

CHAPTER 9

LAND USE / AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

CHAPTER 9 LAND USE / AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section addresses the impacts of the proposed project on existing and planned land uses and agricultural operations in the project vicinity. Existing land uses were determined from reconnaissance-level surveys conducted in December 2004 and January 2005 within the Initial Study Area. Figure 9-1 identifies land uses within this assessment area as noted in the surveys. The land use and agriculture analyses consider the compatibility of the proposed project with applicable local and regional policies and regulations, including the County General Plan Policies and Codes, proposed SEA designations, the *Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan*, the *Final West Mojave Plan (WMP)*, and the Cities of Palmdale and Lancaster General Plans.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Existing Conditions

The assessment area is located in a primarily rural, agricultural portion of the Antelope Valley, consisting of predominantly open space, farmland, and low-density single-family residences. The assessment area is generally flat, with a slight down-slope to the north and west.

The PWRP is completely surrounded by property owned by LAWA. Presently, District No. 20 leases land from LAWA for its effluent management activities. The primary treatment facilities and oxidation ponds are located near the intersection of 30th Street East and Avenue P-8. At the intersection of 40th Street East and Avenue P are additional oxidation pond facilities. The LAWA property, located within an unincorporated area of the County, adjacent to the Cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, may be the site of an expanded PMD or the new PIA. The LAWA property is bisected by Little Rock Wash, and all current PWRP facilities are located to the west of the wash. The Initial Study Area encompasses the eastern portion of the LAWA property, portions of the Cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, and unincorporated areas of the County.

Surrounding Land Uses

Seven general types of land uses exist within the assessment area, namely, open space, agriculture, public facilities, residential, commercial, industrial, and airfield. There is no National Park Service land located within 20 miles of PWRP facilities. However, adjacent to the eastern edge of the Initial Study Area there are various small parcels of open space land owned by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) such as Piute Butte and the Antelope Valley Indian Museum. In addition, there are other designated open space areas to the east and south of the Initial Study Area including Alpine Butte, Lovejoy Butte, Saddleback Buttes State Park, Butte Valley Wildflower Sanctuary, Desert Butte Wilderness, and the Alpine Butte Wildlife Sanctuary.¹ These open space areas are identified in Figure 9-1. The Angeles National Forest is located approximately seven miles south of the project area as well (Figure 9-2).

The LAWA property contains primarily open space and some agriculture and is surrounded by the City of Palmdale, except in the northwest corner where USAF Plant 42 is located. This facility conducts research and development of aviation systems and currently accommodates PMD airport facilities.

The northern part of the Initial Study Area, north of Avenue L, includes part of the City of Lancaster and unincorporated County area. This northern area includes agricultural land, vacant land, and open space, and contains 199 residences, five commercial properties, one public school and one church (see Figure 9-1). The southern part of the Initial Study Area, south of Avenue L, includes the LAWA property, part of the City of Palmdale, the unincorporated rural community of Sun Village, and other areas of unincorporated

¹ All areas are designated on the Land Use Map in the *Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, December 1986*.

County. This area is mostly open space with some agricultural and vacant land and contains 17 residences.

REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Los Angeles County General Plan

The Initial Study Area includes unincorporated areas of the County governed by the policies, procedures, and standards set forth in the County General Plan. The County is in the process of updating its General Plan. The Draft EIR and Preliminary General Plan are scheduled for release in late summer/early fall 2005.²

The Land Use Policy map³ in the County General Plan describes dominant land use characteristics within the County and provides a policy framework for developing areawide, community, and neighborhood plans. According to the general plan, LAWA property is designated as P-Public land, and the rest of the Initial Study Area is designated as R-Non Urban land. R-Non Urban lands include mostly mountain, foothill, and high desert areas, but agricultural and local commercial/industrial uses are also considered compatible land uses.

Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Areas

As part of the County General Plan Conservation/Open Space and Land Use elements, the County has identified and adopted policies for SEAs. The purpose of establishing an SEA is to maintain biological diversity by establishing boundaries which follow natural biological parameters, including habitats, linkages, and corridors, and have self-sustaining populations of their component species contained within each area.⁴ Currently, several SEAs have been designated near the

Initial Study Area. Figure 9-2 identifies these existing SEAs.

