

4.1 AESTHETICS/LIGHT AND GLARE

This section of the EIR describes the existing visual resources of the unincorporated portion of Mendocino County, summarizes the landscape characteristics of the area, and discusses the impacts associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update.

4.1.1 EXISTING SETTING

Mendocino County is a scenic and visually diverse county and is considered predominantly rural with respect to existing development. Natural scenic resources include the rugged Pacific Ocean coastline, redwood and other forests found in various locations throughout the county, and agricultural areas (such as vineyards and irrigated pastures), as well as natural open space and rangeland areas. Native vegetation types that can be found are diverse and include coastal plains, coast redwood, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, pygmy forest, chaparral, oak-grass woodlands, and rangeland/grasslands. In addition to the natural scenic beauty of the county, scenes of land management such as farming, ranching, and forest management operations are considered part of the scenic character of the county.

Historic development patterns have been primarily associated with agriculture, timber harvest/processing, and fishing. As such, the county has experienced a relatively slow growth rate compared to neighboring Sonoma County lying immediately to the south.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Mendocino County is a predominantly rural county. Most of the land in the county is in forest or in agricultural production. Both forest and agricultural lands are considered open spaces that add to the quality of life of county residents and attract tourists. Various state and county parks protect areas with scenic value, including several important redwood groves. The Mendocino coast is considered a scenic resource, and policies in the County's Coastal Element are designed to protect its scenic value. Some ecological communities in the county provide exceptional scenic value, such as the Pygmy Forest in Van Damme State Park, with its unique forest of low, stunted trees and shrubs providing a stark contrast to the adjacent full-size redwood trees.

Mountainous and sometimes rugged ridgelines frame the eastern and western boundaries of the county, providing visually distinct valley regions in the area. Some areas are densely forested with evergreen trees, while others are relatively open in comparison, dominated by mature oak trees set amid scrub and grasslands. Water in the form of creeks, streams, and rivers is often a prominent feature in the landscape.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Viewsheds

A viewshed is an area of land, water, and other elements that is visible from a specific point. In land use planning, viewsheds tend to be areas of particular scenic or historic value that are deemed worthy of preservation against development or other change. Mendocino County has not officially designated any specific viewsheds of scenic or other aesthetic value. However, the Scenic Highways Element of the County's existing General Plan stated the following uses within the county are considered scenic resources:

- Rural-open grazing or grassland;
- Rural-intensive cultivation, usually orchards or vineyards;

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- Deep commercial forest and public lands;
- Inland hills, valleys and ridges – close-up and intermediate views and distant panoramas;
- River views;
- Seascape;
- Historical site;
- Unique natural area (not defined in Scenic Highways Element);
- Small rural communities;
- Urban fringe;
- Heavy rural industry (e.g., lumber mills);
- Naturally sensitive areas subject to erosion or slides if developed; and
- Natural wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Scenic Corridors

As of 2008, no highways in Mendocino County have been officially designated as state scenic highways by either the County or the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The Laytonville community proposed local scenic highway designation on several roads in the area, while Anderson Valley citizens desired local ordinances to ensure scenic protection of the valley.

The Scenic Highways Element of the County's existing General Plan recommends that the entire length of State Route (SR) 1 located within the county be designated as a scenic highway, as well as that portion of SR 162 extending from its intersection with US 101 east 30 miles to Inspiration Point. According to the Caltrans website associated with scenic highways, SR 1 and SR 20 are "eligible" for designation as scenic highways, but have not been officially designated as such (www.dot.ca.gov, 2008).

SR 1 in Mendocino County includes views of the Pacific Ocean, cliffs, estuaries, rivers, headlands, distinctive trees including coast redwood and Douglas fir, bridges, water towers, lighthouses, and examples of historic architecture.

The county has two roadway segments designated as "heritage corridors" by California Public Resources Code Section 5077.5.¹ The North Coast Heritage Corridor includes the entire segment of SR 1 in the county, as well as the segment of U.S. Highway 101 from the junction with SR 1 north to the Humboldt County line. The Tahoe-Pacific Heritage Corridor extends from Lake Tahoe to the Mendocino County coast. It includes the entire segment of SR 20 within the county and the segment of US 101 from the SR 20 junction north of Calpella to the SR 20 junction at Willits.

