

N. VISUAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

This section describes the existing visual and scenic resources of Yolo County and evaluates potential impacts of the County's 2030 Countywide General Plan (Draft General Plan) on these resources. Included in this section is a description of existing visual conditions within the County as well as an evaluation of the potential effects on visual resources from implementation of the Draft General Plan. The visual analysis is based on field observations within the unincorporated County, aerial and ground-level photographs of the Study Area, the *Yolo County General Plan Update Background Report (2005)*, and publicly-available planning documents.

Within this section, the term "viewshed" is used in reference to the surface area visible from a viewpoint or a series of viewpoints: that portion of the landscape that would be visible from a particular location and which could be visually impacted by changes to land use or vegetation and ground cover in those areas. For the purpose of determining the potential effects of the Draft General Plan on visual resources within an area, particular viewpoints were selected because they present a view that is representative of the landscape or reflect a typical viewshed for that area. These viewpoints are then used to describe the visual changes or contrasts that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan. This method was used to determine whether visual degradation or other significant impacts to the visual qualities of the County would occur as a result of development associated with implementation of the Draft General Plan.

1. Setting

This section describes visual and scenic resources within the County at the regional and local level.

a. Regional Setting. Yolo County lies within California's Central Valley and the northern portion of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, directly west of Sacramento and northeast of Solano and Napa Counties. The Central Valley is predominantly flat, contrasting with California's Coast Ranges to the west and the Sierra Nevada to the east. The Sacramento River flows from north of the County into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta at the southern end of the County; this large inverted delta north of the Carquinez Strait includes interconnected canals, streambeds, sloughs, marshes, and peat islands and is part of the Pacific flyway for waterfowl and other North American birds. The Delta area is part of the Clarksburg American Viticultural Area (AVA) and includes a large concentration of vineyards and small-scale wineries. Visual resources within the Central Valley are predominantly agricultural in nature, with expansive vistas consisting of open farmland and rangeland, orchards, vineyards, and distant views to the surrounding mountains, when air quality is at its highest.

b. Local Setting. Yolo County is predominantly rural, having an agricultural character throughout most of the eastern portion of the County and a more topographically-varied foothill/mountain character in the western portion of the County. The Capay Hills rise in the western portion of the County and, along with the Blue Ridge at the western County boundary, enclose the eastern and western edges of the Capay Valley, respectively. This valley extends from the Town of Rumsey in the north to just south of the Town of Brooks; Cache Creek runs along its length before heading east through the center of the County. East of the Capay Hills lie the Dunnigan Hills, which run roughly northwest-southeast along Interstate 5 from the Town of Dunnigan to south of the Town of Zamora. The Capay Valley and Dunnigan Hills are predominantly areas of gently-rolling terrain with AVA designations, although grape vines are a dominant visual feature only on the Dunnigan Hills. The Dunnigan Hills area evokes a visual reference to Northern California's other major wine-producing counties with its vineyards and open rangeland on moderately-sloping, rocky terrain.

Lands to the east of Interstate 5 are dominated by Prime Farmland that supports alfalfa, rice, tomato, and seed crops. In the northern and eastern portions of the County, the visual landscape is dominated by nut orchards, particularly almonds and walnuts.

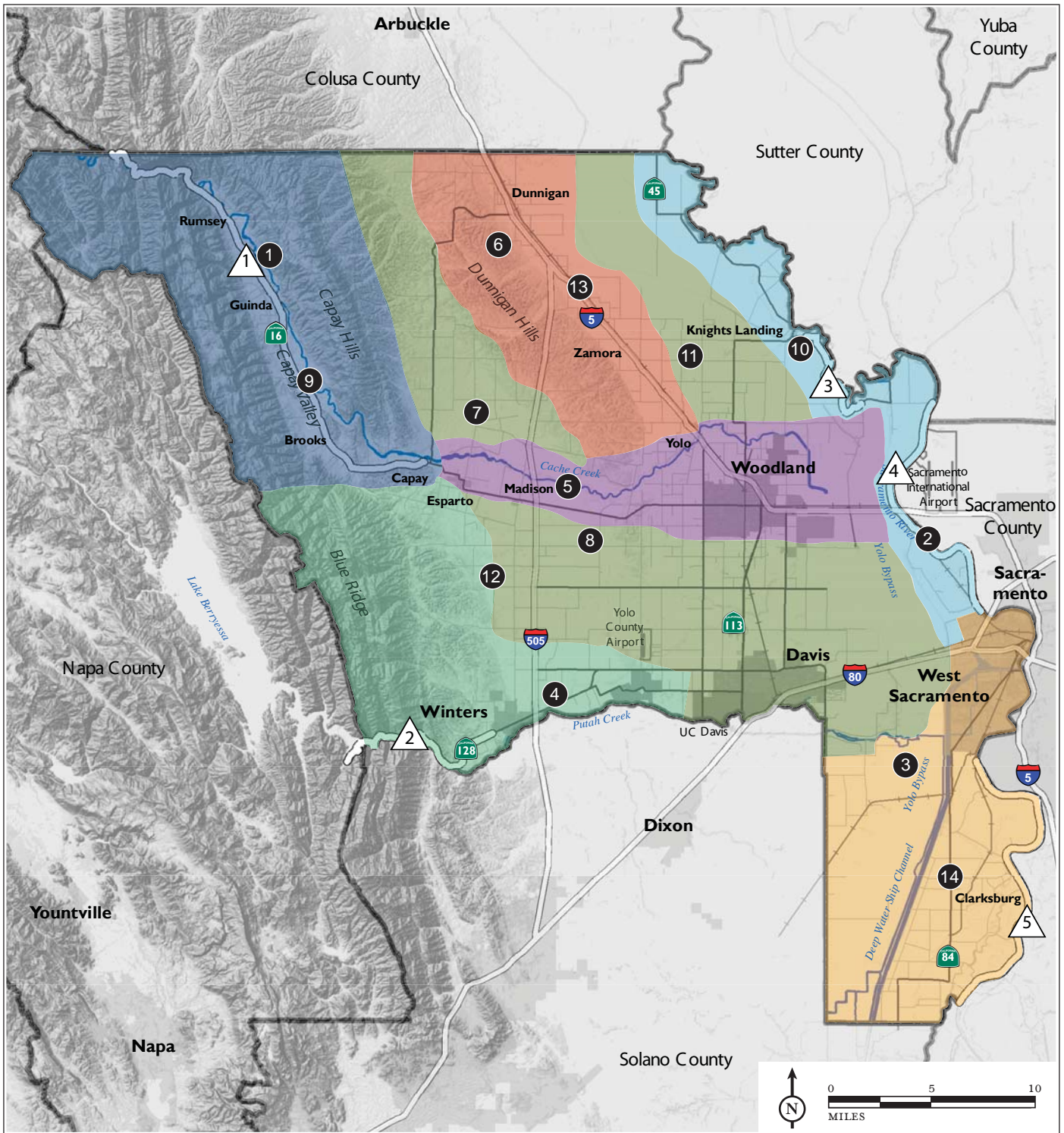
(1) Views Within and Across the County. For the purposes of this analysis, Yolo County was subdivided into seven separate subareas of distinct natural resource, geographic, or developed qualities in order to describe the varying visual and scenic resources found within the County (Figure IV.N-1). Each subarea is described in greater detail below.

