

31 STUDY AREA 31: BIGGS AREA

Study Area 31, the Biggs Area, consists of about 3,600 acres surrounding the Biggs City limits. This study area includes a portion of a region identified by the Butte Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as an Area of Concern. LAFCO is required to notify both the City of Biggs and the City of Gridley of development projects in this area to help coordinate growth. Much of this study area is open agricultural land, primarily used for rice production. Portions are also developed with associated industrial uses, as well as single-family residential.

- ◆ Alternative 1 follows the existing General Plan, designating the majority of the study area for Agriculture. The area close to the City of Biggs is designated for Very Low and Medium-High Density Residential, allowing about 1,600 new homes, as well as about 40 acres of retail and industrial uses and a small area for public purposes.
- ◆ Alternative 2 would increase the industrial area to about 190 acres, and designate the remainder of the study area for Agriculture.
- ◆ Alternative 3 would maintain the 190 acres of industrial uses from Alternative 2 and significantly increase the residential area, allowing approximately 3,000 new homes. This alternative would also allow a residential/retail mix along Highway 99 and B Street, allowing about 30 acres of Retail and 285 acres of residential uses at a variety of densities. The remainder of the study area would be designated for agricultural purposes.

A. *Economics*

1. **Market Viability**

a. **Alternative 1**

The 1,600 new residential units planned under this alternative would be a challenge from a market viability standpoint; however, this is a reasonable location and an attractive community. Given the General Plan time horizon, this amount of new residential development is conceivable. Additionally, the

planned new retail and industrial components seem reasonably scaled given the overall plan for the study area. Overall, Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternative 2

Although the location near the Highway 99 corridor makes sense from an industrial development standpoint, the 3.3 million square feet included in Alternative 2 is aggressive. With potential for approximately 4,000 industrial jobs, this study area would need to capture approximately 38 percent of the total projected unincorporated area job growth across all industries through 2030. This level of market share is unlikely to occur in Biggs, and would be difficult to achieve even in one of the more established industrial locations within the county. Given the questionable market viability of the industrial development, Alternative 3 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Market viability for the residential portion of Alternative 2 would be boosted significantly if the industrial component successfully built out, creating a large source of local jobs to attract new residents; however, as discussed under Alternative 2, the feasibility of the full amount of industrial development is doubtful. Furthermore, the level of planned new retail development in Alternative 3 is excessive, given that the buildout population of the study area would be far less than the 20,000 or more people would likely be necessary to support the scale of planned retail development. New retail development would more likely be at the scale of convenience stores or fast food restaurants. Since both industrial and retail components are questionable, Alternative 3 receives a D.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternative 1

Within the Biggs area, Butte County's share of the property tax revenues is a healthy 19.1 percent of the total; however, this would likely only partially offset the effect of relatively low property values in this part of the county. Because this is an established community that enjoys a reasonable level of county services at this time, service cost increases are likely to be only

incremental, as long as service standards are maintained at their present levels. Given its mix of residential as well as retail and industrial uses, Alternative 1 would not likely generate substantial fiscal deficits or surpluses, if successfully built out, so it receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for new industrial development. Industrial development tends to be a relatively low revenue generator in most instances. At the same time, it also tends to be a fairly low user of county services. Thus, in this location, where service efficiency is good due to good access and existing services, there is potential for fiscal benefits, as long as the industrial development is such that it does not require expensive service standard upgrades. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 is not likely to have major negative or positive fiscal impacts. The addition of the large industrial component to Alternative 3 might enhance the potential for fiscal benefits, while the increase cost to serve the residential component might offset this. Overall, Alternative 3 receives a C.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternative 1

The estimated jobs/housing ratio for Alternative 1 is zero jobs for every one employed resident, meaning that it would exacerbate existing jobs/housing imbalance in the Biggs/Gridley area. Therefore, Alternative 1 receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2's focus on industrial development would help to improve the jobs/housing ratio in the Biggs/Gridley area, although the number of new jobs generated under a more realistic industrial absorption scenario is likely to be relatively small. Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

With the large industrial component creating a bias towards job creation, the estimated jobs/housing ratio under Alternative 3 is one job for every one employed resident, which would help improve the jobs/housing balance in the Biggs/Gridley area. However, the questionable market viability of job-generating industrial uses, combined with the potential for up to 3,000 new homes, means that Alternative 3 would likely have a neutral effect on jobs/housing balance within the General Plan horizon. Since Alternative 3 would not improve Biggs's jobs/housing imbalance, it 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 31. 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 31. The Butte County/CALFIRE Fire Station 73, a career-staffed station, is located less than a ½-mile away.

