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## 3.13 - Recreation

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### 3.13.1 - Introduction

This section describes the existing recreation setting and potential effects from project implementation on the site and its surrounding area. Descriptions and analysis in this section are based on information provided by the Grasslands Park Master Plan, the Yolo County Parks and Open Space Master Plan, and project plans.

### 3.13.2 - Environmental Setting

#### Grasslands Site

The Grasslands site is located within the County of Yolo's Grasslands Regional Park (Park). Grasslands Regional Park is a 323-acre park that was originally part of McClellan Air Force Base's Davis Global Communications site. The Park was deeded to Yolo County for park and recreation uses in 1972. In 1991, volunteers planted stands of valley oaks in the Park. The Park is used for archery, model aircraft soaring, horseshoe pitching, dog walking, wildlife watching, and natural resource research. The Park includes infrastructure such as buildings, irrigation systems, picnic facilities, and parking areas that have been implemented and maintained in cooperation with groups or clubs who use the Park, including the Yolo County Bowmen Archery Club, the Sacramento Valley Soaring Society, and the Yolo County Horseshoe Pitching Club. In addition, a 65-acre area within the northern portion of the Park has been established as a western burrowing owl preserve, as part of a long-term lease and conservation agreement with the City of Davis.

#### Beamer/Cottonwood Site

The Beamer/Cottonwood site does not contain any recreational amenities and is not used for recreational purposes.

### 3.13.3 - Regulatory Setting

#### Local

##### *Yolo County General Plan*

The Yolo County General Plan establishes the following goals and policies related to recreation that are applicable to the proposed project:

- **Goal CO-1:** Natural Open Space. Provide a diverse, connected and accessible network of open space, to enhance natural resources and their appropriate use.
- **Policy CO-1.1:** Expand and enhance an integrated network of open space to support recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, habitat, water management, aesthetics, and other beneficial uses.
- **Policy CO-1.2:** Develop a connected system of recreational trails to link communities and parks throughout the county.

- **Policy CO-1.4:** Provision of an appropriate level of public facilities and infrastructure shall be a priority for all County park facilities.
- **Policy CO-1.9:** Promote the conservation of environmental resources in new and existing park and open space facilities.
- **Policy CO-1.21:** Emphasize the use of native grasses, shrubs and trees as the primary focus of restoration within resource parks and other open spaces.
- **Policy CO-1.22:** Work with concessionaires and lessees to provide recreational amenities that do not conflict with other park uses or general public access.

### ***Grasslands Park Master Plan***

The Grasslands Park Master Plan (Master Plan) expands upon the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Yolo County General Plan. The Master Plan is intended to provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach to management, recreational uses, habitat protection and enhancement, and unified design recommendations that reflect the site and surrounding uses. The Master Plan provides for coordinated management of weeds to protect sensitive species, continued demand for new recreation and habitat improvement projects, and restructuring of agreements associated with the expiration of leases regulating current uses at the site. The Master Plan includes provisions for improved general public use of the park, including a common public entry, picnic areas, trails, group use area, restroom improvements, fencing to define safe use areas, environmental education opportunities, interpretive elements, and environmental restoration.

### ***Yolo County Parks and Open Space Master Plan***

The Yolo County Parks and Open Space Master Plan provides information and guidance to staff, decisions makers, and the public for the management, use, and future development of Yolo County parks and open space facilities, both individually and systemwide. For information, guidance, and policies regarding Grasslands Regional Park, the Parks and Open Space Master Plan defers to and recommends implementation of the Grasslands Park Master Plan.

#### **3.13.4 - Methodology**

Michael Brandman Associates evaluated potential impacts on recreation facilities through review of the project plans, local land use plans, and the Yolo County Parks Master Plan.

#### **3.13.5 - Thresholds of Significance**

According to the CEQA Guidelines' Appendix G Environmental Checklist, to determine whether impacts to recreation are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated.

- a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

- b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

### Existing Recreational Facilities

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**Impact REC-1:**      **The project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.**

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#### **Impact Analysis**

##### *Grasslands Site*

Construction of the photovoltaic (PV) facility and environmental education center at the Grasslands site is expected to utilize the considerable workforce available within the project region. As such, local residents are expected to serve the labor requirements of the proposed project, negating the need for a significant percentage of outside labor. Construction workers at the Grasslands site may use other developed portions of Grasslands Regional Park; however, such use would be temporary and would not involve a significant increase in park usage. As a result, construction of the proposed project is not anticipated to induce substantial population growth in the area either directly or indirectly, and existing recreational facilities would continue to adequately serve the regional population and would not experience substantial physical deterioration.

