

## **13.1 Affected Environment**

This section describes the regulatory and physical environmental setting for recreation, open space, and visual resources in the Plan Area.

### **13.1.1 Regulatory Setting**

#### **Federal**

##### **Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan prepared for the Sutter National Wildlife Refuge provides a summary of legal and policy guidance governing the refuge. The relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997; Refuge Recreation Act of 1962; selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations, and the Service Manual (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2009a). The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act establishes six priority public uses of wildlife refuges: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. Providing and enhancing opportunities to participate in these recreational activities is a goal of the Refuge System as defined by the *Refuge System Mission, Goals, and Refuge Purposes Policy* (601 FW1 of the Service Manual).

#### **State**

##### **Central Valley Vision, California State Parks**

California State Parks has developed Central Valley Vision, a plan to help guide parkland acquisition and development of parkland over a 20-year planning horizon (California State Parks 2009). The Draft Implementation Plan calls for tripling the number of campsites, doubling the number of picnic sites, and doubling the acres of park land in the Central Valley (California State Parks 2009). Most of the existing and proposed parks will be located along rivers.

##### **Lake Oroville State Recreation Area General Plan, California State Parks**

The general plan discusses resource management, site development, and the provision of recreational facilities for the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area (California State Parks 2004). Goals listed in the general plan are designed to provide and increase recreational access and educational opportunities in the recreation area, as well as develop new trails that provide regional, park, and local connections.

## **Gray Lodge Wildlife Area Management Plan, California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

The Gray Lodge Wildlife Area Management Plan describes the expansion of, improvements to, and ongoing maintenance of the Gray Lodge wildlife area. The document provides several goals and objectives that relate to recreation (California Department of Fish and Game 1989). These include those excerpted below.

**Hunting Programs Goal 1:** Provide maximum opportunity for legal hunting of game species in season.

**Warmwater Angling Goal 1:** Optimize public use opportunity of warmwater game fish.

**Nonconsumptive Uses Goal 1:** Accommodate nonconsumptive uses of the wildlife area and the wildlife resource.

**Goal 2:** Educate the public about wildlife ecology and management.

## **Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area Land Management Plan, California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

The Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area Land Management Plan describes the management goals and criteria for the wildlife area, and emphasizes an ecosystem approach for managing the diverse habitat communities and associated species within the wildlife area (California Department of Fish and Game 2009b). The goals focus on facilities maintenance and development, staffing and operational funding, and water supply. Relevant goals from the plan are meant to maintain, manage, and enhance existing ecosystems, as well as control of invasive species that negatively impact wildlife or special-status species. The management plan also calls for continuing to provide existing public use programs and allowing compatible public recreation where and when appropriate.

## **California Scenic Highway Program**

The intent of the California Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highway Code Section 260) of the California Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance California's natural beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the state's scenic resources. SR 70 is an Eligible State Scenic Highway, but is not officially designated for protections (Scenic Byways 2013; California Department of Transportation 2013). Therefore, there are no roadways in or near the Plan Area that are designated as scenic highways worthy of protection for maintaining and enhancing scenic viewsheds.

## **Local**

### **Butte County**

#### **General Plan**

Butte County's General Plan 2030(Butte County 2012) is comprised of multiple elements meant to govern the vision for growth in the county. Goals, policies, and actions are identified within the various elements that protect, maintain, and enhance recreation, open space, and visual resources. These goals, policies, and actions are described below.

### ***Recreation and Open Space***

The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element provides background information describing the importance of conserving open space to protect the county's biological communities, wildlife areas, and migratory deer herds (Butte County 2012). This element also provides goals, policies, and actions related to open space. In addition, the Public Facilities and Services Element includes a discussion of parks and recreation in the county. Goals, policies, and actions relating to recreation and open space from both of these elements are excerpted below.

**Goal COS-6:** Engage in cooperative planning efforts to protect biological resources.

**Policy COS-P6.1:** The county shall coordinate with applicable federal, State, regional, and local agencies on natural resources and habitat planning.

**Action COS-A6.1:** Continue to work with the Butte County Association of Governments and the five municipalities to develop and implement the Butte Regional Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan, and subsequently update as necessary.

**Goal COS-7:** Conserve and enhance habitat for protected species and sensitive biological communities.

**Policy COS-P7.1:** Conservation easements that protect habitat areas, habitat corridors, and sensitive biological resources shall be promoted.

**Policy COS-P7.3:** Creeks shall be maintained in their natural state whenever possible, and creeks and floodways shall be allowed to function as natural flood protection features during storms.

**Goal COS-8:** Maintain and promote native vegetation.

**Policy COS-P8.1:** Native plants shall be used wherever possible on County-owned and -controlled property.

**Goal COS-9:** Protect identified special-status plant and animal species.

**Goal COS-10:** Facilitate the survival of deer herds in winter and critical winter migratory deer herd ranges.

**Goal PUB-P6:** Support a comprehensive and high-quality system of recreational open space and facilities.

**Action PUB-A6.2:** Coordinate with park and recreation districts to allow the development of park and recreation facilities on publicly-owned land.

**Goal PUB-7:** Encourage local, regional, and State parks providers to engage in coordinate and cooperative planning efforts.

**Policy PUB-P7.1:** The County shall coordinate with the municipalities, park and recreation districts, and school districts to plan and develop additional regional and community parks, support and coordinate park master plans, coordinate financing for recreation and park facilities, and plan for the distribution of federal and State funds for recreation and park programs and facilities.

**Policy PUB-P7.2:** Implementation and development of recreation and park facilities within park and recreation district boundaries shall be consistent with the applicable district's master plans.

### ***Visual Resources***

General Plan 2030 elements establish goals, actions, and policies that relate to the visual character and quality of the county. Specifically, policies from the Economic Development Element, Agriculture Element, Water Resources Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, and Public Facilities and Services Element help to establish the types of visual resources viewers currently experience and

will experience during the implementation of the general plan in the county. These goals, actions, and policies are excerpted below.

**ED-P2.3:** The County shall promote agritourism, such as through special events and themed “farm trails” and routes within Butte County’s agricultural areas.

**AG-P2.1:** The County shall work with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to create and maintain a consistent approach to the conservation of agricultural land through the designation of reasonable and logical Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundaries.

**W-P6.1:** Any alteration of natural channels for flood control shall retain and protect riparian vegetation to the extent possible while still accomplishing the goal of providing flood control. Where removing existing riparian vegetation is unavoidable, the alteration shall allow for reestablishment of vegetation without compromising the flood flow capacity.

**COS-P7.3:** Creeks shall be maintained in their natural state whenever possible, and creeks and floodways shall be allowed to function as natural flood protection features during storms.

**COS-P8.1:** Native plant species shall be protected and planting and regeneration of native plant species shall be encouraged, wherever possible, in undisturbed portions of development sites.

**COS-P8.2:** New landscaping shall promote the use of xeriscape and native tree and plant species, including those valued for traditional Native American cultural uses.

**COS-P8.3:** Native plants shall be used wherever possible on County owned and controlled property.

**COS-P8.4:** Introduction or spread of invasive plant species during construction of development projects shall be avoided by minimizing surface disturbance; seeding and mulching disturbed areas with certified weed-free native mixes; and using native, noninvasive species in erosion control plantings.

**COS-P16.2:** Impacts to the traditional Native American landscape shall be considered during California Environmental Quality Act or National Environmental Policy Act review of development proposals.

**COS-P17.1:** Views of Butte County’s scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features and wildlife habitat areas, shall be maintained.

**Goal COS-18:** Protect and enhance scenic areas adjacent and visible from highways for enjoyment by residents and visitors.

**PUB-P8.3:** The development of abandoned railroad rights-of-way, levee tops, utility easements and waterways for new multi-use trails shall be pursued where appropriate.

### **Countywide Bikeway Master Plan**

The County adopted a Bicycle Master Plan in 2011. The Master Plan identifies eight main goals related to providing a safe and efficient biking system that facilitates biking for recreation and commuting (Butte County Public Works 2011).

### **Butte County Outdoor Lighting Standards**

The Butte County Zoning Ordinance includes standards for outdoor lighting in residential areas. Section 24-241 requires that all outdoor lighting in residential areas “be located, adequately shielded and directed such that no direct light falls outside the property perimeter, or into the public right-of-way.”

## City of Biggs

### General Plan

The City of Biggs General Plan (City of Biggs 2011) is comprised of multiple elements meant to govern the vision for growth in the city. Goals, policies, and actions are identified within the various elements that protect, maintain, and enhance recreation, open space, and visual resources. These goals, policies, and actions are described below.

### *Recreation and Open Space*

The Recreation and Open Space Element of the general plan has several goals and policies affecting recreation, including ones related to bicycle and park facilities. These goals and policies are excerpted below.

**Goal CR-1:** Provide a range of parks and recreational facilities and opportunities for all members of the community.

**Policy CR-1.2:** Partner with local service providers, community organizations and other agencies to provide parks and recreation facilities.

**Policy CR-1.3:** Maintain and improve the physical condition and amenities of parks and recreational buildings and facilities.

### *Visual Resources*

The Community Enhancement Element of the general plan addresses the aesthetic and visual character and quality of the city. It emphasizes the city's geographical, historical, and cultural features that contribute to the city's visual character. This plan element provides direct guidance regarding design, streetscapes, and buildings, with the intent of promoting and expanding the physical qualities of the environment. There are no goals or policies related to the natural environment or urban-rural or urban-agricultural edges.

## City of Chico

### General Plan

The City of Chico General Plan (City of Chico 2011a) is comprised of multiple elements meant to govern the vision for growth in the city. Goals, policies, and actions are identified within the various elements that protect, maintain, and enhance recreation, open space, and visual resources. These are described below.

### *Recreation and Open Space*

The Parks, Public Facilities and Services Element addresses the City of Chico's needs for its parks and establishes goals, policies, and actions that are meant to direct the planning, enhancement, and maintenance of parks, greenways, and preserves throughout the general plan study area (City of Chico 2011a). Relevant goals from this element are designed to continue cooperative efforts with local agencies and utilize creeks, greenways, and preserves as a framework for a system of open space. The Open Space and Environment Element addresses the City's focuses on the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment and limiting the adverse effects on environmental resources from implementation of the general plan. Relevant goals from this element, excerpted

below, are designed to preserve native species and habitat through land use planning and to connect the community through the preservation of open space and greenways.

**Goal PPFS-1:** Continue cooperative efforts with the Chico Area Recreation and Park District and the Chico Unified School District to provide a broad range of high quality parks and recreation facilities and services for all residents.

**Goal PPFS-2:** Utilize creeks, greenways, and preserves a framework for a system of open space.

**Goal OS-1:** Protect and conserve native species and habitats

**Goal OS-2:** Connect the community with a network of protected and maintained open space and creekside greenways.

### **Visual Resources**

The Open Space and Environment Element of the general plan has goals and policies that address the visual character and quality of the city by maintaining and protecting certain types of landscapes. Additionally, the Community Design Element provides guidance on the physical elements and spaces that shape the city. Relevant goals and policies in these two elements are excerpted below.