The majority of Study Area 31 has adequate service levels for rural and very low density residential development, as it is located within an eight-minute travel area for a first-due unit. Although the area west of the City of Biggs is within four minutes of a first-due unit, it is within eight minutes of only two fire stations, which is not an adequate concentration for suburban residential, retail and industrial development.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 calls for approximately 1,600 new homes at very low and suburban densities, as well as industrial and retail uses, which typically

require high fire and emergency service levels because they include assets of high economic value and generate customers that depend on those services. Although the very low density residential development would have adequate fire and emergency service levels, the suburban residential, industrial and retail development would not due to high travel times and/or a low concentration of fire stations in the immediate area. Moreover, the level of development under this alternative would not support a new fire station, so there would be little opportunity to improve fire protection. Because this alternative allows more than a minimal amount of new development, portions of which would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels, it receives a C.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 3,000 new homes at suburban densities, as well as retail uses. Alternatives 2 and 3 both call for industrial development as well. All development under Alternatives 2 and 3 would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels due to high travel times and/or a low concentration of fire stations 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. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

2. Sheriff Services

Study Area 31 is served by the Southern Division of the Butte County Sheriff's Office (BCSO). The BCSO is currently understaffed and has limited capacity for expansion of its services. The Southern Division typically has about three to four deputies on duty in the Oroville area. Although Study Area 31 is located relatively close to the Oroville area, access can be difficult due to road and traffic conditions, which can compromise response times.

There is one police station located just beyond the western boundary of Study Area 31; this station is run by the City of Biggs Police Department.

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 would allow approximately 1,600 and 3,000 new homes, respectively, as well as significant industrial development, generating the need for more than five new officers in an area with slow response times. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would not allow any new homes, but calls for significant industrial development, likely generating the need for between one and five new officers in this area with slow response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a C.

3. Capacity of School Districts

Study Area 31 is served by the Biggs Unified School District (BUSD). The enrollment of the BUSD in the 2006-07 school year was approximately 820 students. Current capacity information is unavailable. Although the District owns a vacant, 44-acre site next to the Biggs schools, there are no plans to build a new school facility at this time.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, Study Area 31 could generate approximately 790 new students. The total amount of development foreseen in Alternative 1 in all of the study areas within the BUSD could generate approximately 1,200 new students, one and a half times the 2006-07 enrollment.

Because this study area could generate a significant number of new students, but not enough to support the construction of new schools, this alternative receives a D.

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, Study Area 31 would not generate any new students, so schools are not an issue.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, Study Area 31 could generate approximately 1,390 new students. The new students generated from this study area by this alternative could support about two to three new K-8 schools. However, there would not be enough students to support a new high school.

The total amount of development foreseen in Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the BUSD could generate approximately 2,900 new students, more than triple the 2006-07 enrollment.

Because this study area could generate a significant number of new students, but not enough to support the construction of a new high school, this alternative receives a D.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

Study Area 31 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 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.

The majority of Study Area 31 is located within the Butte Inventory Sub-Unit. During drought years, water needs have not been fully met due to limited groundwater infrastructure. This portion of the study area is served by the Butte Water District, which provides surface water from the Feather River. The District diverts water from the Thermalito Afterbay through the Sutter Butte Canal, and primarily serves the agricultural users in this region.

The northern and western portions of Study Area 31 are located within the Biggs-West Gridley Inventory Sub-Unit. This portion of the study area is served by the Biggs-West Gridley Water District, which provides surface water from the Feather River to the region. The primary water needs are agricultural and environmental, including rice and managed wetlands in the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for residential, retail and industrial development. The majority of this development would be served by the Butte Water District and Biggs-West Gridley Water District. The remaining development would be adjacent to these providers, and it may be possible in the future for the services to expand to provide water to these areas. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 3 receive a B.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for industrial development. All of this development would be served by the Biggs-West Gridley Water District. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives an A.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

Study Area 31 is located within the Valley Inventory Unit. It may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area. Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 call for significant development in this study area, and therefore receive a D.

D. Wastewater

There is currently no publicly managed sewer service in Study Area 31. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

Study Area 31 is adjacent to the City of Biggs, which provides wastewater collection and treatment services to its residents. It is possible that, in the future, a portion of this area may be connected to Biggs' municipal sewer

system if the City were to annex this area. LAFCO's 2006 Municipal Service Review of Domestic Water and Wastewater Providers in Butte County noted that, because the cities of Biggs and Gridley are expected to grow together over time, this area may benefit from a regional wastewater treatment provider.

According to the 2006 Municipal Service Review, the City of Biggs currently has the capacity to collect and treat the wastewater produced within its existing boundaries. However, significant developments may be required to upgrade the existing collection system downstream if additional capacity is needed. Although the City's treatment plant is in excellent condition, the collection system requires significant rehabilitation. During a phone call on March 7, 2008, City staff indicated that the collection system rehabilitation is a high priority for the City, and that they are pursuing grant funds for this work. The collection system is not expected to constrain growth, and the City's fee structure for new connections is adequate.

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for approximately 1,600 and 3,000 new homes, respectively, at a range of densities. Alternatives 2 and 3 call for approximately 190 acres of industrial development. This level of development could create the ability to expand the adjacent municipal sewer system. Therefore Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a B.

