



DATE: January 18, 2017

TO: Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Interested Persons

FROM: Peter N. Maurer, Planning Director, Calaveras County

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CALAVERAS COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

The County of Calaveras is the lead agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Calaveras County General Plan Update (proposed project). The scope of the EIR has been proposed based upon a determination by Calaveras County. The County has directed the preparation of this EIR in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Once a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency must prepare a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform all responsible and trustee agencies that an EIR will be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). The purpose of the NOP is to provide agencies with sufficient information describing both the proposed project and the potential environmental effects to enable the agencies to make a meaningful response as to the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. The County is also soliciting comments on the scope of the EIR from interested persons.

### **SCOPING MEETING**

A public scoping meeting will be held regarding the proposed EIR for the Calaveras County General Plan Update Project on January 30th, 2017 at 5 pm at the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas, CA 95249.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Project Location and Setting**

Calaveras County encompasses approximately 662,791 acres in the central Sierra Nevada region of California (Figure 1). Calaveras County consists of three general topographic areas along the western Sierra Nevada: 1) the western portion of the County is located on the eastern edge of the Central San Joaquin Valley; 2) the central portion of the County is located within rolling foothills; and 3) the eastern portion of the County consists of moderate to steep slopes as one travels eastward into the Sierra Nevada. Watersheds within the County include the Mokelumne River watershed at the County's northern border, the Stanislaus River and Lower San Joaquin River watersheds at the County's southern/southwestern border, and the Calaveras River watershed in the north-central portion of the County.

Primary circulation routes within the County include State Routes (SR) 12, 26, 49, and 4. In addition to several developed communities, the incorporated City of Angels Camp is located in the southern portion of Calaveras County.

### **Project Entitlements**

The entitlements associated with the project include:

- Certification of the EIR;
- Adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP);
- Adoption of Findings of Fact and, for any impacts determined to be significant and unavoidable, a Statement of Overriding Considerations; and
- Adoption of the General Plan.

### **Project Components**

The proposed project comprises a General Plan for Calaveras County. The proposed project is consistent with State law requirements and includes eight elements, a General Plan land use map, and buildout projections for the County.

### **State Law Requirements**

A General Plan acts as the long-term blueprint for making rational decisions regarding a city's or county's vision of future growth. The General Plan expresses the community's development goals and incorporates public policies relative to the distribution of future public and private land uses. California State law requires that each city and county must have an adopted General Plan "for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning".

## Elements

The State of California Office of Planning and Research indicates that seven (7) elements are required in a General Plan, as follows: Land Use; Circulation; Housing; Conservation; Open Space; Noise; and Safety. The Calaveras County General Plan Update Project consists of an update to the existing 1996 General Plan, and includes a total of eight (8) elements. All the General Plan elements include goals and policies carefully drafted to guide successful implementation of the General Plan and the County's overall vision for buildout through the time horizon of 2035.

### *Land Use*

The Land Use Element is intended to serve as a guide for future development in the County and determine many key issues evaluated in other elements of the General Plan. The Land Use Element includes future growth projections for the County based upon the General Plan Land Use Map, which is included in the Element. In addition, the Land Use Element includes a description of each General Plan land use designation. Currently, a total of 16 land use designations are proposed.

### *Circulation*

The Circulation Element includes identification of appropriate levels of service for street operations and congestion; standards for mobility in all modes and for complete streets; ultimate rights-of-way for primary circulation routes; location and feasibility of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities; and appropriate street character and patterns. The Element includes diagrams identifying the primary existing and proposed roadways within the County and their classifications.

### *Resource Production*

The Resource Production Element provides policies and implementation measures to protect and enhance the value of agriculture, timber, and mineral resources within the County.

### *Conservation and Open Space*

The Conservation and Open Space Element addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources and the preservation and utilization of lands and waters devoted to or managed for open space uses.

Other pertinent resources that are addressed in the Conservation and Open Space Element include forests, woodlands, rangelands, water resources, biological resources, air quality and greenhouse gasses, scenic resources, recreational resources, and cultural and paleontological resources. The current setting of such resources within the County is described as well as approaches to their preservation.

## *Noise*

The Noise Element provides a framework for addressing potential noise conflicts between existing and proposed new land uses and serves as a guide for compliance with California's noise insulation standards. The primary objective of the Noise Element is to identify noise sources and minimize exposure of residents, visitors, and businesses to excess noise. Noise contours and thresholds established in the Element will assist the County in determining the appropriate location for noise-sensitive uses.

## *Safety*

The Safety Element addresses natural conditions and human activities that can potentially threaten public health and safety. The Safety Element is intended to reduce the risks associated with hazards identified in the County and to help the County prepare for and avoid emergency situations.

## *Public Facilities and Services*

The Public Facilities and Services Element is intended to assist decision makers in ensuring that adequate public facilities and services are provided to the current and future residents as well as visitors of Calaveras County. The Public Facilities and Services Element addresses those facilities and services that may be affected by the County's land use decisions, including, but not limited to, water supply, wastewater, solid waste facilities, energy, law enforcement, and emergency services.

