

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

**2004 FIELD REPORT**

**COUNTY:** Merced

**FIELD MAPPER(S):** Kerri Kisko

**IMAGERY:**

*source:* National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP)

*date:* summer 2004

*scale:* 2 meter resolution

*film type:* true color mosaic

*coverage gaps:* none

*additional imagery:* NASA-Ames; August 8, 2003; 1:130,000 scale; CIR transparencies

**WRITTEN, DIGITAL & ORAL INFORMATION SOURCES:** *Please list which local governments, interest groups, or individuals submitted comments on the 2002 maps. Also list all phone and in-person contacts made or related GIS data referenced while conducting the 2004 update.*

➤ *local review comments:* none

*cities:*

*county:*

*others:*

➤ *personal contacts:* none

➤ *websites:*

County of Merced ([www.co.merced.ca.us](http://www.co.merced.ca.us))

Solid Waste Information System ([www.ciwmb.ca.gov/swis](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/swis))

University of California, Merced ([www.ucmerced.edu](http://www.ucmerced.edu))

U.C. Merced Planning ([www.ucmercedplanning.net](http://www.ucmercedplanning.net))

Welcome to Merced ([www.yosemite-gateway.org](http://www.yosemite-gateway.org))

➤ *GIS data referenced:*

SWIS landfill/waste facility reference file (swis.dgn)

**2002-2004 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 45 conversions of irrigated farmland to urban land this update. The majority of these changes occurred along the fringes of the cities of Atwater, Livingston, Los Banos, and Merced. In the City of Atwater two large housing developments were added (approximately 95 acres and 120 acres), along with other small areas of homes and additional playing fields at the Buhach Colony High School (≈15 acres). In the City of Livingston the Monte Cristo (≈40 acres) and Sundance (≈30 acres) housing communities and other small areas of homes were added. Also the local water treatment facility was expanded by approximately 20 acres. Multiple housing developments were added in the City of Los Banos, including: Anderson homes (≈15 acres), Avalon homes (≈45 acres), Mission Estates (≈80 acres), Northgate homes (≈45 acres), and a housing community of approximately 65 acres. An approximately 20-acre shopping center was also added. In the City of Merced the La Bella Vista (≈65 acres) and Cypress Terrace (≈25 acres) housing developments were added, along with an approximately 90-acre area of homes and a new apartment complex (≈10 acres). Also, the Iris Garret Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex (≈15 acres) was added next to an existing correctional institution south of the city.

Throughout the rest of the county the development was scattered. In the Community of Ballico approximately 15 acres of homes were added. The Border Valley Trading Inc., Turlock Plant (≈25 acres) was added near the Community of Delhi. In the City of Gustine an area of new homes (≈25 acres) was added. In the Community of Hilmar some buildings (≈10 acres) and new baseball fields (≈10 acres) were added, and the water treatment facility at the Hilmar Cheese Factory was expanded by approximately 10 acres. An area of new homes (≈10 acres) was added in the Community of Planada. Near the Community of Volta a new water control structure (≈50 acres) was noted. In the Community of Winton a new area of homes (≈10 acres) was added.

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

This update the majority of the 32 conversions of local, grazing, or other land to urban land were in the cities of Merced and Atwater. In the City of Merced multiple housing developments were added, including: Fahrenton homes (≈85 acres), Copper Creek homes (≈30 acres), Campus Vista homes (≈25 acres), El Capitan homes (≈25 acres), Summerton homes (≈20 acres), The Grove Apartments (≈20 acres), Village Terrace Apartments (≈15 acres), and other small areas of new homes. Also, the Plaza at El Portal shopping center (≈15 acres) and a self-storage facility (≈15 acres) were added. In the City of Atwater three new housing developments were added (10-30 acres each) and an Atwater Packing Company facility (≈10 acres) was noted.

The rest of the changes were scattered throughout the county. In the Community of Delhi two areas of new homes (≈10 and 40 acres) were added. Approximately 20 acres of new homes were added in the Community of Hilmar. Near the Community of Santa Nella, approximately 85 acres of new homes were added at the junction of Highways 152 and 33.

