

6.1 AGRICULTURAL LANDS

6.1.1 Introduction

Agricultural land uses are a major component of Shasta County's resource land base. They are also a major element in defining the quality of life available to the residents of Shasta County. Were agriculture to lose its land-based prominence in the County, the rural character and country living so valued by its residents and so important to its economy would likely decline. This element encompasses portions of three mandatory elements, namely; land use, conservation, and open space. The pertinent portions of these elements are quoted below.

A land use element . . . designates the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the use of land for . . . agriculture . . . (Government Code Section 65302(a).

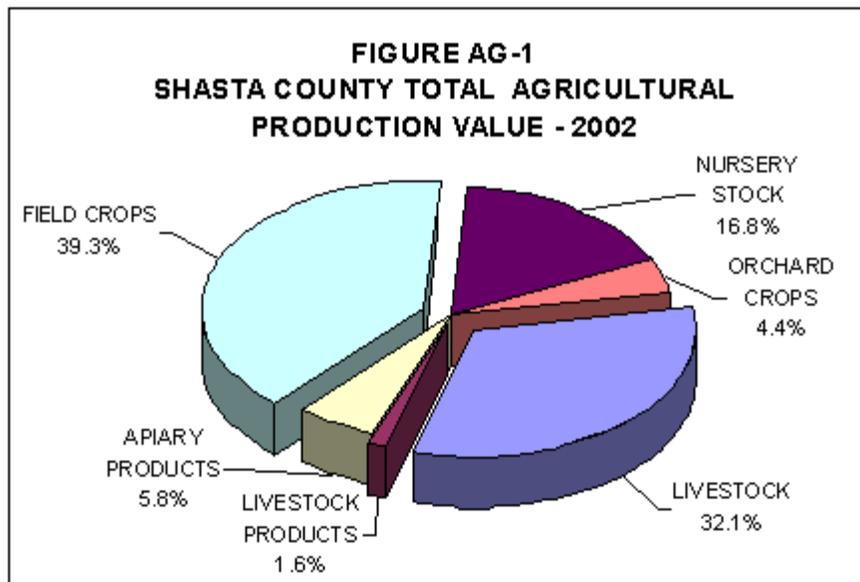
A conservation element for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including . . . soils . . . (Government Code Section 65302(d).

Open space for the managed production of resources, including . . . rangeland, agricultural lands, and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber . . . (Government Code Section 65560(b)(2).

6.1.2 Findings

Contribution to Shasta County

The County's total land area in farms was 333,828 acres in 2002.¹ Agriculture is not a dominant industry in Shasta County, but it does account for an important segment of the County's economic base. In 2002 the total market value of farm products was \$52,197,800, a slight increase from the \$51,691,000 million produced in 2001. Minor increases in the annual production value of orchard crops and apiary products accounted for this increase. Figure AG-1 indicates that field crops accounted for nearly 40 percent of this total with livestock sales providing nearly one-third (32.1 percent) of the County's total agricultural production value.



Total employment in farming operations in 2001 approximated 1,551 persons or 2 percent of the total employment for Shasta County as reported in the 2003 publication "Historical, Comparative Economic Analysis for Shasta County" prepared by Policom Corporation. This study also reported that primary industry earnings from the "Farm" sector accounted for 1.1 percent of the total primary industry earnings for Shasta County in 2000. Shasta County ranked 42nd among the 58 California counties in 2002 in the value of total agricultural production amounting to \$44,477,000 as reported by State Department of Food and Agriculture.

In addition to its economic contribution, the agriculture industry is in large part responsible for the rural character of the County. Farming necessitates a close relationship between the farmer and the land, fosters close relationships with family and community, and encourages self-reliance and independence. These characteristics define a way of life which tends to be assumed by those living in agricultural areas, even though they are not directly engaged in agriculture.

Farmland retention can play an important role in the support of wildlife values through the effects it has on conservation of wildlife habitats. Potentially, the most fertile wildlife habitat is the forest edge or point where natural vegetation bounds meadows, pastures, or croplands. Often such areas (called ecotones) contain greater variations of species and their numbers are much greater than in the communities to either side. As more farmland is developed for urban and suburban uses, the available habitat for most field and woodland edge species decreases, resulting in a subsequent decline or potential elimination of their populations.

Other indirect benefits from maintaining the agricultural landscape include sustaining the protection of watersheds and natural drainage courses. It is also important to recognize the aesthetic values of farmland. Agricultural lands provide productive, privately-maintained open space which contributes to the open, natural landscape of much of Shasta County. Cumulatively, these and other indirect benefits should be considered as important as direct benefits and should be evaluated whenever new development presents a potential to significantly impact agricultural lands.

It is important to understand that agricultural land can be easily degraded and converted to non-agricultural uses; however, it is a resource that cannot be easily replaced. It is a non-renewable resource and once lost or degraded, may never be restored to its original quality. In most cases, the natural fertility of "artificially"-created agricultural land is low and therefore requires a high rate of input of fertilizers, energy, and capital. In the long term, existing agricultural lands in Shasta County may become increasingly valuable as losses occur elsewhere and as urban areas continue to expand. Shasta County, however, contains a pattern of agricultural geography which allows it to avoid significant losses of agricultural lands if appropriate policies are implemented.

While a sizeable portion of California's agricultural system is dominated by national and global agricultural economics, maintaining sufficient agriculturally-productive lands to serve as local sources of food and fiber could become a critical long-term issue. This is due, in part, to the fluctuations of agricultural economies and the irreversible loss of productive agricultural land. The continued existence of agriculture in Shasta County does provide the option for some degree of local self-sufficiency in food production.

General Characteristics of Farms

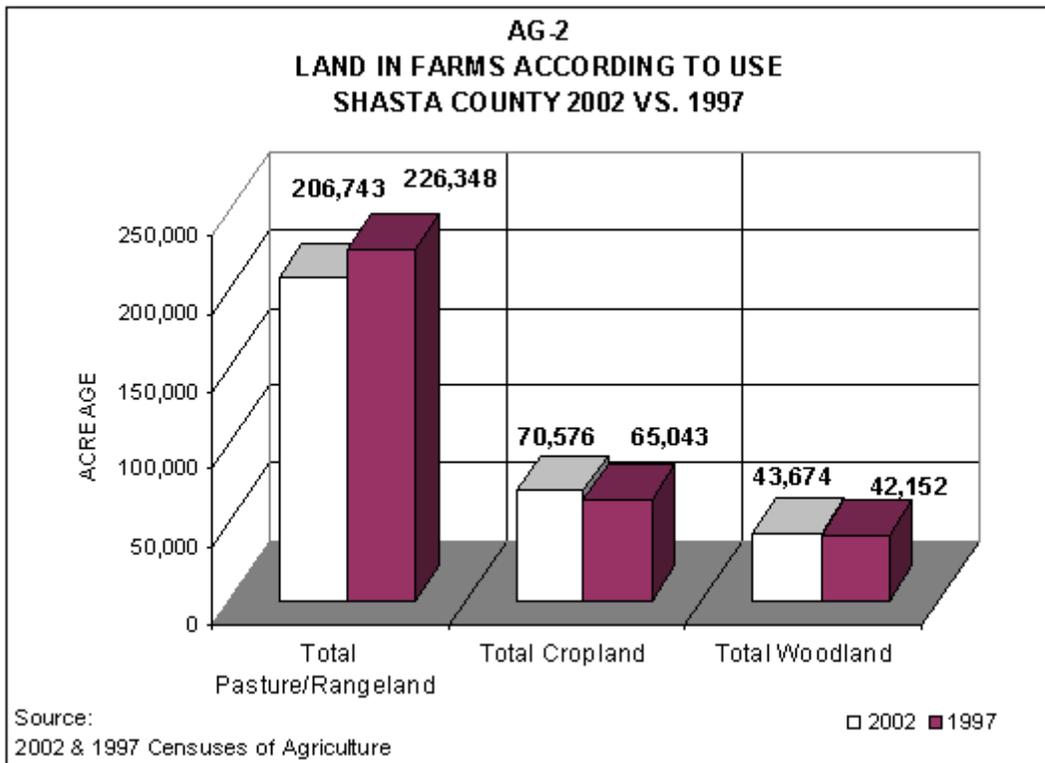
In Shasta County, the number of farms has been slowly increasing and the average farm size has been decreasing since 1987, as shown in Table AG-1. This is the opposite of the California trend toward fewer but larger farms. Since 1997 there has been a slight loss of agricultural land in Shasta County, amounting to 14,246 acres, or a 4.1 percent decline. According to the 2002 U.S. Census of Agriculture, approximately 74.6 percent of all farms in Shasta County were less than 100 acres in size, as shown by Table AG-2. This, in part, explains why approximately 51 percent of the total land in farms is enrolled in Williamson Act Contracts which under Shasta County regulations require a minimum of 100 acres.²

The distribution of all farm land, by general category, in Shasta County is shown in Figure AG-2. The largest portion (62 percent or 206,743 acres) is devoted to pastureland and/or rangeland. This number represents approximately a 8.7 percent reduction in this category for numbers reported in 1997. Cropland represents approximately a 21.1 percent share with 13.1 percent in woodland.

**TABLE AG-1
2002-1997 FEDERAL CENSUSES OF AGRICULTURE
COMPARATIVE ANALYSES - STATE OF CALIFORNIA VS. SHASTA COUNTY**

	Shasta County				California		
	2002	1997	Percent Inc./Dec.		2002	1997	Percent Inc./Dec.
Number of Farms	1,126	1,108	1.6%		79,709	87,991	-9.4%
Acres in Farms	333,828	348,074	-4.1%		27,627,073	28,795,834	-4.1%
Average Size of Farms	296	314	-5.7%		347	327	6.1%
Farms by Size:							
1-9 acs.	323	370	-1.3%		21,823	27,151	-19.6%
10-49	399	338	1.8%		27,331	28,613	-4.5%
50-179	197	174	13.2%		14,357	14,874	-3.5%
180-499	88	91	-3.3%		7,773	8,055	-3.5%
500-999	43	56	-23.2%		3,616	3,912	-7.6%
1,000 +	76	79	-3.8%		4,809	5,386	-1.1%
Farms by Value of Sales:							
Less than \$2,500	570	533	6.9%		23,388	28,871	-19.0%
\$2,500 to \$4,999	122	167	-26.9%		5,999	7,470	-19.7%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	130	128	-1.6%		7,215	7,560	-4.6%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	128	126	1.6%		9,442	9,685	-2.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	81	67	20.9%		7,168	7,360	-1.9%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	45	45	N/C		6,772	6,909	-1.9%
\$100,000 +	50	42	19.0%		19,725	20,136	-2.0%

Source: 2002 & 1997 Federal Censuses of Agriculture



The size of farms is of importance because of its economic implications for the farm operator, which in turn has implications for land use regulations applicable to farm lands. Discussions of appropriate farm sizes frequently focus on the concept of the economically viable farm unit. This concept has its origins in the Reclamation Act of 1902 and addresses the question of the minimum size farm operation capable of sustaining a household. In Shasta County, and increasingly throughout the United States, the classic definition does not encompass all the complex policy considerations associated with planning for agricultural lands. There are various types of farm operations in Shasta County, and each has a different definition of viable farm unit. If County agricultural protection policy were to be based solely on the classic definition of an economically viable farm unit as provided by some standard based on household income, it would be at variance with the present structure and trends of agriculture nationwide. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of farm operators.

Characteristics of Farm Operators

The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicates that farming in Shasta County is largely a family-oriented, owner operated enterprise. Approximately 93.4 percent of the County farms are operated by individuals or families, with partnerships (4.9 percent) and corporations (0.98 percent) accounting for 5.9 percent of farm operations. About 95.3 percent of all farms are operated by either full or part owners.

There are three types of farmers in Shasta County. They are:

- the full-time farm operator
- the part-time/second income farm operator
- the custom farmer

The **full-time farm and ranch operator** is defined as an individual, family, or firm who usually owns the farm he/she operates in Shasta County and who considers agriculture his/her principal occupation. The full-time farm operator requires an area of land of a combined size and quality sufficient to provide the exclusive or primary source of annual income for the entity conducting the operation. This land area may comprise several discontinuous units.

Part-time or second income farming is a significant land use in Shasta County. Individuals in this group tend to have a more diverse background than the members of the full-time category and include:

- Individuals with a significant outside income who have invested primarily in a homesite and lifestyle and who may, particularly prior to the Tax Reform Acts of 1976 and 1986, have been motivated by the provisions of the U.S. income tax laws to invest in Shasta County's agriculture.
- Individuals now employed elsewhere but who intend either during their working years or after retirement to become a more active participant in agriculture.
- Individuals with significant capital assets who seek a secure investment vehicle for these assets, while at the same time measuring return in terms of personal satisfaction as well as annual income.
- Families or individuals who make a deliberate trade-off between economic return from agriculture and the ability to enjoy both an income and a lifestyle that are clearly and directly the result of individual efforts.
- Those persons who produce small volumes of vegetable and fruit truck crops to be sold directly to the consumer and by other direct marketing activities, such as farmer's markets.

While in 2002 the County's average farm size was 296 acres, 28.7 percent of its farms were less than 10 acres and 64.1 percent were 49 acres or less. These facts suggest a strong interest in small scale agriculture in Shasta County and the need to recognize part-time farming as a significant land use type by allowing a range of parcel sizes and densities that are best suited to each unique local area of the County.

Whatever their particular motivations, part-time farmers make several unique contributions to the agriculture industry of Shasta County. Because part-time farmers have alternative, non-farm sources of income and are able to farm more intensively, their ability to operate a successful farming operation can be enhanced. In some cases, they are able to conduct farming operations on lands which could not be as successfully farmed by less intensive full-time operations.

The **custom farmer** is an individual who owns or rents and operates a farm in Shasta County. While the custom farmer considers agriculture his/her principal occupation, the farm operation he/she owns or rents does not provide the exclusive source of his/her income. Money earned by performing custom farming services for others is an important source of income to the custom farmer. It is important to note the critical role played by the custom farmer in the continuity of agriculture in Shasta County. Custom farmers provide services necessary to both full- and part-time farm operations.

Understanding that the motivations and economic circumstances of each type of farm operator differs from those of other types demonstrates that there is no uniform definition of "viable farm unit." The land area required by the full-time farmer will generally be larger than that required by the part-time farmer. The agricultural element must recognize these distinctions and provide areas of land throughout the County of sufficient size and resource value so that all types of farm operators may be accommodated.

Characteristics of Agricultural Areas and Commodities

For the purpose of the Agricultural Element, Shasta County is divided into three types of agricultural areas and subunits within each area, as follows:

<u>Valleys</u>	<u>Foothills</u>	<u>Large Mountain Meadows</u>
Sacramento River and tributaries Fall and Pit Rivers	Western Uplands Eastern Uplands	Goose Valley Burney Creek Valley Cayton Valley Hat Creek Valley

Valleys

The valleys of the Sacramento River and its tributaries, including Churn, Cottonwood, Anderson, Stillwater, Cow, Bear, Battle and Clover Creeks, contain some of the most productive agricultural land in the County. Many hundreds of acres of land in these valleys are classified as prime, unique farmlands or farmlands of statewide importance.

Unfortunately, all of these lands are subject to urbanization pressures. Urban services such as community sewer and water and paved roads are or could be made available to most of these lands. The classic example is the Churn Creek Bottom area which lies south of the Redding City limits and is traversed by Interstate 5 and Churn Creek Road. There is the potential that ongoing development proposals in the Churn Creek Bottom have taken on a character which could promote non-agricultural development of the area.

Very few of these agricultural areas are subject to Williamson Act contracts. It is problematic whether this is the result of the proximity of urbanization, the 100-acre minimum limit currently in effect for Williamson Act contracts in Shasta County, or both. Even so, 11 ranches comprising 8,456 acres on the central valley floor were enrolled in Williamson Act contracts in 1997. This represents approximately 5 percent of the 169,127 total acres in Williamson Act contracts in Shasta County.³ The current primary agricultural uses of these lands are field crops, orchard crops, strawberry nursery stock, and irrigated pasture.

In addition to the high quality of their soils, agricultural lands in this area enjoy a long growing season of from 172 to 205 days.⁴ Water from either the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, Clear Creek Community Service District, surface diversions of streams, or groundwater is available. Excellent transportation access exists.

The Fall and Pit River Valleys contain highly productive agricultural lands. The value of these lands is reflected to some degree by their enrollment in Williamson Act contracts, none of which are subject to notices of nonrenewal. There are 57 ranches in the "Intermountain Area" which total 42,282 acres enrolled in contract. This represents approximately 25 percent of the lands enrolled in contract throughout the County.

The current primary uses of these agricultural lands are field crops, strawberry nursery stock, and irrigated pasture. In comparison to agricultural lands located in the Sacramento River Valley, lands in the Fall and Pit River Valleys experience a shorter growing season and less precipitation.⁶ These factors determine the productivity and economic return of these lands, which in turn impact on their ability to cover the costs of production. A production cost which is becoming increasingly significant in the Fall and Pit River Valleys is energy required for pumping irrigation water. A final factor is transportation of the agricultural products, since the Fall and Pit River Valleys are less accessible to the population centers than in the Sacramento Valley.

Foothills

The foothills located in the portion of Shasta County known as the Western Upland contain some of the best rangelands available in the County. Particularly noteworthy is the area known as the Bald Hills. Some small pockets of land classified as prime agricultural lands are located in the vicinities of Igo and Ono. The primary use of these lands is livestock grazing. Grazing operations in this area enjoy good access to transportation associated with the Interstate 5 corridor and to the regionally important Shasta County Auction Yard located in Cottonwood. Almost all of the grazing lands in this area are subject to Williamson Act Contracts. This area has 50,738 acres enrolled in contract which represents 30 percent of the total lands in contract throughout the County.⁷

Development pressures on these lands have been less intense than in other areas of the County. But if this situation changed, development in this area would greatly increase the conflicts between ranching and residential land uses. Given their impact on grazing and the cattle industry, it is important to understand the nature of these conflicts.