**Goal OS-5:** Preserve agricultural resources for the production of local food and the maintenance of Chico's rural character

**Goal OS-6:** Provide a healthy and robust urban forest.

**Goal CD-1:** Strengthen Chico's image and sense of place by reinforcing the desired form and character of the community

**Policy CD-1.1:** Incorporate and highlight natural features such as scenic vistas, creeks, and trees as well as cultural resources such as walk walls into project designs.

### **Tree Preservation Ordinance**

The City Tree Preservation Ordinance (Chico Municipal Code, Chapter 16.66) defines a *tree* or *trees* as the following.

- Any live woody plant having a single perennial stem of 24 inches or more in diameter, or multi-stemmed perennial plant greater than 15 feet in height having an aggregate circumference of 40 inches or more, measured at four feet six inches above adjacent ground.
- Tree or trees required to be preserved as part of an approved building permit, grading permit, demolition permit, encroachment permit, use permit, tentative or final subdivision map.
- Tree or trees required to be planted as a replacement for unlawfully removed tree or trees.
- "Tree" or "trees" does not mean Ailanthus, Chinese tallow, or box elder.

All native oak trees over six inches diameter at breast height (dbh) on the project site shall be preserved to the maximum extent practical.

### **Municipal Code Section 19.60.050**

This section of the municipal code requires that exterior lighting be shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined to the maximum extent feasible within the boundaries of the site. All light fixtures must be appropriate in scale, intensity, and height to the use that they are serving.

## City of Gridley

### General Plan

The City of Gridley General Plan (City of Gridley 2010) is comprised of multiple elements meant to govern the vision for growth in the city. Goals, policies, and actions are identified within the various elements that protect, maintain, and enhance recreation, open space, and visual resources. These goals, policies, and actions are described below.

### *Recreation and Open Space*

The Circulation Element and Open Space Element of the general plan establish several goals and policies affecting recreation in the city, including ones related to bicycle and park facilities (City of Gridley 2010). These goals and policies are excerpted below.

**Circulation Goal 1:** To ensure that new development accommodates safe and pleasant routes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

**Circulation Goal 2:** To retrofit existing development for increased pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.

**Open Space Goal 1:** To create high-quality, functional open space corridors.

**Open Space Goal 2:** To provide visual screening, buffering, trails, and drainage in open space corridors along the railroad and Highway 99 in the Planned Growth Area.

**Open Space Goal 3:** To provide for drainage, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and landscaping in open space corridors within neighborhoods.

**Open Space Goal 5:** Maintain, expand, and upgrade facilities in existing recreation areas.

**Open Space Policy 5.6:** The City will explore opportunities to improve ongoing public access to, and expand recreational opportunities related to the Feather River on property owned by the City and used for wastewater treatment.

**Open Space Goal 6:** To provide recreation facilities and programs that meet the needs of existing and future residents.

### *Visual Resources*

The Conservation Element addresses the management, use, and development of natural resources within the city. It provides goals and policies that affect the city's overall landscape, which comprises the visual character and quality experienced by viewers. The Open Space Element contains goals and policies that provide guidance regarding numerous aspects of multi-use open space corridors, including aesthetic benefits. The Community Character and Design Element is meant to preserve and enhance specific characteristics of the city (e.g., historical or natural) that contribute to its character, including its aesthetic character. Relevant goals and policies from these elements are excerpted below.

**Conservation Policy 2.2:** Native, drought tolerant landscaping will be used, to the maximum extent feasible, in new City parks and open space and for landscaping within new rights of way as well as within new developments, including commercial, industrial, and residential projects.

**Conservation Policy 2.3:** The City will explore opportunities in existing City-owned parks, open space, rights-of-way, and other City properties to replace landscaping with native, drought tolerant landscaping.

**Conservation Policy 3.3:** The City will require that waterways and floodplains are maintained in their natural condition, wherever possible.

**Conservation Policy 3.4:** Existing swales and sloughs shall be preserved, restored, and used for naturalized stormwater drainage in the context of new development to the maximum extent feasible.

**Conservation Policy 5.2** New development shall preserve open space corridors alongside agricultural drainage ditches.

**Conservation Policy 5.5:** New developments shall preserve and plant native or naturalized vegetation and avoid the introduction of invasive exotic species.

**Conservation Policy 9.1:** The City will consider views of the Sutter Buttes in the orientation of new roadways and trails, and maintain visual connections, where feasible.

**Conservation Policy 10.1:** The City will support and encourage practices that reduce light pollution and glare, and preserve views of the night sky.

**Open Space Policy 1.5:** Within open space corridors, mature trees, including old orchard trees shall be preserved, wherever feasible, as new trees are planted to ensure an ongoing tree canopy.

**Open Space Policy 1.6:** Existing vegetation in open space corridors should be preserved, where it could provide ongoing habitat benefits or stormwater filtering. Noxious weeds, invasive species, and unhealthy plants can be removed, as well as vegetation posing an issue for public health or safety.

**Open Space Policy 1.7:** Newly planted landscaping in open space corridors shall be selected and designed to enhance habitat, provide aesthetic value, filter pollutants out of, and slow down stormwater runoff, and minimize ongoing landscape maintenance and watering.

**Design Goal 7:** To provide attractive and functional landscaping in neighborhoods.

### **City of Gridley Bicycle Plan**

The City of Gridley Bicycle Plan identifies goals, objectives, and measures for developing a bicycle circulation network that ties into the region beyond the city and provides access to the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, the city of Biggs, and the Feather River. The plan establishes several goals, objectives, and implementation measures affecting recreation facilities for bikes, specifically with respect to providing a safe, effective, and efficient bicycle circulation system (City of Gridley 2003:16).

### **Municipal Code Section 17.38.909**

This section of the municipal code prohibits light spillage of any subject property onto adjacent properties.

## **City of Oroville**

### **General Plan**

The City of Oroville General Plan (City of Oroville 2009a) is comprised of multiple elements meant to govern the vision for growth in the city. Goals, policies, and actions are identified within the various elements that protect, maintain, and enhance recreation and open space, as well as visual resources. These are described below.

### ***Recreation and Open Space***

Recreation, as it relates to open space and natural resources, is discussed in the Open Space, Natural Resources, and Conservation Element. This element focuses on goals, policies, and actions that improve the quantity, quality, and character of the open space and natural resources of the city and discusses open space for outdoor recreation and scenic resources. Relevant goals and policies are excerpted below.

**Goal OPS-1:** Provide a comprehensive, high-quality system of recreation open space and facilities to maintain and improve the quality of life for Oroville residents.

**P1.2:** Develop the Thermalito Forebay and Afterbay as a destination water recreation park defining the western boundary of the community, in accordance with the State's original master plan for recreation development associated with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) permit.

**P1.4:** Support appropriate management of local lakes and reservoirs and releases from these water bodies to sustain recreational use and an appropriate environment that maintains natural conditions for aquatic and other species.

**Goal OPS-2:** Engage in coordinated and cooperative planning efforts between local, regional and State park providers.

**P2.5:** Encourage coordinated park and trail development and operations efforts with the State Department of Parks and Recreation, local school districts, and private purveyors in establishing and maintaining park and recreation facilities within and adjacent to the Planning Area.

**Goal OPS-4:** Support the development of an extensive, interconnected multi-use trail system for Oroville.

**P4.3:** Establish agreements with private entities and public agencies for the development and maintenance of trails through their property.

**P4.4:** Seek dedication of existing trails and confirmation of prescriptive rights for trails that exist on private property.

### ***Visual Resources***

Two elements, Open Space, Natural Resource, and Conservation and Community Design, discuss the aesthetic character and quality of the city. The Open Space, Natural Resources and Conservation Element identifies important open space and natural resources in the city and frames goals, policies, and actions such that future development will respect the scenic qualities of these areas, including wildlife areas and agricultural areas. Specifically, it discusses open space for scenic resource value. The Community Design Element focuses on the city's physical built environment and seeks to guide development to maintain and enhance aesthetic quality and character. Relevant goals and policies are excerpted below.

**Goal OPS-5:** Maintain and enhance the quality of Oroville's scenic and vision resources

**P5.3:** Maintain the scenic view of the Feather River and Table Mountain

**P5.4:** Require new light fixtures within new development to be designated and sited so as to minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass into adjoining properties.

**Goal OPS-6:** Preserve the maximum feasible amount of agriculturally productive land, in order to maintain agriculture's contributions to the local economy, lifestyle, air quality, habitat value, and sense of Oroville's heritage.

**P6.2:** Cooperate with Butte County to retain agriculture uses on lands within the Oroville sphere of influence prior to their annexation to the city.

**Goal CD-2:** Maintain and enhance the quality of Oroville's landscape, streetscape, and gateways.

**P2.3:** Encourage imaginative design concepts in woodland areas to perpetuate and preserve native trees.

**P2.4:** Use appropriate landscaping to reduce effects of surface runoff in developing areas, with an emphasis on native and drought-resistant species, minimization of impervious surface, and provisions for recharge.

**P2.6:** Encourage the planting of trees and other landscape features along Oroville's corridors to make them interesting, appealing and inviting.

## 13.1.2 Environmental Setting

The environmental setting for recreation, open space, and visual resources describes the existing conditions for recreation and open space managed and operated by federal and state agencies, the County, and the Cities within the Plan Area. It also describes the existing visual character and quality of the county and cities within the Plan Area.

### Recreation and Open Space in the Plan Area

#### Federal and State

Large open space and recreation areas in the county, within the Plan Area, are owned and managed by various federal and state agencies, as described below.

- Bidwell Mansion, a memorial to John and Annie Bidwell, is a historic Victorian House Museum in Chico that is managed by California State Parks (California State Parks 2011a).
- Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is west of Chico along the Sacramento River and primarily used for boating and fishing. The park is managed by California State Parks and also has the Indian Fisher, Big Chico, and Pine Creek day use areas and the Irvine Finch river access (California State Parks 2011b).
- Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area is 3 miles west of Oroville and managed by California State Parks. The recreation area provides off-road recreation and consists of a large shallow pit ringed with low hills (California State Parks 2011c).
- Gray Lodge Waterfowl Management Area is the southwestern end of the county and managed by CDFW. The area consists of 9,100 acres and provides wildlife viewing year-round (California Department of Fish and Game 1989). Hunting is allowed during the regulated hunting season, as well as fishing in the spring and summer. The area also provides educational programs and nature trails.
- Lake Oroville State Recreation Area is northeast of Oroville and managed by California State Parks. The recreation area provides opportunities for camping, picnicking, horseback riding, hiking boating, fishing, and swimming (California State Parks 2011d). The area also includes the Feather River Fish Hatchery, built by DWR to mitigate for the loss of spawning areas for salmon and steelhead.
- Oroville Wildlife Area, managed by CDFW, is northeast of Oroville (California Department of Fish and Game 2009a). The 11,869 acre wildlife area consists primarily of riparian woodland along the Feather River, as well as grasslands around the Thermalito Afterbay, which is north of

Oroville and managed by DWR. The area provides opportunities for fishing, horseback riding, and camping, and also has a shooting range.