In the Community of Winton an area of new homes (≈10 acres) was noted. In the town of Ingomar some buildings (≈5 acres) were added near the Ingomar Packing Plant. Near the Community of Volta, a water treatment facility was expanded by approximately 25 acres and a large water control structure (≈65 acres) was added. In the City of Los Banos some new buildings (≈10 acres) were noted. In the Community of South Dos Palos the South Dos Palos Park (≈15 acres) and some new apartments (≈10 acres) were added.

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

There were 255 conversions of prime, statewide, or unique farmland to local or grazing land this update. The majority of these changes were due to irrigated farmland being fallow for three or more update cycles. Most of these conversions were fairly small (30 acres or less) and were scattered throughout the county. Large conversions of 100 acres or larger occurred on the Dos Palos (1), El Nido (1), Ingomar (2), Le Grand (1), Merced (1), Ortigalita Peak, NW (1), San Luis Dam (2), Sandy Mush (3), Santa Rita Bridge (2), Stevinson (1), and Volta (6) quads.

Other changes (12) were due to irrigated farmland being converted to nonirrigated grain. Nonirrigated grain is part of the Farmland of Local Importance category. These conversions occurred primarily in the hills west of the City of Los Banos and near the Community of Planada. West of Los Banos (particularly close to the Interstate 5 and Highway 152 junction) several large conversions occurred; two changes were approximately 100 acres each, one change was approximately 165 acres, and the largest change was approximately 1,700 acres. Near Planada the changes were smaller, ranging from 20 to 85 acres in size.

➤ **Irrigated Farmland to Other Land**

This update there were 150 conversions of irrigated farmland to other land. The majority of the changes were small (20 acres or less) and were scattered throughout the county. Low-density housing in the form of ranchettes and rural commercial accounted for almost half (72) of the changes. Confined livestock, particularly dairies, were prevalent as well (71 changes). Most of the confined livestock conversions were due to small expansions of existing dairies, however some large dairies (50 acres or larger) were noted on the Planada (1), Sandy Mush (1), and Turlock (1) quads. Other conversions were due to mining activities and natural vegetation.

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

There were 121 conversions of local, grazing, or other land to irrigated farmland this update. These changes occurred throughout the county and primarily were in the form of orchards, field crops, row crops, and irrigated pasture. The majority of the changes were less than 50 acres in size. Some changes of note include two areas of orchards (~950 acres and 230 acres) and two areas of alfalfa (~275 acres and 150 acres) on the Turlock Lake quad, an approximately 350-acre area of field crops on the Gustine quad, an area of row crops (~250 acres) on the Volta quad, two areas of orchards (~220 acres and 165 acres) on the Le Grand quad, and an area of alfalfa/cotton (~160 acres) on the Ingomar quad.

➤ **UNUSUAL:** *Category changes, complications with the Farmland of Local Importance definition, or any other special circumstances in 2004.*

Grazing Land to Other Land: There were 26 conversions of grazing land to other land. Fifteen of these changes were due to ranchettes (10-30 acres). Four of the changes were due to small dairies (10-35 acres). Other changes were due to mining activities, natural vegetation, and additions of the California Aqueduct for consistency.

Grazing Land to Farmland of Local Importance: There were four changes of grazing land being converted to nonirrigated grain. The large changes occurred on the Le Grand ( $\approx$ 1,000 acres) and Planada ( $\approx$ 150 acres) quads.

University of California, Merced: The new university doesn't show up as a conversion due to the fact that it is built on the site of the former Merced Hills Golf Course. The land was already designated as Urban.

**PROBLEM AREAS:** *What locations and map categories need careful checking in 2006? Why?*

West of Los Banos, near the junction of Interstate 5 and Highway 152, there is a large amount of irrigated farmland that is going fallow or being converted to nonirrigated grain. Watch this area closely next update.

Look for more development along the northeastern fringe of Merced. There are plans for more growth near the new U.C. Merced campus.

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

*photo interpretation, start date:* October 19, 2005

*photo interpretation, number of days:* 7

*ground truthing dates:* October 31- November 4, 2005

*# days for map compilation and clean up:* 18

\* **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](http://www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp)