

33 STUDY AREA 33: SOUTH OF BIGGS

Study Area 33, South Biggs, consists of approximately 275 acres located south of the City of Biggs. This entire study area is located in 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 study area to help coordinate growth. Currently, the majority of this study area is open agricultural land, primarily used for rice production.

- ◆ Alternative 1 designates the entire area as Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 800 new homes.
- ◆ Under Alternative 2, the majority of the study area would be designated for Agriculture, with approximately 180 acres of industrial and retail uses located along the railroad tracks.
- ◆ Alternative 3 designates the entire area as Medium Density Residential, allowing approximately 1,700 new homes.
- ◆ None of the alternatives follow the existing General Plan, which designates this entire study area for agricultural purposes.

A. *Economics*

1. **Market Viability**

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Given a relatively attractive location that appears to be within a path of residential growth along Highway 99, the development of 800 new homes under Alternative 1 is likely viable over the General Plan time horizon and receives an A.

The 1,700 new homes included under Alternative 3 also have potential for market success; however, Alternative 3 may not be fully absorbed during the General Plan horizon, since it includes twice as many new homes. Alternative 3 receives a B.

b. Alternative 2

With a relatively small trade area, competition from development in the Cities of Biggs and Gridley, and a location set off of Highway 99, the retail development planned under Alternative 2 is likely to struggle for market support. The planned industrial component might be feasible over the General Plan time horizon; however, this is not assured given likely competition from Gridley. Since both the retail and industrial components of Alternative 2 are questionable, it receives a D.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 focus on low-density and medium-density residential development, respectively, and would have similar neutral fiscal impacts.

Butte County receives a strong 19.1 percent of the property taxes in this study area. This likely only partially offsets the effects of generally lower property values in the Biggs area, from a property tax generation standpoint. Nevertheless, if existing service levels are considered adequate for the new growth also, service efficiencies associated with expanding this existing community may allow Alternatives 1 and 3 to achieve fiscal neutrality. Both alternatives receive a C.

b. Alternative 2

With only retail and industrial development planned, Alternative 2 would have strong revenue potential, but relatively low service cost implications, as long as the type of new industrial development does not trigger the need for service standard upgrades. If successfully built out, Alternative 2 would likely create fiscal benefits. However, since it is unlikely that the retail and industrial components could be fully absorbed, Alternative 2 would not be expected to generate significant fiscal benefits over the General Plan horizon. Overall, it receives a B.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

With only new residential development planned, Alternatives 1 and 3 would lead to a decrease in the jobs/housing ratio in the Biggs/Gridley area, and therefore both receive a C.

b. Alternative 2

With only new job-generating uses planned, this alternative would lead to an increase in the jobs/housing ratio for an improvement in the Biggs/Gridley area. Alternative 2 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 33. 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 is no fire station within the boundaries of Study Area 33. The Butte County/CALFIRE Fire Station 73, a career-staffed station, is located less than a ½-mile away.

Study Area 33 has adequate service levels for rural and very low density residential development, as it is located within an eight-minute travel area for two first-due units. None of the study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for approximately 800 and 1,700 new homes, respectively, at suburban densities. Alternative 2 calls for industrial and 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. Development under Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels due to high travel times and 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 33 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 33 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 no police station located within the boundaries of Study Area 33. The Biggs Police Department station is located less than a mile away from the study area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternative 1 would allow approximately 800 new homes, generating the need for approximately two new officers. Alternative 2 would not allow any new homes, but would allow some retail and industrial development, generating the need for new officers. Because Alternatives 1 and 2 allow development that would generate the need for less than six new officers in an area with slow response times, they receive a C.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would allow approximately 1,700 new homes, generating the need for more than five new officers in an area with slow response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

3. Capacity of School Districts

Study Area 33 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, approximately 45-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 33 could generate approximately 390 new students. The total amount of development foreseen under 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 33 would not generate any new students, so schools are not an issue.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, Study Area 33 could generate approximately 840 new students. The total amount of development foreseen under 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 new schools, this alternative receives a D.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

Study Area 33 is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 31, 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 33 is located within the Butte Inventory Sub-Unit, and 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.