Operation of the PV facility at the Grasslands site would be conducted remotely. Panel-washing crews would conduct panel washing two times per year; however, these activities would not be expected to increase park use. Operation of the environmental education center would result in field trips to the Grasslands site from Yolo County elementary (K-12) schools. While the field trips would primarily use the proposed environmental education center, use of other existing facilities, such as picnic areas and restrooms, at the Grasslands Regional Park may occur. Trails constructed as part of the proposed project would provide connections from the environmental education center to existing developed areas of Grasslands Regional Park. However, usage of the environmental education center would be seasonal, corresponding to the school year, and managed by the Yolo County Office of Education in coordination with the Yolo County Department of Parks. As such, park usage would not be expected to reach a level that would result in substantial physical deterioration.

In summary, the project would not result in a substantial increase in population during or after construction and therefore would not increase the demand for parks. Use of existing facilities at Grasslands Regional Park may increase as a result of the environmental education center; however, usage levels would not be expected to result in substantial physical deterioration or acceleration of such deterioration beyond normal park usage. Furthermore, the proposed project would develop lands for recreational and educational purposes that have long been identified for such uses. As such, impacts would be less than significant.

*Beamer/Cottonwood Site*

The Beamer/Cottonwood site does not contain any recreational amenities and is not used for recreational purposes. Construction of the PV facility at the Beamer/Cottonwood site would be expected to utilize the considerable workforce available within the project region. As such, local residents are expected to serve the labor requirements of the proposed project, negating the need for a significant percentage of outside labor. As a result, construction of the proposed project is not anticipated to induce substantial population growth in the area either directly or indirectly, and existing recreational facilities would continue to adequately serve the regional population and would not experience substantial physical deterioration. No impacts would occur.

Operation of the PV facility at the Beamer/Cottonwood site would be conducted remotely. Panel-washing crews would conduct panel washing two times per year. As such, operation of the facility would not induce substantial population growth; existing recreational facilities would continue to adequately serve the regional population and would not experience substantial physical deterioration. No impacts would occur.

***Level of Significance Before Mitigation***

Less than significant impact.

***Mitigation Measures***

*Grasslands Site*

No mitigation is necessary.

*Beamer/Cottonwood Site*

No mitigation is necessary.

***Level of Significance After Mitigation***

Less than significant impact.

**New Recreational Facilities**

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**Impact REC-2:**        **The project's recreational facilities would not result in an adverse physical effect on the environment.**

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***Impact Analysis***

*Grasslands Site*

The environmental education center, located adjacent to the Grasslands PV facility, would consist of an environmentally sensitive modular building, park host site, walking trails, wildlife viewing areas, and picnic areas. The park host site would be less than 500 square feet and would provide typical park host amenities, including electrical hookup, a small septic system connection, and potable water connection. These amenities would be utilized only by the park host's personal travel trailer. The environmental education center's modular building would be no more than 2,000 square feet and would host field trips from Yolo County elementary schools, operated by the Yolo County Office of Education. The center would provide educational information regarding the solar array, energy

conservation, sustainability, and habitat protection. The educational center would also operate in conjunction with a system of environmental education placards that describe alternative energy and regional protected habitats and species. The educational center's components would include walking trails, bird watching platforms, picnic areas, and park benches connecting to the adjacent grasslands park. In connection with the environmental education center, the grasslands solar array would be used as a research laboratory for the feasibility of agricultural crop production and weed control beneath the solar panels.

The environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the environmental education center have been considered in this EIR. Where necessary, mitigation measures have been proposed to ensure that any potentially significant environmental impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. Furthermore, operation of the environmental education center would be consistent with the Grasslands Park Master Plan. As such, the project's recreational facilities would not result in an adverse physical effect on the environment. Impacts would be less than significant.

*Beamer/Cottonwood Site*

The Beamer/Cottonwood site does not contain any recreational amenities and is not used for recreational purposes. Construction of the PV facility at the Beamer/Cottonwood site does not include new recreational facilities. As such, no impacts would occur.

**Level of Significance Before Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.

**Mitigation Measures**

*Grasslands Site*

No mitigation is necessary.

*Beamer/Cottonwood Site*

No mitigation is necessary.

**Level of Significance After Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.

