

9 STUDY AREA 9: DOE MILL/HONEY RUN

Study Area 9, Doe Mill/Honey Run, consists of approximately 9,425 acres located east of the City of Chico. This study area is currently undeveloped, and is characterized by open grazing land.

- ◆ Alternative 1 follows the existing General Plan, designating the entire study area for Agriculture.
- ◆ Under Alternative 2, approximately 500 acres would be designated for Medium Density Residential, allowing about 3,000 new homes. The remainder of the study area would be designated for Resource Conservation.
- ◆ Alternative 3 designates approximately 750 acres as Low Density Residential, allowing about 1,500 new homes. This alternative also includes about 30 acres of retail uses along the Skyway, as well as some resource conservation areas.

There is an area of high fire severity risk in the extreme northwest corner of the study area, and a potential for erosion on the steeper slopes throughout the study area. It is likely that development under Alternatives 2 and 3 could be configured to avoid these constraints. However, the entirety of Study Area 9 is within the Vernal Pool Critical Habitat Core Recovery Area, so development would be able to be located to avoid the Recovery Area.

A. *Economics*

1. **Market Viability**

a. **Alternative 1**

Because this study area proposes no significant new residential or commercial development, market viability is not an issue.

b. **Alternative 2**

Given similar successful developments in the greater Chico market area, absorption potential for new homes in Study Area 9 is likely to be solid. Market viability under Alternative 2 could be enhanced by the addition of a

small amount land to accommodate convenience retail and services, to serve as an amenity for residents of the study area. A small amount of new retail development would likely be supported by the 3,000 new homes allowed under Alternative 2. Overall, Alternative 2 receives an A.

c. Alternative 3

market viability is likely solid for the residential component of Alternative 3. Additionally, the commercial component of this alternative would benefit from its location along the skyway, which has good visibility to both the adjacent Chico market and the market in the Paradise/Magalia area. Therefore, Alternative 3 receive an A.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternative 1

This alternative does not propose any significant new residential or commercial development for this study area, so fiscal impacts would be neutral and Alternative 1 receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

This study area is within a TRA for which Butte County receives 17.6 percent of the property tax revenues. Development under Alternative 2 would consist of about 3,000 new homes, approximately 90 percent of which would be single-family homes. Given the proximity to the greater Chico residential market, where values tend to be strong, Alternative 2 has strong revenue generating potential. From a service efficiency standpoint, the study area is located in an area adjacent to Chico where services are already provided just to the west and north. Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

With a solid property tax share, single-family homes that are likely to be fairly high in value, and efficiency of service provision, this alternative is likely to be fiscally positive for the county. The retail sales tax-generating component adds fiscal benefits. Alternative 3 receives an A.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternative 1

Since Alternative 1 does not propose any significant new residential or commercial development, it would have no effect on jobs/housing balance.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 involves only new residential development and no new employment opportunities; thus, it would have a deficit of jobs compared to the number of new residents and lead to a decline in the Chico area's jobs/housing ratio. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

The estimated jobs/housing balance for this alternative is one job for every one employed resident, meaning that it would provide fewer new jobs than new employed residents and lead to a decline in the Chico area's jobs/housing ratio. Alternative 3 receives a C.

B. Public Services

1. Fire and Emergency Services

The Butte County Fire Department and CAL FIRE provide fire protection and emergency services to Study Area 9. In general, there is not adequate staffing to handle more than two serious fire events or several less-serious emergencies at once in Butte County. Any new development in the county will impact the level of fire protection and emergency services.

There are no fire stations within the boundaries of Study Area 9. The closest fire station is the City of Chico Fire Station 4, which is located less than 1 mile away.

The majority of Study Area 9 does not have adequate fire and emergency service levels for any type of development; however, its road frontages along the Skyway and Honey Run Road do have adequate service levels for very

low density residential development, as they are within eight minutes of first-due units. None of the study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

a. Alternative 1

There would be no new development in this study area under Alternative 1, so fire and emergency services are not an issue.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 call for approximately 3,000 and 1,500 new homes, respectively, at suburban densities. In addition, Alternative 3 calls for retail development, which typically requires high fire and emergency service levels because it includes assets of high economic value and generates customers that depend on those services. The majority of this development under Alternatives 2 and 3 would not have adequate levels of fire and emergency services due to high response times and a low station concentration in the immediate area. Moreover, the level of development under these alternatives would not support a new fire station, so there would be little opportunity to improve fire protection. Because Alternatives 2 and 3 allow more than a minimal amount of new development, the majority of which would not have adequate services, these alternatives receive a D.