The foothills situated in the Eastern Upland region of Shasta County contain rangelands equal in quality to those located in the Western Uplands, but this area does not contain a large block of excellent rangeland such as the Bald Hills of the Western Upland. Several creek valleys, including Little Cow, South Cow, Old Cow, and Clover Creeks, contain lands classified as prime agricultural lands and may be suitable as irrigated cropland or pasture.

The primary use of these lands is for the grazing of livestock. Grazing operations here, like those in the Western Upland, also enjoy good access to the Interstate 5 transportation corridor. Almost all of the grazing lands in this area are under Williamson Act contracts (67,651 acres or approximately 40 percent of all land in Williamson Act contracts).

Development pressures in the Eastern Upland are significant. Conflicts between rural residential uses and grazing operations pose a significant threat to the economic viability of the latter. The future of grazing in the Eastern Upland will in part depend on policies adopted by the General Plan with respect to future rural residential development in this area.

Range improvement burning has been practiced in Eastern Shasta County for a number of years both to improve grazing lands and reduce fire hazards. The Shasta County Vegetation Management and Demonstration Project (SCVMDP) has been designed to consolidate landowners and management practices into a coordinated resource management plan. Brush encroachment can be halted in the short run under this project by removal of brush through control burns and/or mechanical and chemical treatment. The benefits of vegetation management to range improvement have been well documented. The University of California Cooperative Extension has an ongoing research program begun in the 1930's in Shasta County to demonstrate the value of brush reduction. Past projects have

shown that livestock grazing can be increased three to four times over a six- to ten-year period following an initial burn. Other benefits include improved wildlife habitat, increased water yield, reduced soil erosion, and control of the air pollution impacts of brush burning. Long-range control of brush will require that landowners use better management practices; i.e., proper grazing use, fencing, water development, seeding of grasses, soil erosion control, and proper class of livestock.

If the SCVMDP proves successful and is applied beyond the current 200,000 acre project area, the livestock carrying capacity of the Eastern Upland will be enhanced. This in turn will have major implications for the cattle industry and the larger economy of Shasta County. But range management practices, such as control burns, do conflict with rural residential uses. This opportunity to enhance the economic productivity of the Eastern Upland will likely be foreclosed in the absence of policies to promote effective range management practices.

Large Mountain Meadows

The County's largest mountain meadows, located above the 3,000-foot elevation in the northeast region of the County, include the Goose, Cayton, Burney Creek, and Hat Creek Valleys. These meadows are irrigated and are used for grazing and growing crops. About half of these lands are under Williamson Act contracts. With the exception of the Hat Creek and the Burney Creek Valleys, development pressures on these lands are minimal and likely to remain so. The Hat Creek Valley has been extensively subdivided, but future development of the lots created will depend on the availability of water and septic suitability. The Burney Creek Valley lies immediately to the north of the town of Burney and could be served by its water and sewer systems. The development potential of this area is limited by flooding problems.

Potential Conflicts Between Agricultural Use and Rural Residential Use

Characteristic to all productive areas of valley agriculture is the need to minimize the problems of incompatibility between commercial agriculture and rural, suburban, and urban residential uses. Intensive agricultural activities can cause dust, odors, noise, smoke, and other results of typical agricultural operations and business which some may find objectionable to non-agricultural lifestyles. In order to protect agricultural activities from complaints from non-agricultural residential users, the County should always carefully evaluate the compatibility of new development proposals which may act to hinder typical agricultural operations on agriculturally-designated lands. The County has adopted an "agricultural use" ordinance to advise future property owners where land divisions occur adjacent to an agricultural use area, and that they may be subject to impacts from the conduct of existing and future agricultural-related activities, which may be considered objectionable.⁹

In the Foothills similar concerns exist. Persons purchasing homes in agricultural areas generally desire the feeling of openness produced by their relatively larger homesites, the surrounding agricultural uses, and the opportunity to engage in gardening and some animal raising, but not part-time farming. This type of rural residential development presents a number of problems impacting the adjacent grazing lands. The following discussion of these impacts is also applicable to rural residential development located in all agricultural areas.

First and foremost, land used for residential purposes is usually unavailable for grazing purposes. Second, the unavoidable consequences of grazing and certain range management practices, such as controlled burning of brush, use of pesticides, tilling of land, noise and odors, and stray animals, adversely affect adjacent residents who in turn petition their elected officials to prohibit or restrict

these activities. Third, adjacent residences adversely affect grazing operations by the destruction of fences, harassment and destruction of stock by trespassers and dogs, increased potential for wildfires, and greater demand for already limited water supplies. There are also other less visible but significant conflicts related to the impact of rural residential development on land prices. As land is developed or merely subdivided for residential purposes, land prices increase, making it more difficult for ranchers to buy or lease land to maintain or increase the size of their grazing operations. People wanting to enter the grazing industry find that this is not financially possible. Non-compatible recreational uses also provide many of the same conflicts to agricultural uses.

