15 STUDY AREA 15: HAMLIN CANYON/HIGHWAY 99

Study Area 15, Hamlin Canyon/Highway 99, consists of approximately 7,410 acres located southeast of the City of Chico along Highway 99 and adjacent to the Neal Road Landfill. 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 as Agriculture.
- Alternative 2 designates about 1,500 acres for industrial purposes, as well as about 500 acres for Medium, Medium-High, and High Density Residential, allowing about 9,000 new homes. The remainder of the study area would remain as Resource Conservation. This amount and mix of development would basically constitute a new town in Butte County. It is assumed that this level of development would also generate additional public and retail uses.
- Alternative 3 designates about 500 acres as Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 1,500 new homes. About 1,500 acres are designated as Industrial, while the remainder is designated as Resource Conservation.

There are significant environmental constraints in Study Area 15, including fire, flood, erosion, subsidence, and expansive soils, as described in the Safety and Hazards section below. The majority of these hazards could be avoided by situating development under Alternatives 2 and 3 in western portions of the study area, along Highway 99. However, the majority of the western part of the Study Area is underlain by expansive soils, so it is likely that development would be affected by expansive soils.

A. Economics

1. Market Viability

a. Alternative 1

Since this alternative does not envision significant new residential or commercial development in the study area, market viability would not be an issue.

b. Alternative 2

The number of new housing units planned in this alternative is extremely large and would constitute about 93 percent of the housing growth projected for the entire unincorporated area through 2030. Such a large number of residential units would demand a full range of retail, services, and public facilities. This study area currently does not include any such amenities. However, it is likely that the 9,000 new homes allowed under Alternative 2 would attract significant retail development, including a neighborhood shopping center with a full-size grocery store, drug store, casual restaurants, and services such as dry cleaners or beauty salons. Until and unless these amenities are in place to serve the planned residential population, residential development in this study area would face stiff competition from developments within the City of Chico that would offer better access to existing stores and services.

The extremely large quantity of new industrial development designated under Alternative 2 makes market viability questionable. In this case, with potentially 26.1 million square feet of industrial space and 31,000 employees, Alternative 2 would represent multiple times the number of new jobs projected for the unincorporated area through 2030. It is unlikely that this single location could capture this amount of industrial development within the General Plan time horizon. As noted in the discussion of Study Area 14, if the County is considering a large-scale industrial strategy, it should not move forward with both Study Area 14 and Study Area 15, since the two areas would likely compete with each other, undermining market viability.

Since the market viability of both the residential and industrial components of Alternative 2 faces significant questions, Alternative 2 receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

Although this alternative calls for only a fraction of the residential development under Alternative 2, the lack of retail, services, and public facilities to serve as amenities for residential development in this study area represents a challenge for market viability. The 1,500 new homes that would be allowed under Alternative 3 would likely support only a limited amount of small convenience stores or fast-food restaurants to serve new residents.

As under Alternative 2, the quantity of new industrial development under Alternative 3 has questionable market viability. Therefore, Alternative 3 also receives a D.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternative 1

This alternative does not propose significant new residential or commercial development; therefore, it would have neutral fiscal impacts and receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

This study area spans TRAs in which Butte County receives between 17.5 and 20.5 percent of the property tax revenues, an above-average rate. With a very large residential component that is 90 percent single-family homes along with a very large concentration of industrial development, Alternative 2 allows substantial new revenues, but it would also require a full urban level of services, which would entail substantial increases in service costs. A large concentration of development like this should, on balance, create economies of scale in service provision and allow the County to realize fiscal benefits under Alternative 2; so it receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 includes the same amount of industrial development as does Alternative 2, but omits the residential development. As with Alternative 2, a

substantial concentration of industrial development should create efficiencies of service provision that would allow the County to realize fiscal benefits from developing the study area. Overall, Alternative 3 receives a B.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternative 1

Since this alternative does not plan significant new residential or commercial development, it does not have any impact on the jobs/housing balance.

b. Alternative 2

The estimated jobs/housing ratio for new residential and commercial development under this alternative is approximately three jobs for every one employed resident, meaning this study area would need to rely on other areas to supply a minimum of about two-thirds of its workers, . Although it would not be expected to fully build out, Alternative 2 would likely provide more jobs than housing and would need to draw from employed residents countywide to fill available jobs. Since the County currently has an overall deficit of jobs to employed residents, Alternative 2 would have a positive jobs/housing balance and receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

With a much smaller residential component than Alternative 2, the projected jobs/housing ratio for the full amount of new residential and commercial development planned under this alternative is 18 jobs for every one employed resident, meaning the study area would be dependent upon workers commuting from other parts of the county to fill the vast majority of the new jobs in the unlikely event that the alternative could successfully build out as specified. Although it would not be expected to fully build out, Alternative 3 would likely provide more jobs than housing and would need to draw from employed residents countywide to fill available jobs. Since the County currently has an overall deficit of jobs to employed residents, Alternative 3 would have a positive jobs/housing balance and receives a B.