2. Sheriff Services

Study Area 9 is served by the Northern Division of the Butte County Sheriff's Office (BCSO). The BCSO is currently understaffed and has limited capacity for expansion of its services. The Northern Division typically has about two deputies on duty in the Chico area. Because Study Area 9 is located near the Chico area, response times to this location are relatively quick.

There is no police station located within the boundaries of Study Area 9; however, the Butte County Sheriff station in the City of Chico is located within 1½ miles of the study area.

a. Alternative 1

There would be no new development in this study area under Alternative 1, so sheriff services are not an issue.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for approximately 3,000 new homes, generating the need for more than five officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 1,500 new homes, generating the need for about five officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a B.

3. Capacity of School Districts

Study Area 9 is served by the Chico Unified School District (CUSD). The CUSD's total current enrollment is approximately 12,930 students, of which 8,440 students are in grades K-8, and 4,490 students are in grades 9-12. The District currently has capacity for a total of approximately 15,040 students, including 1,390 more K-8 students and 720 more 9-12 students. The CUSD's enrollment has been declining for the last ten years.

Although the CUSD is currently operating below capacity, it is important to note that there is significant growth expected within the city limits of Chico. Two major projects that were recently approved in the City of Chico include the Meriam Park and Mountain Vista-Sycamore Glen projects. These two projects are expected to generate approximately 1,280 K-8 students and 630 9-12 students. These projects do not include construction of new school facilities, so they will absorb most of the remaining capacity of the CUSD. Taking into account these projects, the CUSD has the capacity for 110 more K-8 students and 90 more 9-12 students.

The District has already purchased a 50-acre site for a new high school that would likely accommodate approximately 2,000 students, and has purchased a

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12-acre site and conducted environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act for a new elementary school that could serve up to 550 students. These projects could be built if enrollment begins to outstrip capacity.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, Study Area 9 would not generate any new students, so schools are not an issue.

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, Study Area 9 could generate approximately 990 new K-8 students and 490 new 9-12 students, which would exceed the current capacity. However, the additional high school students could be accommodated by the expected capacity of the planned new high school. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in all of the study areas within the CUSD could generate approximately 4,520 new K-8 students, about 4,410 students beyond current capacity, as well as approximately 2,210 new 9-12 students, about 2,120 students beyond current capacity. These additional students would create a need for the planned new elementary and high schools described above.

Because the high school students generated by this study area could be accommodated by the planned capacity, and the K-8 students generated by this study area would support a new K-8 school, this alternative receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, Study Area 9 could generate approximately 500 new K-8 students and 240 new 9-12 students, which would exceed the current capacity. However, these additional students could be accommodated by the expected capacities of the planned new high school and elementary school. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the CUSD could generate approximately 1,290 new K-8 students, about 1,180 students beyond current capacity, as well as approximately 630 new 9-12 students, about 540 students beyond current capacity. These

additional students would create a need for the planned new elementary and high schools described above.

Because the number of new students generated by this study area could be accommodated by the planned capacity, this alternative receives a B.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

Study Area 9 is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit, where groundwater is stored in the Tuscan, Laguna, Riverbank and Modesto Formations. Groundwater in these formations primarily exists within the spaces between sand and gravel deposits, which generally allow greater recharge and access to groundwater than aquifers relying on the fractures and joints of rocks. The Tuscan and Laguna Formations provide water for deep irrigation and municipal wells, while the Riverbank and Modesto Formations provide water for shallower domestic wells.

Study Area 9 is located within the Durham/Dayton Inventory Sub-Unit. The primary source of water is groundwater, although some water suppliers in this Sub-Unit have water rights on Butte Creek. This water is used for both urban and agricultural needs.