No SEAs are within the Initial Study Area; however, there are four SEAs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Initial Study Area. These areas are Saddleback Butte State Park (SEA No. 51), Alpine Butte (SEA No. 52), Lovejoy Butte (SEA No. 53), and Piute Butte (SEA No. 54) (Figure 9-2). North of the City of Lancaster and south of the City of Palmdale, Little Rock Wash is designated as SEA No. 49. The SEA designation encourages conservation of natural resources and requires enhanced review of development by the County Planning Commission. The following are compatible land uses within SEAs:

- Residential uses at densities compatible with the resource values present, and consistent with community character in terms of both overall density and magnitude as set forth in this plan.
- Commercial uses of a minor nature serving local residents and visitors.
- Where no alternative site or alignment is feasible and public and semi-public uses essential to the maintenance of public health, safety, and welfare.
- Agricultural uses compatible with the resource values present.
- Where compatible with identified biotic resources, extractive uses including oil and gas recovery, and rock sand and gravel quarrying.
- Uses related to the conservation of water.

The DRP is considering a single SEA proposed for Antelope Valley (Figure 9-2). This new SEA would be included in the updated County General Plan. The proposed SEA covers 222,325 acres, stretching across the south-central portion of the Antelope Valley, extending from Little Rock and Big Rock Washes downstream to the valley floor, and northward to encompass Rogers, Rosamond, and Buckhorn Dry

² Carol Roskam, County Department of Regional Planning, personal communication, March 7, 2005, crosskam@planning.co.la.ca.us.

³ County General Plan, Land Use Policy map, revised June 30, 1988.

⁴ PCR Services Corporation, Significant Ecological Area Update Study, prepared for CDRP, November 2000.

Lakes.⁵ Although primarily located within unincorporated areas of the County, the proposed SEA also includes numerous private and public land holdings, including existing SEA Nos. 47 through 55, areas within the Cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, LAWA property, Saddleback Butte State Park, and EAFB.

The entire Initial Study Area lies within the proposed boundary for the Antelope Valley SEA. The County General Plan includes the following recommended management practices for the Antelope Valley SEA:

- Limit development densities to one residential unit per ten acre parcel, and constrain development design, where feasible, to cluster dwelling configurations along existing roadways in order to minimize clearing associated with fuel management, and to reduce the need for grading, fencing, and other habitat disturbances.
- Retain habitat linkages within Little Rock and Big Rock Washes as well as the desert-montane transect in keeping with the proposed General Management Practices.
- Maintain the habitat of core populations of listed species, including the federally endangered southwestern arroyo toad, the federally threatened desert tortoise, and the state threatened MGS, as well as adequate buffers to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts.
- Retain rare plant communities with adequate buffers so as to allow for the long term viability and integrity of plant communities as a whole. Rare plant communities include: mesquite bosque, Joshua tree woodland, desert grassland, southern willow scrub, cottonwood-willow woodland, freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, Mojave riparian

forest, desert alluvial fan scrub, and desert alluvial wash.

- Carefully review proposals for new or increased groundwater extraction to prevent overdrafting of the shallow aquifer supporting the dry lakes and riparian habitat areas. The biological functionality of these areas is directly related to the supporting hydrology which originates from the surrounding basin slopes and from the flows of Little Rock and Big Rock Washes.
- Require agricultural activities to employ BMPs as recognized in the industry; avoid unnecessary direct impacts to habitat, and conform to legal standards for all pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer applications.
- Prohibit bridges over Little Rock and Big Rock Washes except for flying-type bridges with wide, open spans beneath, that neither impinge nor alter the channel characteristics below.⁶

Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan

The assessment area is located in the Antelope Valley and thus development is also governed by the policies, procedures, and standards set forth in the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan. The Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, in conjunction with the County General Plan, is a coordinated statement of public policy by the County for use in making public decisions relating to the future of the Antelope Valley.

In the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, all unincorporated areas in the northern and southern portion of the Initial Study Area are designated as N1-Non-Urban, which allows one dwelling unit per two acres and also permits agricultural and local commercial/industrial uses.

The Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan also designates a bikeway along Avenue J, which runs

⁵ PCR Services Corporation, *Biological Resources Assessment of the Proposed Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Area, prepared for the County Department of Regional Planning, November 2000.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

through the Initial Study Area. According to the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, unincorporated areas in the northern Initial Study Area fall within two special management categories: Agricultural Opportunity Areas (AOAs) and Floodplain Management Areas (FMAs). AOAs, shown in Figure 9-3, are areas that are currently used for agriculture or historically were agricultural lands. AOAs are to be protected from incompatible uses, and any proposed non-agricultural projects are evaluated based on impacts to adjacent agricultural operations. Urban and suburban residences are strongly discouraged in AOAs. FMAs are areas where flood inundation or erosion might occur during a major storm event. In rural areas, it is preferred that FMAs be maintained in a natural condition in order to recharge groundwater basins. Preferred land uses in FMAs include agriculture, open space and recreation, groundwater conservation, and extractive uses. On LAWA property, Little Rock Wash also is designated as an FMA.

City of Palmdale General Plan

In 1993, the City of Palmdale updated its general plan, which outlines its goals, objectives, and policies for long-range growth and development. One of the land use objectives stated in the general plan is to ensure compatibility between neighboring land uses that have different functions and impacts. The southern part of the Initial Study Area is located in the City of Palmdale. In the general plan, the city designates all lands in the Initial Study Area north of Avenue P-8 as IND-Industrial. The Industrial category allows for intensive manufacturing activities and should be separated from residential uses by natural or artificial barriers.

Between Avenues P-8 and Q, land use in the Initial Study Area is designated as BP-Business Park, which permits a variety of office, research and development, light industrial, and commercial uses within master-planned complexes in campus settings.

The general plan designates the LAWA property as AR-Airfield and Related Uses. The Airfield designation permits military and commercial air traffic and supporting transportation and commercial facilities.

The southwest corner of the Initial Study Area along Little Rock Wash is designated as Specific Plan No. 14-Eastside Quarry. Eastside Quarry extends from approximately 70th Street East to 90th Street East between Avenues O-8 and S, and continues further south into Little Rock Wash. The California State Mining and Geology Board Guidelines for Mineral Resource Zones (MRZ) has designated 37 square miles in the general area of Little Rock Wash as a MRZ-2 district, which allows for mining, crushing, batching and sales of mineral products. Eastside Quarry is both a State-designated Significant Resource Area and a city-designated Mineral Resource Extraction (MRE) District for sand and gravel. The city's MRE designation permits extraction and processing of mineral resources including sand, gravel, and decomposed granite.

City of Lancaster General Plan

A portion of the Initial Study Area is located in the City of Lancaster as shown in Figure 9-4. The City of Lancaster updated its general plan in 1997. The Lancaster General Plan identifies the types of development that will be allowed and the general pattern of future development in the city. The general plan also addresses planning issues that may affect or be affected by areas outside of the existing city limits, such as the adopted sphere of influence⁷ that extends north of

⁷ *According to the County General Plan, a sphere of influence is an unincorporated area "beyond the boundary of a city, but likely to be included in the ultimate physical boundary of a city due to its ability to provide services and its social and economic interdependence with the area." The City of Lancaster has no regulatory power over its sphere of influence; however, the city establishes land use designations within the sphere in order to communicate intentions for development that can be used to preserve compatible neighboring land uses, particularly open space, agricultural, and resource conservation lands.*

the city to EAFB and the Kern County line, and east to the San Bernardino County line.⁸ Thus, the northern part of the Initial Study Area includes primarily the City of Lancaster and areas within its sphere of influence.

Designated land uses in the Initial Study Area within the City of Lancaster include Urban Residential (2.1 to 6.5 dwelling units per acre), Non-Urban 1 (one dwelling unit per ten acres), and Industrial. Designated land uses in the Lancaster sphere of influence include Urban Residential, Non-Urban 1, and Public/Quasi-Public.