Capay Valley/Capay Hills. The Capay Valley is a unique landform of low, flat alluvial soils that extends generally northwest from the community of Capay to the Colusa County border, following along the Cache Creek. The valley and the adjoining Capay Hills, which form the eastern border of the valley, consist of a series of draws, canyons, and rangelands rising from the valley floor into the surrounding hills. Agriculture is the dominant land use within the valley, with large orchards and open rangeland contributing to the expansive vistas afforded from elevated viewpoints within the Capay Hills across the valley toward Blue Ridge and the County's border with Napa County. Capay Valley is also the location of several small communities, including Capay, Guinda, and Rumsey, and is one of the three AVAs located within the County. The Capay Hills include a number of Yolo County's 20 mountain summits and peaks, including Bald Mountain, which is the prominent peak within the hills and affords uninterrupted views to the west and east.¹ Figure IV.N-2 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Sacramento River. The Sacramento River subarea contains those lands within the County generally east of the Knights Landing Ridge Cut and the Yolo Bypass, north of the City of West Sacramento, including the town of Knights Landing and the Elkhorn area. This subarea is predominantly alluvial plain resulting from the Sacramento River's meandering path and flood deposition, and is composed primarily of prime farmland. Walnut orchards dominate the southern landscape just north of West Sacramento; tomatoes and wheat fields are the most prominent vegetative features along the Sutter County border. Due to the County's location within the Pacific flyway, the numerous canals, streambeds, sloughs, and marshes within this subarea are seasonal homes to a number of North American birds. Waterfowl are present year-round. The Sacramento River subarea includes classic river vistas and other scenic resources typical of flat expanses dominated by riverine and wetland landscapes. Figure IV.N-2 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Yolo Bypass/Delta. Similar in landscape and visual character to the Sacramento River subarea, the Yolo Bypass/Delta subarea comprises those lands within the Yolo Bypass itself as well as the City of West Sacramento and the lowland areas within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that lie to the south. This subarea contains the northern end of the Delta and is composed of both prime farmland surrounding Clarksburg as well as open grazing and wildlife habitat within the Yolo Bypass. This subarea also contains the Clarksburg AVA, which includes approximately 11,000 acres of vineyards which dominate the landscape. The Yolo Bypass includes and lies adjacent to the Deep Water Ship Channel, which affords unique visual character to the area and provides viewers with occasional glimpses of ship traffic from the San Francisco Bay traversing the surrounding agricultural landscape, a visual quality unique to this subarea and not typically seen elsewhere within the State. The downtown Sacramento city skyline is a prominent feature from many vantage points within this area,

¹ Yolo County Mountain Peaks and Summits. <http://www.mountainzone.com/mountains/list-mountains.asp?cid=22434> Accessed on November 14, 2008.



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- SCENIC HIGHWAYS**
- 1 STATE ROUTE 16 FROM THE COLUSA COUNTY LINE TO CAPAY
 - 2 STATE ROUTE 128 FROM THE CITY OF WINTERS TO THE NAPA COUNTY LINE
 - 3 COUNTY ROADS 116 AND 16 FROM THE TOWN OF KNIGHTS LANDING TO THE EASTERN TERMINUS OF COUNTY ROAD 16
 - 4 COUNTY ROAD 117 AND OLD RIVER ROAD FROM THE NORTHERN TERMINUS OF COUNTY ROAD 117 TO THE CITY OF WEST SACRAMENTO
 - 5 SOUTH RIVER ROAD FROM JEFFERSON BOULEVARD IN THE CITY OF WEST SACRAMENTO TO THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY LINE

- VISUAL ANALYSIS SUBAREAS**
- CAPAY VALLEY/CAPAY HILLS
 - SACRAMENTO RIVER
 - YOLO BYPASS/DELTA
 - PUTAH CREEK/LAKE BERRYESSA
 - CACHE CREEK
 - DUNNIGAN HILLS
 - VALLEY FLOOR
 - 4 PHOTO LOCATIONS

FIGURE IV.N-1

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR
Scenic Highways,
Visual Analysis Subareas
and Photo Locations*

SOURCE: COUNTY OF YOLO, 2007.

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Photo 1: Capay Hills



Photo 2: Sacramento River Floodplain

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FIGURE IV.N-2

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR*

Views Within and Across the County

particularly at night and when the area's air quality is good. Figure IV.N-3 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa. Although it contains similar vistas and scenery to other subareas discussed, the Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa subarea demonstrates a cross-section of visual resources typical within the County as rangeland gives way to crop fields, and riverine landscapes adjoin developed areas. Putah Creek forms the southern border of and separates Yolo County from Solano County, flowing to the east from Lake Berryessa's Monticello Dam. The Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa subarea includes those lands generally south of the Yolo County Airport from the western County border to the City of Davis. This subarea includes rolling hills and canyons along the eastern edge of Blue Ridge (used predominantly as rangeland) located west and north of the City of Winters. East of Interstate 505, the landscape becomes flatter and views are dominated by walnut and almond orchards and a medley of other crops. The City of Winters is also home to the Vaca Valley railroad trestle, which was constructed in 1906 and crosses Putah Creek. Toward the eastern end of the subarea, the City of Davis' skyline joins the eastern horizon, although the city's generally low profile prevents it from interrupting the expansive views afforded both from Interstate 505 and State Road 128. Figure IV.N-3 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Cache Creek. The Cache Creek subarea extends generally east from the community of Capay through the center of the County to the Yolo Bypass, just east of the community of Woodland. Within this subarea, the Cache Creek becomes braided past gravel mining operations and consists of several shallow channels. Along the creek, wetland grasses, rushes, and sedges grow under a canopy of cottonwoods, willows, oaks, and alders. At the western end, the creek is restricted within levees that terminate in the Settling Basin before emptying into the Yolo Bypass. Adjoining the mining areas along the creek are a variety of crop fields, which give the landscape a diverse visual character where orderly crop plantings intermingle with natural settings. The Cache Creek subarea also contains Monument Hill, which is the dominant feature of the horizon and affords uninterrupted views across the County from all cardinal points. Figure IV.N-4 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Dunnigan Hills. The Dunnigan Hills subarea includes lands generally northwest of the community of Yolo, north of County Road 19 and to the west of Interstate 5, including the towns of Dunnigan and Zamora. These hills extend northward to the Colusa County line, and are a series of rolling hills used predominantly as rangeland. The Dunnigan Hills subarea also includes the Dunnigan Hills AVA, although most of the 3,000 acres of vineyards are not viewable from many public access points. As a result, this subarea evokes a visual character similar to other open rangelands within the County and the State, with sparse vegetation (mostly grasses) and grazing animals giving the area a pastoral character throughout. Figure IV.N-4 displays a typical view within this subarea.

Valley Floor. The Valley Floor subarea comprises the remaining lands within the County not included in the previous six subareas, and generally includes those lands south of the Cache Creek subarea and north of the Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa subarea as well as lands east of the Dunnigan Hills subarea and west of the Sacramento River subarea. The area includes the City of Woodland and the City of Davis, as well as the towns of Esparto and Madison and the Monument Hills community. These lands are almost entirely agricultural in land use and include vast stretches of alfalfa, rice, and

tomato fields as well as other varieties of field crops. The landscape within this subarea is predominantly flat, with expansive views of cultivated fields uninterrupted by natural or constructed landforms or significant development. Adding to the visual character of this subarea are intermittent farm implement storage and agricultural industrial buildings, including barns, processing facilities, and storage areas, which give the Valley Floor subarea a truly rural character. Figure IV.N-5 displays typical views within this subarea.

(2) Scenic Highways. Yolo County has no designated federal or State Scenic Highways. A portion of State Route 16 (from approximately the town of Capay at County Road 85, north to the County line) is identified by Caltrans as “eligible” for designation as a State Scenic Highway but is not officially designated. Yolo County has, however, designated the following as local scenic highways:

- State Route 16: Colusa County line to Capay
- State Route 128: Winters to the Napa County line
- County Roads 116 and 116B: Knights Landing to the eastern terminus of County Road 16
- County Roads 16 and 117 and Old River Road: County Road 107 to West Sacramento
- South River Road: West Sacramento city limits to Sacramento County line

Figure IV.N-1 displays the location of these local scenic highways; Figure IV.N-6 displays visual qualities along State Road 16 and County Road 116.