Although there are no water service providers currently operating within Study Area 9, the California Water Service Company (Chico District) serves adjacent urbanized areas in Chico. This provider relies on over 60 wells that pump groundwater for urban needs in and around the City of Chico. It may be possible to serve urban development in this study area by connecting to the California Water Service Company network. However, the existing demand in the greater Chico area has created a cone of groundwater depression around the municipal water supply wells.

a. Alternative 1

There would be no new development under Alternative 1, so water supply is not an issue.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 call for approximately 3,000 and 1,500 new homes, respectively, and Alternative 3 also calls for some retail development. Although this development would be located adjacent to a municipal water service district where future annexations could provide municipal water, there is a known cone of groundwater depression in this area. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a C.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

Study Area 9 is located within the Valley Inventory Unit. It may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area.

a. Alternative 1

There would be no new development in this study area under Alternative 1. Therefore, this alternative receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 call for significant residential development and Alternative 3 allows some retail development. Because these alternatives allow significant development in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area, they receive a D.

D. Wastewater

There is currently no publicly managed sewer service in Study Area 9. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

Study Area 9 is adjacent to the City of Chico, which provides wastewater collection and treatment services to its residents. It is possible that, in the

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future, this study area may be connected to Chico’s municipal sewer system if the City were to annex this study area. According to LAFCO’s 2006 Municipal Service Review of Domestic Water and Wastewater Providers in Butte County, the wastewater collection system operated by the City of Chico has sufficient capacity to support its current demand, although there are a few deficient sewer lines that could limit future development potential in some parts of the city unless they are upgraded. Furthermore, anticipated growth in Chico over the next several years is expected to cause wastewater flows to exceed existing capacity at the treatment plant unless it is upgraded.

a. Alternative 1

There would be no new development in this study area under Alternative 1, so wastewater is not an issue.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for approximately 3,000 new homes at a medium density. This level of development could create the ability to expand the adjacent municipal sewer system. However, City staff have indicated that this level of development may require a new sewer interceptor line to be constructed to connect to the City’s wastewater treatment plant. The existing City sewer impact fees may not cover the costs of constructing new sewer interceptor lines. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 1,500 new homes at a low density, as well as retail uses. This level of development could create the ability to expand the adjacent municipal sewer system, but it may not require the construction of a new sewer interceptor line. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a B.

E. Circulation

Study Area 9 is served by two major regional roadways, Honey Run Road and Skyway.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

Two major regional roadways travel through or adjacent to Study Area 9. Honey Run Road runs along the entire southern boundary of the study area, with Skyway clipping the southwestern corner of the study area. Honey Run Road provides a connection to Skyway, which connects to Highway 99. This study area receives an A for access proximity to major roadways. Since Alternative 1 does not include any new development, proximity to roadways is not an issue.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within Study Area 9, planned facilities are located on Honey Run Road. Additionally, existing or planned bicycle facilities are located along Notre Dame Boulevard, Potter Ravine Road and Humboldt Road just outside of the study area. The location of the study area adjacent to the City of Chico allows for bicycle access to jobs, schools, and services in Chico. Due to the study area's high level of access to planned bicycle facilities and location adjacent to the City of Chico urban area, the study area receives a B. Since Alternative 1 does not include any new development, bicycle circulation is not an issue.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Bruce Road and Skyway, which is within ½-mile of the study area. This receives a B. Since Alternative 1 does not include any new development, transit service is not an issue.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

Study Area 9 is not located within an Airport Compatibility Zone. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive an A.

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

The majority of the approximately 1,445 acres in Study Area 9 are identified as Grazing Land. Grazing Land is located throughout the study area.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, the entire study area is designated for Agriculture. Therefore, Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 would convert 500 and 780 acres of Grazing Land to non-agricultural uses, respectively. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a D.

H. Biological Resources

Study Area 9, Doe Mill/Honey Run, is located east of the City of Chico, and is generally bounded by Doe Mill Road to the north, Honey Run Road to the south, and the Chico city limits to the west. The study area is located in the lower foothills and is in the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The dominant land cover types are grassland and blue oak woodland, with grassland with vernal swale complex in the west of the study area and areas of mixed oak throughout.

One occurrence of Butte County meadowfoam has been recorded in the southwest portion of the study area. There are no occurrences of special-status animals known in the study area.