- North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area is located within 11 counties in the Sacramento Valley. The portions of it that are within Butte County are along the Sacramento River. The area is managed by USFWS and consists of conservation easements acquired on privately-owned wetlands that have been developed for waterfowl and other wetland-related wildlife (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2009b). The refuge is closed to the public.
- Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge Complex consists of five national wildlife refuges and three wildlife management areas located throughout the Sacramento Valley (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2011). The portions of the refuge complex that are within Butte County are along the Sacramento River. The refuge is managed by USFWS and provides resting and feeding areas for migratory birds along the Pacific Flyway.
- Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area is along the Sacramento River. The wildlife area is managed by CDFW and consists of three units: the 1,521-acre Llano Seco Unit, the 4,010-acre Howard Slough Unit, and the 3,762-acre Little Dry Creek Unit (California Department of Fish and Game 2011). The area provides opportunities for fishing, camping, and bird watching.

## **Butte County**

Butte County provides numerous recreational areas and facilities due to its diverse ecosystems, which offer a wide range of recreation opportunities. However, a large amount of these lands are inaccessible to the public, and they are classified as open space. There are five recreation and park districts that encompass most of the county's land, of which, three are fully within the Plan Area: Chico Area Recreation and Park District, Durham Recreation and Park District, and Richvale Recreation and Park District. There is a section of the Feather River Recreation and Park District that extends to the east and south east of Lake Oroville that is within the Plan Area. Table 13-1 provides the acreages of developed and undeveloped parks within these Park Districts in the Plan Area.

In addition to the parks and recreational facilities listed in Table 13-1, there is one Class I bike trail in the unincorporated area of the county—the Freeman Trail—which is on the Thermalito Afterbay levee in the far northeastern portion of the study area. The trail is connected to the Oroville State Recreation Area. A Class I bike trail is planned to connect the Cherokee Canal levee via Biggs to Gridley (Butte County 2007). Other Class II bike lanes are planned to link Biggs, Gridley, Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, and Oroville Wildlife Area with other county population centers and places of interest (Butte County 2007).

**Table 13-1. Butte County Park and Recreation Facilities within the Plan Area**

Facility	Acres Undeveloped	Acres Developed	Total Acres
<b>Chico Area Recreation and Park District</b>			
Dorothy Johnson Center/Park	-	3.0	3.0
Oakway Park	-	8.0	8.0
Peterson Park	-	4.1	4.1
Rotary Park	-	0.3	0.3
Hooker Oak Park	-	35.0	35.0
Community Park	-	40.0	40.0
DeGarmo Park	16.0	20.0	36.0
Little Chico Creek	-	15.6	15.6
CARD Community Center	-	3.0	3.0
Pleasant Valley Center/Pool	-	1.1	1.1
Shapiro Pool	-	0.44	0.44
Sycamore Field	-	3.5	3.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	16.0	130.89	146.89
<b>Durham Recreation and Park District</b>			
Durham Community Park	-	24.0	24.0
Ravekes Park	-	0.5	0.5
Louis Edwards Park	-	3.9	3.9
Nelson Park	-	2.0	2.0
Midway Park	-	3.9	3.9
Dwight Brinson Swim Center	-		
Durham Memorial Hall	-		
<i>Subtotal</i>		34.3	34.3
<b>Feather River Recreation and Park District</b>			
Mitchell Park	-	15.3	15.3
River Bend Park	27.43	56	83.43
Martin Luther King Park	-	5.58	5.58
Nelson Ballfield Complex	-	29.6	29.6
Forbestown Park/Community Center	-	3.67	3.67
Palermo Park	-	5.0	5.0
Playtown USA, Playground	-		
Municipal Auditorium	-	1.16	1.16
Bedrock Park/Amphitheatre	-	3.75	3.75
Bedrock Tennis Courts	-	1.5	1.5
Bedrock Skate and Bike Park	-	0.75	0.75
Gary Nolan Sports Complex	-	14.2	14.2
Wildlife Ponds	100		100
<i>Subtotal</i>	127.43	136.51	263.94

Source: Butte County 2010, Table PUB-1.

Note: This table includes parks within incorporated and unincorporated Butte County that are owned and/or maintained by special districts. The table includes facilities that are within incorporated areas because they serve their entire community, which includes unincorporated areas.

- = none.

## City of Biggs

Biggs has three small parks with a variety of amenities, such as ball courts, ball fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, restrooms, and a skatepark (City of Biggs 1998). Currently, no trails connect Biggs with levees, flood control lands, or public open spaces outside the community. The closest Class I bike trail is the Freeman Trail on the Thermalito Afterbay levee, approximately 2.5 miles away. A Class I bike trail is planned to connect Biggs to the Cherokee Canal levee to the northwest and the city of Gridley to the southeast. Class II bike trails have been planned leading from the city to the north, south, and east connecting the city to Cherokee Canal, Gridley, and Oroville Wildlife Area (Butte County 2007). Biggs does not have a boat ramp, water access, or fishing pier along the three levees closest to the city.

## City of Chico

Parks, recreation, and open space resources, facilities, and services have historically been provided by both the City and the Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD). The City has primary responsibility for Bidwell Park (3,670 acres), the neighborhood parks, and for recreation programming and community parks. The city has 37 existing sites that are parks, open space, or recreation centers totaling 4,176 acres. (City of Chico 2011a.)

## City of Gridley

Gridley has four parks and a boat ramp. Amenities at Gridley's parks include ball courts, ball fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, restrooms, and a skatepark. The boat ramp is located on the Feather River to the east of the city next to the city's water treatment plant. There is a shooting range located at the boat ramp. Currently, no trails connect Gridley with levees, flood control lands, or public open space outside the community. The closest Class I bike trail is the Freeman Trail on the Thermalito Afterbay levee, approximately 5 miles away. A Class I bike trail is planned to connect Gridley to the Cherokee Canal levee via Biggs (Butte County 2007). Other Class II bike lanes have been planned leading from the city to the north, south, east, and west connecting the city to Biggs, Live Oak, the Feather River, and Gray Lodge Waterfowl Management Area (Butte County 2007).

## City of Oroville

The City of Oroville has 37 existing parks, recreational facilities, and open space within its city limits. The city parklands encompass approximately 280 acres, while the Feather River Recreation and Parks District and the California Department of Parks and Recreation parklands encompass approximately 250 acres. The city has an extensive network of existing trails for walking, hiking, jogging, and horse riding. For example, the California Hiking and Equestrian trail, comprised of segments known as the Dan Beebe Trail and the Bridle Trail, owned and maintained by the owned and maintained by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, is the longest recognized trail within the city. There are less formally recognized trails and paths used by residents, including trails within the Oroville Wildlife Refuge. (Oroville 2011.)

## Visual Character and Quality

The aesthetic value of an area is a measure of its visual character and quality, combined with the viewer response to the area (Federal Highway Administration 1988). *Scenic quality* can best be described as the overall impression that an individual viewer retains after driving through, walking through, or flying over an area (U.S. Bureau of Land Management 1980). *Viewer response* is a

combination of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. *Viewer exposure* is a function of the number of viewers, number of views seen, distance of the viewers, and viewing duration. *Viewer sensitivity* relates to the extent of the public's concern for a particular viewshed.

Visual character of an area or view is comprised of its natural and artificial landscape features, such as its geology, hydrology, flora and fauna, recreational facilities, and urban setting (development such as roads, utilities, structures, earthworks, and the results of other human activities). The visual quality of a view is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity, as modified by viewer sensitivity, a well-established approach to visual analysis adopted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (Federal Highway Administration 1988; Jones et al. 1975). High-quality views are highly vivid and relatively intact and exhibit a high degree of visual unity. Low-quality views lack vividness, are not visually intact, and possess a low degree of visual unity. The measure of the quality of a view is tempered by the overall sensitivity of the viewer. Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, proximity of viewers to the visual resource, elevation of viewers relative to the visual resource, frequency and duration of views, number of viewers, and type and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

## Plan Area

The Plan Area is in western Butte County within California's Sacramento Valley (valley) (Figure 2-1). The city of Biggs and the other smaller communities of Palermo, Richvale, Nelson, and Durham are located off of SR 99, on local roadways in the Plan Area. Chico is the largest city in the Plan Area and is connected by SR 99 and SR 70 to the smaller cities of Gridley and Oroville. Overall, a mix of developed and natural landscapes characterizes the Plan Area. The overall landscape pattern of the Plan Area is characterized by sprawling development, major roadways, and the agricultural land, mountains, and waterways of the region. Viewers include residents, local business employees, roadway users, and recreational users.

Given that much of the land is in agriculture (44% of the Plan Area), an agriculture landscape is the dominant visual resource in the area. A patchwork of fields surround the suburban outskirts of cities and communities, separating developed areas. These fields offer expansive views that, when haze is at a minimum, extend over agricultural fields and recent development in the foreground to the middleground and background. Because of agriculture's dominance in the region, views of agriculture are considered to be moderately high in vividness; they are relatively intact because agriculture covers a large area of land; and, these views show a high degree of visual unity because of the large area agriculture encompasses and because the primary agricultural crop, rice, generally looks the same to all viewers and from any location.

Mountains and waterways are also a notable feature in the Plan Area. The Sutter Buttes, located outside of the Plan Area, can be seen vividly rising up from the flat valley floor in the foreground, middleground, and background. Views of Mount Vaca and the Coast Ranges to the west can often be seen, as well as background views to the Sierra Nevada foothills to the east. The Thermalito Forebay and Afterbay (approximately 2.5 miles north of Biggs) and the Sacramento Feather Rivers can also be seen in the Plan Area. The views of the mountains and rivers are moderately high in vividness because of their location against the flat valley floor, possess a high degree of visual unity, but are less intact depending on intervening atmospheric haze or vegetation.

While much of the Plan Area is still in agricultural production, there has been and continues to be an increasing conversion of agricultural land to suburban land uses. This trend is evident around the outskirts of Gridley and Oroville. These agrarian communities have grown slowly over the past

decade, which slowly changes the visual character from rural to suburban. Development in the region is typified by a growing core of residential, commercial, and some industrial land uses with agricultural fields surrounding the city outskirts. Older residential and commercial areas in the region are often distinct, having a wide vernacular of architectural styles, development layouts, and visual interest. Newer residential and commercial development, however, tends to be homogenous in nature, having similar architectural styles, building materials, plan layouts, and commercial entities, and development often lacks a distinctive character from one city to the next. Both natural and human-made waterways and bypasses help limit development by serving as physical and natural resource barriers. Generally, urban visual character and quality are moderate to moderately low in vividness because of a range in quality of the built environment, depending upon location, when compared to agricultural or natural landscapes. Views are typically much less intact due to intervening buildings, vegetation, or other physical impediments that block viewers' line of sight and exhibit a low degree of visual unity because of the different kinds of infrastructure and architectural styles that intermix within urban development.

