

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the environmental consequences of the Draft 2030 Countywide General Plan for Yolo County (Draft General Plan). This EIR is designed to fully inform decision-makers in Yolo County, other responsible and trustee agencies, and the general public of the potential environmental consequences of approval and implementation of the updated General Plan. It recommends mitigation measures in the form of modifications to the proposed General Plan land uses, policies, and actions that would reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts. This EIR also examines cumulative impacts, and various alternatives to the proposed project.

Yolo County (County) is the lead agency for environmental review of the proposed project. This EIR will be used by Yolo County staff and the public in their review of the Draft General Plan. It may also be used by other agencies in their decision-making (see Table III-11 in Chapter III, Project Description).

This document is a Program EIR for the General Plan update and may function as a project-level EIR for later specific projects based on the outcome of subsequent project and/or site review and analysis. The effects of General Plan land uses and implementation actions are analyzed in this document as specifically and comprehensively as possible in order to limit or preclude the need, consistent with State law, for further CEQA compliance.

The preparation, content, and processing of this document are covered by primarily by CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. As described in this section, a Program EIR is one that may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project, and that are related: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

The General Plan update satisfies each of these criteria. It governs land use and development within the entire unincorporated area of Yolo County thus resulting in a geographic relationship. The Plan includes maps, goals, policies, and actions that are logical parts of a chain of contemplated actions governing future land uses and allowed development. The policies and actions either directly establish, or will govern future plans that will establish, rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria governing implementation of the General Plan. The General Plan update will be carried out under the authority and approval of Yolo County. Many of the specific projects and actions carried out pursuant to the General Plan would have similar environmental impacts which could be mitigated in similar ways.

There are several advantages to a program EIR. It provides a more thorough consideration of regional influences, secondary effects, cumulative impacts, land use and policy alternatives, global climate

change, and other factors that apply to the program as a whole. Program EIRs avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations. They allow the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at a time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with fundamental issues and/or cumulative effects.

Subsequent projects approved or undertaken pursuant to a program EIR may still require additional environmental review. This will be determined by the County on a project-by-project basis based on the details and specifics of the project and/or site, and appropriate subsequent analysis. However, program EIRs allow subsequent environmental review to focus on issues unique to the site that were not specifically addressed in the program EIR. This allows decision-makers and interested parties to focus the CEQA analysis of a subsequent project on new effects (if any) not considered before.

Subject to the foregoing, with the exception of the identified Specific Plan areas, other planned growth in the General Plan update is expected to move forward under negative declarations, exemptions, and/or reliance on this EIR. The Specific Plan areas will have additional technical and site analysis, and are anticipated to likely trigger subsequent EIRs, although negative declarations will be prepared if appropriate. The County intends to rely, to the extent legally feasible, upon the statutory exemptions provided under state law including: 1) Public Resources Code Section 21083.3 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 for land use actions and development consistent (including ordinances and community plans) with the General Plan; and, 2) California Government Code Section 65457a and CEQA Guidelines Section 15182(a) for residential projects consistent with the Specific Plans.

Other planned development (as described in more detail in Chapter III, Project Description) may be allowed by right, and/or may rely on this EIR and subsequent site-level technical studies only. This will include the following: a) growth allowed in other community areas; b) farm dwellings, agricultural commercial development, and agricultural industrial development; c) future open space acquisitions and minor accompanying improvements (e.g. staging areas, parking lots, interpretive areas, etc); d) roadway widenings and improvements consistent with the General Plan Circulation Element; and e) trails, including those that fall outside of community areas, such as between towns.

The County will consider future discretionary projects and make determinations as to their consistency with the General Plan and other regulations and whether they may properly rely on this EIR, and/or whether any subsequent site-level technical studies and resource inventories should be required. The County and other agencies will use information presented in this Program EIR to evaluate future land use and/or development proposals and to focus subsequent CEQA review on project-related impacts (if any) that were not specifically addressed in this EIR.

## **B. PROPOSED PROJECT**

The Draft General Plan covers unincorporated Yolo County including: Capay Valley, Clarksburg, Dunnigan, Esparto, Knights Landing, Madison, Monument Hills, Yolo, Zamora, and a number of other community areas. The four incorporated cities in the County, land owned by State and federal agencies, tribal trust land held on behalf of the Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians, and the UC Davis campus all have varying degrees of independent land use decision-making authority and are not under the jurisdiction of County's General Plan. In addition, land that lies within the primary zone of the

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta falls under the authority of the Delta Protection Agency Land Use and Resource Management Plan.

