

Appendix D1

Environmental Background

The MTP Plan Area spans a diverse geography, including productive agricultural lands, the rapidly growing urban core and foothill communities, and the sparsely populated forest lands of the western Sierra Nevada Mountains. These conditions are described in more detail by county:

El Dorado County in 2008

El Dorado County extends from the Sacramento County line on the west to the summit of the Sierra Nevada on the east. From west to east, the geography of El Dorado County progresses from foothill to mountainous terrain. Existing land uses include residential, commercial, and industrial urban development, rural and agricultural lands used for resource extraction, open space and recreation. The only incorporated city within the county is Placerville. Residential development is primarily concentrated on the west side of the county in clusters along U.S. Highway 50, including Placerville and the unincorporated communities of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park (the Tahoe Basin is not part of the MTP Plan Area). El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park are recently urbanized areas of the county, where housing and commercial development is suburban in nature. Commercial development has generally followed the same growth patterns as residential development, clustering along U.S. Highway 50 and State Routes 49 and 193. A new El Dorado Hills Business Park south of Highway 50 and just east of the El Dorado-Sacramento County border has begun generating some job growth outside of the traditional jobs center in the city of Placerville.

Forty-five percent of the land in the county is in public ownership. Agricultural and forest lands make up the largest percentage of undeveloped lands. Forest lands are managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also manages forested lands in the American and Cosumnes River canyons.

Placer County in 2008

With a similar geography to El Dorado County, Placer County is predominantly rural. The six incorporated cities within Placer County are Auburn, Colfax, Lincoln, Loomis, Rocklin and Roseville. However, the majority of the population lives in the suburban southwest portion of the county where residential development has occurred in and around the fast-growing cities of Roseville, Rocklin and Lincoln. Residential uses in Placer County range from rural residential areas containing parcels up to 160 acres in rural areas, to medium and high-density dwelling units in urbanized areas. Most residential development within the county consists of single-family dwellings. In recent years, Roseville and Rocklin have emerged as a regional employment center. Accompanying this has been unprecedented housing development throughout the southwest Placer area. Outside of these cities, along eastbound Interstate 80, suburban residential uses are concentrated in the cities of Loomis, Auburn, and Colfax. The predominant land use in these cities is low-density residential, though Auburn has a concentration of employment uses due to its role as the county seat of government.

Commercial land uses are primarily located in the urbanized portions of the county; although a large concentration of commercial development occurs outside existing urban areas along Interstate 80. The highest concentrations of commercial uses within urbanized areas fall within the cities of Roseville, Rockin, Auburn, and Loomis. Industrial and heavy commercial uses are scattered in various locations outside the various urban boundaries. Concentrations of such uses are located along Interstate 80 near Newcastle, Auburn, Foresthill and Weimar.

Non-urban uses within Placer County include agricultural, resource extractive (timber and mining), and public lands and open space uses. A large portion of the county, particularly in the eastern half, is under public ownership. The largest amount of public lands within Placer County consists of most of the eastern half of the county, and is under the control of the BLM. Smaller amounts of land in central Placer County are under the jurisdiction of the USFS and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Sacramento County in 2008

Sacramento County encompasses approximately 994 square miles in the middle of the 400-mile long Central Valley, which is California's prime agricultural region. The County is bordered by Contra Costa and San Joaquin Counties on the south, Amador and El Dorado Counties on the east, Placer and Sutter Counties on the north, and Yolo and Solano Counties on the west. Sacramento County extends from the low delta lands between the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers north to about ten miles beyond the State Capitol and east to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The southernmost portion of Sacramento County has direct access to the San Francisco Bay. Sacramento County lies at the geographic center of the region and spans both agricultural land uses as well as the most urbanized areas of the region. The geographic boundaries of the County of Sacramento include seven incorporated cities, which include Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Rancho Cordova, and Sacramento.

The highest densities of employment and residential uses are located in the urban core of the city of Sacramento. Outside of this, land uses are predominantly low-density suburban. Two of the three regional employment centers are located in Sacramento County, one in downtown Sacramento and the more recent along the U.S. Highway 50 Corridor in the cities of Rancho Cordova and Folsom. Land uses north of the American River are primarily suburban residential with concentrations of commercial and employment uses along major transportation routes. In the southern end of the region, south Sacramento, the unincorporated Vineyard community, the cities of Elk Grove and Galt, are predominantly residential, with the latter three areas at fairly low suburban- to rural- densities. The Cosumnes River flood plain and existing agricultural operations separate the cities of Elk Grove and Galt. The southeast county (outside of existing cities and the county Urban Services Boundary) is in agricultural use with pockets of rural residential communities.

Sutter County in 2008

Land use in Sutter County is predominantly agricultural and agriculture is the county's primary industry. Yuba City and Live Oak are the two incorporated cities in Sutter County. Several unincorporated "rural communities" include Meridian, Nicolaus, East Nicolaus, Rio Oso, Robbins, Sutter and Trowbridge. The 1996 General Plan Policy Document contains policies which encourage agricultural preservation in the unincorporated areas of the county and direct new development

adjacent to and into the county's two cities. Yuba City and Live Oak are suburban and rural in their current land use pattern. Sutter County has a long-standing policy of directing new growth to the cities. The exception to this policy is the "Measure M" area, located at the southern end of the unincorporated county, where a pending specific plan would allow it to be developed as a mixed-use community.

Yolo County in 2008

Agriculture is Yolo County's primary industry. The eastern two-thirds of the County consists of nearly level alluvial fans, flat plains, and basins, while the western third is largely composed of rolling terraces and steep uplands used for dry-farmed grain and range. The elevation ranges from slightly below sea level near the Sacramento River around Clarksburg to 3,000 feet along the ridge of the western mountains. Yolo County's 661,760 acres is home to over 150,000 people. Nearly 85% of the population lives in the County's four cities (Davis, West Sacramento, Woodland, Winters).

Yolo County and its cities also operate under an agriculture preservation policy that directs urban development into existing urban areas. The cities of Davis, Woodland and West Sacramento have received most of this growth. For this reason, land uses in the cities are relatively compact compared to other cities in the region.

Yuba County in 2008

Yuba County is located in the Northern Sacramento Valley, approximately 40 miles north of the State Capital, Sacramento. Its boundaries stretch from the farms and orchards of the valley to the timberlands of the Sierras. Like Sutter County, Yuba County is also primarily rural and agricultural. However, the Highway 70 corridor in unincorporated Yuba County has recently experienced suburban residential growth since the approval of the Plumas Lakes Specific Plan. The city of Marysville maintains its compact footprint due, in large part, to significant flood constraints. The city of Wheatland has had modest residential growth. Figure 13-1 depicts land uses throughout the region as adopted by local cities and counties.

Agricultural Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The MTP Plan Area has a long history of agricultural activities due to its location in the middle of the fertile Central Valley of California. The following is a profile of existing agricultural resources around the region.

EL DORADO COUNTY

Agricultural lands and forestlands make up a large percentage of the undeveloped lands in the County. Agricultural influences and activities contribute to the economic stability of the county through crop production, serve as the foundation of the county's rural lifestyle, and serve as a key element in the sense of community of many rural regions. In 2005, the county had a gross crop

value of \$42.9 million, including timber (El Dorado County Department of Agriculture 2005). The overall contribution of agriculture to the county's economy (through employment, sales, tourism, and other related activities) totaled approximately \$434 million in 2005 (El Dorado County Department of Agriculture 2005). Forestlands occupy 636,000 acres (55 percent) of the County (Lands on the west slope of the county are considered the most valuable for agriculture because of the area's gentler slopes and richer soils. Historically, grazing of cattle and other livestock was the primary economic contributor in El Dorado County. Recently, production of fruit (including wine grapes) and nuts has become a major contributor to the county's agricultural production value.

