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## **4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED**

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The following is an introduction to the proposed General Plan Update environmental analysis, cumulative analysis, and general assumptions used in the environmental analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR regarding specific assumptions and methodology and significance criteria used in the analysis.

### **4.0.1 ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS GENERALLY USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

#### **BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE DRAFT EIR**

Section 15125(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and the environmental analysis is begun. The State CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to normally serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting conditions of the unincorporated portion of the county are described in detail in the technical sections of the Draft EIR. In general, these setting discussions describe the conditions of the unincorporated portion of the county as they existed when the NOP for the project was initially released on June 19, 2008, and environmental review began.

The proposed General Plan Update would incorporate the Coastal Element and the Ukiah Valley Area Plan (UVAP) as Sections 6.0 and 10.0, respectively, and would maintain existing policy provisions and land uses in those two areas. As of the release of this Draft EIR, the UVAP is currently being prepared, with an associated environmental document that will address specific land use changes in this area. The Coastal Element is scheduled to be updated in 2009. The Brooktrails Township Specific Plan remains intact as a land use planning document.

#### **GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS UNDER THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNINCORPORATED PORTION OF THE COUNTY**

Future growth in the unincorporated portion of the county would be guided by the land uses identified on the proposed General Plan Land Use Policy Map and other General Plan provisions. In this Draft EIR, impact analyses of both short-term (i.e., construction-related) and long-term effects are based on these proposed land use patterns.

"Buildout" is the development of land to its full potential or theoretical capacity under current or proposed planning or zoning designations (OPR, 2003). A complete analysis of the buildout potential of all vacant and underutilized parcels in the county within the planning horizon of the General Plan Update would not be feasible or realistic, as the potential to reach that ultimate buildout is extraordinarily unlikely and virtually unattainable within the 20-year planning horizon.

As discussed above, since the buildout potential of all the vacant residential parcels is not anticipated to occur within the planning horizon of the General Plan Update, an analysis based on historical growth patterns was conducted. The historic growth rate in the unincorporated county area has fluctuated significantly between 1970 and 2008. The annual growth rate in unincorporated Mendocino County varied from a high of 4.25 percent (1977-1978) to a low of 0.17 percent (1998-1999). Since 1990, the average annual growth rate in the unincorporated county area has been approximately 0.75 percent.



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The County anticipates that the future growth rate would remain relatively stable in the planning horizon (to year 2030), and a 1 percent annual growth rate has been used as a conservative projection of future growth in the unincorporated county to the year 2030. Based on the unincorporated area 2008 estimates of 27,725 housing units and a 61,990 population, the anticipated growth at a 1 percent rate would result in a total of 34,510 housing units and a population of 77,160 persons by the year 2030. That would result in an increase of 6,785 housing units and an increase in population of 15,170 over 2008 conditions located within the unincorporated area of the county.

The 1 percent growth scenario is analyzed throughout this Draft EIR in relevant sections where quantitative analysis can be performed (e.g., population/housing, public services, and utilities). Please note that the 1 percent growth scenario is only a conservative estimate based on historic growth rates and is not a target or limit set by the County, nor is it a policy set by the County.

### **Winery and Vineyard Development**

For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the number of wineries and acres of vineyards will continue to grow in the unincorporated county area. According to the 2007 Mendocino County Crop Report, there were 17,162 acres of bearing and non-bearing wine grapes. The U.S. Department of the Treasury, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, has established American Viticultural Areas across the United States. For Mendocino County, it is assumed that the growth of future vineyards and wineries in the county would occur in the viticultural areas. The following viticultural areas have been established in Mendocino County.

- Cole Ranch (May 1983)
- Anderson Valley (September 1983)
- Potter Valley (November 1983)
- Mendocino (July 1984)
- McDowell Valley (February 1987)
- Redwood Valley (February 1997)
- Mendocino Ridge (December 1997)
- Yorkville Highlands (June 1998)
- Dos Rios (November 2005)

### **Other Land Use Activities in the County**

It is anticipated that in addition to future residential and vineyard growth (described above), subsequent land use activities in the county would likely include continuation of other agricultural activities (e.g., cattle grazing, orchards, and dairy operations), timber production, and potential resource extraction activities. It is also anticipated that illegal marijuana farming activities will likely continue in the county.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS**

Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR contain a detailed description of current setting conditions (including applicable regulatory setting), an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed project, identification of proposed General Plan Update policies, action items, and code sections that mitigate the



environmental effect, additional feasible mitigation measures, and identification of whether significant environmental effects of the project would remain after application of proposed policies and action items, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the Draft EIR include the following information.

### **Existing Setting**

The subsection includes a description of the physical setting conditions associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As previously identified above, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on June 19, 2008.

### **Regulatory Framework**

This subsection consists of the identification of applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

### **Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

The Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update and identifies those County Codes and proposed General Plan policies and action items that would serve to mitigate the environmental effects. Standards of significance are identified and used to determine whether identified environmental effects are considered "significant" and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 4.8.1 – Construction Impacts on Surface Water Quality) and is supported by substantial evidence included in the discussion. In addition to impacts created from the application of the standards of significance, the DEIR also addresses impacts to the provisions of the proposed General Plan policies that could result in significant environmental effects.

Mitigation measures for the proposed General Plan Update were developed through a thorough review of the environmental effects of the General Plan Update by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental professionals. The mitigation measures identified consist of "performance standards" that identify clear requirements that would avoid or minimize significant environmental effects (the use of performance standard mitigation is allowed under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a) and is supported by case law *Sacramento Old City Association v. City Council of Sacramento* [3d. Dist 1991] 229 Cal.App.3d 1011, 1028 [280 Cal.Rptr. 478]).

An EIR for a general plan is substantially different than a project-level EIR in the way that mitigation measures are identified and incorporated back into the "project," which is the proposed plan. This is a function of the general plan and EIR being a set of programmatic documents as opposed to consideration of individual development projects with specific physical impacts. As much as possible, potential program-level environmental impacts related to the policies of a general plan are identified as the plan is being prepared. Additional policies and action items can then be formulated and proposed in the general plan to address and mitigate those impacts. Furthermore, the general plan establishes policies and measures by which the county would address environmental issues related to future implementation of the plan.

A second way that mitigation measures in a general plan EIR differ from a project-level EIR is that the general plan recognizes that future development projects would be required to undertake



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their own subsequent CEQA analysis when there is project-specific information that can be evaluated, as well as particular proposed project sites for which environmental impacts can be identified and evaluated.

### APPROACH TO THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's effect is considered cumulatively considerable. The analysis of cumulative impacts for each environmental factor can employ one of two methods to establish the effects of other past, current, and probable future projects. A lead agency may select a list of projects, including those outside the control of the agency, or alternatively, a summary of projects. These projects may be from an adopted general plan or related planning document, or from a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, and they may describe or evaluate regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact.

### Definition of Cumulative Setting

The cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on:

- **Local Adopted General Plans.** The existing land use plans in the cities of Fort Bragg, Point Arena, Willits, and Ukiah, as well as the Brooktrails Township Specific Plan.
- **Large-Scale Development Projects.** Consideration of large-scale existing, approved, and proposed development projects as listed in **Table 4.0-1**. This list of projects is intended to describe large-scale past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development activities in the entire Mendocino County area that, when considered with the proposed General Plan Update, have the potential to have cumulatively considerable impacts. The list is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of projects in Mendocino County.
- **Effect of Regional Conditions.** This primarily consists of consideration of the background traffic volumes and patterns on U.S. and state highways (e.g., U.S. Highway 101 and State Routes 20, 128, 162, 175, 253, and 271), background air quality conditions, and other associated environmental conditions that occur within the North Coast Air Basin, both within and outside of the unincorporated portion of the county.
- **Consideration of Existing Land Use Patterns.** This consists of consideration of the current environmental conditions of existing development and past land use activities in the region. This includes major land use activities in Mendocino County, agricultural activities and conversion of open space and agricultural lands from existing development patterns, as well as timber production activities in the region. Timber production has been declining in recent years, while the value of wine grape and wine production has been increasing.

Each technical section of the Draft EIR includes a description of the cumulative setting's geographic extent based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration (e.g., consideration of the North Coast Air Basin for cumulative air quality analysis) as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines. For some issues, such as air quality, this area is very large, often extending over county lines to other parts of Northern California.