(3) Light and Glare. Unincorporated Yolo County is a predominantly rural, agricultural county with approximately 35 isolated areas of existing development. Because of its rural character, night lighting and glare mostly occur within and around these developed communities, although individual areas supporting agriculture and other industries produce limited amounts of nocturnal lighting and glare on an intermittent basis when evening activities require additional lighting. Existing sources of ambient nighttime lighting generally include neon and fluorescent signs in developed areas; exterior lighting along buildings for safety, architectural accent, or to illuminate nighttime operations; lights within buildings that illuminate the exteriors of buildings through windows; landscape and wayfinding signage lighting; street and parking lot lighting; and vehicle headlights. Glare is created by reflection of natural (i.e., sunlight) and artificial light off of existing windows and building surfaces.

(4) Visual Analysis Methodology. The assessment of visual resources within and across the Study Area was based on the landscape evaluation system developed by the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture for their Visual Management System. To assess the potential effects a project may have on visual resources, it is first necessary to describe the visual environment of the County. Landscapes are dynamic, and even those areas of high aesthetic value require some level of management activity, at a minimum, to retain their character over time. Defining what that visual character is in an evolving landscape can be difficult and there have been many changes to agricultural landscapes throughout the County since the 1930s. For the purposes of this analysis, it is understood that the County seeks to manage the landscape within its borders to retain its current predominantly-agricultural character, as noted in the 1983 Yolo County General Plan, while encouraging concentrated development within the existing communities. Yolo County recognizes that the landscape within identified subareas, as described in Section 1.a of this chapter, may be altered to varying degrees depending on the actual level of development that may occur.



Photo 3: Yolo Bypass



Photo 4: Orchards in Putah Creek subarea

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FIGURE IV.N-3

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR*

Views Within and Across the County



Photo 5: Cache Creek



Photo 6: Dunnigan Hills

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FIGURE IV.N-4

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR
Views Within and Across the County*



Photo 7: Valley Floor Cropland



Photo 8: Agricultural Industrial Uses in the Valley Floor Subarea

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FIGURE IV.N-5

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR*

Views Within and Across the County



Photo 9: Visual Quality along State Route 16



Photo 10: Visual Quality along County Road 116

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FIGURE IV.N-6

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR
Visual Qualities of the Study Area*

The scenic qualities of an individual landscape were determined through an analysis of the landscape's character type, which is a unit of physiographic area having common landscape features (e.g., landforms, rock formations, water forms, and vegetative patterns.) Landscape features were separated according to four factors: form, line, color, and texture. The form of an object is its visual shape or mass. Lines are often defined by edges of objects, landforms, or vegetation. Color is defined both by the value or reflective brightness (e.g., light, dark) and hue (e.g., red, green.) Texture is the apparent surface coarseness of an object or area.

The degrees of diversity in a landscape are called "variety classes" and are a measure of the scenic quality of a landscape. Three variety classes have been established for evaluating the landscape by the Department of Agriculture's Visual Management System:

- **Variety Class A – Distinctive:** Areas where features of landform, vegetative patterns, water features, and rock forms are of unusual or outstanding visual quality.
- **Variety Class B – Common:** Areas where features contain variety in form, line, color, or texture, or combinations thereof, but which tend to be common throughout the character type and are not outstanding in visual quality.
- **Variety Class C – Minimal:** Areas where features in the landscape have little change in form, line, color, or texture. Includes all areas not found under Classes A or B.

Visual relationships between elements in a landscape can often be traced to four factors: dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity. Specific elements or components in a landscape may dominate the view because of an element's position within the landscape, visual contrast with adjacent or surrounding elements, or importance. Scale is the apparent size relationship between landscape components. Diversity is a function of the number, variety, and intermixing of visual patterns. Continuity is the uninterrupted flow of patterns in a landscape and the maintenance of the visual relationships of connected or related landscape patterns.

(5) **Character and Visual Quality of the Study Area.** The overall visual quality within the County is generally Variety Class B, with some Variety Class A based on specific visual features as follows:

- The County consists predominantly of agricultural land.
- Hilly landforms, vegetative cover, and limited areas of development are characteristic of the County's regional landscape and common within the Capay Hills, Dunnigan Hills, and western Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa. Features include Monument Hill, Bald Mountain, Chimney Rock, and China Peak
- Riverine landscapes along the southern and eastern borders of the County include unstructured plant communities and wildlife habitat that contrasts visually with more orderly adjacent agricultural uses.
- Throughout the County's agricultural lands, vegetation creates a dense medium texture of land cover and provides a visual continuity or flow of pattern, affected only seasonally by crop growth and harvest, field tilling, and planting activities.

Landforms range from hilly to flat, with the majority of the County demonstrating not only an agricultural character but one of wildlife habitat and open space, as well. Visual qualities are enhanced by

occasional placement of agriculture-related development, including barns, implement storage, and processing facilities that further contribute to its agrarian character. A mixture of landforms from west to east across the County draw views similar in nature and scope to those found throughout California's Central Valley and coastal ranges. Examples of these visual qualities are displayed in Figure IV.N-7.

(6) Scenic Value and Sensitivity to Change. Scenic value is a function of the number and type of viewers, the visual importance of the area, surrounding land uses, and the presence or absence of significant geological, historical, or botanical and vegetative features. Viewer groups for the County generally include residents and workers within the County; recreational users of parks and open space areas (rafters, hikers, cyclists, birdwatchers, and hunters/fishermen); tourists visiting local wineries and areas of interest; travelers utilizing roadways that cross through the County, including those identified as local scenic highways in section 1.b.(2) above; and travelers using Interstates 5, 80, and 505 and County Road 85.

Residents, workers, and visitors in the County view the landscape from different vantage points (e.g., from residential areas, from roadways traversing the County, from the wildlife areas, or from elevated vantage points or aircraft) and have a perceived image of what they expect to see when viewing these areas. This image may be based on their personal knowledge of the County, as well as the emotional values that they attach to specific aspects of the landscape. This expectation generally does not take into account the evolution of the landscape over time, and as a result may not generate a realistic expectation of views of the County's landscape. As the length of time viewers have to examine a landscape is extended, however, the expectation of how that landscape should appear will increase. For example, viewers will tend to take greater notice of the visual impacts of new housing or industrial development as the viewer's exposure to and familiarity with a particular view increases. Therefore, those development activities viewed from a residence, busy roadway, vista point, picnic or scenic area, or other prominent viewpoint will generally have a greater impact on the visual quality of an area than those that cannot be readily viewed, such as areas that are screened from view or located below a line-of-sight or are viewed only in passing. Factors that affect a viewer's impression of development activities, then, can include:

- **Capacity of the Landscape to Absorb Change:** For example, the view within an orchard or tall-crop (e.g., corn field) area is much shorter than that of an open vista or one containing only ground-level crops or vegetation. As a result, views into orchards and tall crops will be limited, and development activities conducted on the opposite side of these areas from the viewpoint will likely be screened, at least partially, from viewers. Conversely, orchard or tall-crop areas that are clear cut or otherwise have all vegetation removed will have a greater visual impact than a meadow that has been mowed or ground-level crop field that has been harvested, because the changes will be more evident initially and the recovery period will be of a longer duration.
- **Viewing Distance from Activity:** Change that takes place immediately adjacent to places where people will gather for an extended period of time, near destinations where people travel explicitly to view the surrounding landscape (such as picnic or camp sites, staging areas, vista points, and public facilities), or near private residences will be more visually apparent than those activities at remote sites located further from viewers.