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for residential development, and Alternative 2 calls for retail and industrial development. All of this development would be served by the Butte Water District. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive an A.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

Study Area 33 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 33. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

Study Area 33 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 study area may be connected to Biggs' municipal sewer system if the City were to annex this study 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 study 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 800 and 1,700 new homes, respectively, at low and medium densities. Alternative 2 calls for approximately 100 acres of industrial and 15 acres of retail 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 33 is not served by any major regional roadways.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

No major regional roadways travel through or adjacent to Study Area 33. Biggs East Highway runs ¼-mile north of the study area, with Highway 99 1 mile east of the study area. This study area receives a B for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within Study Area 33, a bicycle facility is planned along Biggs-Gridley 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 planned bicycle facilities and location adjacent to Biggs, the study area receives a B.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Biggs-Gridley Road, which runs adjacent to the study area. This receives an A.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

Study Area 33 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 33, there are approximately 60 acres identified as Prime Farmland and approximately 220 acres identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Prime Farmland is located in the northern region of the study area and the Farmland of Statewide Importance is located in the central and south regions.

Under Alternatives 1 and 3, the entire study area is designated for non-agricultural uses, which would convert approximately 280 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural uses. Alternative 2 would convert 110 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

This small study area is located on the valley floor, and is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. Three land cover types have been mapped: irrigated pasture, rice, and orchard.

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 study area.

There is no deer herd habitat in the study area.

Alternatives 1 and 3 would result in development on approximately 275 acres and Alternative 2 would result in agricultural development on approximately 165 acres. There is potential for impacts on the potential habitat for special-status species. 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. Therefore, 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

Study Area 33 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

Study Area 33 is not included in the 100-year and 500-year FEMA flood zones. Flood hazards would not affect development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3, therefore, each of the alternatives receives an A.

3. Geologic Hazards

Study Area 33 has slight erosion potential, significant subsidence potential, zero to low landslide potential, and moderate potential for liquefaction. Approximately 100 acres of land in the center of the study area have high potential for soil expansion and 10 acres have very high potential, with low and moderate expansive soils throughout the remainder of the study area. There are no faults within Study Area 33 or within a 50-foot radius.

Alternatives 1 and 3

In Alternative 1 and 3, subsidence hazards could potentially affect development of approximately 280 acres of land designated for development, and approximately 100 acres of land designated for development have high potential and approximately 10 acres have very high potential for soil expansion. Alternatives 1 and 3 receive a D.

Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, subsidence hazards could potentially affect development of approximately 110 acres of land designated for development, and approximately 20 acres of land designated for development have high

potential and 10 acres have very high potential for soil expansion. Alternative 2 receives a D.

J. Cultural Resources

Study Area 33 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, no cultural resource sites have been recorded in Study Area 33. This study area lies within in a valley region, and has no local water source. This, coupled with the lack of previously recorded sites, indicate that this study area is of low sensitivity for cultural resources.

1. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 designates the entire study area for low density residential development. No acreage is set aside for Resource Conservation land use areas under any of the alternatives. Due to the acreage of residential development and the lack of designated Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources, Alternative 1 receives a D.

2. Alternative 2

Despite the low sensitivity of the study area, Alternative 2 includes a large number of acres in agricultural use and industrial development and a lack of designated Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. The rice, row crops, and orchards that would be allowed under Alternative 2 have a high potential to impact cultural resources because of the ground disturbing activities associated with these crops. Alternative 2 receives a D.

3. Alternative 3

Despite the low sensitivity of the study area, Alternative 3 includes a higher density of residential development and a lack of designated Resource

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Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Alternative 3 receives a D.

K. Notes