PLACER COUNTY

Placer County has a long and proud history of agricultural activity, starting before the birth of the county in 1851 and continuing to this day. Historically, the county produces fruit and nut crops, timber, rice, flowers, cattle, poultry, and sheep. In 2005, the total gross value for agricultural products was \$73.8 million (Placer County Agricultural Commissioner 2005). Recently, nursery products have become the leading agricultural industry due to urban growth and an increased demand for landscape plants. Cattle and calf operations, timber and rice production are also among the top grossing agricultural operations in the county. As in El Dorado County, Placer County's western lands are the most valuable for agriculture because of the flat to-gently sloped topography and richer soils.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

While it is the most urbanized of the counties in the region, Sacramento County has a long history of agricultural activity. The majority of agricultural lands and activities are located in the south and east county areas, including the Sacramento River delta region. In 2005 the county grossed more than \$348 million in agricultural products, which was a record for a ten year period from 1995-2005 (County of Sacramento Agricultural Commissioner 2005). Top producing crops in the county include wine grapes, milk, nursery products, and pears.

SUTTER COUNTY

Agriculture is the primary industry of Sutter County, with 96 percent of the county's acreage in farmland (U.S. Census of Agriculture 2002). The County's valley floor location between two major rivers has created over geological time a broad area of deep, rich agricultural soils with abundant surface and subsurface water. Together with an inland climate that provides for a long growing season, these factors have lead to a productive agricultural environment. Agricultural activities within the County can generally be placed into one of two classes, either intensive agriculture, which includes field crops, seed crops, vegetable crops, fruit and nut crops, nursery stock, and apiary products (bee keeping), or extensive agriculture, which involves animal husbandry forms of agriculture. In 2005, the agricultural production grossed over \$298 million, with rice, fruit, and nut crops being the leading commodities (Sutter County Department of Agriculture 2005).

YOLO COUNTY

Agriculture is the primary industry of Yolo County. Of the county's agricultural land, cultivated crops are the most prevalent, accounting for the most land area in the county, followed by livestock

operations (includes grazing and pasture land, as well as more intensive animal operations) and agricultural commodities, (feed and grain mills and agricultural-related businesses) are also prevalent agricultural resources in the county (Yolo County 2005). The 2005 gross valuation of agricultural products was more than \$332 million and agriculture's overall contribution to the county's economy was \$1 billion (Yolo County Department of Agriculture 2005). Fruit and nut crops, field crops, and vegetable crops are the county's top three commodities (Yolo County Department of Agriculture 2005).

Y U B A C O U N T Y

Agriculture is the most extensive land use in Yuba County and the most significant component of the county's economy. The gross value of Yuba County's agricultural production for 2005 was more than \$136 million (Yuba County Agricultural Commissioner 2005). Rice, fruit and nut crops, and cattle have been the leading agricultural products in Yuba County in recent years (Yuba County Agricultural Commissioner 2005).

Agricultural Preserved Lands

H A B I T A T C O N S E R V A T I O N P L A N S / N A T U R A L C O M M U N I T Y C O N S E R V A T I O N P L A N S

A summary of the current habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs) in the MTP Plan Area is provided below. Not all of these plans have been adopted or fully implemented. During implementation of specific projects, an activity subject to Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act and considered a covered project under the implementing rules of an adopted HCP or NCCP may be able to participate in the plan in order to avoid adverse effects on covered species.

S O U T H S A C R A M E N T O H C P

The South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP) is currently in preparation. The SSHCP area encompasses 345,000 acres in southern Sacramento County. Sacramento County is partnering with the incorporated cities of Rancho Cordova and Galt and is seeking to include the City of Elk Grove to further advance the regional planning goals of the SSHCP. The SSHCP will cover 41 species of plants and wildlife, including 12 that are state- or federally listed as threatened or endangered.

N A T O M A S B A S I N H C P

The Natomas Basin is a low-lying area of the Sacramento Valley located in the northern portion of Sacramento County and the southern portion of Sutter County. The Natomas Basin HCP (NBHCP) was approved in 2003 and has two permit holders with land use authority: the City of Sacramento and Sutter County. The NBHCP covers a 53,537-acre area. The Natomas Basin Conservancy (TNBC) is the nonprofit entity responsible for administering and implementing the NBHCP. TNBC reports directly to the permit holders. The HCP covers 22 sensitive species. The

NBCP provides coverage for Authorized Development for each of the NBHCP Land Use Agency Permittees intending to allow urban development within a 17,500 acre footprint within the Natomas Basin, as defined by the NBHCP. Development projects covered by the HCP must be offset by mitigation fees, and in some cases land dedications, to set aside and manage 0.5 acres of habitat mitigation land for each 1.0 gross acre of development that occurs in the Basin. Any development in excess of that authorized by the NBHCP would not have take coverage under the NBHCP and such take coverage would require either an amendment to the NBHCP and permits or preparation of a separate HCP and approval of separate permits for that additional development, including an updated assessment of impacts and mitigation measures.