The Lancaster General Plan encourages urban core-based development as opposed to residential sprawl. The EIR prepared for the Lancaster General Plan in 1997 assesses three alternatives: (1) No Project; (2) Infill Growth; and (3) Urban Core Expansion. The No Project Alternative projects that most residential sprawl would be expected to occur east of downtown. Under this alternative, residential development is projected to expand into the Initial Study Area by the year 2020. The Infill and Urban Core Alternatives assessed in the EIR would reduce growth in the outlying areas, favoring instead infill and urban center development. Under these alternatives, the Initial Study Area would not be developed in the near future, limiting the effects of residential sprawl.

Los Angeles World Airports

PMD is owned and operated by LAWA, which is a department of the City of Los Angeles. Currently, PMD is located at USAF Plant 42. LAWA leases 61.75 acres of land from USAF Plant 42 under a joint use agreement that allows civilian airfield facilities at the military airport. At USAF Plant 42, LAWA owns and operates a 9,000 square foot passenger terminal and 11,000 square yard apron for civilian aircraft parking.

LAWA is developing a new PMD Master Plan to meet expected future demand within Antelope Valley for additional flight capacity at PMD, and to determine the ability of PMD to accommodate some of the projected

increase in air transportation demand in greater Southern California. According to the SCAG 2004, regional passenger demand will double and air cargo will more than triple by 2030. SCAG 2004 suggests expanding regional airports rather than increasing capacity at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

The PMD Master Plan is being developed in three phases. Phase I, which evaluated existing conditions and developed forecasts of airport capacity and facility requirements for the next 30 years, is complete. Phase II, an analysis of alternative development scenarios for PMD, has begun with an NOP from LAWA released on January 13, 2005. The NOP outlines three alternative projects that could accommodate the expected capacity of 1.14 million passengers per year at PMD in 2030. The alternatives consider expansion scenarios within USAF Plant 42 boundaries and on adjacent land owned by LAWA. The sites for all three alternative development scenarios are located west of 40th Street East and north of Avenue P. The City of Los Angeles is preparing a joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Report (EA/EIR) for the recommended project pursuant to both NEPA and CEQA. A Draft EA/EIR is scheduled for release in February 2006.

The Final West Mojave Plan

The WMP is a habitat conservation plan (HCP) and federal land use plan that has been jointly prepared by agencies having administrative responsibility or regulatory authority over species of concern within the West Mojave Desert. The WMP defines a regional strategy for conserving plant and animal species, such as the desert tortoise and MGS, as well as their habitats. The WMP develops an efficient, equitable, and cost-effective process for complying with threatened and endangered species laws. The WMP will enable the USFWS and DFG to issue programmatic biological opinions and incidental take permits more efficiently. The federal lead agency is the BLM.

⁸ *City of Lancaster General Plan, October 13, 1997.*

The WMP area extends from Olancho in Inyo County on the north to the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains on the south, and from the Antelope Valley on the west to the Mojave National Preserve on the east. The Initial Study Area is entirely within the WMP area and therefore, may be subject to its guidelines. The WMP proposes areas of critical environmental concern and desert wildlife management areas, but currently there are no proposed designations in the assessment area. The WMP Amendment/HCP was released for public comment on June 10, 2003. The final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Plan were published in March 2005.

Farmland Mapping

In 1970, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) began a mapping program to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use. In 1982, the state of California created the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program within the California Department of Conservation to carry on the mapping activity from the NRCS on a continuing basis. Figure 9-3 depicts farmland resources in the project vicinity. As shown in this figure, LAWA property contains Prime Farmland and Grazing Land.⁹ The Initial Study Area contains Prime Farmland, Grazing Land, and small areas of Unique Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Prime Farmland is land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has produced irrigated crops at some time within the four years prior to the mapping date. Farmland of Statewide Importance is land that meets the criteria for Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings such as greater slopes or lesser soil moisture capacity. Unique Farmland has even lesser quality soils and produces the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but also includes non-irrigated orchards and vineyards. Grazing

Land is land on which the vegetation is suitable for grazing livestock.

