

July 2020 – Environmental Impact Report Addendum

**ADDENDUM TO THE
CALAVERAS COUNTY GENERAL PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

SCH# 2017012043

Calaveras County

Prepared by:

Calaveras County
Peter Maurer, Planning Director
891 Mountain Ranch Road
San Andreas, CA 95249
209-754-6394



Background

On November 12, 2019 the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and adopted the General Plan. Fourteen objectives of the General Plan were identified and are listed below:

1. Protect property rights;
2. Provide flexibility in meeting the needs of the County;
3. Promote maintenance and development of productive resources;
4. Promote an improved, business friendly economic climate;
5. Enhance the County's tax base to provide needed services and fiscal stability;
6. Allow for diverse economic growth;
7. Support agriculture, forestry, mineral industries, recreation, and tourism where such endeavors are practical;
8. Preserve the natural beauty of the region where such preservation efforts are appropriate;
9. Preserve the character of historic communities within the County;
10. New development will provide infrastructure necessitated by development and maintain existing levels of service;
11. Maintain transportation connectivity and encourage other modes of transportation;
12. Coordinate the provision of essential services;
13. Protect citizens from hazards; and
14. Maintenance of open space, habitat, and resource lands will be accomplished by the continued ability of those who own, operate, or manage them.

As discussed in the Community Planning element, community plans have long been a component of Calaveras County's General Plan. Prior to the adoption of the current General Plan, there were community plans for Arnold, Avery/Hathaway Pines, Ebbetts Pass, Mokelumne Hill, Murphys/Douglas Flat, Rancho Calaveras, San Andreas, and Valley Springs. With the exception of plans for Mokelumne Hill, Rancho Calaveras and San Andreas, the Community Plans from the 1996 General Plan had not been revised and approved by the County to be included in the current General Plan. The Community Planning element includes Policy CP 1.1, which encourages each community that does not have a community plan included in the General Plan to find consensus in a community plan, applicable in particular to that community and consistent with this General Plan, that expresses that community's own goals, policies and implementation measures, and Implementation Measure CP-1A, which directs the County to support communities that wish to adopt or update community plans. The Community Planning element notes that additional community plans may be added through general plan amendments as they are completed.

The Board of Supervisors is proposing to amend the General Plan to incorporate the Valley Springs Community Plan. The proposed General Plan amendment would add a description of the Valley Springs Community and policies for that community to the Community Planning Element. The purpose of this addendum is to determine whether the proposed General Plan amendment would result in any new or substantially more severe significant impacts compared to what was analyzed in the EIR.

CEQA Analysis

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, an addendum to an EIR shall be prepared if some changes or additions are necessary, but none of the conditions identified in Guidelines Section 15162 have occurred. The following discussion concludes that the conditions set forth in Section 15162 are not present, and that an addendum is appropriate for the proposed Valley Springs Community policies amendment (Amendment).

Discussion

The discussion in this addendum confirms that the proposed Amendment would not require major revisions to the EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. As demonstrated below, the potential impacts of the Amendment were evaluated in a previously certified EIR and the EIR provides a sufficient and adequate analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed Amendment. Thus, the County determined that an addendum is the appropriate environmental document for adoption of the proposed Amendment.

Pursuant to Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the “lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an addendum to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.”

The following are the provisions from Guidelines Section 15162 referenced above describing when a subsequent EIR must be prepared:

- (a) *When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, one or more of the following:*
 - (1) *Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;*
 - (2) *Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or*
 - (3) *New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:*
 - (A) *The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;*
 - (B) *Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;*

- (C) *Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or*
- (D) *Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.*

The discussion below addresses whether any of these events have occurred.

Environmental Analysis

This section evaluates the potential for the proposed Amendment to result in new or substantially more severe significant impacts compared to the impacts disclosed for the adopted General Plan that was analyzed as the “proposed project” in the certified EIR. The environmental analysis provided in this section describes the information that was considered in evaluating the questions contained in the CEQA Checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The information used in this evaluation includes the certified Calaveras County General Plan EIR and the proposed Amendment.

The proposed amendment would add a section to the Community Planning Element of the General Plan that provides a description of the community of Valley Springs, its history, and a vision statement taken from documents worked on by community members over several years. In addition, 29 community-specific policies would be added that complement the General Plan policies that apply to the county as a whole. These policies are divided into six categories: Land Use, Circulation, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Natural Resources, and Safety and are intended to enhance the livability of Valley Springs and further protect community values and the environment unique to that community. The additional community-specific policies are consistent with the General Plan and would not cause additional development that was not contemplated in the EIR.

Aesthetics

The EIR found that there would be a significant and unavoidable impact due to the degradation of the existing visual character of the county. Implementation Measures PF-4D and LU-5A were modified through mitigation measure 4.1-2(a) to consider the environmental sensitivity when siting communication facilities, but development in the county would still result in potentially significant impacts. The proposed amendment would not increase potential impacts and would enhance measures to preserve the visual character of Valley Springs. Policy CPVS 1.1 requires preservation of view corridors, CPVS 1.2 encourages open space and greenbelts to protect views, CPVS 1.6 requires incorporation of existing vegetation and viewsheds into commercial development design. Policies CPVS 1.8 and 1.9 direct the protection of the historic character of the historic center of town. In the Natural Resources section, policies CPVS 5.1 and 5.3 limit development on steep slopes outside of the historic town site to protect scenic views and unique features. All other potential aesthetic impacts would remain less than significant. No new information nor substantial change has been identified that would require a subsequent EIR.

Agricultural, Forest, and Mineral Resources

The EIR found that there would be significant impacts from the development that would likely occur under the General Plan from conversion of farmland and loss of mineral resources. With mitigation, the impacts on mineral resources was determined to be less than significant, but the impact remained significant and unavoidable for the loss of important farmland. The adoption of these new policies would not change the land use map and would not increase potential development on agricultural land or land with mineral resources. There is no new information, changes in circumstances, or new measures that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

The EIR found that there would be a significant cumulative effect on the environment due to violation of air quality standards, exposure of sensitive receptors to pollution and odors, and generation of greenhouse gases. While mitigation measures were added, the development under the plan would still lead to significant and unavoidable air quality and GHG impacts. Several policies and implementation measures address efforts to reduce air quality and GHG impacts, and those would apply to any development in Valley Springs. None of the proposed policies would reduce the effectiveness of those policies nor would they provide for development that would increase potential impacts. Several proposed policies would encourage development that would promote pedestrian circulation (CPVS 1.6, 2.2 and 2.3). The addition of these policies would not increase the significant effect of these impacts. There is no new information, changes in circumstances, or new measures that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Biological Resources

Implementation of the General Plan would have potentially significant and unavoidable impacts on several biological resources. These included impacts to special status species, riparian habitats, oak woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife movement. While mitigation measures were incorporated into the general plan to reduce those impacts, they were still determined to be significant. Development in Valley Springs would still be subject to all of the mitigation measures and policies of the plan and the addition of the proposed community area policies would not increase the potential for impacts to biological resources or reduce the effectiveness of any of the measures. Proposed policies listed under Natural Resources would provide enhanced protection of riparian areas (CPVS 5.2) and oak tree protection (CPVS 5.4). There is no new information, changes in circumstances, or new measures that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Cultural Resources

Similarly, the EIR found that there could be significant and unavoidable impacts to a variety of cultural resources, including historic, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources. Mitigation measures were incorporated into the policies and implementation measures to reduce those impacts, but they were still considered significant. Several of the proposed policies would enhance cultural resource protection. These include CPVS 1.8, 1.9 and 5.3. The additional policies would not reduce the effectiveness of any of the existing policies or implementation measures. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Geology and Soils

No significant impacts to geologic resources, including soils and seismicity, were found by the EIR as a result of the General Plan. The proposed policies would not create any new impacts or

significantly increase impacts related to geology and soils. Proposed policies CPVS 5.1 and 5.2 would serve to enhance protection of geologic resources. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The only hazard identified in the EIR as being significant was the potential risk to structures and people from wildfire. This impact was found to be significant and unavoidable even after mitigation measure 4.7-5 (Policy S 3.2) was added. The additional policies will only enhance the ability to protect from wildfire hazards. Circulation Policy CPVS 2.1 directs the County to coordinate with other agencies to pursue an alternative route for State Routes 12 and 26 that would allow for better circulation and potential escape routes by improving through traffic flow around the center of the community. Safety Policy CPVS 6.1 encourages signage that will make it easier for residents fleeing a fire to find the emergency shelter. The additional policies would not reduce the effectiveness of any of the existing policies or implementation measures. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Hydrologic and water quality impacts were found to be less than significant in the EIR after mitigation measures were added. Measures addressed groundwater supplies and off-site storm water run-off. The proposed policies would not increase potential impacts or reduce the effectiveness of the measures. Policy CPVS 1.2 encourages the use of open space and greenbelts for storm-water management. Policy CPVS 1.6 requires projects to incorporate storm-water retention facilities which can reduce flood hazards and improve water quality. Policy CPVS 5.1 would limit development on steep hillsides to protect natural resources, which would include minimizing storm-water runoff and erosion potential. Policy CPVS 5.2 would prohibit development within the Cosgrove Creek floodplain. These policies would all enhance protections to hydrology and water quality. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Land Use and Planning