### **City of Biggs**

The visual character and quality of the city of Biggs is comprised of the different land uses within and surrounding the city and the area's wide variety of topography. The land uses are primarily residential and farming-supporting. The City has largely maintained the compact urban form upon its original plan. The majority of the city's residential housing was constructed post-World War II and utilized the basic lot-and-block layout of the original city parcel map. Infill continues to take place in the original urban footprint. Industrial buildings and uses that are slightly lower density are located closer to the outer edges and primarily in the southwestern portion of the city. The western edge of the city is the beginning of a large area of active, irrigated agricultural land, mainly used for rice cultivation. The topography is flat and expansive. The areas to the north and south are characterized by flat topography comprised of larger lot rural residential development and isolated agricultural and grazing areas. The areas to the east are predominantly used for tree crops; while topography is flat, the views are made up of vegetation and are interrupted by trees (City of Biggs 2011).

As described above under Plan Area, views of the natural landscape and agricultural landscape are typically moderately high in vividness, relatively intact, and show a high degree of visual unity. Generally, urban visual character and quality are moderately to moderately low in vividness, typically much less intact, and exhibit a low degree of visual unity. However, As stated in the City of Biggs Draft Community Enhancement Element (insert citation), "The urban form of the downtown area is reflective of a compact style, with buildings generally extending to the street in the front and having limited to no setbacks or open areas between adjacent buildings. The collective style of the downtown core is reflective of the age and evolution of the city's nonresidential center."

The organization of the Biggs downtown urban form results in a higher degree of visual unity.

### **City of Chico**

Chico's natural attributes, such as agriculture, foothills, trees, and creeks have all contributed to its shape and urban form. These attributes, the various land uses (e.g., suburban, urban, agriculture), development patterns, and streets contribute to the overall visual character and quality of the city. The City places a high value on the scenic open space and fertile agricultural lands that contribute to its character. The abundance of open space, park land, stream corridors, and unique habitats all

contribute to Chico's diverse visual patterns. The city has retained its distinct small town character by preserving the urban fabric of the downtown; however, the differences between the development patterns in the newer and older areas of the city are distinct. The original grid pattern of the city streets and unique architecture in the downtown core and surrounding older neighborhoods provide a distinct contrast to the post-World War II development with arterial streets and diverse architectural styles and forms (City of Chico 2011a).

As described above under *Plan Area*, views of the natural landscape and agricultural landscape are typically moderately high in vividness, relatively intact, and show a high degree of visual unity. Generally, urban visual character and quality are moderately to moderately low in vividness, are typically much less intact, and exhibit a low degree of visual unity. However, the higher density of the urban uses in the middle of the city on the original city grid pattern of the city likely results in a higher degree of visual unity based on the grid organization of the streets and adjacent buildings.

### **City of Gridley**

The visual character and quality of the City of Gridley is comprised mainly of its small-town character and surrounding agricultural uses. The topography is predominately flat, affording views of rural residential homes, downtown areas, SR 99, and surrounding agricultural areas, and expansive views of the Sierra Nevada and Sutter Buttes, depending on the location of the viewer (City of Gridley 2010). The most prominent regional scenic resource viewable from the city is the Sutter Buttes. The Sutter Buttes are approximately 6 miles to the southwest and are close to 1,800 feet higher in elevation than the city (City of Gridley 2009).

Surrounded by orchards and field crops, Gridley has distinct edges as its urban area meets the neighboring agricultural lands and open space. The city is organized on a grid street pattern with large tree and residences. The downtown is surrounded on the east and west by historic residential areas with a diverse set of building types and sizes and newer commercial development along SR 99. Industrial land uses are less visually prominent in the core areas of the city and are primarily located along SR 99. (City of Gridley 2010.)

As described above under *Plan Area*, views of the natural landscape and agricultural landscape are typically moderately high in vividness, relatively intact, and show a high degree of visual unity. The views of the Sutter Buttes are also highly vivid because of their location against the flat valley floor, but are less intact depending on intervening atmospheric haze or vegetation, and possess a high degree of visual unity based on their unique geologic formation. Generally, urban visual character and quality are moderate to moderately low in vividness; are typically much less intact; and exhibit a low degree of visual unity.

### **City of Oroville**

The visual character and quality of the city of Oroville is comprised of the different land uses within and surrounding the city and the wide variety of topography of the area. The land uses are primarily wildlife and nature preserves, agricultural uses, and urban or suburban uses. Oroville has a number of scenic resources in the form of wildlife and nature preserves and prominent land formations. Oroville also has multiple prominent, identifiable land forms, including Table Mountain and the Sierra Nevada foothills. Table Mountain is a large, flat-topped mountain located north of Oroville and highlight visible from many parts of the city and surrounding area. Some parts of the city have views toward the foothills to the east. Preserves in the city are to be maintained in their form, character, and use and provide different visual character and qualities, such as highly vegetated

areas and variable topography interspersed with views of various water resources. Along the Feather River and Oroville Dam (e.g., Feather River Wildlife Preserve and Oroville Wildlife Refuge Preserve), are preserves, a nature center, and a native plant park that provide scenic vistas of the Feather River.

Along with the varied topography, vegetation, and wildlife that preserves and water resources provide, agriculture and urban and suburban uses also shape Oroville's visual character and quality. Row crops and rice fields are predominant in the mostly flat areas in the northwest portion of the city and the City's sphere of influence. There are small olive groves on the hillsides in the southeastern portion and citrus orchards in the southwestern corner. The urban and suburban uses are comprised of a variety of building types and are primarily concentrated (i.e., higher density) in downtown and along SR 99, with less concentrated development and larger lot sizes for homes and businesses away from the downtown. (City of Oroville 2009a.)

As described above under *Plan Area*, views of the natural landscape and agricultural landscape are typically moderately high in vividness, relatively intact, and show a high degree of visual unity. Views of Table Mountain and the Sierra Nevada are highly vivid because of their location frames and backdrops against the flat valley floor, but are less intact depending on intervening atmospheric haze or vegetation, and possess a high degree of visual unity based on their unique geologic formation. Generally, urban visual character and quality are moderate to moderately low in vividness, typically much less intact, and exhibit a low degree of visual unity.

## Scenic Highways

Scenic highways add to the visual character and quality of a landscape or area; however, since they are addressed by a separate threshold in the impact analysis, they are discussed separately here.

There are no highways in or near the Plan Area that are designated in federal or state plans as scenic highways worthy of protection for maintaining and enhancing scenic viewsheds. SR 70 is an Eligible State Scenic Highway, but is not officially designated for protection (Scenic Byways 2013; California Department of Transportation 2013).

Figure COS-8 in General Plan 2030 identifies county-designated scenic highways. Most of the county-designated scenic highways are west of the Plan Area boundaries in the mountains. However, a small section of SR 70 north of the SR 149 intersection is located in the Plan Area (Cascade Foothill CAZ) (Butte County 2012).

The City of Biggs, Chico, City of Gridley, and the City of Oroville general plans have no locally designated scenic highways or roads (City of Oroville 2008; City of Gridley 2009; City of Chico 2010; City of Biggs 2011).

## Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas add to the visual character and quality of a landscape or area; however, because scenic vistas are addressed by a separate threshold in the analysis, they are discussed separately here.

The county does not have any designated scenic vista locations. However, the vegetation in the foothills along the eastern edge of the Plan Area and adjacent to the Plan Area (in the Cascade Foothills CAZ, and the Sierra Foothills CAZ) is primarily grasslands and chaparral. Consequently, according to General Plan 2030, the foothills provide important scenic vistas along river and creek

canyons and out across the Sacramento Valley, such as the views from the Skyway, Neal Road, and SR 70 (Butte County 2010).

The City of Biggs General Plan does not specifically designate any scenic vistas or important views within or outside the city (City of Biggs 2011).

The city of Chico does not have any designated scenic vista locations; however, the City considers views of the transition between landscapes (Sierra Nevada foothills to the east and Central Valley to the west), the agricultural landscape, the foothills and the rising elevations to the east of Chico, the major creeks, and Bidwell Park as scenic vista areas (City of Chico 2011b).

The City of Gridley considers views of the Sutter Buttes a scenic vista; the Buttes are also seen from other parts of the Plan Area (City of Gridley 2009).

The City of Oroville considers Table Mountain and views of the foothills as scenic vistas, which are seen from other areas within the Plan Area (City of Oroville 2009b).

## **Viewer Groups and Viewer Responses**

The primary viewer groups in the Plan Area are persons living or conducting business in the Plan Area; travelers using highways and smaller local roads (including those on levee crowns); and recreational users (including boaters, beachgoers along the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, and anglers using canals, creeks, and rivers; trail users; equestrians; bicyclists; and joggers). All viewer groups have direct views of the Plan Area, depending on whether they are located in urban, suburban, or more rural areas.

### **Residents**

Suburban and rural residents are located throughout the Plan Area. Suburban residences are mostly oriented inward toward the developments, and only residences on the outer edge of the developments have middleground and background views of the surrounding landscape. The separation and orientation of rural residences allow inhabitants to have direct views over agricultural fields to surrounding areas. Both suburban and rural residents are likely to have a high sense of ownership over their adjacent views, the inherent scenic quality of such views, and the open space surrounding them and the recreational opportunities it provides.

Residents are considered to have high sensitivity to changes in the viewshed because of their long-term exposure to such views and sense of ownership.

### **Businesses**

Viewers from industrial, commercial, government, and educational facilities have semipermanent views from their respective facilities. Situated in different locations throughout the Plan Area, these facilities' views range from views limited by their surroundings (e.g., buildings and landscaping or forest) to sweeping views that extend out to the background. Employees and users of these facilities are likely to be occupied with their work activities and tasks at hand, and pay relatively little attention to the views during working hours.

Because of their limited viewing times, their focus on tasks at hand, this viewer group is considered to have moderate sensitivity to changes in views.

## Roadway Users

Roadway users' vantages differ based on the roadway they are traveling and elevation of that roadway. The majority of views are mostly limited to the foreground by suburban, commercial, and industrial development; vegetation; and levees. Views to the middleground and background are present but are limited to areas where structures that otherwise would conceal background views from the roadway are set back. However, if the vantage is elevated, as on portions of SR 99, bridges crossing over the waterways, levee roads, and other local roadways, most views of the surrounding mountain ranges (Vaca Mountains, Coast Ranges, and Sierra Nevada), waterways (Sacramento and Feather Rivers, Sutter Bypass when flooded, etc.), and open space areas (e.g., agricultural areas, parkways) are only partially obstructed by the rooflines and mature vegetation in the Plan Area.

Travelers use roadways at varying speeds; normal highway and roadway speeds differ based on speed limits and the traveler's familiarity with the route and roadway conditions (e.g., presence/absence of rain). Single views typically are of short duration, except on straighter stretches where views last slightly longer. Viewers who frequently travel these routes generally possess moderate visual sensitivity to their surroundings. The passing landscape becomes familiar to these viewers, and their attention typically is not focused on the passing views but on the roadway, roadway signs, and surrounding traffic.

Viewers who travel local routes for their scenic quality generally possess a higher visual sensitivity to their surroundings because they are likely to respond to the natural environment with a high regard and as a holistic visual experience. Scenic stretches of roadway passing through the Plan Area offer sweeping views of the surrounding area that are of interest to motorists, especially when traveling on the bridges or levee tops or on ascending/descending climbs in the Sierra Nevada foothills that can offer views out to the surrounding landscape.

For these reasons, viewer sensitivity is moderate among most roadway travelers, although higher for those who are traveling specifically for scenic views, as described above.

## Recreational Users

Recreational users view the Plan Area from parks, waterways, roadways, trails, and from levees. Recreational uses consist of boating and fishing on local waterways; hunting in the bypasses; birding; and walking, running, jogging, and bicycling along trails, levee crowns, and local roads. Users accessing waterway edges and bypasses are likely to seek out natural areas, such as vegetated areas, sand and gravel bars, and beaches, in addition to using the waterways as a resource. Those on waterways have differing views based on their location in the landscape and are accustomed to variations in the level of land uses and activities taking place in the Plan Area. The amount of vegetation present along waterways creates a softened, natural edge that is enjoyed by all recreational users. Recreational users walking, running, jogging, and bicycling along trails, levee crowns, and local roads also have differing views based on their location in the landscape and are accustomed to variations in the level of land uses and activities occurring within the Plan Area. Local recreational users also have a high sense of ownership over the waterways and corridors they use, and these areas are highly valued throughout the Plan Area.

Viewer sensitivity is high among recreational users using the Plan Area because they are more likely to highly value the natural environment, appreciate the visual experience, have a high sense of ownership, and be more sensitive to changes in views.

## 13.2 Environmental Consequences

This section incorporates by reference the impact determinations presented for recreation, open space, and visual resources in the Local Agencies' general plan EIRs (as described in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.3, *Resource Chapter Organization and NEPA/CEQA Requirements*).<sup>1</sup> The significance findings and mitigation measures of each of the general plan EIRs are compiled in Appendix C. The Lead Agencies have reviewed these analyses and found them to be appropriate for the purposes of this EIS/EIR.

### 13.2.1 Methods for Impact Analysis

The BRCP would not provide individual project approvals or entitlements for any private or public development or infrastructure projects. Accordingly, this EIS/EIR does not provide CEQA or NEPA coverage for individual covered activities and does not function as a *programmatic* or *umbrella* CEQA or NEPA document for regional development and infrastructure projects. The BRCP EIS/EIR evaluates only the adverse and beneficial environmental effects associated with the decisions of the Local Agencies, water and irrigation districts and Caltrans to approve, permit, and implement the BRCP. Accordingly, the methods for analyzing direct impacts on recreation, open space, and visual resources are tailored to evaluate the decisions of the Local Agencies, water and irrigation districts, and Caltrans to approve, permit, and implement the BRCP. This EIS/EIR also incorporates the impact determinations of the Local Agencies' general plan EIRs to analyze indirect impacts on recreation, open space, and visual resources.

It is assumed that all covered activities approved by the Local Agencies would be consistent with the policies of their respective general plans and would be subject to any mitigation measures identified such that impacts would be adequately mitigated to the extent identified in the general plan EIRs. Water and irrigation district activities have not been analyzed in previous CEQA documents. These activities include: rerouting of existing canals, replacement of water delivery structures, replacement of large weirs, mowing and trimming vegetation along service roads, and removing aquatic vegetation from canals. Potential impacts on recreation, open space, and visual resources could occur primarily during construction or maintenance of these activities.

### Activities within Local Jurisdictions

#### Recreation and Open Space

In adopting the EIRs for the local general plans, the Local Agencies—with the exception of the City of Gridley—determined that implementation of the general plan, including its policies and identified mitigation measures, would have no impact or a less-than-significant impact on recreation. The City of Gridley determined that significant and unavoidable impacts would result from the expected population increase and increased use of recreation facilities associated with that population increase. It is assumed that all activities approved by the Local Agencies would be consistent with the policies of their respective general plans and would be subject to any required mitigation measures to adequately mitigate impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> These previous CEQA documents are available collectively for public review at the BCAG offices (2580 Sierra Sunrise Terrace, Suite 100 Chico, CA 95928-8441). Individual general plans and EIRs are also available at each of the respective land use agencies.

## Visual Resources

In adopting the EIRs for the local general plans, the Local Agencies (except for the Cities of Gridley and Chico) determined that implementation of general, including its policies and identified mitigation measures, would have no impact or a less-than-significant impact on visual resources. The City of Gridley determined significant and unavoidable impacts would result from the expected changes in visual character and quality, scenic vistas, and light and glare from the conversion of agriculture or open space to urban or suburban development. In addition, the City of Chico determined there would be significant and unavoidable impacts resulting from the expected changes in visual character and quality in its planning area resulting from the conversion of agriculture or open space to urban or suburban development. It is assumed that all activities approved by the participating local jurisdictions would be consistent with the policies of their respective general plans and would be subject to any mitigation measures identified such that impacts would be adequately mitigated.

## Activities outside Local Jurisdictions, Conservation Strategy Activities, and Conservation Measure Activities

### Recreation and Open Space

This EIS/EIR contains a qualitative impact analysis for activities outside of the local jurisdiction of the Local Agencies. These activities include those of the water districts and irrigation districts and those that would take place as part of the proposed action's conservation strategy and conservation measures that could result in physical environmental changes. The qualitative analysis addresses beneficial and adverse impacts by discussing how implementation of the alternatives could potentially affect recreational opportunities and open space (i.e., their compatibility with biological goals and biological measureable objectives). The analysis includes a discussion of impacts on recreation and open space that may result from the removal or addition of lands for any BRCP conservation activity or covered activity. The baseline setting for recreational and open space is compared against the expected changes to the use of existing recreational facilities and the construction of new recreational opportunities under the various covered activities by alternative. A determination is made based on the general qualitative magnitude of the change if impacts on recreational resources and open space would be significant, less than significant, or would not occur.

### Visual Resources

This EIS/EIR contains a qualitative impact analysis for activities outside of the local jurisdiction of the Local Agencies. These activities include those of the water districts and irrigation districts, Caltrans and BCAG transportation projects outside of City jurisdictions, and those that would take place as part of the proposed action's conservation strategy and conservation measures that could result in changes in the aesthetic setting. The baseline visual setting is compared against the expected changes to the scenic highways, scenic vistas, visual character and quality, and light and glare under the various covered activities by alternative. A determination is made based on the general qualitative magnitude of the change if impacts to visual resources would be significant, less than significant, or would not occur.

## 13.2.2 Significance Criteria

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the action alternatives would be considered to have a significant effect if they would result in any of the conditions listed below.

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.
- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway.
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

## 13.2.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

### Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1, *Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)*, project proponents would apply for permits on a project-by-project basis, without coordinated effort to minimize biological impacts through the Plan Area. Under Alternative 1, urban development and public infrastructure projects would continue to occur pursuant to the approved general plans of the Local Agencies and BCAG's regional plan(s). These projects include residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as construction, maintenance, and use of urban infrastructure, parks, recreational facilities, public services, and similar types of urban land uses. Other activities that would occur under Alternative 1 are construction and maintenance of public infrastructure projects outside of urban areas, including public infrastructure projects in and over streams (e.g., bridge replacements). No regional conservation strategy or conservation measures would be implemented; therefore, impacts on recreation and visual character and quality associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not occur

**Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The County and the Cities of Biggs, Chico, and Oroville determined that the implementation of the general plans would result in no impact or less-than-significant impacts associated with increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities (City of Oroville 2009b; Butte County 2010; City of Chico 2010; City of Biggs 2013). These Local Agencies made these determinations because (1) general plan implementation would include additional recreational facilities so there would be no deterioration of existing neighborhoods or regional parks; (2) the goals, policies, and actions of the general plans would result in maintaining and protecting existing parks; or (3) the Local Agencies already have sufficient parkland, and general plan implementation would not substantially decrease this existing parkland.

The City of Gridley determined that the approval of its general plan, and the physical activities associated with the implementation of the general plan, would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on recreational facilities. Although population growth is expected to take place in the city, general plan goals, policies, and actions require parkland standards be met that would result in a substantial increase in the use of existing parks such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

The activities of water districts and irrigation districts would not increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities. These activities would typically be performed within the service districts of the water and irrigation districts. The service districts are located outside the boundaries of the cities and, therefore, would not result in impacts on parks or recreational facilities in the cities. The water district and irrigation district service boundaries have some overlap with the Durham Recreation and Park District and the Richvale Recreation and Park District within the Plan Area. Since the specific location of the activities is unknown, it would be speculative to identify which parks or recreational facilities in those two recreation and park districts may be affected. However, given the types of activities that the water districts and irrigation districts would perform under Alternative 1, it is anticipated they would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities. The districts' activities primarily involve providing irrigation water for agriculture; these activities would not increase population in the service district area, and increasing population is one of the main mechanisms for an increased use of existing neighborhood or regional parks.

Furthermore, if construction and maintenance associated with water district and irrigation district activities occurred within close proximity to an existing park or recreational facility, these activities would occur infrequently (e.g., once every 5 years or once every 4 to 5 years). They would also tend to occur during the winter (e.g., September–December or late January–early April) when there is generally low use of outdoor parks and recreation facilities. Thus, these covered activities would only present a temporary effect on the existing park or recreational facility such that patrons would likely continue to use the park or facility, or patron use would be low because of the season (e.g., winter). Therefore, it is not anticipated the activities associated with water or irrigation districts would result in the increased use of existing recreational facilities.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial increase in the use of existing recreational facilities because of population growth, thereby leading to deterioration of recreational facilities. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial increase in the use of existing recreational facilities because of population growth, thereby leading to deterioration of recreational facilities. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less than significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The County of Butte and Cities of Biggs, Chico, and Oroville concluded that although site-specific impacts could not be determined at the general plan level, their general plan goals, policies, and

actions would ensure that significant impacts associated with construction or expansion of recreational facilities as a result of implementation of the general plans would be less than significant (City of Oroville 2009b; City of Chico 2010; Butte County 2010; City of Biggs 2013). However, the City of Gridley determined that there would be substantial adverse impacts related to parks and recreational facilities, as discussed above in Impact REC-1.

The water districts' and irrigation districts' activities would include the construction and maintenance of piping, water delivery structures, canals, or the trimming of vegetation along service roads, and would not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial increase in the use of existing recreational facilities because of population growth, thereby resulting in the potential need for new or expanded facilities. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial increase in the use of existing recreational facilities because of population growth, thereby resulting in the potential need for new or expanded facilities. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The County of Butte and Cities of Biggs, Chico, and Oroville determined that the implementation of their general plans—and thus, activities that would occur under their general plans—would result in no impact or less-than-significant impacts on a scenic vista (City of Oroville 2009b; City of Chico 2011b; Butte County 2010; City of Biggs 2013). The goals, objectives, and actions of the general plans would not result in significant impacts on scenic vistas and would seek to maintain designated scenic views or vistas (e.g., Feather River and Table Mountain), or continued implementation of the Municipal Code in the various jurisdictions would result in no substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas.