Photo 11: Hilly Landforms in Eastern Yolo County



Photo 12: Visual Continuity of Agricultural Landscape

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FIGURE IV.N-7

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR
Visual Qualities of the Study Area*

- **Focus of the Viewer:** The potential visual impact of change within the County will increase as the viewer's attention is focused toward an object or key viewpoint. For example, activity that occurs within the direct line of sight from a vista point to the Sutter Buttes will be more apparent than similar activities conducted within a growth boundary or developed area that merely shortens a viewer's line of sight toward or from those areas.

Naturally-occurring changes to the existing scenic value of views within the County are also likely to occur that can disrupt viewers' expectations of the existing vegetation and landforms. Yolo County lies adjacent to, and partially contains, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area, which is a dynamic system that has developed over the millennia through complex physical processes and continues to change in response to tectonic and atmospheric forces generated in the larger region. The landscape, vegetation, and uses of County lands are also continuing to change through factors such as human influence, flooding, and grazing animals. As a result, the wildland flora seen today is a mixture of native vegetation and introduced non-native annual grasses, herbs, and trees in addition to the mix of agricultural resources present throughout the County.

(7) **Visual Sensitivity.** Visual sensitivity is a measure of people's concern for scenic quality and is a function of the number and type of viewers, activities of viewers, visual exposure of potential development or other activities that could impact visual resources, and the relative distance of potential development or other activities from sensitive viewing locations. Three sensitivity levels are defined by the U.S. Forest Service:

- **Sensitivity Level 1 – Highest Sensitivity:** Level 1 includes lands seen from primary travel routes where a significant number of viewers have major concerns for scenic qualities; primary recreation areas; scenic byways; views from residences; and areas of geological, botanical, or historical importance.
- **Sensitivity Level 2 – Average Sensitivity:** Areas with Level 2 sensitivity include primary travel routes where a smaller volume of travelers have concerns for scenic qualities and/or the travel route or use area is of only local importance and has a low use volume.
- **Sensitivity Level 3 – Lowest Sensitivity:** Level 3 includes all areas seen from travel routes and use areas where few users or travelers would have a concern for scenic quality.

The unincorporated County overall is categorized as Sensitivity Level 2 (Average Sensitivity) based on the views afforded and number of viewers, as described below:

- The County Study Area is predominantly viewed by travelers and residents of the local areas and is part of a larger regional landscape that extends into the neighboring counties.
- The County serves as a major viewshed for several major highways in the Central Valley, including Interstates 5, 80, and 505, and those highways identified in section 1.b.(2) above.
- Residential areas are located directly adjacent to lands with scenic agricultural qualities, including residences in Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, Woodland, and the nine community areas within the County defined in Section IV.A, Land Use and Housing, in this EIR.
- Several public institutions and recreational facilities are located in or adjacent to the County, including UC Davis; Cache Creek Regional Park; Grasslands Regional Park; Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area; and numerous wineries, farms, and other public attractions.

Several key public viewpoints are located within or in close proximity to the County. These viewpoints are areas where a significant number of viewers would have major concerns for the scenic qualities of a particular viewshed, and include (but are not limited to):

- Interstate 5 along the Dunnigan Hills
- Views within the Clarksburg Agricultural District
- State Route 16 through the Capay Valley
- Views of the Sacramento River along County Road 116, Old River Road, and South River Road
- Views westward toward Blue Ridge from the communities of Capay, Esparto, and Madison, and I-505
- Views of Putah Creek along State Route 128
- Views eastward toward the City of Sacramento skyline from I-5 and State Route 113
- Views of and along Cache Creek from the communities of Rumsey, Guinda, Capay, Esparto, Madison, and Yolo.
- Views along existing and proposed bicycle/pedestrian trails.

Views from Interstate 5 along the Dunnigan Hills and along State Route 84 near Clarksburg are shown in Figure IV.N-8.

c. Regulatory Context. There are currently no County-wide regulations applicable to visual and scenic resources. Design review is performed on a project-by-project basis during application review; design controls are generally implemented at the town level. The County is currently preparing countywide design guidelines.

2. Draft 2030 Countywide General Plan for Yolo County

The Draft General Plan contains a number of goals and policies intended to preserve and protect the existing visual and scenic resources of the County. Those goals and policies pertaining to visual and scenic resources are as follows:

Land Use and Community Character Element

The Draft General Plan contains a number of policies and actions designed to implement the County's strategies for preserving and protecting its visual and scenic resources. These goals and actions are as follows:

- Policy CC-1.1: Encourage private landowners of both residential and commercial properties to maintain their property in a way that contributes to the attractive appearance of Yolo County, while recognizing that many of the land uses in the County, including agriculture and light industry, require a variety of on-site structures, equipment, machinery and vehicles in order to operate effectively.
- Policy CC-1.2: Preserve and enhance the rural landscape as an important scenic feature of the County.
- Policy CC-1.3: Protect the rural night sky as an important scenic feature to the greatest feasible extent where lighting is needed.
- Policy CC-1.4: Identify and preserve, where possible, landmarks and icons which contribute to the identity and character of the rural areas.



Photo 13: Dunnigan Hills Viewshed along Interstate 5



Photo 14: Viewshed along State Route 84

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FIGURE IV.N-8

*Yolo County 2030 Countywide
General Plan EIR
Visual Qualities of the Study Area*

- Policy CC-1.5: Significant site features, such as trees, water courses, rock outcroppings, historic structures and scenic views shall be used to guide site planning and design in new development. Where possible, these features shall become focal points of the development.
- Policy CC-1.6: New freestanding off-site advertising along rural roads shall be limited. Existing non-conforming advertising shall be eliminated whenever possible.
- Policy CC-1.7: Reinforce the growth boundaries for each community through appropriate mechanisms including greenbelts, buffers, conservation easements and other community separators.
- Policy CC-1.8: Screen visually obtrusive activities and facilities such as infrastructure and utility facilities, storage yards, outdoor parking and display areas, along highways, freeways, roads and trails.
- Policy CC-1.9: In communities, place both new and existing line utilities and telecommunications infrastructure underground where feasible. Where underground utilities are not feasible, minimize the aesthetic impact.
- Policy CC-1.10: Protect existing ridgelines and hillsides from visually incompatible development.
- Policy CC-1.11: Require the development of open space corridors, bicycle paths and trails integrating waterways, scenic areas and County parks where appropriate, in collaboration with affected land owners as a part of project approval. The intent is to connect each community and city and other special places and corridors, throughout the County.
- Policy CC-1.12: Preserve and enhance the scenic quality of the County's rural roadway system. Prohibit projects and activities that would obscure, detract from, or negatively affect the quality of views from designated scenic roadways or scenic highways.
- Policy CC-1.13: The following routes are designated as local scenic roadways, as shown in Figure LU-3 (Scenic Highways) [of the Draft General Plan, included as Figure IV.N-1 in this EIR]:
 - State Route 16 (Colusa County line to Capay)
 - State Route 128 (Winters to Napa County line)
 - County Roads 116 and 116B (Knights Landing to eastern terminus of County Road 16)
 - County Roads 16 and 117 and Old River Road (County Road 107 to West Sacramento)
 - South River Road (West Sacramento City Limits to Sacramento County line)
- Policy CC-1.14: Designate other scenic roadways or routes where appropriate using the following criteria: the roadway or route traverses a scenic corridor, water feature, open space area or other interesting or unique areas, both urban and rural and may include bikeways, hiking and riding trails and pedestrian ways.
- Policy CC-1.15: The following features shall be protected and preserved along designated scenic roadways and routes, except where there are health and safety concerns:
 - Trees and other natural or unique vegetation
 - Landforms and natural or unique features
 - Views and vistas
 - Historic structures (where feasible), including buildings, bridges and signs
- Policy CC-1.16: The following features shall be stringently regulated along designated scenic roadways and routes with the intent of preserving and protecting the scenic qualities of the roadway or route:
 - Signage
 - Architectural design of adjoining structures