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 15. 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 would impact the level of fire protection and emergency services.

There are no fire stations within the boundaries of Study Area 15. The closest fire station is Fire Station 45, a career- and volunteer-staffed station located more than three miles from the western boundary of the study area. There are currently plans for an additional station to be constructed in the Butte College area; this station would be less than a mile away from the southeastern boundary of the study area when constructed. Construction of this station is anticipated to be complete by 2010.

The majority of Study Area 15 does not have adequate fire and emergency service levels for any type of development; however, its road frontages do have adequate service levels for very low density and rural density residential development. Specifically, the road frontages on Durham-Pentz Road and Highway 99 are within eight minutes of a fire station, an appropriate travel time for very low density residential development. The road frontage on Neal Road is primarily within ten minutes of a fire station, an appropriate travel time for rural density residential development. None of the study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 does not call for any new development in this study area, so fire and emergency services are not an issue.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 allow significant industrial development, covering approximately 1,500 acres. In addition, Alternative 2 allows approximately 9,000 new homes at suburban densities. These alternatives have enough development that they could support a new fire station in the study area. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a B.

2. Sheriff Services

Study Area 15 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 15 is accessible to the Chico area via Highway 99, response times to this location are relatively quick.

There is no police station located within the boundaries of Study Area 15. The Butte County Sherriff station in the City of Chico is located less than five miles away from the northern boundary of the study area and approximately 9 miles from the southern corner.

a. Alternative 1

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

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 allow approximately 9,000 and 1,500 new homes, respectively, as well as significant industrial development. This development would generate the need for more than five new officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, these alternatives receive a C.

3. Capacity of School Districts

Study Area 15 is served by the Durham Unified School District (DUSD). The DUSD has been experiencing declining enrollment, but is operating near capacity. The DUSD's current enrollment is approximately 1,150 students,

while it has the capacity for approximately 1,180 students, meaning the District has the capacity for approximately 30 more students. The District does not have any specific expansion plans at this time.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, Study Area 15 would not generate any new students, so schools are not an issue.

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, Study Area 15 could generate approximately 4,420 new students, which would exceed its current capacity by about 4,660 students. The new students generated from this study area by this alternative could support about eight new K-8 schools and one to two new high schools. This would significantly increase the size of the DUSD and require additional administration and other services.

The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in all of the study areas within the DUSD could generate approximately 4,690 new students, four times the current enrollment in the District and about 4,660 students beyond current capacity.

Because the number of new students generated by this study area could support the construction of new schools, this alternative receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, Study Area 15 could generate approximately 740 new students, which would exceed its current capacity by about 710 students. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the DUSD could generate approximately 1,690 new students, about 1,660 students beyond current capacity.

Because this study area could generate more students than can be accommodated by the existing capacity, but would not generate enough

students to support the construction of a new high school, this alternative receives a D .

C. Water

1. Water Supply

Study Area 15 is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 14, the Valley aquifers typically allow greater recharge and access to groundwater than the foothill and mountain aquifers, and they provide water for municipal, irrigation and domestic wells.

Study Area 15 is located within the Pentz Inventory Sub-Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 14, the primary source of water in the Pentz Sub-Unit is groundwater. There are no water service providers operating within Study Area 15.

a. Alternative 1

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

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 allow significant residential and industrial development. Because these alternatives allow significant development without an identified water supply, they receive a D.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

Study Area 15 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 allow significant residential and industrial development in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area, and therefore receive a D.

D. Wastewater

There is currently no publicly managed sewer service in Study Area 15. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

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

b. Alternatives 2 and 3
Alternatives 2 and 3 call for approximately 9,000 and 1,500 new homes, respectively, at a range of densities, as well as significant industrial development. This development can effectively be served by sewers due to the density and amount of development. Furthermore, it appears likely that this development would create the ability to form a new sewer system because it would all be part of one development proposal. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

E. Circulation

Study Area 15 is served by two major regional roadways, Highway 99 and Durham-Pentz Road.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways
Two major regional roadways travel through or adjacent to Study Area 15. Highway 99 runs along the southwestern boundary of the study area and

Durham-Pentz Road is the southern boundary to the study area. Neal Road serves as the northwestern boundary to the study area. 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

Adjacent to Study Area 15, planned bicycle facilities are located along Durham-Pentz Road and Neal Road. Due to the study area's high level of access to planned bicycle facilities and location more than 1 mile from existing urban areas, the area receives a C. Since Alternative 1 does not include any new development, bicycle circulation is not an issue.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Highway 99 in the study area. This receives an A. Since Alternative 1 does not include any new development, transit service is not an issue.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

Study Area 15 is not located within an Airport Compatibility Zone. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive an A.

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

There are approximately 7,090 acres in Study Area 15 identified as Grazing Land, 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 each convert approximately 1,690 acres of Grazing Land to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a D.