However, the City of Gridley determined that the approval of its general plan, and the physical activities associated with the implementation of the general plan, would result in significant and unavoidable impacts on scenic vistas. Views of the Sutter Buttes, considered a scenic vista in Gridley, could be partially or totally blocked by future urban land uses in Gridley. Converting agricultural lands to urban lands would also permanently alter foreground and background views of the Sutter Buttes for vehicles traveling along SR 99.

The water districts' and irrigation districts' activities would require construction that could result in temporary alterations to the baseline visual setting. However, the service districts are located in parts of the county where the visual setting is highly dominated by agriculture and typically oriented away from viewers that would be highly sensitive to changes in the visual setting or scenic vistas (e.g., residents or recreationists). Furthermore, the majority of these activities are actually performed to maintain the baseline conditions (e.g., remove aquatic vegetation from canals to maintain an open irrigation channel), and many of these activities are already part of the baseline

visual setting (i.e., water districts and irrigation districts are already conducting these activities to maintain their canals and infrastructure); thus, these activities would not affect a scenic vista.

Some transportation projects, such as those capacity-enhancing projects on SR 99, would result in short term changes to the visual character and quality of the Plan Area during construction. Activities such as grading operations requiring the movement of heavy equipment on roadways during limited construction periods would occur. The construction areas would generally be small compared to the larger visual setting of the county, and the construction periods would be of limited duration. It is unlikely these construction impacts would block or alter scenic resources of the Plan Area for extended periods of time. Furthermore, viewer sensitivity is moderate among most roadway travelers, and they are not likely to experience substantial adverse effects on their visual setting as a result of construction equipment or staging areas. Once the roadways have been upgraded or modified, they would generally be flat and would not result in the blocking or altering of a scenic resource. Therefore, it is anticipated that Caltrans and other BCAG transportation projects would not substantially and adversely affect scenic resources of the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas as a result of blocking views of the Sutter Buttes. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas as a result of blocking views of the Sutter Buttes. Implementation of Gridley's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-4: Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway (NEPA: less than significant; CEQA: less than significant)**

There are no state scenic highways designated in the Plan Area. SR 70 is eligible for designation but has not been designated. Therefore, substantial damage to scenic resources along a state scenic highway would not occur. Furthermore, the Cities of Oroville, Chico, Biggs, and Gridley do not have locally designated scenic highways. The County's General Plan 2030 and Zoning Ordinance locally designate several scenic highways within the Plan Area as described in Section 13.1.2, *Environmental Setting*. And the County's General Plan 2030 describes scenic highway overlay zones (Figure COS-9 of County General Plan 2030). However, the County general plan EIR (2010) concludes that the general plan's goals, policies, and actions (e.g., Goal COS-18) would avoid significant impacts related to the locally designated scenic highways.

Caltrans and BCAG would undertake several capacity enhancing improvements on roadways in the Plan Area and other roadway improvements under Alternative 1. Specifically, the County would upgrade the rural intersection of Pentz Road at Durham-Pentz Road. Pentz road is part of a scenic highway overlay zone as identified on Figure COS-09 of the County General Plan 2030. The improvements would include installation of traffic signals or widening of the roadway to accommodate the creation and/or extension of intersection turn lanes and through lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities (e.g., bike lanes, crosswalks, islands). The improvements may require a 3-acre construction footprint, including a staging area. However, during construction, any

effects on scenic resources in the area would be temporary, and the upgrade of a rural intersection would, overall, not substantially damage scenic resources because it would not substantially change the visual connectivity of the intersection with the surrounding environment. Furthermore, as identified in the County general plan EIR (2010) the general plan's goals, policies, and actions (e.g., Goal COS-18) would avoid significant impacts related to the locally designated scenic highways. No other Caltrans or County roadway improvement projects would occur on locally designated scenic highways or highway overlay zones.

Activities associated with the water districts or irrigation districts are not anticipated to take place along the locally designated scenic highways. These activities would take place within the service areas of the water districts or irrigation districts, and there are no locally designated scenic highways in these areas (Figure COS-8 of County General Plan 2030).

**NEPA Determination:** Alternative 1 would not result in substantial damage to scenic resources along a scenic highway because there are no officially designated scenic highways in the Plan Area, and implementation of the Local Agency general plans would avoid impacts on locally designated scenic highways. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**CEQA Determination:** Alternative 1 would not result in substantial damage to scenic resources along a scenic highway because there are no officially designated scenic highways in the Plan Area and implementation of the Local Agency general plans would avoid impacts on locally designated scenic highways. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**Impact REC-5: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The County and Cities of Biggs and Oroville determined that the implementation of their general plans—and thus, activities that would occur under their general plans—would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the plan areas and their surroundings (City of Oroville 2009b; Butte County 2010; City of Biggs 2013). The goals, objectives, and actions of the general plans would not result in a substantial degradation to the existing visual character or quality of the planning areas (City of Oroville 2009b; Butte County 2010).

However, the Cities of Chico and Gridley determined that the expected changes in visual character and quality in the planning areas resulting from the conversion of agriculture, open space, or vacant or undeveloped land to urban or suburban development as the plan areas are built out would have a significant impact on existing visual character and quality. The City of Gridley determined that the general plan's purpose is to provide a framework for governing the development of the very urban land uses that would convert existing agricultural land in the City and its planning area. The City of Chico concluded that the introduction of urban uses into designated special planning areas, which are currently vacant undeveloped land, would result in changes to the visual resources those lands currently provide. (City of Gridley 2009; City of Chico 2011b.)

Water districts' and irrigation districts' activities would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Plan Area. As discussed in REC-3, the water districts' and irrigation districts' service areas are located in parts of the county where the visual setting is highly dominated by agriculture and typically oriented away from viewers that would be highly sensitive to changes in the visual setting or scenic vistas (e.g., residents or recreationists). Furthermore, many of the water districts' and irrigation districts' activities are already part of the baseline visual setting (i.e., water

districts and irrigation districts are already conducting these activities to maintain their canals and infrastructure).

Some transportation projects, such as those capacity-enhancing projects on SR 99, would result in short-term changes to the visual character and quality of the Plan Area during construction as described in REC-3. However, construction areas would generally be small compared to the larger visual setting of the county, and construction periods would be of limited duration. Furthermore, viewer sensitivity is moderate among most roadway travelers, and they are not likely to experience substantial adverse effects on their visual setting as a result of construction equipment or staging areas. Once the roadways have been upgraded or modified, they would generally be flat, with potentially new signage or intersection lights, and would not result in the substantial degradation of the visual quality or character of the Plan Area as they would complement the existing roadway infrastructure. Therefore, it is anticipated that Caltrans and other BCAG transportation projects would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's and the City of Chico's general plans would result in a substantial degradation of the existing visual character and quality of their jurisdictions, primarily as a result of the conversion of agricultural and open space lands to urban lands. Implementation of Gridley's and Chico's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's and the City of Chico's general plans would result in a substantial degradation of the existing visual character and quality of their jurisdictions primarily as the result of the conversion of agricultural land and open space to urban lands. Implementation of both Gridley's and Chico's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to less-than-significant levels (City of Gridley 2009; City of Chico 2011b). Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-6: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The County and Cities of Biggs, Chico, and Oroville determined that the implementation of the general plans—and, thus, activities that would occur under the general plans—would result in no impact or less-than-significant impacts on creating new sources of substantial light or glare. The goals, policies, and actions of the general plans, as well as the municipalities codes that restrict light and glare of new development, would prevent new sources of substantial light and glare. (City of Oroville 2009b; City of Chico 2010; Butte County 2010; City of Biggs 2013.)

However, the City of Gridley determined that the approval of its general plan, and the physical activities associated with the implementation of the general plan, would result in significant and unavoidable impacts by increasing nighttime lighting and daytime glare. New urban development would increase the amount of nighttime light and daytime glare and would introduce a new source of nighttime lighting in existing rural areas (City of Gridley 2009).

The water districts' and irrigation districts' service areas may result in some new sources of light and glare associated with replacement of larger water delivery structures (e.g., large weirs). During this replacement, new security or safety lighting could be incorporated, but it is anticipated that

effects would not be adverse because the districts would install only the minimum amount of lighting necessary to provide safety and security.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in substantial new sources of light and glare due to the increase in urban land uses. Implementation of the City's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to a less-than-significant level. Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in substantial new sources of light and glare due to the increase of urban land uses. Implementation of the City's general plan policies or mitigation measures would not reduce these effects to a less-than-significant level (City of Gridley 2009). Consequently, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

## Alternative 2—Proposed Action

As discussed in Section 13.2.1, *Methods for Impact Analysis*, covered activities within the jurisdiction of the Local Agencies have been analyzed in previous CEQA documents that are incorporated by reference. These types of covered activities are incorporated into Alternative 2 and are described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2, *Alternative 2—Proposed Butte Regional Conservation Plan (Permit Issuance/Plan Implementation)*. These covered activities include development or maintenance of residential, commercial, public, or industrial facilities; recreational facilities; transportation facilities; pipeline facilities; utility service and waste management facilities; and flood control and stormwater management facilities. The following analysis of Alternative 2 references the Alternative 1 analysis because impacts for these BRCP covered activities would be the same.

Under Alternative 2, covered activities would include the existing, planned, and proposed land uses over which the Permit Applicants have land use authority; state and local transportation projects; maintenance of water delivery systems (e.g., WCWD canals and similar delivery systems); habitat restoration, enhancement, and management actions (conservation measures); and adaptive management and monitoring activities. Most covered activities would require individual permits and approvals pursuant to the Local Agencies' general plans and land use regulations or the requirements of the implementing agency (such as Caltrans and irrigation districts) and would undergo subsequent project-level CEQA review and relevant NEPA review for construction and operation-related impacts; some covered activities, however, may be exempted from environmental review requirements due to project characteristics including small projects or infill projects.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures have not been analyzed in previous CEQA documents and include habitat management and enhancement, habitat restoration, general maintenance, avoidance and minimization measures, and species population enhancement. Not all conservation measures would result in physical changes to the environment, thus the following conservation measures have the potential, either during construction or maintenance, to impact recreational and/or visual resources: CM1, CM4–CM14. The remaining conservation measures are not anticipated to result in physical changes to the environment and thus would have very low potential or no potential to affect recreation, open space, or visual resources; therefore, they are not discussed below. Furthermore, the BRCP specifically allows recreational uses on BRCP conservation lands where compatible with the conservation goals for those lands.

**Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies and water and irrigation districts, on existing parks or other recreational facilities and within the water districts' and irrigation districts' service areas would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-1.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures would not increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities. These conservation activities would not result in an increase in population in the Plan Area, and population increase is the primary mechanism for increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities.

The conservation, preservation, and restoration of large, contiguous patches of oak woodland and savanna (with a total protection target of approximately 20,000 acres within the Sierra Foothills and Cascade Foothills CAZs) are anticipated to support mule deer, which are enjoyed by wildlife viewers. The conservation strategy would protect CDFW-designated crucial winter range, the most important habitat for this species. Although CM5 (along with CM2 and CM6, which do not include physical activities) may prohibit access and recreational activities (e.g., rock climbing, hang gliding) in important nesting areas to prevent disturbance of nesting peregrine falcons, overall, it is anticipated the conservation strategy would actually increase the recreational opportunities for the public in the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy is anticipated to increase the recreational opportunities for the public in the Plan Area. However, as identified for Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in unavoidable impacts on parks or other recreational facilities. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy is anticipated to increase the recreational opportunities for the public in the Plan Area. However, as identified for Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would have a significant impact on parks and other recreational facilities. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies and water districts and irrigation districts related to the environmental effects of construction or expansion of recreational facilities would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-2.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures would not include the construction of specific recreational facilities that would have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would not result in effects related to the environmental effects of construction or expansion of recreational facilities; however,

implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in unavoidable impacts in this area. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would not result in effects related to the environmental effects of construction or expansion of recreational facilities; however, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in unavoidable impacts in this area. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies and water districts and irrigation district on scenic vistas would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-3.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures could have a beneficial or negative effect on scenic vistas depending on the location of the activities. Conservation of natural and agricultural lands will be beneficial in maintaining open vistas and protecting views of open space and farmland from urban or other types of development. Natural areas are rarer scenic features in the Plan Area, and restoration of natural vegetation would increase visual diversity. In general, restored habitat would create visual interest and would generally not block background views. Restoration actions could also result in the creation of new scenic vistas, perhaps through the removal of existing agricultural tree rows and the establishment of vista points at specific locations or viewing opportunity areas along newly created recreational trails. However, at some sites, the restoration of agricultural lands to riparian forest could block long-distance vistas from scenic vista areas. For example, riparian forest plantings installed along a river or creek segment where roadway travelers currently have open vistas of the waterway would mature and result in more restricted views of the river and vistas beyond.

After completion of construction activities necessary for restoration, areas surrounding the restored/enhanced area may be denuded of vegetation or appear to be so from a distance because immature planted vegetation would be similar in appearance to tilled or newly planted agricultural fields. The sites would be in a transitional state, and over a period of 1 to several years, plant species would mature, and vegetation would recolonize the sites. The restored sites would be scattered throughout the Plan Area and CAZs, so the sites would not create a visual imposition on the landscape or be perceived as a centralized, large-scale visual change. In addition, restored/enhanced sites would increase the amount of native vegetative communities that attract wildlife, thus helping to improve the visual quality and diversity of the restored areas. Other beneficial effects would result when flat agricultural lands and row crops are replaced by restored riparian vegetation. The visual characteristics of these restored/enhanced landscapes would be similar to other natural areas in the Plan Area and would increase the Plan Area's overall amount of natural land, which is less extensive than the widespread areas of agricultural development. The BRCP would have an overall beneficial effect related to the enhancement and creation of scenic vistas in the Plan Area. Therefore, it is anticipated that the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not have a substantial effect on scenic vistas.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would not affect scenic vistas and views and in some cases may enhance existing views. However, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses and reduce the visibility of the Sutter Buttes, thereby substantially affecting scenic vistas or views. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would not affect scenic vistas and views and in some cases may enhance existing views. However, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses and reduce the visibility of the Sutter Buttes, thereby substantially affecting scenic vistas or views. Gridley would be responsible for implementing its own general plan goals, policies, and actions or mitigation; however, implementation would not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-4: Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway (NEPA: less than significant; CEQA: less than significant)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies, water districts and irrigation districts, and Caltrans and County transportation project areas on scenic vistas would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-4.

There is a very low probability that conservation measures would take place along the very short length (i.e., less than 10 miles) of SR 70 (a locally scenic highway) that is within the Plan Area. However, if conservation measure activities were to take place along this short length of road, they would likely be CM4 or CM5, which would restore riparian habitat and other natural habitat in the Cascade Foothills CAZ. These types of activities would have a beneficial effect on the scenic resources seen by roadway travelers because they would provide visual interest and diversity.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy and measures would not affect scenic resources along a very short segment of SR 70 because of the low probability activities would occur in this area. In addition, the County general plan EIR determined that implementation of the general plan's goals, policies, and actions would avoid significant impacts on scenic highways, and local jurisdictions lack designated scenic highways. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy and measures would not affect scenic resources along a very short segment of SR 70 because of the low probability activities would occur in this area. In addition, the County general plan EIR determined that implementation of the general plan's goals, policies, and actions would avoid significant impacts on scenic highways, and local jurisdictions lack designated scenic highways. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**Impact REC-5: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies on existing visual character or quality would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-5.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Plan Area. CM1, CM4–CM14 would establish a conservation land system and restore certain acreages of natural communities and habitats activities for covered species. It is unknown the location of site-specific conservation strategy and conservation measure activities and the potential presence of sensitive viewers. However, activities associated with the implementation of restoration and habitat enhancement would take place over 50 years, often during a relatively short window each year between biologically important seasons (e.g., migration or nesting) so as to minimize the effects on species. The overall intensity and duration of each action would vary based on the individual project, but would generally be short to fit within the short window each year. Implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures could introduce heavy equipment and associated vehicles, including dozers, graders, scrapers, and trucks, into the viewshed of all viewer groups in the vicinity. Construction may include increasing connectivity between marshes and waterways, grading, and planting. Currently, it is not uncommon for heavy equipment to be seen, intermittently, for existing levee maintenance, agricultural purposes, dredging operations, site-specific construction, and managing and restoring habitat within the Plan Area. Therefore, it is not anticipated that construction equipment and activities for generally short durations over 50 years would result in a substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the Plan Area.

The conversion of agricultural lands to natural communities as a result of implementing the conservation measures could alter the visual character or quality of the Plan Area because the dominant visual feature and resource in the Plan Area is agriculture. Approximately 4,000 acres of agricultural lands in the Plan Area may be affected by conversion to restored natural communities (Butte Regional Conservation Plan 2012: Figure 4-20). The specific conversion sites are unknown, but the conversion would take place over the 50-year permit period and be within the approximately 142,000 acres of agricultural lands in the Plan Area. This conversion represents less than 3% of the agricultural land within the Plan Area. Once the land is converted to natural communities, it is anticipated that there would be beneficial effects where flat agricultural lands and row crops have been replaced by restored riparian vegetation or other vegetation, such as wetlands or grasslands, because natural areas are rarer scenic features in the Plan Area, and such a change would increase visual diversity. The BRCP would have an overall beneficial effect related to the enhancement and creation of scenic vistas in the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would benefit the existing visual character of the Plan area, and not substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of agricultural lands and natural lands. However, as identified for Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Chico's and City of Gridley's general plans would result in substantial degradation of the existing visual character and quality of the areas within their local jurisdictions primarily due to more urban land uses. Both Gridley and Chico determined there is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level (City of Gridley 2009; City of Chico 2011b). Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2 the conservation strategy would benefit the existing visual character of the Plan area, and not substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of agricultural lands and natural lands. However, as identified for Alternative 1, implementation of the City of Chico's and City of Gridley's general plans would result in degradation of the existing visual character and quality of the areas within their local jurisdictions primarily due to more urban land uses. Both Gridley and Chico determined there is no feasible mitigation available

to reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level (City of Gridley 2009; City of Chico 2011b). Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-6: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies on daytime or nighttime views would be the same as those described for Alternative 1 under Impact REC-6.

The intent of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be to establish native vegetation in the various CAZs. Given the nature of the conservation measures (restoration and management of habitat and species), it is anticipated that there would be very few new sources of permanent lighting during operation and that these sources would not result in a substantial increase in light or glare. Restored areas would largely be natural habitat areas. At this time, it is not known where (if any) new lighting sources might be proposed; however, it is anticipated that there would be a very limited number of such areas and that the lighting would be reduced to the minimum necessary to provide safety and security as required by the County Zoning Ordinance and that effects would not be adverse.

**NEPA Determination:** Under Alternative 2, the conservation strategy would not result in a substantial increase of light and glare. However, as identified for Alternative 1, substantial new sources of light or glare would be introduced in the Plan Area as a result of implementation of Gridley's general plan. Gridley determined there is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level beyond the policies and programs of the general plan, which would fully preserve existing nighttime views while at the same time allow urban development (City of Gridley 2009). Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** Under Alternative 2 the conservation strategy would not result in a substantial increase of light and glare. However, as identified for Alternative 1, substantial new sources light or glare would be introduced in the Plan Area as a result of implementation of Gridley's general plan. Gridley determined there is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level beyond the policies and programs of the general plan, which would fully preserve existing nighttime views while at the same time allow urban development (City of Gridley 2009). Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

### **Alternative 3—Reduced Development/Reduced Fill**

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2 except that it uses the various general plan EIR reduced development alternatives as described in Chapter 2, *Proposed Action and Alternatives*, to create a single reduced development footprint. Covered activities under this alternative would be similar to those described in the BRCP but would be limited to the reduced development footprint for a reduced permit term of 30 years. The reduced footprint and reduced land conservation would result in fewer built structures and less ground disturbance.

It is anticipated that under Alternative 3, fewer acres of natural communities would be conserved because reduced development would provide reduced funding for the conservation strategy. However, it is anticipated that the conservation measures would be the same because the reduction of fill would be achieved through the reduced development footprint of the Local Agencies rather than through modification of conservation measures. Consequently, the impacts related to

implementation of the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be the same as under Alternative 2.

**Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

Under this alternative, a moderate reduction in new development and consequent increased demand for recreational facilities would occur. But in general, effects are not expected to substantially differ from those identified in Impact REC-1 for Alternative 2.

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to, but of lower intensity than, those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-1. It is anticipated that fewer natural communities would be conserved as a result of there being less development to fund the conservation strategy. The natural communities that would be conserved and restored would be greater than those that currently exist under baseline conditions. Therefore, it is anticipated that the conservation strategy would actually increase the recreational opportunities for the public in the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies and water districts and irrigation districts related to the environmental effects of construction or expansion of recreational facilities would be similar to those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-2.

The conservation strategy and conservation measures would not include the construction of specific recreational facilities that would have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

Generally, under Alternative 3, there would be a greater intensity of urban development within the county's and cities' urbanized areas as compared to Alternative 2. Thus, this alternative is generally anticipated to reduce the amount of land converted to urban uses county-wide, helping to retain the small town, rural character of the county and cities over a larger area of the county and maintain more undeveloped scenic areas. However, implementation of the City of Gridley's general plan would result in a substantial conversion of agricultural land and open space to urban uses and the

potential reduction of the visibility of the Sutter Buttes, and thus would adversely and substantially affect scenic vistas.