Y U B A / S U T T E R H C P / N C C P

In 2001, Yuba and Sutter counties committed to becoming joint applicants on an HCP/NCCP. The independent science advisor's report was finalized in February 2006, and the two counties have begun a public participation plan, which includes creating an Advisory Committee and drafting a Planning Agreement. In addition, a baseline GIS data inventory of physical and biological resources has been conducted. The Yuba/Sutter HCP/NCCP Area is currently approximately 200,100 acres but may be expanded.

Y O L O C O U N T Y H C P / N C C P

In February 2005, the Joint Powers Authority (five local public agencies formed to prepare a regional conservation plan for Yolo County) and DFG entered into an HCP/NCCP Planning Agreement. The independent science advisor's report was finalized in March 2006. The HCP/NCCP planning area encompasses almost 400,000 acres and provides habitat for 28 sensitive species, including 13 state- and federally listed species. There are 28 species that have been proposed for coverage (no fish species are covered).

P L A C E R C O U N T Y C O N S E R V A T I O N P L A N

Placer County, DFG, and USFWS entered into an NCCP planning agreement in December 2001. The Conservation Plan is being prepared in three phases. Phase 1 is currently underway and covers 273,983 acres of the valley floor and low foothill portions of Placer County. Five plant and 28 wildlife species are proposed for coverage. The County is working to establish a process to review and evaluate interim projects in order to avoid foreclosing conservation options and receipt of desired permits. The County has begun data gathering for Phase 2, which covers 273,717 acres in the foothills and the Martis Valley area. Phase 3 has not been initiated but is proposed to cover 412,153 acres of public and private timberlands.

A I R P O R T L A N D U S E C O M P A T I B I L I T Y P L A N S

Pursuant to state law, each county has an Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC). The ALUC prepares an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for each general use airport. The plan provides for the orderly growth of the airport and the area surrounding the airport, excluding existing land uses. Its primary function is to safeguard the general welfare of the inhabitants within the vicinity of the airport and the public in general. Cities and counties must submit their general and specific

plans to the ALUC upon adoption or amendment. The plans must be consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

I N V E N T O R I E S O F I N F O R M A T I O N A N D R E S O U R C E S

The key sources of data and information used in the preparation of Chapter 7 (Biology) of the EIR are listed below:

- a records search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) for Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, Yuba, Placer, and El Dorado Counties (California Natural Diversity Database 2007);
- the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) list of endangered, threatened, and proposed species for Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, Yuba, Placer, and El Dorado Counties (Appendix Bio-1);
- the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS's) 2006 online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California;
- preliminary information on Habitat Conservation Plans for Sacramento, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, and Placer Counties;
- USFWS' National Wetland Inventory Maps;
- Sacramento Area of Council of Governments Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2025 Program Environmental Impact Report (SACOG 2002)
- California Wildlife: Conservation Challenges (California Wildlife Action Plan) (Bunn et al. no date);
- published and unpublished literature; and
- Jones & Stokes file information.

The key sources of data and information used in the preparation of Chapter 8 (Cultural Resources) of the EIR are listed below.

General cultural resources information was collected for each county within the MTP Plan Area. This information is kept at the following regional cultural resources information centers:

- the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University (Yolo County),
- the North Central Information Center at Sacramento State University (Sacramento, Yuba, Placer, and El Dorado Counties), and
- the Northeast Information Center at California State University, Chico (Sutter County).

Each Information Center keeps records and reports of known archaeological sites and historic architecture. Resources consulted at the Information Centers included data from the following:

- State Archaeological Determinations of Eligibility,
- State Historical Property Data File,
- California Points of Historical Interest,
- California Historical Landmarks,

- California Inventory of Historical Resources, and
- Caltrans state and local bridge inventories.

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was also contacted, with a request to search their Sacred Lands database and to provide a list of Native American representatives from each county in the MTP Plan Area; the NAHC responded with a list of interested Native American representatives (Appendix C of the EIR).