Framework for Minimum Agricultural Parcel Sizes

This examination provides the basis for establishing ranges of minimum parcel sizes appropriate to the variety of conditions present in the County. These parcel sizes, which are presented in Table AG-2, provide a framework for plan policies designed to preserve agricultural lands in units capable of supporting agricultural operations. Table AG 2 presents minimum parcel sizes for both full- and part-time operators.

In the case of the full-time operator, these minimum parcel sizes assume that it would be economically worthwhile to use a parcel for the primary use listed. Economically worthwhile means that the economic return on this property is attractive to a full-time operator if proper management and financing strategies are utilized. The concept of an economically worthwhile parcel size must be distinguished from the concept of a parcel capable of supporting a family. Under this latter concept, the minimum size of a parcel would in most cases exceed the minimum size under the concept of economically worthwhile. It follows that the full-time operator may require more than one parcel of an economically worthwhile size to support a family.

**TABLE AG - 2
MINIMUM PARCEL SIZE REQUIREMENTS**

		Minimum Parcel Size ¹	
Agricultural Area	Current Primary Use	Full-Time Operators (A-C or A-G)	Part-Time Operators (A-cg)
VALLEYS			
Sacramento River	Field Crops	40	5, 10 or 20
	Orchard Crops	40	5, 10 or 20
	Nursery Stock	40	5, 10 or 20
	Irrigated Pasture	120	5, 10 or 20
	Grazing	760	5, 10 or 20
Fall & Pit Rivers	Field Crops	40	5, 10 or 20
	Nursery Stock	40	5, 10 or 20
	Irrigated Pasture	160	5, 10 or 20
	Grazing	760	5, 10 or 20
FOOTHILLS			
Eastern Upland	Grazing	760	
	Irrigated Pasture	160	
Western Upland	Grazing	760	
	Irrigated Pasture	160	
MOUNTAIN MEADOWS			
Goose Valley	Irrigated Pasture	160	
Burney Creek Valley	Irrigated Pasture	160	
Cayton Valley	Irrigated Pasture	160	
Hat Creek Valley	Irrigated Pasture	160	

¹In cases involving irregular sections the minimum parcel size may vary up to five percent but not more than that needed to adjust for the irregularity, whichever is less.

Source: This table was developed in cooperation with the Shasta County Cattlemens' Association and the Shasta County Farm Bureau.

In the case of the part-time operator, it is assumed that a parcel of the size required would yield an economic return, but this return would not provide a self-sustaining annual family income. Typically, this will involve parcel sizes on agricultural soils ranging from 5 acres to less than 40 acres which are designated based on local land use patterns and need for buffers between residential and other resource uses.

The following definitions are provided as guidelines for use with Table AG-2:

"Cropland" is land capable of producing agricultural products which are planted, cultivated, and harvested by either mechanical means or by hand, or both. Cropland types include field and row crops, orchards and vineyards, nursery crops, and other related food and fiber crops.

"Irrigated pasture" is land used primarily for grazing and occasional haymaking, which is irrigated by surface or subsurface means according to generally accepted practices.

"Grazing land" is land used primarily for grazing and which relies exclusively on rain and snowfall for production of forage. Agriculturally-fallow land is also considered grazing land if left fallow under the definition of "current primary uses."

"Current primary use" refers to the prevailing use on a majority of land or a parcel during three of the previous five years.

For example, the current primary use of a parcel would be irrigated pasture if it had been used as provided by definition during at least three of the previous five years.

6.1.3 Objectives

- AG-1 Preservation of agricultural lands at a size capable of supporting full-time agricultural operations (designated on the land use maps as A-C or A-G) in order to allow the continuation of such uses and to provide opportunities for the future expansion and/or establishment of such uses.
- AG-2 Preservation of agricultural lands at a size capable of supporting part-time or second income, but not full-time, agricultural operations (designated on the land use maps as A-cg) in order to allow the continuation of such uses and to provide opportunities for the future expansion and/or establishment of such uses.
- AG-3 Recognition by Shasta County residents that the preservation of agricultural lands for agricultural uses, both large and small scale, is in the public interest because it preserves local and regional food supplies and is an important contributing industry to the Shasta County economy.
- AG-4 Recognition by Shasta County residents that preservation of agricultural lands, both large- and small-scale, provides privately maintained open-space, facilitates a rural lifestyle, and requires Countywide understanding of the problems facing ranchers and farmers.
- AG-5 Protection of agricultural lands from development pressures and or uses which will adversely impact or hinder existing or future agricultural operations.
- AG-6 Protection of water resources and supply systems vital for the continuation of agriculture.

