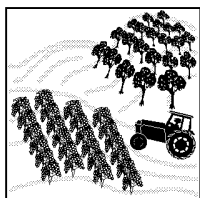

Preliminary Draft Toro Canyon Plan



D. LAND USE - AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LANDS

1. EXISTING SETTING

a. Regional Setting

Agriculture is the County's leading industry with a gross production value of over \$626 million in 1997. There are approximately 712,400 acres of agricultural land currently in production in the County (114,700 acres cultivated). In addition to its primary role in production of food and fiber, the County's agricultural lands also filter rainfall and recharge groundwater basins, and provide valuable wildlife habitat and open space.

The South Coast supports extensive avocado orchards on the steep slopes of the Santa Ynez Mountains above Goleta, Santa Barbara, Summerland and Carpinteria. The Carpinteria Valley is the South Coast's most productive and diverse agricultural region. The region's relatively mild year-round climate enables the production of frost-sensitive and some typically subtropical crops, including avocados, lemons, strawberries, and cherimoyas. More than half of the County's cut flower and nursery products (chrysanthemums, orchids, roses and potted plants) are produced in greenhouses throughout the Carpinteria Valley. The Carpinteria Valley's booming flower trade has made agriculture the fastest growing industry in an area more often recognized for attracting high-tech businesses and tourism. Toro Canyon supports about 30% of total greenhouse development in the Carpinteria Valley.

b. Regulatory Setting

The primary regulations governing agricultural land use development in Toro Canyon include the Agricultural Element, the Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP), the Land Use Element and the implementing zoning Articles II (coastal) and III (inland). The County's Right to Farm Ordinance provides protection for farmers primarily through notification to residents located near agricultural lands.

The Agricultural Element provides goals and policies to protect and maintain agriculture. The CLUP and the Land Use Element guide land use designations (e.g. agriculture vs. ranchette), identify minimum parcel sizes allowable for development and, with the zoning ordinances, provide greenhouse permit requirements and development standards. Minimum parcel size is often a key determinant in long term agricultural viability; often the larger the parcel, the more agricultural options available. However, Toro Canyon's mild coastal climate and areas of prime soils sometimes allow smaller parcels to retain agricultural viability. Due to poorer soils, water availability and environmental constraints, steeper foothill and mountain parcels often require parcel sizes of 100 acres or more to maintain viability while avoiding constraints.

c. Local Agricultural Setting

Toro Canyon's urban and rural areas support diverse agricultural development. Over 4,100 acres are designated for agricultural use within the planning area (Table II.D-1). These lands play an important role in the Carpinteria Valley economy through the contribution of agricultural production to the area's job and economic base. Foothill agriculture mainly consists of avocado

Preliminary Draft Toro Canyon Plan

and other orchards, while the lower, flatter areas of Toro Canyon are generally used for greenhouses and open field agriculture. Most farms in Toro Canyon are fairly small in size. Crops grown include lemons, avocados, oranges, vegetables, and flowers and ornamentals grown in extensive greenhouses mostly south of Foothill Road. There are also a few small pastures scattered on smaller farms.

TABLE II.D-1: EXISTING AGRICULTURAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Existing Land Use Plan Designation	Number of Parcels	Acreage
A-I-5	30	186
A-I-10	79	787
A-I-20	11	469
A-I-40	19	428
A-II-40	21	912
AC	35	1,350
Totals:	195	4,133

Agricultural Preserve Lands: Approximately 20 agricultural parcels in Toro Canyon are enrolled in the County's Agricultural Preserve Program (Williamson Act). Landowners voluntarily enter into 10 year contracts that are renewed annually with the County to form agricultural preserves and maintain their property in agricultural and open space uses, in return for a reduced property tax assessment based on the agricultural value of the property. The bulk of these parcels are located northeast of Toro Canyon Park, with other blocks located along Foothill Road.

Greenhouses: The Carpinteria Valley currently supports approximately 13.7 million square feet (314 acres) of greenhouse development, which includes all permanent structures such as greenhouses, plant protection structures as well as semi-permanent structures such as "shade structures." In addition, there are approximately 250,000 square feet of related development (e.g., packing sheds, warehouses, etc.) for a combined total of approximately 14 million square feet (321 acres) of greenhouse and related development in the Carpinteria Valley.

The greenhouse, nursery and field flower industry has grown rapidly since its introduction in 1962. Specialization in cut flowers, which produce greater returns under temperature and climate control, has resulted in significant greenhouse development. In 1962, there was only 100,000 square feet of greenhouse development. In 1970, there was just under three million square feet, while in 1982, eight million square feet was in production. By 1998 approximately 14 million square feet of greenhouses had been built, representing a 75% increase over the last 15 years. In addition to this substantial increase in coverage, new "clusters" of greenhouses have been approved in areas of the valley historically used for open field agriculture, orchards, or undeveloped open space. This greenhouse development has created substantial economic progress while raising some concerns over growth, loss of rural character and water quality impacts.

Equestrian Use: The Toro Canyon area also has a long tradition of equestrian use. Commercial and private equestrian operations include the Santa Barbara Polo and Racquet Club near Via Real and Nidever Road, several large polo training fields along Via Real and Padaro Lane, private

Preliminary Draft Toro Canyon Plan

equestrian stables and boarding facilities along Lambert Road, and the non-profit Santa Barbara Therapeutic Riding Academy located in Toro Canyon Park.