H. Biological Resources

Study Area 15 is located on the valley floor rising to the lower foothills and is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover types vary with elevation; grasslands and grassland with vernal swale complex dominate the lower elevation and valley and blue oak woodland dominates the foothills and slopes. Small areas of chaparral are found in the northern portion of the study area.

Two occurrences of special-status plants have been recorded in the study area: veiny monardella and Butte County checkerbloom are known from Hamlin Slough in the northwest of the study area.

There are no CNDDB (2007) occurrences of special-status animals in the study area. There is Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)-modeled habitat in this study area for the following 21 species:

- Ahart's dwarf rush
- Bald eagle
- Butte County checkerbloom
- Butte County meadowfoam
- Butte County golden clover
- Conservancy fairy shrimp
- Foothill yellow-legged frog
- Greene's tuctoria
- Hairy Orcutt grass
- Hoover's spurge
- Northwestern pond turtle breeding habitat in pond and perennial habitat in Hamlin Slough

- Peregrine falcon
- Swainson's hawk
- Tricolored blackbird
- Valley elderberry longhorn beetle
- Vernal pool fairy shrimp
- Vernal pool tadpole shrimp
- Western burrowing owl
- Western spadefoot
- White-tailed kite
- Yellow-breasted chat

There is Critical Habitat for Central Valley steelhead in Little Dry Creek, which is on the edge of the southeastern corner of the study area. The half of the study area that is at lower elevations is within a Vernal Pool Core Recovery Area.

Grassland with vernal swale complex occurs in the western portion of the study area. The remainder of the study area is dominated by blue oak woodland. Valley oak riparian woodland occurs along Little Dry Creek in the southeast part of the study area; a small patch of cottonwood willow riparian woodland occurs on Hamlin Slough in the north part of the study area.

The northeastern half of the study area is in Winter Range deer herd habitat.

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 the land would remain in grazing and resource conservation and there would not be a significant number of new homes, this designation could allow range improvements (e.g. fertilizing or disking grasslands) that would damage vernal pool habitat. 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

Development included in both of these alternatives would negatively affect a Vernal Pool Core Recovery Area. Winter Range deer herd habitat, sensitive habitat, and potential habitat for special-status species. 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

The north and east part of Study Area 15 is located in a high fire severity zone.

a. Alternative 1

In Alternative 1, there is no land designated for development. Therefore, this alternative receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Although a portion of the site is within the high fire severity zone, it is assumed that development would be located on the eastern portion of the site that is not constrained by fire hazards. Therefore, these alternatives would receive a B.

2. Flood Hazards

A portion of Study Area 15 along Hamlin Slough is included in the 100-year FEMA flood zone.

a. Alternative 1

In Alternative 1, there is no land designated for development. Therefore, this alternative receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Although a portion of the site is within the 100-year flood zone, it is assumed that development would be located on the portion of the site that is not constrained by flood hazards. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

3. Geologic Hazards

Approximately 2,300 acres in the northern and eastern portions of Study Area 15 have severe erosion potential. Some western portions of this study area have a high potential for subsidence. Study Area 15 has zero to low landslide potential, no earthquake faults and moderate potential for liquefaction. A significant portion of Study Area 15, approximately 3,820 acres, has very high potential for soil expansion.

a. Alternative 1

In Alternative 1, there is no land designated for development. Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

In Alternatives 2 and 3, it is assumed that development would be located to avoid erosion and subsidence hazards. Due to steep slopes, and fire and erosion hazards in the eastern part of this study area, development under Alternatives 2 and 3 would be located in the western part, in areas with very high expansive soil hazards. Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a D.

J. Cultural Resources

Study Area 15 lies within the Hamlin Canyon USGS 7.5' quadrangle. Approximately 30 percent of the land in the Hamlin Canyon Quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, a total of nine cultural

resources sites have been recorded in Study Area 15. This number includes seven prehistoric sites, one site containing both prehistoric and historic period artifacts, and one site containing historic period artifacts. The prehistoric sites include three rock shelters and four bedrock mortars, the historic site contains a foundation and a privy, and the combined site has a trash and lithic scatter. This study area lies within valley and foothill regions, and has various creeks running through it. This coupled with the number of previously recorded sites and the relatively large size of the study area, indicate this study area is of medium sensitivity for the presence of prehistoric resources.

a. Alternative 1

In Alternative 1, the entire area would remain in agriculture, devoted to grazing. Grazing is not particularly destructive to most types of cultural resources. Therefore there is little potential for impacts to cultural resources under this alternative. Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternative 2

Although over 5,400 acres of Resource Conservation would remain, about 2,000 acres would be developed with residential, retail and industrial uses in this moderately sensitive area. Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

In Alternative 3, although over 5,400 acres of Resource Conservation would remain, about 2,000 acres would be developed with residential, retail and industrial uses in this moderately sensitive area. Alternative 3 receives a B.

K. Notes