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar, but fewer, than those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-3. It is anticipated that fewer natural communities would be conserved as a result of there being less development to fund the conservation strategy. Overall, even though fewer acres of natural communities would be restored/enhanced, the acres that are restored/enhanced would increase the amount of native vegetative communities that attract wildlife, thus helping to improve the visual quality and diversity of the restored areas. The visual characteristics of these restored/enhanced landscapes would be similar to other natural areas in the Plan Area and would increase the Plan Area's overall amount of natural land, which is less extensive than the widespread areas of agricultural development. In this sense, the BRCP would have an overall beneficial effect related to the enhancement and creation of scenic vistas in the Plan Area. Therefore, it is anticipated that the conservation strategy and conservation measures would not have a substantial effect on scenic vistas. This impact would be less than significant.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-4: Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway (NEPA: less than significant; CEQA: less than significant)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies, water districts and irrigation districts, and Caltrans and County roadway project areas on scenic vistas would be the same as those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-4.

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar, but fewer, than those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-4. It is anticipated that fewer acres of natural communities would be conserved as a result of there being less development to fund the conservation strategy. There is a low probability that the conservation strategy and measures would be implemented along SR 70, and if they were implemented, there would be potential beneficial effects on scenic resources seen by roadway travelers. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**Impact REC-5: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies and water districts and irrigation districts on existing visual character or quality would be the same as those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-5.

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar, but fewer, than those described for Alternative 2 under impact REC-5. It is anticipated that fewer acres of natural communities would be conserved as a result of there being less development to fund the conservation strategy. As a result, it is anticipated that fewer agricultural acres would be converted to restored natural communities; therefore, it is likely that less than 3% of the existing agricultural acreage in the Plan Area would be converted. A more limited change in the rural visual character and quality of the Plan Area would take place. The visual characteristics of these restored landscapes would be similar to other natural areas in the Plan Area and would increase the Plan Area's overall amount of natural land, which is less extensive than the widespread agricultural development. In this sense, the BRCP would have an overall beneficial effect related to the enhancement and creation of visual character and quality in the Plan Area.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-6: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts of covered activities within the jurisdictions of the Local Agencies on daytime or nighttime views would be the same as those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-6.

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar, but fewer, than those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-6. It is anticipated that there would be fewer acres of natural communities conserved as a result of there being less development to fund the conservation strategy. Given the nature of the conservation measures (restoration and management of habitat and species), it is anticipated that there would be very few new sources of permanent lighting during operation and that these sources would not result in a substantial increase in light or glare. Restored areas would largely be natural habitat areas. Therefore, any new lighting or glare would be very limited.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

## **Alternative 4—Greater Conservation**

Alternative 4 would be similar to Alternative 2 except that under Alternative 4, the conservation strategy would include the conservation of an additional 9,850 acres of grassland and 35,310 acres of riceland. It would include the same conservation measures as Alternative 2, and all other acreage protection targets for natural communities/land types would remain the same as described for Alternative 2. Therefore, impact mechanisms for recreation, open space, and visual resources would be similar to those described for Alternative 2.

**Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those described for Alternative 2. Although grassland and rice would not necessarily create additional public use recreational or open space opportunities, they would not prevent some of the other natural community types (e.g., managed wetlands) from occurring. Overall, it is anticipated that the conservation strategy could increase the recreational opportunities for the public in the Plan Area because there would be increased acreage that could be used for recreational opportunities.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-2.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar, but fewer, than those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-3. While the visual setting under Alternative 4 might favor more flat topographic lands associated with rice and grasslands, this would not be a substantial change from the existing visual setting of the Plan Area, which is primarily agricultural land (44%), generally located to the west of SR 99. Therefore, it is not anticipated to have a substantial effect on existing scenic resources. Furthermore, any restoration/enhancement of other natural communities or land types (e.g., riparian, wetland, Oak woodlands) would result in landscapes similar to other areas of the Plan Area that are in a natural state and less extensive than the widespread areas of agricultural development. This would help to improve the visual quality and diversity of the setting and enhance effects on scenic vistas.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-4: Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway (NEPA: less than significant; CEQA: less than significant)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-4. There is a low probability that the conservation strategy and measures would be implemented along SR 70, and if they were implemented, there would be potential beneficial effects on scenic resources seen by roadway travelers.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**Impact REC-5: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those described for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-5. As discussed for Alternative 4 under REC-3, this alternative might favor more flat topographic lands associated with rice and grasslands. This would not be a substantial change from the existing visual character and quality of the Plan Area, which is primarily agricultural land (44%), generally located to the west of SR 99. Therefore, it is not anticipated to have a substantial effect on existing visual character and quality because it would continue to support flat land uses that are rural, open, and agricultural in nature. Furthermore, any restoration/enhancement of other natural communities or land types (e.g., riparian, wetland, Oak woodlands) would result in landscapes similar to other areas of the Plan Area that are in a natural state and less extensive than the widespread areas agricultural development. Therefore, this would help to improve the visual quality and diversity of the setting and enhance effects on the visual character and quality of the rural, open space, and agricultural nature of the setting. Impacts would be less than significant.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**Impact REC-6: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area (NEPA: significant and unavoidable; CEQA: significant and unavoidable)**

The impacts associated with the conservation strategy and conservation measures would be similar to those identified for Alternative 2 under Impact REC-6. An increase in rice acreage or grassland acreage would not result in any new permanent sources of light or glare. These lands are typically open and in natural settings and do not have permanent light fixtures. Nighttime harvest of rice can take place and currently does take place within the Plan Area; however, this is temporary and only during harvest season and takes place within areas surrounded by other rice fields and agricultural lands. An increase in the acreage of rice is not anticipated to change these conditions substantially.

**NEPA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

**CEQA Determination:** The impact determination would be the same as Alternative 2; the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

## 13.2.4 Cumulative Analysis

### Methods and Approach

The cumulative analysis for recreation, open space, and visual resources is a qualitative evaluation using the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects listed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2, under *Cumulative Impacts*. This analysis considered development projects, including roadway projects, water supply development projects, and park acquisition and management projects; the general plan EIR impact determinations for cumulative impacts, where applicable; and the impact determinations identified above for the various alternatives.

This analysis determines whether the covered activities not analyzed in previous environmental documents would result in a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution that, when combined with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, would result in a cumulatively significant impact.

### Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects are identified in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2, under *Cumulative Impacts*. Past and present projects have resulted in an increase in recreational facilities and open space in the Plan Area. These projects have provided a beneficial cumulative effect because of the continued operation and management of available park lands and recreational opportunities to the public in the Plan Area.

Past and present projects have resulted in substantial modification to the visual resources of the Plan Area. These projects have converted natural habitat communities to agricultural land uses and converted agricultural land uses to urban and suburban land uses. These projects have generally contributed to an incrementally cumulative effect on the visual resources of the landscape.

### Alternative 1—No Action (No Plan Implementation)

#### Recreation and Open Space

The City of Gridley determined that the recreational facilities within its jurisdiction would experience cumulatively considerable and significant impacts; no other local jurisdiction made this determination. Therefore, past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects, including implementation of the general plans of the cities and the county, would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on recreational resources. Although there would be no conservation strategy or conservation measures, Alternative 1 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley general plan EIR.

#### Visual Resources

The City of Gridley determined that the visual resources in its jurisdiction would experience cumulatively considerable and significant impacts; the City of Chico also determined that the general

visual character and quality of Chico would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts associated with the conversion of undeveloped land to urban and suburban uses. Therefore, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, including implementation of the general plans of the Cities and the County, would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on visual resources.

Although there would be no conservation strategy or conservation measures, the Alternative 1 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley and Chico general plan EIRs.

## **Alternative 2—Proposed Action**

### **Recreation and Open Space**

The City of Gridley determined that the visual resources in its jurisdiction would experience cumulatively considerable and significant impacts; no other local jurisdiction made this determination. Therefore, past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects—including implementation of the general plans—would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on recreational resources. The covered activities identified for water districts or irrigation districts and/or the conservation strategy and conservation measures, combined with other conservation planning, would maintain large areas of open space, which is a land use that does not place high demand on recreational services. Furthermore, the conservation strategy and conservation measures would provide opportunities for additional recreation and open space use by the public (e.g., managed wetlands).

Although there would be no impacts generated by the additional activities (i.e., conservation strategy or conservation measures) beyond implementation of the general plans, Alternative 2 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley general plan EIR.

### **Visual Resources**

The City of Gridley determined that the visual resources in its jurisdiction would experience cumulatively considerable and significant impacts; the City of Chico also determined that the general visual character and quality of Chico would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts associated with the conversion of undeveloped land to urban and suburban uses. Therefore, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, including implementation of the general plans of the Cities and the County, would result in cumulatively considerable and significant impacts on visual resources. The covered activities identified for water districts or irrigation districts and/or the conservation strategy and conservation measures, combined with other conservation planning, would generally occur where flat agricultural lands and row crops are replaced by restored riparian vegetation. Such a change would increase visual diversity because natural areas are rarer scenic features in the Plan Area than are agricultural lands. Furthermore, restored/enhanced sites would increase the amount of native vegetative communities that attract wildlife, thus helping to improve the visual quality and diversity of the restored areas. The visual characteristics of these restored/enhanced landscapes would be similar to other natural areas in the Plan Area and would increase the Plan Area's overall amount of natural land, which is less extensive than the widespread areas of agricultural development. In this sense, the BRCP would have an overall beneficial effect related to the enhancement and creation of scenic vistas and beneficially adding to the visual character and quality in the Plan Area.

Although there would be no impacts generated by the additional activities (i.e., conservation strategy or conservation measures) beyond implementation of the general plans, Alternative 2 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley and Chico general plan EIRs.

### **Alternative 3—Reduced Development/Reduced Fill and Alternative 4—Greater Conservation**

#### **Recreation and Open Space**

The extent of available recreational facilities and open space associated with implementation of the water districts' and irrigation districts' covered activities and the conservation strategy and conservation measures differs slightly between these two alternatives. However, the mechanism and implications are similar to or slightly reduced compared to Alternative 2. Each of these alternatives would result in an incremental contribution to cumulative impacts. Although there would be no impacts generated by the additional activities (i.e., conservation strategy or conservation measures) beyond implementation of the general plans, Alternative 2 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley general plan EIR.

#### **Visual Resources**

The extent of conversion of undeveloped land to urban and suburban uses and the overall amount of restored/enhanced lands associated with implementation of the water districts' and irrigation districts' covered activities and the conservation strategy and conservation measures differs slightly between these two alternatives. However, the mechanism and implications are similar to or slightly reduced compared to Alternative 2. Each of these alternatives would not result in an incremental contribution to cumulative impacts. Although there would be no impacts generated by the additional activities (i.e., conservation strategy or conservation measures) beyond implementation of the general plans, Alternative 2 would contribute to cumulative impacts as determined in the Gridley and Chico general plan EIRs.

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