## *Community Plan*

The 1996 General Plan included the adoption of six Community Plans (Valley Springs, San Andreas, Mokelumne Hill, Murphys-Douglas Flat, Avery-Hathaway Pines, and Arnold), along with two Special Plans (Rancho Calaveras and Ebbetts Pass.) With the adoption of the General Plan Update, existing community plans would be rescinded. The Community Plan Element provides policy for the following new Community Plan Areas: Glencoe, Mokelumne Hill, Mountain Ranch, Paloma, Railroad Flat, Rancho Calaveras, San Andreas, Sheep Ranch, West Point, and Wilseyville.

## Draft General Plan Land Use Map

The Land Use Element guides the general pattern of development in the County by identifying the general nature, location, density, and intensity of existing and future land uses. Similar land uses are grouped into categories called "general plan land use designations". The distribution of these land use designations countywide is identified on the Calaveras County General Plan Land Use Map (Figure 2).

Land uses are widely distributed throughout the County. Higher density residential, commercial, and industrial uses follow the historical development pattern in and around the existing communities, where infrastructure and services are available. Areas around

such communities have been designated to provide for expansion of commercial, industrial, and residential uses to take advantage of that infrastructure, and to reduce the costs of providing services to a more widely scattered population.

The Calaveras County General Plan Land Use Map includes land use designations for all existing communities in the County with the exception of the one incorporated city– the City of Angels Camp (see Figure 2).

### Buildout Projections

An estimate of how many units and population could be accommodated by the most recent version of the General Plan Land Use Map was developed by the County using the County's GIS database system. This estimate is known as "carrying capacity" and represents how much development could occur within the County over the life of the General Plan (2035) using a set of described parameters. The "carrying capacity" does not represent actual buildout nor does the estimate express with any certainty what will in fact occur. Rather, "carrying capacity" is simply a way to understand the development potential of the land use map.

A buildout formula was assigned for each General Plan land use designation that accommodates residential units. Next, buildout was calculated for the maximum density of each land use category. The assumed percent buildout for each land use was based on a report provided to the Board of Supervisors. Table 1 indicates the carrying capacity for all residential land use areas in the County, excluding lands within the City of Angels city limits.

Table 2 shows a comparison between existing and potential population under three different scenarios – the current 1996 General Plan, the proposed General Plan Update, and the Department of Finance (DOF) projections for 2035. Based on 2010 census data, currently 45,578 persons reside in Calaveras County, including Angels Camp. For Year 2035, the General Plan horizon year, DOF projects a modest population increase – 9,963 persons – for a total of 55,541 persons. This equates to an annual increment of 399 persons per year. The table illustrates that adequate carrying capacity exists under the proposed General Plan Update to accommodate the projected DOF population for Year 2035. The proposed Plan could accommodate approximately 111,527 persons, approximately double what DOF projects for Year 2035. By comparison, the existing General Plan would accommodate approximately 322,900 persons, almost five times the DOF projections.

Table 3 shows a comparison between existing and potential number of units under the same three scenarios in Table 2. According to the 2010 Census Data, 18,886 units exist in Calaveras County, including Angels Camp. Based on DOF population projections, approximately 23,200 units would be in the County in Year 2035. This equates to an annual increment of about 174 units per year.

**Table 1  
Residential Buildout Estimates by Land Use**

<b>General Plan Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Existing Total County Acreage</b>	<b>Max. Residential Density (du/ac)</b>	<b>Max. Population Density (persons/acre)</b>	<b>Percent Buildout</b>	<b>Estimated Total Units</b>	<b>Estimated Total Population (at 2.41 persons/household)</b>
Community Center (CC)	747.4	20.00	47.80	20	2,990	7,205
Historical Center (HC)	269.6	12.00	28.68	20	647	1,559
Residential High Density (RHD)	120.0	20.00	47.80	50	1,200	2,892
Residential Low Density (RLD)	7,921.2	6.00	14.34	50	23,764	57,270
Residential Medium Density (RMD)	698.5	12.00	28.68	50	4,191	10,101
Resources Production (RP)	368,455.2	0.03	0.06	10	921	2,220
Rural Residential (RR)	13,599.0	1.00	2.39	50	6,800	16,387
Rural Transition A (RTA)	11,674.4	0.10	0.24	50	584	1,407
Rural Transition B (RTB)	29,937.7	0.20	0.48	50	2,994	7,215
Working Lands (WL)	49,145.3	0.05	0.12	30	737	1,777
Future Specific Plan (FSP)*	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	1,065	2,566
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>482,568.3</b>				<b>46,277</b>	<b>111,527</b>

\*Per the Land Use Element of the General Plan, FSP areas are subject to the following standards for maximum density and intensity of development: 2,130 total residential units, including a maximum of 100 spaces in an RV park. A buildout of 50 percent was assumed based on other similar residential land uses.

