



## 7.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.6, the following Section describes a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed Project, which could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the proposed Project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The evaluation considers the comparative merits of each alternative. The analysis focuses on alternatives capable of eliminating significant environmental effects or reducing them to less than significant levels, even if these alternatives would impede, to some degree, the attainment of the Project objectives. Potential environmental impacts associated with four separate alternatives are compared to impacts from the proposed Project. The alternatives include the “No Project/No Development”, “No Project/Existing Designation”, “Reduced Density” and “Multiple Reservoirs Design” Alternative. The chapter concludes with identification of the “Environmentally Superior” Alternative. Refer to Table 7-1, *Comparison of Alternatives*, at the end of this Section for an impact matrix which compares the alternatives to the proposed Project.

### 7.1 “NO PROJECT/NO DEVELOPMENT” ALTERNATIVE

#### DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the No Project/No Development Alternative would retain the site in its current condition. None of the improvements proposed as part of the project and/or the existing General Plan Land Use (or Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan) designation would occur. It is noted that this Alternative is presented for the purposes of this EIR Alternatives Section. It is not the intent of the County to preclude development from occurring within the project site. The following discussion evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the No Project/No Development Alternative and compared to impacts from the proposed Project.

#### IMPACT COMPARISON TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

##### Land Use and Relevant Planning

According to the Madera County General Plan/ Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan, the area of the project site consisting of the proposed residential uses is designated for Very-Low Residential (VLDR), Low-Density Residential (LDR), Rural Residential (RR) uses. The land use designations in the Area Plan are consistent with the designations in the Madera County General Plan. The proposed water reservoir would be located in an area designated for Opens Space (OS) use.

Under the No Project/No Development Alternative no development would occur onsite. The existing land use designations would remain and an amendment to the General Plan/Area Plan would not occur. With no development occurring within the project site, it would remain in its existing undeveloped condition. The No Project/No



Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Recreation**

Since no new residents would be generated by this Alternative, no new demands would be placed on local and regional recreational facilities in the area. This Alternative would retain existing on-site paths/trails. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Public Services and Utilities**

Fire and Police Protection. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not involve new residences; thus, no new demand for fire and police protection services over existing conditions would be required. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Schools. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not generate additional school children and would not place demands on the school district serving the sites. Thus, this Alternative would not strain current educational resources. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

Libraries. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not generate additional residents and would not place demands on libraries serving the project site. Thus, this Alternative would not impact current resources. Since the proposed Project would create minimal demands on library resources, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Water and Sewer. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not involve development within the project area. Consequently, the need to develop facilities to divert water from Miami Creek would not occur under this Alternative. Additionally, it would not be necessary to construct water and wastewater treatment plants and on-site septic tanks under this Alternative. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

Solid Waste. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not produce new generators of solid waste, and would not impact existing County landfills. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Utilities. The No Project/No Development Alternative would not increase the demand for utility services beyond existing levels. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Aesthetics/Light and Glare**

The visual character of the site, which consists of undeveloped vacant land, would remain unchanged and no site grading would occur. Views to and from the site



would not be obstructed from the project site. In addition, lighting impacts would be eliminated, as no new light sources would be introduced onto the project site. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

### **Traffic and Circulation**

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not create new interior roads within the project area or increase project-related traffic above current levels. Due to the reduction in traffic generation, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Air Quality**

No new long-term sources of air pollution would result from increased traffic, wood burning fireplaces and the increased use of energy sources. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Noise**

The noise increases created by project-related traffic would not occur under this Alternative. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Biological Resources**

The impacts to plants and wildlife would not occur under this Alternative. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Cultural Resources**

The impacts to cultural resources would not occur under this Alternative. The No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Geology and Soils**

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not involve development within the project area. Consequently, no new structures would be subject to seismic hazards, such as ground shaking or seismically induced settling. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

### **Hydrology and Drainage**

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not involve development within the project area. Thus, no groundwater or surface water (Miami Creek) resources would be utilized and no new sources of stormwater runoff would be created.



Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

### **ABILITY TO MEET PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not result in any of the environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction and development of the proposed Project. This Alternative would avoid potential impacts resulting from alterations of the project sites' physical characteristics and construction of new structures and uses. Maintaining the Project site in its existing condition would not alter the visual characteristics of the Project site. The No Project/No Development Alternative would eliminate recreation, aesthetic, public services and utilities, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, cultural resources, geology, soils, hydrology and groundwater impacts associated with the proposed Project. This Alternative is not consistent with the Project objectives, which are to provide up to 315 single-family homes, on lots ranging from 7,000 sf. up to five (5) acres on approximately 487 acres of land.

## **7.2 “NO PROJECT/EXISTING DESIGNATION” ALTERNATIVE**

### **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE**

Implementation of the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be in accordance with the existing Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan land use designations, which are consistent with the Madera County General plan. The proposed densities would be consistent with the Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan. This Alternative would be more intensive than the proposed Project. The proposed Project would include 315 dwelling units. Assuming 3.055 persons per household, approximately 962 persons would be added to the permanent population of Madera County under the proposed Project. Approximately 545 dwelling units would occur at buildout of the project area under the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative. The proposed Project would result in land use designation changes that would affect approximately 245 acres, while approximately 294 acres would have land use designations that would remain unchanged. Assuming 3.055 persons per household, approximately 1,664 persons would be added to the permanent population of Madera County under this Alternative. The following discussion evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative as compared to impacts from the proposed Project.