- Construction, repair and maintenance operations
- Landscaping
- Litter control
- Water quality
- Power poles, towers, above-ground wire lines, wind power and solar power devices and antennae
- Policy CC-1.17: Existing trees and vegetation and natural landforms along scenic roadways and routes shall be retained to the greatest feasible extent. Landscaping shall be required to enhance scenic qualities and/or screen unsightly views and shall emphasize the use of native plants and habitat restoration to the extent possible. Removal of trees, particularly those with scenic and/or historic value, shall be generally prohibited along the roadway or route.
- Policy CC-1.18: Electric towers, solar power facilities, wind power facilities, communication transmission facilities and/or above ground lines shall be avoided along scenic roadways and routes, to the maximum feasible extent.
- Policy CC-1.19: Unscreened outdoor storage of industrial and commercial parts and materials, salvage or junk, dismantled vehicles, used or new vehicle sales or, building materials for sale and similar materials, uses and things along designated scenic roadways and routes shall be prohibited.
- Policy CC-2.16: Require the following sustainable design standards as appropriate for projects located within the growth boundaries of the unincorporated communities:
 - A. Imaginative and comprehensive planning that seeks to make best use of existing community features and fully integrate new development.
 - B. Compact and cohesive communities that promote walking, bicycling and public transit.
 - C. Well defined neighborhoods served by parks, schools, greenbelts and trails.
 - D. The fiscal impacts of development projects shall be revenue neutral or positive in terms of impacts to the County General Fund. Appropriate exceptions for socially beneficial projects such as affordable housing, parks, etc. may be allowed.
 - E. Distinct neighborhood focal points such as a park and/or school and/or small neighborhood-serving retail site.
 - F. Narrow streets lined with evenly-spaced trees of the same or alternating species forming a shade canopy.
 - G. Vertical curbs and sidewalks separated from the street by landscaping.
 - H. Street lighting and trail lighting, as appropriate, at a scale appropriate for pedestrians and bicycles.
 - I. Maximum block lengths of 600 feet.
 - J. Schools within walking distance of a majority of the homes served.
 - K. A wide range of housing types, densities, sizes and affordability.
 - L. Where housing is not near the downtown area, allow small neighborhood commercial nodes that provide retail and small office opportunities for neighborhood residents with the goal of accommodating routine daily needs within walking distance of most residents.
 - M. Incorporate a grid street network that provides safe and efficient travel for all modes throughout the community with multiple connections to exterior routes.
 - N. Orient the grid pattern of new streets to align north/south and east/west, to give a sense of place and direction in new community areas, as well as to maximize solar access.

- O. Downtown streets shall have parking on both sides.
- P. Downtown areas shall have one or more civic nodes such as a central park, town square, fountain plaza, etc.
- Q. Homes that do not back onto roads, parks, schools, greenbelts, trails, or water bodies. Instead, homes that front on these features shall access by way of single-loaded streets or other designs to improve public aesthetics and neighborhood security.
- R. Development regulations and design standards shall emphasize healthy community design and safe neighborhoods.
- S. Avoid noise walls to the greatest possible extent.
- T. Entry features shall be provided at all main community entrances and exits and shall announce the community by name.
- U. Except for parking provided onsite for individual residential lots, parking shall be located to the rear of the facility being served and screened from public view. Parking shall be landscaped to achieve a minimum of 50 percent shading.
- V. Development and incorporation of community art and activities.
- W. Encourage specific land uses and designs that support community diversity.
- X. Protect and preserve to the greatest feasible extent creeks, riparian areas and other biological values within or adjoining an area.
- Y. Incorporate low-water use appliances, drought tolerant landscaping and other water efficient features.
- Z. Provide convenient and secure bicycle parking in downtown areas.
- AA. To the greatest possible extent, avoid cul-de-sacs that create barriers for pedestrian and bicycle access to adjacent areas.
- BB. Include recharging stations, preferred parking, and other incentives for alternative energy vehicles.
- CC. Limit the amount of turf in yards for new residential developments to a maximum of 25 percent of the yard area.
- DD. Require the installation of low output sprinklers, such as drip, soaker hoses, and microspray in new residential development whenever possible.
- EE. Use recycling systems for chillers and cooling towers.
- FF. Demonstrate adherence to LEED Neighborhood Design Standards or the equivalent, for new development, including Specific Plans.
- GG. Demonstrate consistency with the County's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction/Climate Action Plan(s), upon adoption.
- Policy CC-3.2: Ensure the consistency of Specific Plans with the County General Plan. Project specific goals and policies for new development will be established in the Specific Plan, as well as design standards that address the character of the existing community.
- Policy CC-3.11: Achieve the following within the Elkhorn Specific Plan growth boundaries:
 - A. The goal for this location is a regional conference center and hotel facility, with appropriate general commercial development and industrial research and development uses, capitalizing on the existing natural amenities and riverfront.
 - B. The Specific Plan shall emphasize aesthetic standards that recognize the importance of this site as the "visual gateway" to Yolo County along Interstate 5.

- C. The property shall be required to buildout from north to south. New construction and/or development shall be consistent with this General Plan, including but not limited to: satisfaction of levels of service for public services and facilities, protection of biological resources, protection against unreasonable geotechnical risk and/or exposure to hazards, exposure to noise, fiscally beneficial to the general fund, net public benefit, sustainable design, architectural excellence, jobs/housing balance and match, flood protection, water supply, sewer/septic service and protection of significant visual and/or aesthetic features.
- Policy CC-4.3: Reduce activities that encroach upon nature, through:
 - Reuse of existing buildings and sites for development.
 - Compact and clustered residential development, including reduced minimum lot sizes.
 - Reduction or elimination of impervious paving materials.
 - Development patterns that respect natural systems such as watersheds and wildlife corridors.
 - Policy CC-4.8: Require measures to minimize “heat islands” by requiring light-colored and reflective roofing materials and paint; “green” roofs; light colored roads and parking lots; extensive numbers of shade trees in parking lots; and shade trees and/or overhangs on the south and west sides of new or renovated buildings.
 - Policy CC-4.12: Require “green” design, construction and operation including:
 - A. Site planning sensitive to the natural environment.
 - B. Efficiency in resource use (including energy, water, raw materials and land).
 - C. Building reuse and adaptive reuse.
 - D. Selection of materials and products based on their life-cycle environmental impacts.
 - E. Use of materials and products with recycled content.
 - F. Use of materials provided from within the region.
 - G. Recycling of construction and demolition waste.
 - H. Reduction in the use of toxic and harmful substances in the manufacturing of materials and during construction.
 - I. Use of passive and active solar strategies and efficient heating and cooling technologies.
 - K. Reduction in water use for buildings and landscaping.
 - L. Light pollution reduction.
 - M. Improvements to interior and exterior environments leading to increased health, comfort and productivity.
 - N. Facility maintenance and operational practices that reduce or eliminate harmful effects on people and the natural environment during occupancy.
 - O. Water reuse systems.
 - P. Other systems to capture energy sources that would otherwise be wasted.
 - Policy CC-4.14: Enhance public safety through implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies. These include designing the placement of activities and physical features, such as buildings, entrances and exits, corridors, fences, pavement, signs, lighting and landscaping, in such a way as to clearly define public and private space, maximize visibility, control access and circulation and foster positive social interaction.