No significant impacts to land use and planning were found in the EIR resulting from development of the General Plan. The proposed Valley Springs Community Plan provides a description of the community, a brief history, a vision of what community members would like to see for their community, and a series of policies. All of these would serve to support the General Plan goals and policies to facilitate appropriate development within the communities, enhance economic growth and provide adequate infrastructure to support planned growth. There is no new information, changes in circumstances, or new measures that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Noise and Vibration

The EIR found that there would be substantial and unavoidable impacts from noise and vibrations resulting from implementing the General Plan. These included exposure of people from transportation noise, exposure to non-transportation noise sources, and an increase in temporary and permanent ambient noise levels. Additionally impacts were found to be significant from exposure to groundborne vibration and noise, but mitigation measure 4.10-3 (Policy N 1.14) reduced this impact to less than significant. Proposed Policy CPVS 2.1 would promote an alternate route for State Routes 12 and 26 to shift highway traffic, the primary source for

transportation noise, away from the center of the community, which would reduce, to some degree, the exposure of people living and working in the core area of Valley Springs to transportation noise sources. The other proposed policies would not reduce the effectiveness of any of the existing policies or implementation measures. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Population and Housing

The EIR found that the General Plan would result in population growth inducing impacts. The proposed Valley Springs Community Plan would not change the land use designation, and therefore, would not increase the potential for population growth in the area. The proposed policies would further clarify development expectations consistent with the goals and policies of the Land Use, Circulation, Public Facilities and Services, and Conservation and Open Space elements of the General Plan. There is no new information, changes in circumstances, or new measures that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Public Services and Utilities

The EIR found that there would be significant and unavoidable effects due to the need to provide new or expanded facilities for law enforcement, fire protection, and other public facilities to accommodate the growth projected in the General Plan. Significant and unavoidable impacts were also identified from the construction of water projects, wastewater treatment, telecommunication, and recreation facilities. The proposed policies would not increase the demand for these services, therefore, would not increase the severity of the impacts. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Transportation and Circulation

The EIR found that there would be a significant and unavoidable impact due to conflicts with adopted Caltrans plans for State-maintained roadways. Cumulative growth projections would exceed the desired level of service (LOS) on specified road segments on State Routes 12 and 26, both of which serve the Valley Springs area.¹ The proposed community plan would not increase density or intensity of development, therefore, there would be no increase in travel demand and corresponding reduction in LOS. Policy CPVS 2.1 directs the County to work with Caltrans to design and construct an alternate route around Valley Springs, which would improve travel times through town and improve LOS at the intersection of SR 12 and 26. Other policies would enhance non-vehicular modes of traffic (CPVS 2.2, traffic calming, and CPVS 1.5, pedestrian connections). The additional policies would not reduce the effectiveness of any of the existing policies or implementation measures. There are no changes in circumstances or new information that would warrant preparation of a subsequent EIR.

Cumulative Impacts

¹ As noted above, the purpose of an addendum is to document whether there are new or substantially more severe impacts compared to what was analyzed in a previously certified EIR. After the EIR was certified, the Legislature amended CEQA to prohibit agencies from considering changes in Level of Service or other measures of traffic congestion as significant environmental impacts. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21099, subd. (b)(2); CEQA Guidelines, § 15064.3.) In any event, the proposed modifications would not result in new or more severe significant impacts even if such analysis was required for this addendum.

The EIR found that with buildout of the draft General Plan, the associated impacts in combination with other projects would not create a substantial difference in the analyses and conclusions included throughout the EIR. The additional policies proposed with this amendment would not increase the severity of any of the impacts, and therefore, would not create any new substantial difference.

Alternatives

The DEIR analyzed three alternatives: No Project, Department of Finance (DOF) Projections, and Rural Character Protection. The addition of policies specific to the Valley Springs Community would not alter any of the impacts associated with these alternative because each alternative was a land use map based alternative. The proposed amendment would not change the land use map that was adopted when the EIR was certified in November, 2019.

Conclusion

The proposed General Plan amendment, adding community-specific policies for the Valley Springs area, would not result in new significant environmental impacts, or impacts that would be substantially more severe than those identified in the 2019 EIR. Based on the above analysis and discussion, no substantive revisions are needed to the 2019 Calaveras County Draft General Plan FEIR because no new significant impacts or substantially more severe impacts would result from the proposed amendment; because there have been no changes in circumstances in the project area that would result in new significant environmental impacts or substantially more severe impacts; and because no new information has come to light that would indicate the potential for new significant impacts or substantially more severe impacts than were discussed in the 2019 FEIR. Therefore, no further evaluation is required, and no Subsequent EIR is needed pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. This EIR Addendum has therefore appropriately been prepared, pursuant to Section 15164.