

3.21 FOOD AND FIBER PRODUCTION

The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1994 was enacted to reduce the amount of highly productive farmland being converted to non-agricultural uses as a result of various federal programs. Farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Prime farmland is defined as available land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops. Farmland subject to the requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is required to assess the potential impacts on farmland during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, under a public interest review of food and fiber. While there may be small outdoor or indoor garden projects in individual communities, there are no state- or federally designated prime or unique farmlands in the project area.

In most of the US, agriculture provides food, natural fibers, biofuels, and other products to American consumers; however, in southwest Alaska, subsistence is the most important source of non-imported food and raw materials (see Section 3.9, Subsistence).