

IV. SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This chapter contains an analysis of each topic that has been identified through preliminary environmental evaluation of the Yolo County 2030 Countywide General Plan (Draft General Plan), and, as such, constitutes the major portion of this EIR. Sections A through N of this chapter describe the environmental setting of the proposed project as it relates to each specific environmental topic. This setting is used as the baseline of physical environmental conditions within the County and includes those conditions as they existed at the time the Notice of Preparation was published (October 8, 2008), in accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15125(a). The analysis that follows each sections' setting discussion evaluates potential impacts that may result from build-out of the Draft General Plan, and identifies mitigation measures for each impact that would reduce or eliminate the impact, if such mitigation measures are necessary and feasible.

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

CEQA is the foundation of environmental law and policy in California. It encourages the protection of all aspects of the environment by requiring cities and other agencies to prepare multi-disciplinary environmental impact analyses and to make decisions on the findings of those studies regarding the environmental effects of the proposed project or action. Under CEQA, a significant effect is defined as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.¹ The *CEQA Guidelines* direct that this determination be based on scientific and factual data. Determining appropriate thresholds of significance is necessary to accurately identify the minimum levels at which impacts may negatively affect the physical environment or residents and workers within the County. Under *CEQA Guidelines* Section 21082.2, the lead agency identifies and determines the significance thresholds and the potential impacts and whether they may have a significant effect on the environment based on substantial evidence in light of the whole record. For example, a temporary, local impact may affect a small area or population, but may not exceed the identified threshold to be considered "significant" and would therefore not require further mitigation. Substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the lead agency, must exist before an impact can be considered significant. In order to fulfill this requirement, each impact evaluation in this chapter is prefaced by criteria of significance, developed by the County as the lead agency with consideration of information contained in Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*, followed by substantial evidence within the evaluation that supports or refutes a determination that a significant impact is likely to occur.

The reader should note that CEQA requires the lead agency to focus on the physical environmental effects of a project, and issues such as economic and social impacts are not within the domain of CEQA and are therefore not considered in the following analysis.

¹ Public Resources Code Section 21068.

ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Preliminary evaluation, conducted according to the CEQA Environmental Checklist's Evaluation of Environmental Impacts process and *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15060, was completed in preparation of the Initial Study for the Draft General Plan and made available with the Notice of Preparation. The CEQA Environmental Checklist is used to identify basic information concerning the physical environment in which the proposed project would take place, including existing general plan and zoning designations, surrounding land uses, other public agencies whose approval of the project may be required, and those environmental factors that may potentially be affected by the proposed project. Once a preliminary evaluation of potential environmental impacts is completed, the lead agency makes a determination as to whether further environmental analysis is required. Where the lead agency finds that a proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, further study conducted as part of an EIR is required. The EIR is required to evaluate only those topics that have not been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards or those that have not been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.

For the Draft General Plan, this EIR provides a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental topics listed below and provided as individual sections in this Chapter to determine whether build-out of the Draft General Plan would pose significant impacts in the following topic areas:

- A. Land, Population, Housing and Employment
- B. Agricultural Resources
- C. Transportation and Circulation
- D. Air Quality
- E. Noise
- F. Global Climate Change
- G. Public Services
- H. Utilities and Energy
- I. Cultural Resources
- J. Biological Resources
- K. Hydrology and Water Quality
- L. Geology, Soils, Seismicity and Mineral Resources
- M. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- N. Visual and Scenic Resources

FORMAT OF ISSUE SECTIONS

Each environmental issue section has three main subsections: 1) Setting (a description of the existing conditions); 2) Draft 2030 Countywide General Plan Policies (an identification of the relevant policies and actions related to the topic being addressed); and 3) Impacts and Mitigation Measures. Any identified significant impacts are numbered and shown in bold type, and the corresponding mitigation measures are numbered and indented. The mitigation measures are feasible actions that have been proposed to minimize significant (S) adverse impacts to a less-than-significant (LTS) level. If no feasible or available mitigation measures exist to reduce a significant impact, the impact is considered Significant and Unavoidable (SU) and will require a Statement of Overriding Considerations be prepared by the lead agency. Per *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093, during preparation of the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the lead agency must balance the

economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits of the proposed project against the identified unavoidable environmental impacts when determining whether to approve the project. If the specific benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, they may be considered “acceptable.” For the purposes of this EIR, the mitigation measures generally take the form of new or revised Draft General Plan policies and actions. Mitigation measures are not required for effects which are not found to be significant. The following notations are provided after each identified significant impact and after identification of mitigation measures:

SU = Significant and Unavoidable
S = Significant
LTS = Less than Significant

These notations indicate the significance of the impact before and after mitigation.

Significant impacts and mitigation measures are numbered consecutively within each topic and begin with a shorthand abbreviation for the impact section (e.g., LAND for Land Use). The following abbreviations are used for individual topics:

LU: Land Use
AG: Agriculture
CI: Transportation and Circulation
AIR: Air Quality
NOISE: Noise
GCC: Global Climate Change
PUB: Public Services
UTIL: Utilities and Energy
CULT: Historic and Cultural Resources
BIO: Biological Resources
HYDRO: Hydrology and Water Quality
GEO: Geology, Soils, Seismicity and Mineral Resources
HAZ: Hazards and Hazardous Materials
VIS: Visual and Scenic Resources