- Policy CC-4.15: Reflect a human scale in architecture that is sensitive, compatible and distinctive to both the site and the community.
- Policy CC-4.16: Encourage “visitability” accommodations in new residential development.
- Policy CC-4.17: Avoid the repetition of residential facades/designs within subdivisions and abrupt changes in facades between adjoining developments.
- Policy CC-4.18: Front exterior living spaces of a usable size (e.g. front porches, large front-facing windows, balconies, etc.) are highly desirable.
- Policy CC-4.19: Within community areas, houses shall front on the street.
- Policy CC-4.20: Discourage garage-forward and/or garage-dominated residential design.
- Policy CC-4.21: Discourage gated and/or walled communities.
- Policy CC-4.25: Incorporate art into the public open spaces of both public and private developments.
- Policy CC-4.26: Locate and design civic buildings as significant structures that help anchor and provide focus to the downtown area, with a character that fosters community identity and pride.
- Policy CC-4.27: Downtown architecture shall have a pedestrian scale, with varied and articulated facades. Entries must be oriented to the sidewalk. Front facades shall include numerous windows and covered arcades.
- Policy CC-4.28: Design highway service commercial uses at identified rural interchanges to preserve surrounding agriculture, rural character, scenic quality and the natural environment.
- Policy CC-4.30: Non-residential corner lots in the downtown and other “gateway” settings shall receive special design treatment which may include enhanced landscaping, entry features that establish community identity, fountains, plazas, enhanced pedestrian furniture (bench and arbor) or similar features. Corner residential lots are encouraged to have duplex or other multi-family units with entries on each street face.
- Action CC-A9: Prepare and implement design guidelines and minimum design requirements (standards) that ensure sustainable and attractive growth. (Policies CC-2.16, and CC-4.1 through CC-4.36)
- Action CC-A10: Prepare a Public Art Ordinance that requires a minimum percentage of the construction budget for development projects (both public and private) over a certain size threshold to be used for public art works.
- Action CC-A26: Update the County Zoning Code to prohibit the location of new homes on or near the top of ridgelines, where they would adversely affect nearby views.
- Action CC-A28: Orient the grid pattern of new streets to align north/south and east/west, to give a sense of place and direction in new community areas, as well as to maximize solar access.

3. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The following section discusses potential effects related to the visual and scenic resources of Yolo County that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan. The section begins with the criteria of significance, establishing the thresholds to determine whether an impact is potentially significant. The latter part of this section presents the impacts and recommends mitigation measures, if required.

a. Significance Criteria. Implementation of the Draft General Plan would have significant impacts on visual resources if it would:

- Block a unique or locally-significant scenic area, vista, or view;

- Result in substantial impacts to scenic resources along a scenic corridor;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the County or portions of the County;
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views outside of identified growth areas;
- Substantially conflict with applicable plans, policies and regulations of other agencies where such conflict would result in an adverse physical change in the environment; or
- Result in new policies that would result in significant adverse physical impacts as compared to the 1983 General Plan policies.

b. Impacts Analysis. This section discusses potential impacts to visual and scenic resources that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan and recommends mitigation measures, if appropriate.

(1) Block a Unique or Locally-Significant View. This section describes potential physical impacts of the Draft General Plan related to the potential that allowed growth could block a unique or locally-significant view.

Under the Draft General Plan approximately 4,738 acres can and are expected to develop into future urban uses (i.e., anything not designated as agriculture or open space) within the defined community area growth boundaries, including land designated as Specific Plan. This growth is confined within designated areas established in the Draft General Plan to limit the developed footprint within the County, protect agricultural uses and resource areas, and support sustainable growth. The Draft General Plan designates these limits as “growth boundaries” for each community and other outlying areas of the unincorporated County, to delineate the furthest extent of urban growth that will occur around these areas. Lands outside the growth boundaries are designated for agricultural and open space uses.

Outside of the growth boundaries (or the urban areas), build-out of the Draft General Plan is anticipated to result in the following acres of potential impact (totaling 10,018 acres):

- Growth in support of and related to agriculture that would include agricultural industrial activities (agricultural processing), agricultural commercial activities (agricultural-tourism), and an estimated 1,932 new farm dwellings, which would collectively impact approximately 5,684 acres over the next 20 years.²

² For farm dwellings, County staff assumed 1,610 units under build-out of the 1983 General Plan plus another 322 assumed units added under the 2030 General Plan for a total of 1,932 new units. To conservatively identify the number of acres to be developed with new farm dwellings by 2030, County staff assumed a 2.5-acre home site for every farm dwelling or farm dwelling complex, therefore 1,932 units x 2.5 acres = 4,830 acres. For agricultural industrial and agricultural commercial activities, approximately 854 acres are estimated to be impacted, per Table III-11.

- Growth of open space and supporting uses, which could result from future open space acquisitions, and may remove approximately 4,103 acres from agricultural production.³
- Roadway widening and improvements to allow additional capacity identified in the Draft General Plan Circulation Element could impact approximately 69 acres.⁴
- Future trails between towns and other places could impact approximately 162 acres.⁵

In summary, the area of potential effect includes approximately 14,756 acres (4,738 acres of urban uses and 10,018 acres of other uses).

As described previously, the entirety of the County is considered to have Variety Class B landscape diversity, with the preponderance of views and scenery commonly found throughout the County. The County was also determined to have a Visual Sensitivity level of 2, as described above in subsection 2.f. The landscapes and visual features of the County are of predominantly local importance and the area does not host significant numbers of viewers. The County's scenic areas, vistas, and views are predominantly accessible by the County's locally-designated scenic highways, as noted in subsection 3.d, above. While some development may occur within the vicinity of these scenic highways, the level of development anticipated under the Draft General Plan does not include growth of a nature that would block these resources through the installation of highway signage and development of facilities and structures typically regarded as capable of potentially obstructing scenic vistas or views to the horizon. Where larger facilities and structures are proposed for development, these projects would typically undergo design review during the application process, at which time the scale and massing of the facility or structure could be evaluated with respect to scenic vistas or views. Further, future growth is only allowed as infill or redevelopment, or in areas that are adjacent to existing developed areas, where views to the horizon and other scenic vistas may already be partially obstructed from existing development and surrounding structures.⁶

Any new development occurring adjacent to existing community areas would generally not obstruct views to any greater degree than currently exists, and single or small-grouped facilities typical of agricultural industrial development would not block an entire view or vista; in many instances, these facilities would contribute to the overall agrarian aesthetic of the County as a working agricultural landscape. Draft General Plan policies CC-1.2, CC-1.4, CC-1.5, and CC-1.15 protect and preserve the rural landscape as well as landmarks, icons, and significant site features to include these items as focal points. Policies CC-1.6, CC-1.9, and CC-1.16 limit signs and utilities that could impact views. Policies CC-1.10, CC-1.12, CC-1.18, CC-4.28, and ED-4.8 protect ridgelines and hillsides from

³ County staff estimate of an additional 4,103 acres to be removed from agricultural use for open space uses assumed 6,452 acres of open space would be required to satisfy the Draft General Plan level of service standard (20 acres/1,000 population regional and open space parks established by Policy CO-1.10); 1,973 acres currently exist in the County's resource park inventory, and 376 acres are designated for open space within the Specific Plan areas (for either agricultural buffer, habitat buffer, and/or buffer from known waterways). Total County population 322,586 persons ÷ 1,000 x 20 acres = 6,452 acres open space.