6.1.4 Policies

AG-a Agricultural lands in Shasta County shall be classified according to three general categories based on the following criteria:

Lands designated on the land use maps as A-G capable of supporting grazing by full-time operators, including:

- Existing grazing lands used for this purpose.
- Lands which are not now but could be used for this purpose based on resource characteristics (soils, climate, access to water) and compliance with the applicable parcel size minimums of Table AG-2.

Land designated on the land use maps as A-C capable of supporting crop production by full-time operators, including:

- Existing croplands used for this purpose.
- Lands which are not now but could be used for this purpose based on resource characteristics (soils, climate, access to water) and compliance with the applicable parcel size minimums of Table AG-2.

Land designated on the land use maps as A-cg capable of supporting crop production by part-time or second income operators, with the following characteristics:

- Existing lands used for this purpose.
- Lands which are not now but could be used for this purpose based on resource characteristics (soils, climate, access to water).
- Applicable parcel size minimums of 5, 10 or 20 acres, as best suited to the locale, and applied to part-time agricultural areas found in Table AG-2.

AG-b Existing agricultural lands and other County lands meeting the criteria described in Table AG-2 shall be reviewed by the County at five year intervals to determine the appropriateness of either their current or potential classification as agricultural lands. The purpose of this review is to ensure that agricultural lands either currently or potentially preserved for agricultural uses merit such special treatment and to provide a systematic, uniform, and equitable process for the periodic review of certain current or potential agricultural lands. This review process shall be used judiciously. Removal of land from the agricultural designation shall occur only when evidence and findings are provided which shows an overriding public need to develop the property for non-agricultural uses.

This review shall be conducted by the Department of Resource Management in conjunction with appropriate agricultural interest groups.

Existing agricultural lands and other County lands may be nominated for review between five year General Plan updates as follows:

- By resolution of intention by the Board of Supervisors or Planning Commission;
- By completed application of the property owner; and
- By recommendation of the Department of Resource Management.

Each nomination for a land use or policy change shall be executed by a completed County application which includes special supplemental information required by the County specific to amendments for the Agricultural Lands Element.

In its review, the Department of Resource Management and advisory groups shall address the following factors, and any recommendations presented shall provide an analysis which explicitly states the relationship to these factors:

- The local, State, and National interests in the preservation of agricultural lands to assure adequate, healthful, and nutritious food supplies.
- The availability of non-agricultural lands to serve the purposes which would otherwise require the conversion of agricultural lands into non-agricultural lands.
- The impact of the conversion of agricultural lands into non-agricultural lands (e.g. adjacent agricultural lands).
- The impact of the conversion of non-agricultural lands into agricultural lands (e.g., adjacent non-agricultural lands).
- The relationship between the geographic pattern of agricultural land use and the pattern of community development prescribed in the General Plan.

AG-c Lands designated on the land use maps as A-C or A-G shall be principally used for grazing and/or crop production. In addition to these principal uses, lands so classified may be used for residential purposes accessory to the principal use. Such accessory residential uses shall be limited to "family member" housing and farm labor housing. Separately-created legal lots not exceeding five acres in size may be created for family member housing or for purposes of financing as long as it can be demonstrated that the division will not infringe upon the viability of the agricultural operation. The number of family member parcels that may be created shall be determined by the Zoning Plan. Farm labor housing which includes both seasonal and annual employees shall be permitted at the rate appropriate to the type of agricultural operation and shall not be located on separate legal lots created for this purpose.

Lands classified as agricultural lands may also be used for low-intensity commercial recreation uses. Such low-intensity uses shall not preclude the long-term availability of such lands for agricultural production. As used in this context, low intensity commercial recreation uses are defined as uses which will not interfere with the principal uses of lands for agricultural purposes and do not require substantial improvements, including lodging facilities. Examples of low intensity recreation uses include hunting, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, non-motorized boating, and similar activities.

Lands classified as agricultural lands may be used for mineral exploration and extraction purposes that will not permanently interfere with the principal uses of the lands for agricultural purposes.

AG-d In order to protect full-time agricultural uses from incompatible land uses, lands being divided in areas designated either RA or RB that adjoin lands designated for full-time agricultural uses shall comply with one of the following:

- If outside of a rural community or town center, the minimum parcel size shall be ten acres or more depending on other policies or standards. Residential building sites shall be located, to the extent feasible, to avoid negative impacts on the adjacent land uses.
- If within a rural community or town center, the minimum parcel size shall be five acres or more depending on other policies or standards. Residential building sites shall be located, to the extent feasible, to avoid negative impacts on the adjacent land uses.
- If it can be shown that topographic or man-made features will sufficiently separate the uses, the above-mentioned standards shall not be applied.