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is designed to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging their premature and unnecessary conversion to urban uses. Williamson Act contracts, also known as agricultural preserves, offer tax incentives for agricultural land preservation by ensuring that land will be assessed for its agricultural productivity rather than its highest and best use. There are no agricultural lands enrolled under the Williamson Act located within the County.¹⁰

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Thresholds of Significance

The CEQA Guidelines establish that a project would normally have a significant effect on existing land uses if it would:

- Physically divide an established community;
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect; or
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

The CEQA Guidelines establish that a project would normally have a significant effect on existing agricultural resources if it would:

⁹ California Department of Conservation map: Los Angeles County Important Farmland 1998.

¹⁰ Sokulsky, Richard, County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weight & Measures, personal communication, April 8, 2003.

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract; or
- Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

Impact 9-1: Implementation of the proposed project would convert land to effluent management facilities.

Treatment Upgrades

The treatment facilities would be upgraded to produce tertiary-treated wastewater effluent. The upgrades would be constructed within the current footprint of the PWRP facilities. No new land is required to accommodate the treatment upgrades. The PWRP site currently is zoned for public facilities. The upgraded treatment facilities would not impact local land uses.

Storage Reservoirs

The proposed project would construct up to 700 acres of new storage reservoirs within the Initial Study Area, within one of three proposed 1,350-acre sites, as shown in Figure 9-1.

Storage Reservoir Areas Nos. 1 and 2 are located along the eastern boundary of the LAWA property. If new storage reservoirs were built in Storage Reservoir Area No. 1 or No. 2, vacant land would be converted to public utility facilities. According to the City of Palmdale General Plan, the designated land use in both Storage Reservoir Areas Nos. 1 and 2 is Airfield and Related Use (AR). The County considers LAWA property to be P-Public. According to the City of

Palmdale Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 6, Article 63, Section 63.02, Zone M-3 is consistent with the Palmdale General Plan AR designation. In Zone M-3, utility facilities are permitted, subject to Site Plan Review approval (Section 63.05). Therefore, following Site Plan Review, a CUP would not be necessary for constructing storage reservoirs in either Storage Reservoir Area No. 1 or No. 2.

There is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in Storage Reservoir Area No. 1 or No. 2. There also are no residences or sensitive receptors such as schools or churches in Storage Reservoir Area No. 1. Thus, assuming an approved Site Plan Review and land acquired from LAWA, there would be no impact to land use or agriculture if new storage reservoirs were built in Storage Reservoir Area No. 1.

There is one residence in Storage Reservoir Area No. 2. If new storage reservoirs were built in Storage Reservoir Area No. 2, the land conversion would displace this residence unless 700 acres were selected within Storage Reservoir Area No. 2 that excluded it. See Section 20, Population and Housing, for further discussion of displacement impacts. Otherwise, assuming an approved Site Plan Review and land acquisition from LAWA, there would be no impact to land use due to land conversion in Storage Reservoir Area No. 2.

District No. 20 would have to lease or purchase land from LAWA in order to construct storage reservoirs in Storage Reservoir Area No. 1 or No. 2. Thus, LAWA would also have to agree that public utility facilities would be compatible with the future neighboring PMD. Since the publication of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, attempts to negotiate with LAWA were unsuccessful and, therefore, Storage Reservoir Areas Nos. 1 and 2 cannot be used for this project.

Storage Reservoir Area No. 3 is located mostly northwest of Alpine Butte, mostly within the Initial Study Area and partially within SEA No. 52.¹¹ A small parcel of land within the footprint of present PWRP facilities west of Little Rock Wash is also part of Storage Reservoir Area No. 3. If new storage reservoirs were built in Storage Reservoir Area No. 3, vacant land would be converted to public utility facilities. Land use designations in this area are Industrial (IND) within the City of Palmdale and Non-Urban (NU) in unincorporated County land. According to the City of Palmdale Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 6, Article 62, Section 62.02, Zone M-2 is consistent with the Palmdale General Plan IND designation. In Zone M-2, utility facilities are permitted, subject to Site Plan Review approval (Section 62.05). According to the County Planning and Zoning code, the unincorporated land within Storage Reservoir Area No. 3 is an A-2 zone, which requires the issuance of a CUP before constructing water reservoirs (County Code 22.24.150). In addition, a CUP would be required if storage reservoirs were developed within SEA No. 52.¹² District No. 20 would be required to submit the proposed project design to the SEATAC for review. The SEATAC recommendations would be submitted to the County Planning Commission for consideration before approval of the CUP. With the issuance of a SEACUP, no impacts to land use would be anticipated for construction of storage reservoirs.

There are no residences or other sensitive receptors in Storage Reservoir Area No. 3. The area is directly adjacent to SEA No. 52. There is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in Storage Reservoir Area No. 3. If new storage reservoirs were built in Storage Reservoir Area No. 3, there would be no impact to land use or agriculture due to land conversion, given Site Plan Review approval by the City of Palmdale and the issuance of a CUP or SEACUP by the County.

Agricultural Areas

In the existing EMS, land within the lease area (Figure 8-1) has been converted from agriculture and open space to agricultural reuse where treated effluent is applied to crops at, or in some cases above, agronomic rates. Approximately 5,140 additional acres of land would be converted to agriculture within either Agricultural Study Area No. 5 or No. 6. Recycled water from the PWRP would be applied to crops at agronomic rates in the new agricultural area. A one-million gallon recycled water storage tank also would be built in the vicinity of the new agricultural reuse fields. The tank would have approximately a 96-foot diameter footprint.

The lease area contains Prime Farmland and Grazing land. Agriculture is a compatible use within areas designated as Prime Farmland. Thus, there would be no impact to land use or designated important farmland from additional land conversion to agricultural reuse in the lease area.

Agricultural Study Area No. 6 was the highest ranked site for conversion to agricultural reuse. However, attempts to negotiate with LAWA for purchase or long-term lease of their property were unsuccessful. Therefore, the proposed project includes agricultural reuse and construction of the water storage tank in Agricultural Study Area No. 5.

Agricultural Study Area No. 5 is located between 70th Street East and 150th Street East, and generally between Avenues K-8 and M-8, mostly within the City of Palmdale. The predominant land use designation in Agricultural Study Area No. 5 is IND. According to the City of Palmdale Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 6, Article 62, Section 62.02, Zone M-2 is consistent with the Palmdale General Plan IND designation. In Zone M-2, agriculture is permitted without planning approval (Section 62.03), and public utility facilities, such as water storage tanks, are permitted subject to Site Plan Review approval (Section 62.05). Agricultural Area No. 5 includes a small portion of SEA No. 49

¹¹ Julie Lowry, *DRP personal communication*, March 7, 2005, jstriplin@planning.co.la.ca.us.

¹² *Ibid.*

along the Little Rock Wash. Mitigation Measure 9-1 would ensure that none of SEA No. 49 would be converted to agricultural uses.

There is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in Agricultural Study Area No. 5. However, a small portion of Agricultural Study Area No. 5 is located in an AOA (Figure 9-4). Agricultural reuse meets the intended purpose of AOAs, which is to preserve agricultural land from urban and suburban development. There are no sensitive receptors in Agricultural Study Area No. 5. However, there are 12 scattered residences that could be displaced by the conversion of land to agriculture.

Agricultural Study Area No. 6 includes LAWA property east of Little Rock Wash. In Agricultural Study Area No. 6, vacant land would be converted to agricultural reuse, which is compatible with the Airfield land use designated in the Palmdale General Plan. According to the City of Palmdale Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 6, Article 63, Section 63.02, Zone M-3 is consistent with the Palmdale General Plan AR designation. In Zone M-3, agriculture is permitted without planning approval (Section 63.03) and utility facilities, such as water storage tanks, are permitted subject to Site Plan Review approval (Section 63.05).

There is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in Agricultural Study Area No. 6. There are no schools, churches, or other sensitive receptors in Agricultural Study Area No. 6. However, there is one residence in Agricultural Study Area No. 6 that would have been displaced.

Impacts to land uses from land conversion to agricultural reuse in Agricultural Study Area No. 5 or Agricultural Study Area No. 6 would be less than significant. Agricultural Study Area No. 6 was ranked higher than Agricultural Study Area No. 5 per the evaluation criteria contained in Chapter 7. However, as noted above, attempts to negotiate with LAWA for purchasing or leasing their property were unsuccessful,

and therefore Agricultural Study Area No. 6 cannot be used for agricultural operations.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure 9-1: District No. 20 shall avoid constructing water tanks or storage reservoirs or converting land to agriculture within SEA No. 49 or No. 52.

Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant.

Impact 9-2: Portions of the proposed project would be located within the proposed Antelope Valley SEA.

The proposed project involves construction of storage reservoirs within the boundaries of the proposed Antelope Valley SEA (see Figure 9-2). Although the SEA has not been adopted, the County has developed and made available the proposed SEA locations to be used for planning purposes. The proposed project also involves construction of agricultural areas for effluent management within the proposed SEA.

As discussed above, the County General Plan specifies policies for development within SEAs relating to the protection of biotic resources. The policies call for the protection of core populations of sensitive species and rare communities and the preservation of habitat linkages.

A SEACUP is required before any building or grading permits are issued for any project in an SEA (County Code 22.56.215). Public utilities are not exempt from SEACUPs. District No. 20 could be required to obtain a SEACUP for construction of agricultural reuse operations within a proposed SEA if the SEA is adopted prior to the start of construction.¹³ The SEACUP application would be submitted to SEATAC for review

¹³ Kevin Johnson, DRP, personal communication, January 13, 2005, (213) 974-6443.

and comment. SEATAC would provide recommended measures in support of the County's SEA policies. SEATAC's recommendations would be submitted to the County Planning Commission for consideration prior to approval of the SEACUP. With issuance of the SEACUP, no conflicts with the County SEA land use policies would be anticipated for construction of storage reservoirs or clearing of land for agriculture.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Significance of Impact

Less than significant.

Impact 9-3: Construction of wastewater treatment facilities and effluent management facilities could conflict with existing airport operations and future plans to convert the LAWA property into a regional or international airport.

The PWRP is surrounded by property owned by LAWA. District No. 20 currently leases approximately four square miles of land west of the Little Rock Wash from LAWA. The land is used for effluent management including land application and agriculture, both at and above agronomic rates. This area will continue to be used for agriculture, applying treated effluent at agronomic rates through the EMS portion of the proposed project. The LAWA lease area will be used for agricultural operations as long as it is permitted. As discussed in this section, LAWA has plans to expand the PMD and may develop an international airport. Use of the lease area for effluent management including agricultural operations could conflict with the existing airport operations and LAWA's development plans. As such, District No. 20 recognizes that existing agricultural land may need to be moved east if development of the airport were to be affected. District No.20 is considering developing one of two agricultural area alternatives to replace the lease area. Agricultural Study Area No. 6 is located east of Little Rock Wash on land currently owned by LAWA.

However, attempts to negotiate with LAWA to utilize this alternative with assurances of future reliability (i.e., purchase or long-term lease) were unsuccessful. Agricultural Study Area No. 5 is located north and east of Agricultural Study Area No. 6 outside of LAWA property and is the proposed site because of the failure in the attempts to negotiate with LAWA for use of their property.

The proposed tertiary treatment plant would be constructed within the property owned by District No. 20 on 30th Street East and Avenue P-8. Containing the treatment facilities within District No. 20's current footprint would minimize effects of planned developments in the neighboring area. The treatment plant would not be incompatible with airport land uses.

Placing agriculture near the proposed airport would be considered a compatible land use, restricting residential and commercial encroachment that could be adversely affected by aircraft noise. In addition, no tall structures are required for agricultural operations that could interfere with aircraft flight. The large-scale agriculture operations would attract birds that could increase the potential for bird air strike hazards for both the existing and proposed airports. This effect could be minimized by establishing a buffer area around the runways or other protective measure deemed necessary by LAWA or the FAA. Otherwise, agricultural uses near airfields are generally considered compatible land uses that reduce encroachment of sensitive land uses. Furthermore, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would result in moving agricultural operations away from the existing runways, which would reduce air strike potential compared with existing conditions.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Significance of Impact

Less than significant.