⁴ Identified roadway widenings and improvements include 68.7 acres (see Draft General Plan page CI-8). County staff assumed additional right-of-way as follows: 25 feet on CR6; 20 feet on CR 99W; 25 feet on CR21A and 85B; 20 feet on SR16 (CR21A to I505); 10 feet on CR89, CR 102, and on SR16 (CR 75 to CR85B and I-505 to CR98).

⁵ To determine the number of acres associated with future trails between towns and other places, County staff assumed a 25-foot wide trail extending from Rumsey to Woodland, from Woodland to Davis, from the end of the Class I bike trail along Road 31 to Winters, and from Clarksburg to West Sacramento (approximately 53.5 miles x 25 feet).

⁶ Obstruction of scenic areas, vistas, and views are assessed from common areas, rather than from private homes and properties; as such, views from existing homes on the perimeter of communities are not considered.

visually-incompatible development, preserve and enhance scenic qualities from rural roadways, limit the placement of visually-incompatible facilities, require highway-serving uses to preserve surrounding scenic qualities, and encourage development of private recreational facilities that preserve scenic resources. Implementation of these Draft General Plan policies would reduce the potential impact to views that could result from new development. As a result, build-out of the Draft General Plan would not block a unique or locally-significant scenic area, vista, or view and any impacts would be considered less-than-significant.

(2) Impacts to Scenic Corridors. This section describes potential impacts to scenic resources along scenic corridors that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan.

Yolo County has designated the following as local scenic highways:

- State Route 16: Colusa County line to Capay
- State Route 128: Winters to the Napa County line
- County Roads 116 and 116B: Knights Landing to the eastern terminus of County Road 16
- County Roads 16 and 117 and Old River Road: County Road 107 to West Sacramento
- South River Road: West Sacramento city limits to Sacramento County line.

In addition to these routes, local scenic corridors exist along the waterways of Cache and Putah Creeks, the Yolo Bypass, and the Sacramento River. The Draft General Plan confines urban growth within designated limits established in the Draft General Plan to contain the developed footprint within the County. The Draft General Plan designates these limits as “growth boundaries” for each community and other outlying areas of the unincorporated County to delineate the furthest extent of growth that will occur around these areas. Where these growth boundaries extend along a designated local scenic highway or adjacent to a local waterway, the potential exists for new development to impact scenic resources along these corridors. Such development could occur along State Route 16 as it passes through the communities of Rumsey and Guinda and into the community of Capay; along County Road 116 at Knights Landing; and along South River Road as it passes through Clarksburg. Where non-urban growth such as the construction and operation of agricultural industrial and/or agricultural commercial facilities occurs within these areas, however, these facilities would contribute to the overall agrarian aesthetic of the County as a working agricultural landscape and would not, therefore, be considered negative impacts to these scenic corridors.

Draft General Plan policies CC-1.7, CC-1.11, CC-1.14, CC-1.15, CC-1.16, and CC-1.17 reinforce growth boundaries through the use of mechanisms such as greenbelts, buffers, and conservation easements; require the development of open space corridors; enable the County to designate additional scenic roadways and corridors; and identify features to be stringently regulated along these corridors, including signage, landscaping, utilities, and architectural design of adjoining structures. Draft General Plan policies CC-1.2, CC-1.5, and CC-1.15 protect and preserve the rural landscape as well as landmarks, icons, and significant site features to include these items as focal points. Policies CC-1.6, CC-1.8, CC-1.9, and CC-1.16 limit signs and utilities that could impact views along scenic corridors. Policies CC-1.10, CC-1.12, and CC-1.19 protect ridgelines and hillsides from visually-incompatible development, preserve and enhance scenic qualities from rural roadways, and limit the placement of visually-incompatible facilities. Implementing these policies would reduce the potential impacts to scenic corridors as a result of new development anticipated under the Draft General Plan, including provisions both for new development within growth boundaries and for any uses along waterways and scenic highways. New development contained within the defined growth boundaries

would occur adjacent to existing development, and thorough implementation of the Draft General Plan policies by the County during the project review and approval process would ensure consistency with existing uses and development patterns in these areas. As a result, new development would only extend, by a small margin, the existing patterns of development along these scenic corridors, and any potential impacts to scenic resources along the scenic corridors would be less-than-significant.

(3) Degrade Visual Character and Quality of the County. This section describes potential impacts to the visual character and quality of the County that could result from build-out of the Draft General Plan.

Impact VIS-1: Build-out of the Draft General Plan would result in new growth that degrades the existing visual character and quality of the County. (S)

As described above in subsection 2.d, the overall visual quality within the County is generally Variety Class B, with some Variety Class A based on specific visual features. Landforms range from hilly to flat, with the majority of the County demonstrating not only an agricultural character but one of plant and animal natural resources and open space, as well. Visual qualities are enhanced by occasional placement of agriculture-related development, including barns, implement storage, and processing facilities that further contribute to its agrarian character. A mixture of landforms from west to east across the County provide views similar in nature and scope to those found throughout California's Central Valley and coastal ranges.

The Draft General Plan confines urban growth within designated limits established in the Draft General Plan to contain the developed footprint within the County. The Draft General Plan designates these limits as "growth boundaries" for each community and other outlying areas of the unincorporated County to delineate the furthest extent of growth that will occur around these areas. Development proposed through the Draft General Plan would be consistent with existing types and massing of housing, commercial, and industrial buildings in these areas. With implementation of the Draft General Plan there is the potential for new development to degrade the existing visual character or quality of the surrounding area if that development was proposed for areas currently without adjacent development, or if the type or massing of proposed development was significantly greater than what currently exists. Draft General Plan policies CC-1.5, CC-1.7, CC-1.19, CC-2.16, CC-4.3, CC-4.8, CC-4.12 and CC-4.17 would ensure that design and construction of new development incorporates local design elements and contributes to the overall visual character of the area. The Draft General Plan also includes a number of policies intended to limit or mitigate the potential impacts of new development on agricultural areas, which contribute to the County's visual continuity and overall character; policies LU-2.1, AG-1.2, AG-1.11, AG-1.12, and AG-1.13 support the designation and use of growth boundaries, discourage contradictory uses adjacent to agricultural land uses, and encourage buffers between development and agriculture. The visual features identified above that contribute to the County's visual character and quality would be enhanced by the Draft General Plan by focusing development in defined areas and limiting development outside of identified growth boundaries, however, the incorporation of smart growth principles would encourage this urban growth to incorporate taller building heights and denser construction than currently exists throughout the County.

Mitigation Measure VIS-1: None available. (SU)

While implementation of the policies and actions included in the Draft General Plan would reduce the severity of this impact to unique visual and scenic resources, no additional feasible

mitigation measures are available. Therefore, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

The Draft General Plan policies identified above would reduce but not fully mitigate these impacts to the existing visual quality and character of the County, and build-out of the Draft General Plan will result in greater overall growth in amounts larger than those which currently exist within the County. This growth is beneficial to the County overall; as such, no additional feasible mitigation measures have been identified, and this impact remains significant and unavoidable.

(4) Create New Light and Glare. This section describes potential impacts on visual and scenic resources from added light and glare that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan.

Impact VIS-2: Implementation of the Draft General Plan could result in additional uses that would create new sources of substantial light or glare, which could adversely affect nighttime views outside of identified growth areas. (S)

Outdoor lighting is necessary for illuminating connections between building and support facilities such as sidewalks, parking lots, roadways, and community gathering places. However, light trespass, glare, and substantial nighttime lighting from poorly designed lighting systems can affect the nocturnal ecosystem, and light pollution limits night sky access. Additional sources of substantial light and glare typically result from the development of facilities and other improvements that include, as part of their exterior or façade, materials with a high potential for reflectance of exterior light or visible light transmittance of interior light. Additional developed facilities and other improvements, particularly those designed to accommodate activities or operations that may take place between dusk and dawn, may include exterior lighting schemes that require placement of pole lighting to broadcast sufficient candlepower at elevated lighting power densities for nighttime operations or safety.