E. Circulation

Study Area 31 is served by two major regional roadways: Highway 99 and East Biggs Highway.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

Highway 99 and East Biggs Highway run through the study area. This study area receives an A for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within Study Area 31, planned bicycle facilities are located along East Biggs Highway, Riceton Highway, and Afton Road. The location of the study area adjacent to the City of Biggs allows for bicycle access to jobs, schools, and services in Biggs. Due to the study area's high level of access to bicycle facilities and location adjacent to Biggs, the area receives a B.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Biggs-Gridley Road, which is within ¼ mile of the study area. This receives a B.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

The South Paradise/Pentz Road study area is not located within an Airport Compatibility Zone. Therefore, airport compatibility issues would not affect development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3.

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

In Study Area 31, there are approximately 1,800 acres identified as Prime Farmland and 1,240 acres identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Prime Farmland is located primarily in the northern region of the study area while the Farmland of Statewide Importance is located centrally within study area.

Under Alternative 1, approximately 430 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance would be converted to non-agricultural uses. Alternative 2 would convert 170 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural uses. Alternative 3 would convert approximately 940 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a D.

H. Biological Resources

Study Area 31 is located on the valley floor, and is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover types are orchard and irrigated cropland, with rice west of Biggs.

There are no plant or animal occurrences in the study area.

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

- ◆ Bald eagle
- ◆ Giant garter snake
- ◆ Greater sandhill crane
- ◆ Peregrine falcon
- ◆ Swainson's hawk
- ◆ Tricolored blackbird
- ◆ Western burrowing owl
- ◆ White-tailed kite

There is no Critical Habitat or other protected lands in the study area.

No sensitive habitats have been mapped in the area.

There is no deer herd habitat in the study area.

Alternatives 1 and 3 would result in development on approximately 490 acres and 1,285 acres respectively, with the construction of 1,600 or 3,000 new homes. Alternative 2 would designate the entire area as Agriculture. Conversion to agriculture crops that support foraging raptors (e.g. Swainson's hawks and white-tailed kites) would be more beneficial than conversion to agricultural crops such as vineyards which do support wildlife habitat to any great extent. Because there is potential habitat for special-status species, and these alternatives impact this potential habitat, these alternatives receive a C

for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, an A for Critical Habitat and Other Protected Lands, an A for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

The Biggs Area study area is located in a low fire hazard severity zone. Fire hazards would not affect development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3, therefore, these alternatives receive an A.

2. Flood Hazards

The Biggs Area study area is not included in the 100-year and 500-year FEMA flood zones. Therefore, each of the alternatives receives an A.

3. Geologic Hazards

There is slight potential for erosion in the Biggs Area study area. There is potentially significant subsidence potential throughout the study area with the exception of the northwest corner. The Biggs Area study area has zero to low landslide potential and moderate potential for liquefaction. This study area has very low, moderate, high and very high potential for soil expansion. The majority of the study area has moderate potential for soil expansion but approximately 60 acres in the southwest of the study area have high potential for soil expansion and approximately 1,000 acres in the west and east of the study area have very high potential for soil expansion. There are no faults within the Biggs Area study area or within a 50-foot radius.

a. Alternative 1

In Alternative 1, approximately 520 acres of land designated for development have potential subsidence hazards and approximately 60 acres have very high potential for soil expansion. Alternative 1 receives a D.

b. Alternative 2

In Alternative 2, approximately 70 acres of land designated for development have potential subsidence hazards and approximately 190 acres have very high potential for soil expansion. Alternative 2 receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

A small portion of land designated for development in Alternative 3 has high and very high potential for soil expansion, but development could avoid areas of expansive soil hazards. In Alternative 3, approximately 1,405 acres of land designated for development have potential subsidence hazards. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a D.

J. Cultural Resources

Study Area 31 lies within the Biggs USGS 7.5' quadrangle. Approximately 10 percent of the land in the Biggs Quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, one cultural resource site has been recorded in Study Area 31, a historic water conveyance system. This study area lies within in a valley region, and has no local water source. This, coupled with the low number of previously recorded sites, indicate that this area is of low sensitivity for cultural resources.

1. Alternatives 1 and 2

Despite the low sensitivity of the area for cultural resources, Alternatives 1 and 2 include a large number of acres in unspecified agriculture and a lack of Resource Conservation that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. The rice, row crops, and orchards in the study area have a high potential to impact cultural resources because of the ground disturbing activities associated with these crops. Alternatives 1 and 2 receive a D.

2. Alternative 3

Despite the low sensitivity of the area for cultural resources, Alternative 3 includes both a large number of acres in unspecified agriculture and dense

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residential development, both of which could impact cultural resources. Alternative 3 lacks any Resource Conservation that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Alternative 3 receives a D.

K. Notes