Ridgelines

Major ridgelines are prominent throughout the county, generally above 2,000 feet in elevation, and form visual and physical boundaries of many of the county's valleys. Within 20 miles of the

¹ "Heritage corridor" means a regional, state, or nationwide alignment of historical, natural, or conservation education significance, with roads, state and other parks, greenways, or parallel recreational trails, intended to have guidebooks, signs, and other features to enable self-guiding tourism, and environmental conservation education along most of its length and of all or some of the facilities open to the public along its length, with an emphasis on facilities whose physical and interpretive accessibility meet "whole-access" goals.

ocean, the landscape generally rises to 3,000 feet in elevation in a series of northwest-southeast trending ridges paralleling the coast and irregularly alternating with narrow alluvial valleys. Views of ridgelines from public roadways are prevalent from many vantage points countywide and can be considered a valuable scenic resource.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Five watercourses within the county have been designated Wild and Scenic Rivers under the federal Wild and Scenic River Act (see Regulatory Framework below): the Eel River, the Middle Fork of the Eel River, the South Fork of the Eel River, the Black Butte River, and Cold Creek. Within the county, the Eel River is designated from the Humboldt County line to 100 yards below Van Arsdale Reservoir. The Middle Fork of the Eel is designated from its confluence with the main stem of the Eel (at the community of Dos Rios) to the southern boundary of the Yolla Bolly Wilderness at the Trinity County line. The South Fork of the Eel is designated from the Humboldt County line to the confluence with Section Four Creek near the community of Branscomb. The Black Butte River is designated from the Glenn County line to its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Eel River. A tributary, Cold Creek, has been designated a Wild and Scenic River from the Glenn County line to its confluence with the Black Butte River.

Coastal Features

Mendocino County's coast includes beaches, dunes, high bluffs, sea stacks, jutting headlands, wetlands, heavily wooded gulches, grassy upland terraces, pygmy forests, serene river estuaries, and rocky streams. Several 19th century communities, each with a distinct character, complement the natural landscape. The beauty and accessibility of the Mendocino coast have made it a heavily used tourist and recreational area, attracting both active sport enthusiasts and sightseers. Scenic resources are the basis of the coast's tourist and retirement economies as well as a source of continuing pleasure for residents. While the Mendocino Coast is an important visual resource in the county, areas within the Coastal Zone are subject to policies in the Coastal Element and are not proposed to change under the proposed General Plan Update.

Water Features

There are numerous water features in the unincorporated portion of the county. Two of the largest rivers are the Eel River and the Russian River. Other large water features include Van Arsdale Reservoir in Potter Valley and Lake Mendocino adjacent to the border with Lake County. Mendocino County has 130 miles of coastline along the Pacific Ocean. The Mendocino coast has a variety of scenic water features such as tide pools, estuaries, and lagoons. Wetlands, including freshwater and saltwater marshes and seasonal wetlands, are generally located near rivers and streams. Despite these important water features of



the county's coastline, some areas within the Coastal Zone are not located in the unincorporated county but are a significant resource countywide. Please refer to Section 4.8,

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Hydrology and Water Quality, for a more detailed discussion of the functional aspects of surface water features.

Forests and Other Scenic Vegetative Communities

Mendocino County has several vegetative communities that lend a distinct visual character to the landscape. Redwood forests generally occur within 25 miles of the coast on cool, moist slopes and along streams. Redwood forests are generally found within Mendocino County in the coastal watersheds that drain directly into the Pacific Ocean and in the upper reaches of watersheds that drain into the Eel and Russian rivers.

The vast majority of local forest has been managed or harvested in the past and is currently characterized as young growth. These managed forests often consist of high numbers of small to medium-sized trees. Visibility through the forest from public roadways is often limited by a lack of light penetrating the forest canopy, the tree density, dense understory vegetation, and road position on steeper slopes. Large tree focal points are generally limited to scattered residual legacy trees where they exist and in protected areas such as Navarro River Redwoods State Park, Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve, and Mailliard Redwoods State Natural Reserve.



