during proposed construction activities through implementation of a Demolition & Remediation Activity Management Plan (DRAMP), which would also reduce the potential to adversely affect nearby cropland through an increase in fugitive dust.

The Project would remediate the site to a level that meets applicable risk-based industrial standards as determined by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The conceptual remediation approach for the site includes excavation and off-site disposal, which would be conducted in accordance with applicable federal and California regulations to avoid

release of contaminants within the Project area or along designated haul routes. Based on compliance with RWQCB and other applicable federal and California regulations, the Project would not result in short- or long-term risk of release of contaminants that could affect nearby cropland.

The Project site is located in the Nipomo Mesa Management Area (NMMA) of the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin (SMGB). The SMR, when operating, pumped approximately 1,110 acre-feet per year (AFY) of groundwater for crude oil processing activities. Demolition of the SMR would ultimately reduce groundwater pumping and would increase the availability of groundwater within the SMGB. As such, the Project would not reduce the availability of groundwater for agricultural uses within the SMGB.

Based on implementation of mitigation measure AQ.1-1 to reduce short-term fugitive dust emissions, required compliance with RWQCB and other applicable federal and California regulations to address soil remediation and disposal activities, and required compliance with the County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance to reduce the potential to indirectly convert nearby cropland to non-agricultural uses, the Project would not result in other changes to the environment in a manner that could convert farmland to non-agricultural uses or forest land to non-forest use.

Mitigation Measures

See mitigation measure AQ.1-1.

Residual Impacts

Based on implementation of mitigation measure AQ.1-1 referenced above and discussed in detail in Section 4.3, Air Quality, of this EIR, residual impacts to agricultural resources on site and in the area would be **less than significant with mitigation (Class II).**

4.2.6 Mitigation Measure Impacts to Other Issue Areas

As no mitigation measures are proposed for agricultural resources, there would not be any impact from the mitigation measures on other issue areas.

4.2.7 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impact analysis is based on Chapter 3.0, Cumulative Study Area. Although the Project would not result in the direct or indirect conversion of farmland, other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects located on or near farmland have the potential to result in the direct and/or indirect conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Because the Project would have no impact related to the conversion of Important Farmland or conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracted land, less-than-significant effects on off-site farmland, and negligible effects on off-site forestland, the Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable adverse effect on agricultural resources. The Project would allow for future development of the Project site, which would be subject to Policy AGP24 (Conversion of Agricultural Land) of the County's General Plan Agriculture Element and Policy SL 3.1 (Conserve Important Agricultural Soils) of the County's COSE to discourage

the conversion of agricultural land and important agricultural soils to non-agricultural use and the County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance to reduce the potential to indirectly convert nearby cropland to non-agricultural uses.

Based on the analysis provided above, the Project would not contribute to the cumulative loss of farmland within the County, and impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable.

4.2.8 References

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