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**TABLE 4.0-1**  
**LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MENDOCINO COUNTY**

Project Name	Project Description	Status
Local Coastal Plan	An approximately 150-square-mile mixed-use area plan, with residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, and open space uses.	Existing, awaiting update by County
Ukiah Valley Area Plan (UVAP)	An approximately 60-square-mile mixed-use area plan, with agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, and open space uses. Proposed land use designations in the UVAP include Remote Residential, Rural Residential, Suburban Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Rural Community, Mixed-Use: Residential Focus, Mixed-Use: General, Mixed-Use: Masonite, Mixed-Use: North State, General Commercial, Industrial, Agriculture, Range Lands, Public Lands, and Parks and Recreation.	Existing, awaiting update by County
City of Fort Bragg Mill Site	<p>An approximately 420-acre mixed-use specific plan, with residential, retail, resort, light industrial, and open space uses. The site also allows for Native American housing. The specific plan proposes development in six distinct areas with specific potential uses identified in each area.</p> <p>Area A: West Fort Bragg – approximately 52 acres on the north end of the site; this area would most likely include a mixture of residential uses</p> <p>Area B: North Headlands – approximately 32 acres on the north headlands of Soldier Bay; this area would most likely include a resort and resort-related uses</p> <p>Area C1: Downtown Addition – approximately 18 acres adjacent to the existing downtown area; this area would most likely include a mixture of residential, commercial, office, retail, and other service type uses</p>	Proposed; City of Fort Bragg



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Project Name	Project Description	Status
	<p>Area C2: Central Corridor – approximately 34 acres located along SR 1, just south of the central business district; this area would most likely include auto-oriented retail and commercial uses</p> <p>Area D: Southern Headlands – approximately 120 acres comprising the southern half of the Mill Site; this area would be more auto dependent, including a mix of uses such as residential, commercial, light industrial, and resort and resort-related uses</p> <p>Area E: Southern Reserve – approximately 30 acres at the southern end of the site; this area has been designated for open space</p>	

Sources: [city.fortbragg.com](http://city.fortbragg.com), 2008; [www.co.mendocino.ca.us](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us), 2008

### Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Each technical section in the Draft EIR considers whether the project's effect on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). The determination of whether the project's impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors, including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies, and expert opinion. Section 5.0, Cumulative Impacts, provides a summary of the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed General Plan Update.

Cumulative impacts are based on the project's contribution to development compared with the cumulative baseline condition.

### Cumulative Setting and Impacts

This subsection is an analysis of the proposed project's contribution to cumulative impacts to the environment. The analysis focuses on whether the project's contribution is "cumulatively considerable" (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130; see also the following subsection: Approach to the Cumulative Impact Analysis, and Section 5.0, Cumulative Impacts). A cumulative impact occurs from the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355[b]). Accordingly, the cumulative setting includes related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the region.



### TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe the environmental effects of the proposed project:

**Less Than Significant Impact:** A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment (no mitigation would be required for project effects found to be less than significant).

**Significant Impact and Potentially Significant Impact:** A significant impact would cause (or would potentially cause) a substantial adverse negative change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects using specified standards of significance provided in each technical section of the EIR. Identified "significant" impacts are those where the project would result in an impact that can be measured or quantified, while identified "potentially significant" impacts are those impacts where an exact measurement of the project's effects cannot be made but substantial evidence indicates that the impact would exceed standards of significance. A potentially significant impact may also be an impact that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be foreseen. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce project effects to the environment to a less than significant level.

**Significant and Unavoidable Impact:** A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial negative change in the environment that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level if the project is implemented.

**Less Than Cumulatively Considerable Impact:** A less than cumulatively considerable impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment under cumulative conditions.

**Cumulatively Considerable Impact:** A cumulatively considerable impact would result when the incremental effects of an individual project result in a significant adverse physical impact on the environment under cumulative conditions.

**Standards of Significance:** A set of significance criteria to determine at what level or "threshold" an impact would be considered significant. Significance criteria used in this EIR include the State CEQA Guidelines; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and County goals, objectives, and policies. Specified significance criteria used by the County of Mendocino are identified at the beginning of the impact analyses of each technical section of the EIR.

**Subsequent Projects/Activities:** These are anticipated development projects (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, recreational projects) that could occur in the future as a result of the implementation of the proposed General Plan, the continuation and potential expansion of land use activities (such as agricultural operations), or as a result of changes from the land use designations of the existing General Plan. This could also include public infrastructure and utility extension projects including, but not limited to, roadway widenings and extensions, intersection improvements, and water, stormwater, and wastewater distribution improvements.



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