Redwood Grove, Hendy Woods State Park

In addition, a portion of the Mendocino National Forest is located in northern Mendocino County and is a significant visual resource. The Mendocino National Forest spans portions of Mendocino, Colusa, Lake, Glen, Tehama, and Trinity counties. Vegetation types include mixed conifer forests, oak woodlands and savannah, chaparral, annual and perennial grass glades, and wet meadows (<http://www.fs.fed.us>, 2008).

Scenic Farmlands

Agricultural lands in Mendocino County are found primarily on the valley floors and lower elevations. Based upon information provided by the Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner, an estimated 2.9 percent of county land is cultivated as cropland. Presently, agricultural land in production in the county is dominated by vineyards, followed by pear and apple orchards, row crops, and pasture. Agricultural lands are generally considered scenic, as they contain little urban development and feature vegetation of many varieties. Structures supporting agricultural operations, such as barns and farmhouses, are often considered aesthetically pleasing in their architectural design and setting. Section 4.2 of this EIR discusses potential impacts of the General Plan update on agricultural lands.



Scenic Aspects of Community Areas

Communities in the unincorporated portion of the county have developed with a mixture of building styles. Some communities have buildings or districts that are considered aesthetically pleasing due to their architectural styles. Some of these scenic architectural styles include old farmhouses built in the early 1900s in Potter Valley and Redwood Valley, and Victorian and Venetian homes and commercial buildings in Hopland.



Wilderness Areas, Forest Reserves, and Parks

The unincorporated portion of the county includes numerous federal, state, and county parks that offer views of the valleys from atop ridgelines, as well as a mix of different types of vegetation and wildlife. Please refer to Section 4.12, Public Services, for a more detailed discussion on parks and recreation.

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A nighttime sky in which stars are readily visible is often considered a valuable scenic/visual resource. In urban areas, views of the nighttime sky are being diminished by "light pollution." Light pollution, as defined by the International Dark-Sky Association, is any adverse effect of artificial light, including sky glow, glare, spillover lighting, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste. Two elements of light pollution may affect county residents: sky glow and light trespass. Sky glow is a result of light fixtures that emit a portion of their light directly upward into the sky where light scatters, creating an orange-yellow glow above a city or town. This light can interfere with views of the nighttime sky and can diminish the number of stars that are visible. Light trespass occurs when poorly shielded or poorly aimed fixtures cast light into unwanted areas, such as neighboring property and homes.



Hopland Brewery, Hopland, CA

Light pollution is a problem most typically associated with urban areas. As Mendocino County is predominantly rural, light pollution is not a problem in many county areas. However, in areas near the larger population areas, light pollution may affect views of the nighttime sky. In some communities, light trespass may occur. The inappropriate illumination of adjacent properties with excessive lighting may disturb the sleep of residents, as well as affect sky views.

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4.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

STATE

State Scenic Highway Program

In 1963, the California legislature created the Scenic Highway Program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to state highways. The state regulations and guidance governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated scenic depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view.

Mendocino County contains no officially designated state scenic highways. However, segments of SR 1 and SR 20 are eligible for scenic highway designation. The status of a scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a scenic highway.

State Route segments within Mendocino County identified as eligible for official scenic highway designation are the following:

- **State Route 1** – Complete segment located within Mendocino County.
- **State Route 20** – Complete segment located within Mendocino County.

A critical element of the scenic highway program is implementation and enforcement of Corridor Protection Programs. Scenic corridors consist of land that is visible from the highway right-of-way and comprise primarily scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries. Part of a Corridor Protection Program requires a jurisdiction to adopt ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document that such regulations already exist in local codes. They should be written in sufficient detail to avoid broad discretionary interpretation and demonstrate a concise strategy to effectively maintain the scenic character of the corridor. These ordinances and/or policies make up a Corridor Protection Program. According to Caltrans, an effective Corridor Protection Program will ensure activities within the scenic corridor are compatible with scenic resource protection and consistent with community values while still allowing appropriate development.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

In 1968, the U.S. Congress enacted the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This act seeks to preserve certain selected rivers with "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fishery, wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values" in free-flowing condition, with no development. "Wild" rivers are free of impoundments and are generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. "Scenic" rivers are similar to wild rivers, except they are accessible in places by roads. A third classification, "recreational" rivers, applies to those rivers readily accessible by roads and that may have some development along their shorelines and may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. Designated rivers require management plans by the agency with responsibility for the river.

As noted above, the county has five Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Eel River and its Middle and South Forks were designated in 1981, and the Black Butte River and Cold Creek were designated in 2006. The U.S. Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest, has responsibility for the Black Butte River. Responsibility for the Eel River and its forks primarily is with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Nighttime Sky – Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Standards

The California Legislature passed a bill in 2001 requiring the California Energy Commission (CEC) to adopt energy efficiency standards for outdoor lighting for both the public and private sector. In November 2003, the CEC adopted changes to Title 24, parts 1 and 6, Building Energy Efficiency Standards. These standards became effective on October 1, 2005, and included changes to the requirements for outdoor lighting for residential and nonresidential development. The new standards will likely improve the quality of outdoor lighting and help to reduce the impacts of light pollution, light trespass, and glare. The standards regulate lighting characteristics such as maximum power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls to turn lighting on and off. Different lighting standards are set by classifying areas by lighting zone. The classification is based on population figures of the 2000 Census. Areas can be designated as LZ1 (dark), LZ2 (rural), or LZ3 (urban). Lighting requirements for dark and rural areas are stricter in order to protect the areas from new sources of light pollution and light trespass. The majority of Mendocino County is designated as LZ2.

4.1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The impact analysis provided below is based on the following CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance. An aesthetic or visual resource impact is considered significant if implementation of the proposed project would:

- 1) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- 2) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- 3) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- 4) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

As described above, Mendocino County in general and the forests and state parks specifically are known for their scenic beauty. Within the unincorporated areas, the county's skylines, ridgetops, and hillsides are largely undeveloped, which helps retain this beauty to the benefit of local residents and visitors alike. A "substantial" alteration is characterized by a negative "sense of loss" of character or unique resources or a change that is an obvious and disharmonious modification of the overall scene, to the extent that the change clearly dominates the view.

As described above in the Regulatory Framework section, there are no officially designated State Scenic Highways in the county. Only SR 1 and SR 20 are considered eligible for this designation. Since there are no officially designated highways in the county, this issue will not be further evaluated in this EIR.

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METHODOLOGY

The visual resource analysis is based on field review of the county, review of topographic conditions, review of data and information contained in the Background Report, and an assessment of the proposed Mendocino County General Plan Update.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impacts to Scenic Vistas and Degradation of Visual Character

Impact 4.1.1 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update have the potential to allow development in areas that are currently undeveloped. This development has the potential to alter or degrade existing views or visual quality in the unincorporated portions of the county. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Although there is no officially designated scenic vista or viewshed in the unincorporated portion of the county, subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the General Plan Update may result in the development of urban uses, such as residential or commercial uses, which have the potential to obstruct existing viewsheds. Other types of development could also affect the quality of scenic views and resources, such as the construction of microwave transmission towers or other uses that do not blend in with the natural environment. Other impacts could include placement of structures or roadways or other improvements, such as grading, on ridgelines and along County-designated scenic roadways that are out of character with the landscape characteristics of the view. Views of waterways, ridgelines, natural areas, open space, agricultural lands, and certain structures with architectural and/or historic value have been identified in the General Plan as visually important to residents and visitors in the county.

Under the General Plan Update, compact development near existing community areas is encouraged, while existing land use designations in resource areas would remain. New residences could be constructed (up to one single-family residence per legal parcel and one second unit) throughout the unincorporated county area. Wineries could be constructed and/or expanded on parcels designated Agricultural, Rangeland, Forestland, and Industrial. New vineyards could be developed in all land use designations. Timber harvesting on a commercial level is permitted by right in Forestland and Industrial areas. Grazing lands, naturally vegetated areas, and vineyard lands all contribute to the visual character and scenic resources in the county, and therefore any changes from one vegetation assemblage to another would not be considered significant. The General Plan Update does not encourage development or alteration of landscapes in scenic resource areas. Rather, it promotes and maintains land use patterns that currently make up the visual landscape characteristics of the unincorporated area of the county.

Mendocino County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

Chapter 20.184 regulates existing and proposed signs with the intent to enhance the aesthetic appearance, as well as preserve the scenic and natural beauty, of the community.

Chapter 22.04 authorizes the removal of existing overhead utility facilities and the installation of underground facilities in Underground Utility Districts created by the Board of Supervisors, which would reduce the unsightly appearance of overhead utilities in those areas.

Chapter 22.08 pertains to the inclusion of land within scenic highway corridors, wildlife habitat areas, salt ponds, managed wetland areas or submerged areas, agricultural preserves, and contracts to restrict use.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy CP-AV-2 indicates that the County encourages the State of California to maintain SR 128 as a two-lane, rural roadway.

Policy CP-AV-4 states that building designs shall reflect and incorporate the historic character of downtown Boonville.

Policy CP-AV-20 encourages the establishment of conservation easements or similar mechanisms to protect outstanding natural and scenic resources and agricultural and open space uses.

Policy CP-AV-21 states that hillside development that results in excessive grading, removal, or disturbance of native vegetation in Anderson Valley shall be limited to the extent possible.

Policy CP-C-1 calls for the preservation and enhancement of the established historic character of downtown Covelo.

Policy CP-C-4 discourages subdivision activity in the outlying Rural and Remote Residential lands, including transitions to Rangelands and Forests.

Policy CP-H-5 preserves and enhances the established historic character and architectural themes of the Hopland communities.

Policy CP-H-6 stipulates that building designs shall reflect and incorporate the historic character of downtown Hopland and Old Hopland.

Policy CP-H-13 helps to preserve the visual character of the Hopland area by limiting the visual impacts of signs along roadways and in the community.

Policy CP-L-1 states that the County will maintain the open, rural atmosphere of Long Valley and facilitate infill of the existing community by restricting the State Route 101 business district of Laytonville to the established town center of Laytonville.

Policy CP-PV-3 discourages subdivision activity in the outlying Rural and Remote Residential lands, including transitions to Rangelands and Forestlands.

Policy CP-RV-3 promotes economic infill opportunities that support infill and improve the aesthetic character of the Redwood Valley downtown core.

Policy CP-RV-6 encourages streetscape improvements to the East Road street frontage to improve appearance and aesthetics, potentially including landscaping, pedestrian access, lighting, or other features on private property and in the public right-of-way.

Policy DE-23 would allow density transfers between land use classifications, especially in support of an action to preserve resource lands.

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Policy DE-37 encourages cooperation with LAFCO and other agencies to reduce suburban sprawl, promote efficient service delivery, and protect agricultural, timber, and open space areas from unintended conversion to urban uses.

Policy DE-38 promotes the creation of defined boundaries for each community area, separating suburban or urban land uses from adjoining resource and rural landscapes.

Policy DE-66 emphasizes local community character and culture in community planning and development.

Policy DE-76 stipulates that site planning and design shall adhere to resource protection standards in order to integrate and complement the natural ecology and environmental setting. Action Item DE-76.1 calls for the development of community design guidelines for site planning, architectural form, circulation and multi-modal access, streetscapes, landscaping, and site improvements such as landscaping, parking, lighting, utility placement, and signage.

Policy DE-83 states that view preservation shall be considered when development is located in a highly scenic environment, adjacent to or atop a ridgeline or hill, with resource lands as a background scene, and in similar settings.

Policy DE-94 encourages restoration and reuse of buildings and spaces, especially those with community and architectural significance.

Policy RM-19 recognizes the economic and ecological values and benefits provided by natural landscapes including wildlands and forests. The County's goal is to prevent fragmentation and loss of oak woodlands, forests, and wildlands and preservation of the economic and ecological values and benefits.

Policy RM-20 provides for protection of the county's natural landscapes by restricting conversion and fragmentation of timberlands, oak woodlands, stream corridors, and other natural environments.

Policy RM-24 encourages the use of conservation and open space easements, growth boundaries, tax incentives, and other tools to protect, restore, and enhance significant resource values.

Policy RM-73 requires a permit for vegetation removal involving five (5) or more acres, assessing impacts including visual impacts from public vantage points such as public roadways.