2. PLANNING ISSUES

The key agricultural land use issue in Toro Canyon is balancing the goals of the County's Agricultural Element to promote continued agricultural expansion and intensification with protection of the area's semi-rural character and environment. Potential conflicts include soil erosion from foothill grading and orchard development on steep slopes, land use incompatibilities from pesticide drift, and the change in rural character/visual impacts from greenhouse and berry hoop development.

Toro Canyon contains substantial undeveloped lands that may be appropriate for agricultural expansion and intensification. Consistent with the goals of the Agricultural Element, this Plan retains over 70 percent (approximately 4,100 acres) of the Toro Canyon area in agricultural zoning. The plan also contains policies to protect existing agricultural land.

As crop values have risen, increased agricultural development has occurred on steeper slopes and canyon hillsides. While most agricultural development is well planned and installed, in some cases, poorly planned and executed foothill grading for crops or structures has caused landslides, visual degradation, significant erosion and downstream sedimentation in creeks. In addition, once agricultural roads are in place, some property owners follow with additional grading for residential development, including driveways, building pads, yard areas, etc. Much of this has led to significant scarring of the terrain and ongoing erosion problems. Further, grading and road construction in the mountains under the appearance of "agricultural development" may actually be preparation for estate residential development.

Additional greenhouse development may also raise the need to balance various competing goals in the Comprehensive Plan. While greenhouses are important to the area's economy, the growth of the greenhouse industry has raised concerns over several important planning issues, particularly cumulative impacts on water quality, groundwater recharge, visual resources, land use compatibility, and long-term maintenance of diverse agriculture. The County is currently studying the impacts of greenhouses valley-wide.

To protect agriculture in the Toro Canyon Plan Area, agriculture should be encouraged where it is appropriate. However, to minimize erosion and other adverse impacts, expansion of foothill agriculture should be carefully planned and installed. This Plan redesignates approximately 950 acres of foothill lands from Agriculture to Mountainous Area (MA) to balance resource protection with agricultural expansion (Table II-D-2). This plan rezones two parcels (40 acres) from AG-I-10 to RR-20 in order to reduce residential development potential in an area with limited access, steep slopes, poor soils, high fire hazards, and large areas of sensitive habitat. This Plan also redesignates several agricultural areas for larger minimum parcel sizes due to steep topography, landslide and erosion potential, high visibility, poor access and high fire hazard. In addition, larger minimum parcel sizes are necessary to minimize non-agricultural development potential (e.g., residences and roads) and to ensure agricultural viability. The plan also rezones certain areas from AG-I to AG-II to increase consistency with surrounding parcels and proposed changes

Preliminary Draft Toro Canyon Plan

in the Urban/Rural Boundary Line. In addition, development standards that address new development adjacent to existing agricultural operations are proposed to provide compatibility between uses and ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.

TABLE II.D-2: PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Proposed Land Use Plan Designation	Number of Parcels	Acreage
A-I-5	1	6
A-I-10	74	410
A-I-20	19	268
A-I-40	40	1102
A-II-100	1	4
MA-100	22	950
AC	35	1,350
Totals:	192	4,090

3. LAND USE - AGRICULTURE & RURAL LANDS GOALS, POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

GOAL LUA-TC: Protect And Support Agricultural Land Use And Encourage Appropriate Agricultural Expansion, While Maintaining A Balance With Protection Of Coastal And Natural Resources And Protection Of Public Health And Safety.

Policy LUA-TC-1: The County shall develop and promote programs to preserve agriculture in the Toro Canyon Plan Area.

DevStd LUA-TC-1.1: County Planning and Development Building and Safety Division shall coordinate with property owners and the Natural Resource Conservation Service and other government agencies to promote agricultural expansion projects while ensuring that such projects are consistent with the Grading Ordinance, Brush Removal Ordinances and Articles II and III.

Policy LUA-TC-2: Land designated for agriculture within Toro Canyon shall be preserved for agricultural use, unless:

- **The County finds that the land is no longer suitable for continued agriculture, or is unsuitable for agriculture due to steep slopes, environmentally sensitive habitats, or other major constraints; and**
- **There is an overriding public need for conversion to another use for which there is no other suitable land available in Toro Canyon.**

Preliminary Draft Toro Canyon Plan

Policy LUA-TC-3: New development shall be compatible with adjacent agricultural lands.

DevStd LUA-TC-3.1: New non-agricultural development adjacent to agriculturally zoned property shall include appropriate buffers, such as trees, shrubs, walls, and fences, to protect adjacent agricultural operations from potential conflicts and claims of nuisance. The size and character of the buffers shall be determined through parcel-specific review on a case-by-case basis.

DevStd LUA-TC-3.2: Consistent with the County's adopted Right to Farm Ordinance, a Notice to Property Owner (NTPO) shall be recorded with the final tract and/or parcel map for properties within 1,000 feet of agriculturally zoned land. The NTPO shall inform the buyer that: *The adjacent property is zoned for agriculture and is located in an area that has been planned for agricultural uses, including permitted oil development, and that any inconvenience or discomfort from properly conducted agricultural operations, including permitted oil development, shall be allowed consistent with the intent of the Right to Farm Ordinance. For further information, contact Santa Barbara County Planning and Development.*