*Source: Calaveras County General Plan Land Use Element, November 2015. Buildout percentage assumptions are from a report provided to the Board of Supervisors in June of 2015.*

Source	Additional Population	Total Population
Existing Population <sup>1</sup>	n/a	45,578
DOF Projections <sup>2</sup>	9,963	55,541
Proposed General Plan	65,949	111,527
Existing General Plan <sup>3</sup>	277,316	322,894
1. California Department of Finance, Census 2010 Summary File 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. Profile prepared by the California State Data Center, (916) 323-4086 (www.dof.ca.gov). Angels Camp represents 9% of countywide population. 2. For Year 2035. California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, May 2012. 3. Based on 2.39 persons per household per 2010 Census Data, California Department of Finance and 1996 General Plan projected new units (116,032).		

Table 3 illustrates that adequate carrying capacity exists under the proposed General Plan to accommodate projected DOF units for Year 2035. The proposed Plan could accommodate approximately 46,277 units, more than double what DOF projects for Year 2035. By comparison, the existing General Plan would accommodate approximately 134,900 units, almost five times the DOF projections.

Source	Additional Units	Total Units
Existing Units <sup>1</sup>	n/a	18,886
DOF Projections <sup>2</sup>	4,353	23,239
Proposed General Plan	27,391	46,277
Existing General Plan <sup>3</sup>	116,032	134,918
1. California Department of Finance, Census 2010 Summary File 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. Profile prepared by the California State Data Center, (916) 323-4086 (www.dof.ca.gov). 2. For Year 2035. California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, May 2012. 3. Based on 1996 Calaveras County General Plan.		

The above tables demonstrate that while the proposed General Plan Land Use Map reduces the amount of potential development allowed by the current General Plan, the proposed map still provides significant capacity above DOF projections for Year 2035. This allows substantial development flexibility in terms of density, intensity, and location of future development.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

For purposes of evaluating the potential impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan Update, the projections outlined in Table 1 above will be utilized for 2035 General Plan buildout. Such projections are anticipated to provide a more realistic buildout scenario for 2035 than the 1996 General Plan projections. As a result, the impact evaluations in the General Plan EIR will be focused on potential impacts resulting from buildout of the 2035 General Plan per the projections in Table 1. If the determination is made that buildout of the General Plan will result in impacts to the environment, the EIR

will identify appropriate mitigation measures if feasible to ensure that the necessary improvements are implemented over the course of the next 18 years.

The EIR will include program-level, or “first-tier”, analysis for the Draft General Plan, consistent with California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 21083.3, 21093, and 21094; and 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Sections 15152 and 15168. A Program EIR provides the necessary environmental review and impact mitigation for adoption and implementation of the Draft General Plan, as well as program-level review for any subsequent actions related to implementation of general plan goals and policies. The County will review subsequent projects for consistency with the Program EIR and prepare appropriate environmental documentation pursuant to CEQA provisions for subsequent projects.

In addition to disclosing and documenting environmental effects of the General Plan, the analysis provided in the Program EIR is intended to establish a framework for subsequent, more detailed analyses associated with individual project applications. One of the County’s goals in preparing the current document is to reduce the amount of new information that would be required in the future at the project level by dealing as comprehensively as possible in this document with cumulative impacts and regional considerations.

The General Plan Update Program EIR will include chapters consistent with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, which would ensure that the eight proposed elements are comprehensively addressed. The environmental analysis is proposed to focus on the following technical environmental issues:

- Aesthetics;
- Agricultural, Forestry and Mineral Resources;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services;
- Recreation;
- Transportation and Circulation; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

Each EIR chapter will include a description of the existing environmental setting, regulatory context, and impacts and mitigation measures. The impacts and mitigation measures section of each chapter will include the methods of analysis and the

significance criteria used to determine the potential impacts resulting from buildout of the General Plan Land Use Map.

### **DISCUSSION OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

In accordance with Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines, an analysis of cumulative impacts will be provided in the EIR. In addition, pursuant to CEQA Section 21100(B)(5), the analysis addresses the potential for growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project.

### **DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES**

In accordance with Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, several project alternatives, including the No Project / Existing Conditions Alternative, will be analyzed. The remaining alternatives will be determined during the preparation of the Draft EIR. The alternatives analysis will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. The analysis will include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. The significant effects of the alternatives are discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the proposed project. The discussion will also identify and analyze the “environmentally superior alternative”.

### **SUBMITTING COMMENTS**

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed project is addressed and all significant issues are identified, written comments are invited from all interested parties regarding the scope of the environmental analysis as well as potential alternatives. Written comments concerning the proposed CEQA analysis for the Calaveras County General Plan Update project should be directed to the name and address below:

Peter N. Maurer, Planning Director  
Calaveras County Planning Department  
891 Mountain Ranch Road  
San Andreas, CA 95249  
(209) 754-6394

**Written comments are due to Calaveras County at the location addressed above by 5:00 p.m. on February 16, 2017. Comments can also be emailed to the County by this deadline at the following address: [gpupdate@co.calaveras.ca.us](mailto:gpupdate@co.calaveras.ca.us).**

**Figure 1**  
**Regional Location Map**