There are two fundamental aspects to the Draft General Plan: 1) the maps and diagrams, including the Land Use Diagram that identifies future planned land uses; and, 2) the goals, policies, and actions that guide all decision-making. The policies of the Draft General Plan focus on the following primary themes:

- The continuing primacy of agriculture and related endeavors throughout the County, by allowing for more economic innovation and aggressively protecting the water and soil resources upon which farming depends.
- Modest managed growth within existing towns, where accompanied by improvements to infrastructure and services to ensure community sustainability.
- Expanded protection of a network of connected open space and recreational areas, integrated with the Yolo Natural Heritage Program.
- Opportunities for revenue-producing and job-producing agricultural, industrial, and commercial growth in designated locations and along key transportation corridors.
- Management of the existing road network to make the most of existing capacity, while accommodating a diversity of users and alternative modes of transportation.
- Service levels that allow for the effective and efficient provision of services, consistent with rural values and expectations.
- A comprehensive approach to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and plan for the potential impacts of global climate change.
- New emphasis on community and neighborhood requirements that reflect “smart growth” and “healthy design” principles, which complement the unique character of existing developed areas.

The Draft General Plan is divided into nine chapters. Six of these chapters or elements – Land Use and Community Character, Circulation, Public Facilities and Services, Conservation and Open Space, Health and Safety, and Housing – cover the seven topics required by Government Code Section 65302. The remaining element, the Agriculture and Economic Development Element, is an optional element prepared by the County to meet local needs and concerns. Each element has a policy framework consisting of goals, policies, and an implementation program, which contains various actions that carry out the goals and policies of the element. The Draft General Plan elements are described in detail in Chapter III, Project Description.

Approximately 23,265 people currently live in the unincorporated area of Yolo County, which includes about 7,263 homes and 20,818 jobs. Under the existing 1983 General Plan, an additional 11,240 people, 4,014 homes, and 13,127 jobs could be added. At build-out of the Draft General Plan, estimated to occur by 2030, the unincorporated County could have a population of approximately 64,700 persons, approximately 22,061 residential units, and 53,154 jobs.

The proposed land use changes in Dunnigan account for the majority of these increases. At build-out, assumed to occur in 2030, the existing town of Dunnigan would contain about 24,139 people<sup>1</sup>, 8,281

<sup>1</sup> 8281 total added new units x 2.8 persons per household = 23187 + 952 existing population = 24139

homes, and 8,661 jobs. This would comprise approximately 37 percent of the projected buildout of population and housing in the unincorporated area, and about 16 percent of the jobs.

The first Public Review Draft of the 2030 Countywide General Plan was published for public review on September 10, 2008. The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission held a joint public workshop to review the Plan on September 16, 2008. Subsequently, 29 additional community meetings and workshops were held. On November 3, 4, and 6, 2008 the Planning Commission held workshops on the Draft General Plan polices and considered public comments on the polices. Based on these meetings and the comments received, the Planning Commission recommended modification of certain policies. The Revised Public Review Draft General Plan, published on January 20, 2009, contained nearly all of the changes recommended by the Planning Commission, as well as other changes recommended by staff. Additionally, the staff proposed revisions to the land use map in order to more accurately reflect existing land uses based on the new proposed land use designations. On January 20 and 21, 2009, the Board of Supervisors held workshops on the Revised Draft General Plan and ultimately accepted that document, with specified changes, as the “preferred project” for purposes of environmental review. This EIR analyzes the environmental impacts of the revised Draft General Plan including the changes directed by the Board of Supervisors on January 21, 2009.

### **C. EIR SCOPE**

Yolo County published and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on September 22, 2008, which was distributed to local, regional, and State agencies and posted on the County website at <http://www.yolocounty.org/Index.aspx?page=1589>. A total of nine comments were received by the County which were taken into account during the preparation of the EIR. The NOP and written comments received on the NOP are included in Appendix A.

This Draft EIR focuses on the areas of concern identified in the NOP and comments received on the NOP. The following environmental topics are addressed in this EIR:

- A. Land Use and Housing
- 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

## D. REPORT ORGANIZATION

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter I – Introduction:** Discusses the overall EIR purpose, provides a summary of the proposed project, describes the EIR scope, and summarizes the organization of the EIR.
- **Chapter II – Summary:** Provides a summary of the impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce or avoid significant impacts.
- **Chapter III – Project Description:** Provides a description of Yolo County, project background, the project objectives, the elements of the Draft General Plan, land use changes proposed by the Draft General Plan, adoption and implementation of the Draft General Plan, and uses of this EIR.
- **Chapter IV – Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures:** Describes the following for each environmental technical topic: existing conditions (setting), applicable Draft General Plan policies, potential environmental impacts and their level of significance, and mitigation measures recommended to mitigate identified impacts. Potential adverse impacts are identified by levels of significance, as follows: less-than-significant impact (LTS), significant impact (S), and significant and unavoidable impact (SU). The significance of each impact is categorized before and after implementation of any recommended mitigation measures(s).
- **Chapter V – Alternatives:** Provides an evaluation of three alternatives to the proposed project.
- **Chapter VI – CEQA Considerations:** Provides an analysis of effects found not to be significant, growth-inducing impacts, unavoidable significant environmental impacts, significant irreversible changes, and cumulative impacts.
- **Chapter VII – Report Preparation:** Identifies preparers of the EIR, references used, and the persons and organizations contacted.
- **Appendices:** The appendices contain the NOP and comments on the NOP, technical calculations, and other documentation prepared in conjunction with this EIR.