Policy RM-77 would protect "pygmy" ecosystems ("pygmy" and "transitional pygmy" vegetation and soils).

Policy RM-80 encourages conservation of the county's hillside vegetation by incorporating density transfers, clustering, small building sites, and shared improvements that will help to minimize visual impacts.

Policy RM-92 calls for maintaining extensive agricultural land areas and limiting establishment of incompatible uses in these areas.

Policy RM-99 requires that discretionary projects shall not undermine the integrity and economic viability of agricultural operations by causing or contributing to piecemeal land use conversion, land fragmentation, urban encroachment, the introduction or concentration of incompatible

uses on lands adjoining or within agricultural areas, or the extension of growth-inducing urban services such as public water or sewers.

Policy RM-118 prohibits rezoning and development of prime timberland.

Policy RM-122 states that new development should incorporate open space and resource conservation measures.

Policy RM-123 encourages the support of land trusts and similar organizations in identifying and protecting lands and corridors with significant resource, recreational, or scenic values. Action Item RM-123.1 calls for the continued protection of the scenic qualities of uplands and rural landscapes through measures such as timberland production and large lot zoning controls, clustering, the Williamson Act, the Forest Practices Act, and good management of public lands.

Policy RM-124 calls for the protection of the scenic values of the county's natural and rural landscapes, scenic resources, and areas of significant natural beauty.

Policy RM-128 supports the maintenance and enhancement of scenic values through development design principles and guidelines.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update policies CP-AV-2, CP-AV-4, CP-AV-20, CP-AV-21, CP-C-1, CP-C-4, CP-H-5, CP-H-6, CP-H-13, CP-L-1, CP-PV-3, CP-RV-3, CP-RV-6, DE-23, DE-37, DE-38, DE-66, DE-76, DE-83, DE-94, RM-19, RM-20, RM-24, RM-73, RM-77, RM-80, RM-92, RM-99, RM-118, RM-122, RM-123, RM-124, RM-128 and action items DE-76.1 and RM-123.1 would provide for the preservation and enhancement of scenic views and visual quality of the county and would ensure that this impact is **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Daytime Glare and Nighttime Lighting

Impact 4.1.2 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update may create new sources of daytime glare and could change nighttime lighting and illumination levels. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update may introduce new sources of daytime glare and may change nighttime lighting and illumination levels in the unincorporated portion of the county. Lighting nuisances typically are categorized by the following:

- 1) Glare – Intense light that shines directly or is reflected off of a surface into a person's eyes.
- 2) "Skyglow"/Nighttime Illumination – Artificial lighting from urbanized sources that alters the rural landscape in sufficient quantity to cause lighting of the nighttime sky and reduction of visibility of stars and other astronomical features.
- 3) "Spillover" Lighting – Artificial lighting that spills over onto adjacent properties, which could interrupt sleeping patterns or cause other nuisances to neighboring residents.

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The main source of daytime glare in the unincorporated portion of the county is from sunlight reflecting off of structures with reflective surfaces such as windows. The proposed land uses would include various densities of commercial, office, recreation, and other public uses containing structures and other potential sources of glare. Building materials (for example, reflective glass and polished surfaces) are the most substantial sources of glare. Glare is usually most acute at sunrise and sunset because the angle of the sun is lower during these times.

The source of glare during nighttime hours is artificial light. The sources of new and increased nighttime lighting and illumination include, but are not limited to, new residential development, lighting from non-residential uses, lights associated with vehicular travel (car headlights), street lighting, parking lot lights, and security-related lighting for non-residential uses. Increased nighttime lighting and illumination could result in adverse effects to adjacent land uses through the "spilling over" of light into these areas and "sky glow" conditions.

Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan may increase the potential for the amount of daytime glare and nighttime illumination in existing developed areas through intensification of development as compared to 2008 development levels. Between the year 2008 and 2030, it is projected that there will be an additional 6,785 dwelling units and other agricultural activities in the unincorporated portion of the county. This development could result in significant glare and lighting impacts described above. Daytime glare can be reduced or eliminated by using non-reflective building materials and architectural coatings, roof overhangs, and proper structural design. Nighttime lighting impacts could be reduced by utilizing lighting designed to control glare and minimize light spillage. However, the intensity and density of development under the proposed General Plan Update would be similar to the existing rural conditions of the unincorporated area of the county and is not expected to result in substantial changes in light and glare.