AG-e Divisions of agricultural lands designated A-C or A-G shall conform to Table AG-2 with respect to the geographic location of the agricultural lands, their current primary use, and full-time operation.

Any proposed division of lands shall be for exclusive agricultural purposes, except in the case of family member residences or family member financing, trades between agricultural operations, or the transfer or settlement of estates. Such exceptions may be approved only if all the following conditions are met:

- No conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations will result from the division.
- Any proposed division of land designated on the land use map as full-time agricultural lands shall require documentation that the division is necessary for continued full-time agricultural uses and that the proposed parcel sizes will not be detrimental to the economic viability of agricultural operations on said parcels or adjoining parcels.

AG-f All lands classified as full-time agricultural lands shall be placed in a corresponding agricultural zone district and shall be eligible to enter into a contract, as provided by the Williamson Act (also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965) and applicable Shasta County agricultural preserve standards which require a minimum of 100 acres of Class 1 equivalent soil based on the Soil Conservation Service's soil capability system and soil equivalencies adopted by the Shasta County Board of Supervisors.

AG-g Lands designated A-cg shall be maintained to support both short- and long-term part-time agricultural activities as the primary land use while allowing subordinate auxiliary uses, including single family residences. Removal of agricultural soils and other activities which reduce the potential for agricultural production as the primary land use are prohibited, except in the following situations:

- A. Mineral extraction or mining on lands in the vicinity of a significant waterway where the County has adopted a stream corridor delineation upon consultation with the Department of Fish and Game and subject to all of the following general performance standards:

- The land shall be located within the adopted delineated stream corridor.
- The end result of the land use change is to enhance fish and wildlife habitat within the delineated stream corridor.
- The perceived natural resource and environmental value and public interest must be equal to or greater than that of maintaining the site as part-time agricultural land.
- The land use conversions result in habitat protection zoning.
- A long-term and comprehensive aggregate and wildlife habitat management and protection program for the waterway reach affected by the proposed land use change has been adopted by the County, after consultation with the Department of Fish and Game.
- Protection of bridges and other key infrastructure which may be impacted by mining operations is assured through proper engineering and hydrologic design.

Mining applications may be approved prior to the adoption of a comprehensive management plan to an affected waterway if supportable findings are made that the proposal has substantially complied with other performance standards contained in this policy (approved May 9, 1995, GPA 1-95, Resolution 95-90).

- B. A deviation from minimum parcel size requirements may allow parcels as small as two acres in lieu of five-acre parcels sizes in exchange for creating a common area which will be maintained in perpetuity for open space or other resource conservation activities (i.e. wetland). Such projects shall provide the following:
- The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed project design would result in a project which is environmentally superior and provides a public benefit in maintaining a common area for a significant or unique natural resource such as a wetland.
 - The applicant must demonstrate and the approving body must find that the preservation of the resource value of the site by providing permanent open space for wildlife and the habitat upon which it relies is in the public interest.
 - In all cases, the applicants must demonstrate through written documentation from the appropriate resource agency(s) that: (1) the site is located within an area of areawide management significance, (2) the resource should be maintained, and (3) that the proposed project will provide the necessary protection.
 - The applicant shall request, enter into, and execute an agreement with the County which restricts the development and provides for the permanent maintenance of the common open space by either: (1) forming a homeowners' association or other entity acceptable to the County to maintain the open space; (2) granting in fee-title to a public agency willing to accept the open-space land; or (3) dedicating a conservation/open space easement or similar instrument to a public agency.

- Residential use shall be compatible with and subordinate to agricultural use in the area with the realization that the conduct of agriculture includes such activities as controlled burning of brush, use of pesticides, tilling of land, noise and odors, and stray animals.
- Residential uses shall be limited to one dwelling unit per parcel, based on the one dwelling unit per five acre density, consistent with the rural agricultural character envisioned by this Element. No additional residential density shall be permitted.

AG-h The site planning, design, and construction of on-site and off-site improvements for non-agricultural development in agricultural areas shall avoid unmitigatable short- and long-term adverse impacts on facilities, such as irrigation ditches, used to supply water to agricultural operations.

Footnotes:

1. 2002 Census of Agriculture
2. Shasta County Assessor, 2004
3. Shasta County Assessor, 2004
4. Agricultural Study of the Churn Creek Bottom Area, University of California Cooperative Extension, 1975
5. Shasta County Assessor, 2004
6. Climate of Shasta County, U. C. Extension, August 1965
7. Shasta County Assessor, 2004
8. The discussion is taken from California Department of Forestry, Shasta County Vegetation Management and Demonstration Project Report, pages 3-6
9. Shasta County Ordinance No. 94-2

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