The Draft General Plan includes a number of policies that promote the location of agricultural industrial facilities and other complementary uses on agricultural lands. Policies LU-2.2 and AG-1.7 allow additional agricultural commercial and industrial land uses and farm dwellings in agricultural areas, where appropriate. Policies AG-3.1, AG-3.2, AG-3.4, AG-3.7, AG-3.8, and AG-3.18 support agricultural districts and uses that support agriculture, recognize and protect agricultural infrastructure, the development of local suppliers for agricultural goods and services, and encourage the reuse of agricultural industrial facilities in agricultural areas. Agricultural commercial and industrial uses typically require or include nighttime lighting schemes to enable post-dusk operations during seasons where these operations are critical, such as harvesting, off-loading, and packaging during harvesting seasons, as well as some year-round operations such as delivery and loading of shipping trucks.

According to the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America's (IESNA's) guidance document RP-33-99, *Lighting for Exterior Environments*, park and rural settings are classified as zone LZ1 (Dark), with little concentrated ambient illumination. Areas within this category have population densities of less than 200 people per square mile, according to the last U.S. census. Applying IESNA RP-33-99 to Yolo County, the majority of agricultural and other lands outside the boundaries of existing developed areas would be included in this category and could be adversely impacted by additional development that includes substantial exterior lighting, as new sources would contribute light pollution to surrounding areas and could disrupt local nocturnal ecosystems. Developed areas within the County would be classified as either LZ2 (Low) or LZ3 (Medium), depending on their population, and would be less-significantly affected by exterior lighting schemes proportionate to

existing exterior lighting in these areas and their surroundings (i.e., these areas already have an existing amount of light pollution and new sources would generally not contribute significantly to elevate light pollution levels).⁷

Because the Draft General Plan seeks to balance various land uses and activities to promote sustainability for existing towns and the greatest potential benefit for the County and its residents, the placement of agricultural industrial facilities in locations that provide a strategic advantage for their use is a critical piece of the Draft General Plan's land use and agricultural enhancement efforts. The placement of these facilities within agricultural areas reduces the economic burden of transportation and processing on the farmer, and reduces the potential for spoilage and other loss that typically results from transporting crops long distances prior to processing. Because these uses will be emphasized in agricultural areas, which are predominantly void of significant nocturnal lighting due to their sparse development, sensitively-designed outdoor lighting can both extend access and use of these agricultural uses while limiting their potential impacts on surrounding users and the general nighttime ambience of the County. Any time lighting is added to an exterior environment, however, the potential for light pollution exists. Using the minimum amount of lighting equipment, limiting or eliminating all landscape lighting, and avoiding light pollution through the careful selection of lighting equipment and controls can allow nocturnal wildlife to thrive while still providing for these necessary nighttime activities.

Mitigation Measure VIS-2: Implement Mitigation Measure LU-2b.

Implementation of this mitigation measure and the polices in the Draft General Plan will reduce this impact, but the potential impacts that may result are still considered significant and unavoidable. (SU)

As required by Mitigation Measure LU-2b that revises Policy CC-4.11, a lighting study shall be prepared for developments that propose outdoor nighttime lighting, subject to site conditions and available technical information as determined by the County lead department. The technical study must meet CEQA standards, applicable industry standards for nighttime lighting, such as those of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, *New Construction & Major Renovation Reference Guide*,⁸ and the County's nighttime lighting requirements. The County's requirements include outdoor light fixtures that are low-intensity, shielded and/or directed away from residences and the night sky and use low-glare lamps or other similar lighting fixtures. All light fixtures must be designed, installed and shielded in such a manner that no light is emitted from the fixture at angles above the horizontal plane. Lighting plans must demonstrate that illumination levels at the project site boundary will not exceed 1 foot candle.

Implementation of this measure will further the County's efforts to promote environmentally responsible or "green" building practices and it will reduce the potential for substantial light or glare that could impact surrounding users from new development, but new or existing uses that create these lighting sources, such as nighttime harvesting, will still occur as a result of implementing the Draft General Plan. Mitigation Measure VIS-2 will limit the potential light pollution resulting from new sources of light or glare to those areas within the immediate vicinity of the lighting source, and will

⁷ U.S. Green Building Council, 2007. Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, *New Construction & Major Renovation Reference Guide*, version 2.2. Third Ed. October.

⁸ Ibid.

minimize the amount of light pollution emitted to the greater night sky, but the potential impacts that may result would still be considered significant and unavoidable.

(5) Conflict with Plans and Policies of Other Agencies. Visual and scenic resources are generally regulated at the local level. With implementation of the Draft General Plan policies and actions that call for the protection of visual and scenic resources, as well as the goals, policies and actions that require consistency with the Delta Protection Commission's Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta, build-out of the Draft General Plan would not conflict with any applicable plans and policies of other agencies related to visual resources, and any potential impacts would be considered less-than-significant.

(6) Result in Adverse Impacts from Draft General Plan Policies Compared to 1983 General Plan Policies. The Draft General Plan greatly expands the scope and content of goals, policies, and actions for the enhancement of visual and scenic resources as compared to the 1983 General Plan. The Draft General Plan includes these items to ensure "green" design is considered and implemented, where feasible, and that new urban growth is complementary to existing development and completed according to the smart growth focus of the Draft General Plan. In addition to the aesthetic advantages of this smart growth focus, the results will encourage alternative transportation uses, reduced greenhouse gas emissions through reduced vehicle use, increase energy efficiency, and increased public health. Additionally, the Draft General Plan promotes the location of agricultural industrial facilities within agricultural areas, which will achieve economic advantages for the County's farmers as well as contribute to the overall agrarian aesthetic of the County's rural landscape.

The goals and policies of the Draft General Plan's Land Use and Community Character Element build on and enhance the goals and policies pertaining to visual and scenic resources contained in the 1983 General Plan by updating those goals and objectives to include advances in community design and architecture, building construction and siting, and infrastructure development, as well as promoting preservation and enhancement of the County's visual and scenic resources. The goals and objectives of the 1983 General Plan were supported by policies that have, for the greater part, only been reinforced in the Draft General Plan, including 1983 policies pertaining to land use, open space, conservation, and the County's scenic highways. Policies AG-1.18, AG-3.8, AG-5.4, and AG-5.7 emphasize the reuse of existing assets and infrastructure to reduce the need for additional associated development. Policies CC-1.1 through CC-1.19 preserve and enhance the rural landscape within the County, promote placement of new infrastructure where such facilities will be visually unobtrusive, promote the location of agricultural industrial facilities within agricultural areas to provide economic benefit as well as contribute to the overall agrarian aesthetic of the County, and promote quality design to enhance the County's visual character and scenic qualities. Specifically, policies CC-2.3 through CC-2.16 encourage infill development where possible, as well as higher-density housing and mixed-use development in downtown areas, developing parks and buffers to reduce impacts to surrounding agricultural areas, and including sustainable design standards to provide a variety of housing types and walkable communities. Policies CC-4.3, CC-4.8, CC-4.11, and CC-4.12 through CC-4.38 emphasize compact development, minimizing heat islands, adherence to smart growth and green design principles provided in the SACOG Blueprint, and development design that emphasizes a human scale and visually-appealing neighborhood design. Implementation of the Draft General Plan's policies related to visual and scenic resources would support the County's local community values and the Draft General Plan's overall vision, and would not result in significant adverse physical impacts as com-

pared to the 1983 General Plan policies. As a result, any potential impacts would be considered less-than-significant.