Applicable County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

Chapter 20.184 regulates existing and proposed signs with the intent to enhance the aesthetic appearance, as well and preserve the scenic and natural beauty, of the community.

Chapter 22.04 authorizes the removal of existing overhead utility facilities and the installation of underground facilities in Underground Utility Districts created by the Board of Supervisors, which would reduce the unsightly appearance of overhead utilities in those areas.

Chapter 22.08 pertains to the inclusion of land within scenic highway corridors, wildlife habitat areas, salt ponds, managed wetland areas or submerged areas, agricultural preserves, and contracts to restrict use.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy DE-76 requires that site planning and design shall adhere to resource protection standards in order to integrate and complement the natural ecology and environmental setting. Action Item DE-76.1 calls for the development of community design guidelines for site planning, architectural form, circulation and multi-modal access, streetscapes, landscaping, and site improvements such as landscaping, parking, lighting, utility placement, and signage.

Policy DE-87 emphasizes the reduction of excessive artificial light and off-site light impacts while maintaining nighttime safety, security, and productivity.

Policy RM-128 emphasizes the maintenance and enhancement of scenic values through development design principles and guidelines to (a) facilitate development scale and design that is subordinate to and compatible with the setting; (b) reduce the visual impacts of improvements and infrastructure; and (c) minimize disturbance to natural features and vegetation.

Policy RM-130 requires the County to seek to protect the qualities of the nighttime sky and reduce energy use by requiring that outdoor nighttime lighting is directed downward and reduced to the level necessary for safety and convenience. Action Item RM-130.1 would amend the County's Codes to incorporate standards for outdoor nighttime lighting that implement Policy RM-130.

Implementation of proposed General Plan Update policies and action items DE-76, DE-76.1, DE-87, RM-128, RM-130, and RM-130.1, as well as the low intensity and density of development expected, would reduce impacts resulting from daytime glare and nighttime lighting to a **less than significant** level.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Degradation of Wild and Scenic River Resources

Impact 4.1.3 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update is not expected to result in damage to scenic resources in or near designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Five watercourses within the county have been designated Wild and Scenic Rivers under the federal Wild and Scenic River Act: the Eel River, the Middle Fork of the Eel River, the South Fork of the Eel River, the Black Butte River, and Cold Creek. Pursuant to the proposed General Plan Update, future growth and development within the county is encouraged to take place near existing communities. The proposed General Plan Update proposes very little change in land use designations outside of existing community areas. The rivers mentioned above are situated within relatively remote portions of the county outside of community growth areas. The major potential visual impact near Wild and Scenic Rivers is associated with timber harvesting. The proposed General Plan Update does not increase the amount of potential harvest that can take place when compared to the existing General Plan. It is anticipated that timber harvesting will continue to take place at a rate and manner as currently experienced in the county and would not be increased due to the proposed General Plan Update.

Mendocino County Code Sections that Provide Mitigation

There are currently no ordinances or codes that provide mitigation or protection for the county's Wild and Scenic River resources.

Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

Policy RM-1 is intended to protect stream corridors and riparian habitat as development occurs.

Policy RM-20 protects the county's natural landscapes by restricting conversion and fragmentation of timberlands, oak woodlands, stream corridors, and other natural environments.

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Policy RM-73 requires a permit for vegetation removal involving five (5) or more acres, assessing impacts that may have an effect on the natural vegetative cover and ecology in a project area or impact visual quality from public vantage points.

Policy RM-126 protects the outstanding values of designated river corridors within the Wild and Scenic River System by limiting land use and site development impacts (including grading and vegetation removal).

Policy RM-127 emphasizes that lakes, stream corridors, large reservoirs, and other water bodies have scenic values that shall be maintained or enhanced and restored when necessary.

Implementation of General Plan policies RM-1, RM-20, RM-73, RM-126, and RM-127 would help reduce any potential impacts to wild and scenic rivers and other scenic watercourses to a **less than significant** level.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

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