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There is Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)-modeled habitat in this study area for the following 18 species:

- ◆ Bald eagle
- ◆ Butte County checkerbloom
- ◆ Butte County meadowfoam
- ◆ Foothill yellow-legged frog
- ◆ Giant garter snake
- ◆ Greene's tuctoria
- ◆ Hairy Orcutt grass
- ◆ Hoover's spurge
- ◆ Northwestern pond turtle
- ◆ Peregrine falcon
- ◆ Swainson's hawk
- ◆ Tricolored blackbird
- ◆ Western spadefoot
- ◆ Western burrowing owl
- ◆ White-tailed kite
- ◆ Valley elderberry longhorn beetle
- ◆ Vernal pool fairy shrimp
- ◆ Vernal pool tadpole shrimp

All of the study area is located within a Vernal Pool Core Recovery Area.

Grasslands with vernal swale complex are located on the western side of the study area. Blue oak and mixed oak woodlands are scattered throughout. Valley oak riparian woodland occurs along Butte Creek on the southern edge of the study area.

There is Winter Habitat Range for deer herd on the eastern edge of the study area.

a. Alternative 1

The existing General Plan designates this study area for Agriculture (Grazing and Open Land). The existing General Plan does not allow a significant number of new homes. Although there would be no change in the current land use designation, sensitive vernal swale complex habitat and its associated special-status species could be damaged by grazing range improvements (e.g. fertilizing or disking grasslands with vernal pool complex). Therefore, this alternative receives a C for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, a C for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a C for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Critical habitat, sensitive habitats, and associated special-status species in Study Area 9 could be impacted by the amount and type of development foreseen under these alternatives. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, a D for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a D for Sensitive Habitats, and a C for Deer Herd Habitat.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

Study Area 9 is located in moderate and high fire severity zones. The high fire severity zone is located in the northwest corner of the study area.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 does not designate any land for development. Therefore, Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Although a small portion of the study area is within the high fire severity zone, the study area is large enough to accommodate development under Alternatives 2 and 3 outside of the high fire severity zone. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

2. Flood Hazards

A small portion of the Doe Mill Honey Run study area is included in the 100-year FEMA flood zone.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 does not designate any land for development. Therefore, Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

In Alternatives 2 and 3, development would not be limited by flood hazards. Although approximately 5 acres of the site is within the 100-year flood zone, this is a relatively small area that could be avoided. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

3. Geologic Hazards

The majority of the Doe Mill Honey Run study area has moderate erosion potential, though some 110 acres of land in the northern part of the study area have severe erosion potential. There are potentially significant subsidence hazards in the southwest corner of the study area. There is zero to low and moderate landslide potential. Approximately 60 acres of land, located in the northwest and south of the study area, have very high potential for expansive soils. There are no faults located within the Doe Mill Honey Run study area or within a 50-foot radius. This study area has low and moderate potential for liquefaction.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 does not include any development and so receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Landslides, faults and liquefaction would not constrain development under Alternatives 2 and 3. It is assumed that development under Alternatives 2 and 3 could avoid steep slopes with severe erosion potential, and the small areas subject to subsidence and expansive soils. Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a B.

J. Cultural Resources

The Doe Mill Honey Run study area lies within a portion of the Chico USGS 7.5' quadrangles. Approximately 20 percent of the land in the Chico Quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, a total of three cultural resources sites have been recorded in this study area. This number includes two prehistoric sites and one site containing historic period artifacts. This study area lies within a foothill and valley setting, with little nearby water. The number of previously recorded sites indicates that this study area is of medium sensitivity for prehistoric and historic resources.

a. Alternative 1

The entire area would be designated Agriculture and would be use for grazing and open land. This land use is not particularly damaging to most types of cultural resources. Alternative 1 does not include any development and so would receive an A.

b. Alternative 2

This alternative provides for more medium density residential development than Alternative 3. However, it also includes approximately 945 acres of designated Resource Conservation land use that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

This alternative includes low density residential development and designated Resource Conservation land use. However, the resource conservation would include a golf course and soccer fields, neither of which is conducive to the preservation of cultural resources. Alternative 3 receives a B.

K. Notes

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