### **IMPACT COMPARISON TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

#### **Land Use and Relevant Planning**

According to the Madera County General Plan/ Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan, the area of the project site consisting of the proposed residential uses is designated for Very-Low Residential (VLDR), Low-Density Residential (LDR), Rural Residential (RR) uses. Under the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative, dwelling units



consistent with the above stated land use designations would be developed. The existing land use designations would remain and an amendment to the General Plan/Area Plan would not be processed. The proposed Project would result in land use designation changes that would affect approximately 245 acres. Of the 245 acres that would result in land use designations changes, approximately 73 acres currently designated for open space uses would be converted to residential uses. Thus, an amendment to the Area Plan land use designation map would be required for the proposed Project. The proposed Project would also require that 345 acres zoned for Residential, Rural, Single-Family (two and one-half acre) (RRS-2 ½), Agricultural Rural, Exclusive (forty-acre district) (ARE-40) and Open Space (OS) be changed to Residential, Urban, Single-Family District (RUS), RRS, and RRS-5 uses. Implementation of the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would not require any changes to the existing zoning designations. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Recreation**

Approximately 1,934 new residents would be generated by this Alternative, as compared to 962 new residences under the proposed Project. The *Madera County General Plan Policy Document* has identified a park space standard of 3.0 acres of improved parkland per 1,000 residents. In consideration of the County's target parkland, the population increase generated by the proposed Project would create a demand for approximately 2.9 acres of parkland. In contrast, development under the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would create a demand for approximately 5.8 acres of parkland. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Public Services and Utilities**

Fire and Police Protection. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would result in development of 545 residential lots on the project site; thus; there would be an increase in the demand for fire and police protection services would occur over existing conditions. Similar to the proposed Project, this Alternative would result in the need for expansion or construction of fire protection facilities and potentially police protection facilities. Since development under this Alternative would result in approximately an additional 230 residences and 972 residents beyond the proposed Project, it is concluded that greater demands and further expansion to fire protection facilities would be required under this Alternative. Thus, the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

Schools. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would generate a total of approximately 317 students, with 153 students (0.28 students per unit x 545 units) to Yosemite Joint Union High School District (YJUHS) and 164 students (0.3 students per unit x 545 units) to Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District (BLJUESD). The proposed Project would generate approximately 183 students, with approximately 88 students to the YJUHS and 95 students to the BLJUESD. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would generate approximately 134 more students than the proposed Project. Since existing elementary school enrollments



are close to or exceed the capacity at the two schools that would serve the project site, increases in students would further strain resources. Since the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would generate more impact on existing educational resources, it would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

Libraries. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would generate approximately 972 additional residents beyond the proposed Project; however, as with the proposed Project, the addition of the new residents would not significantly impact libraries serving the project site. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Water and Sewer. Given that the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would result in development of 545 residential lots on the project site, the need to provide water and sewer treatment facilities for the project site would be more of an impact than with the proposed Project. Since groundwater supplies and surface water supplies within Miami Creek are limited, this Alternative would produce a greater impact to water resources, as compared to the proposed Project. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed project.

Solid Waste. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would produce more solid waste when compared to the proposed Project. Thus, this Alternative would result in more of an impact to existing landfills. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

Utilities. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would result in an increase in demand for utility services (i.e., gas, electric) beyond existing levels and at levels greater than those of the proposed Project. The need for modification and addition of utilities into the project site would be more than for the proposed Project. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Aesthetics/Light and Glare**

The visual character of the site, which consists of undeveloped vacant land, would be modified under the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative. Given that this Alternative involves 545 dwelling units, as compared to 315 dwelling units under the proposed Project, greater impacts are anticipated with respect to landform alteration, aesthetics and light and glare under this Alternative. Due to the location of the existing vegetation and topography, distant views of the foothills/mountain ranges would be similar to those of the proposed Project. However, the development of 545 lots under this Alternative would involve greater amounts of native habitat being removed for the proposed residential uses and more change to the existing visual character, as compared to the proposed Project. Thus, the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.



### **Traffic and Circulation**

The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would create new interior roads within the project area and would increase project-related traffic above current levels. Similar to the proposed Project, this Alternative would contribute to the projected intersection deficiency at Harmony Lane and State Route 49. However, this Alternative would result in greater new trips on the local road system when compared to the proposed Project. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Air Quality**

More vehicular trips would be generated under this Alternative than for the proposed Project, which would also produce more mobile and energy source emissions. With more homes, more particulate emissions would be generated. This Alternative would result in greater local and regional air pollutant emissions. Thus, the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Noise**

Given that approximately 230 more residential lots would occur under this Alternative, long-term noise levels associated with vehicular traffic would be higher than the noise levels under the proposed Project. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Biological Resources**

The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would impact existing on-site biological resources with the development of 545 residential lots, as compared to 315 residential lots of the proposed Project. This Alternative would result in greater amounts of trees removed and effects to habitat for sensitive plant and wildlife species as greater amounts of grading would be required for the increased number of residential lots, as compared to the proposed Project. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Cultural Resources**

Development under either the proposed Project or the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative has the potential to impact on-site cultural resources. Although the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would alter a greater quantity of land than the proposed Project, both would require monitoring by qualified archeological and/or paleontological experts. Thus, the No Project/No Development Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.



## **Geology and Soils**

Under this Alternative, more residents and structures would be exposed to seismic hazards than the proposed Project. The proposed Project would involve grading for 315 residences, while grading required for this Alternative would occur for development of 545 residential lots. The amount of grading associated with this Alternative would result in greater potential impacts resulting from slope stability than the proposed Project. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior.

## **Hydrology and Drainage**

The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would involve more development in the project area than the proposed Project. The amount of impermeable surface area (i.e., roads, driveways, etc) would be more with this Alternative than the proposed Project. Additionally, this Alternative would involve more residences and vehicles on-site, thus increasing sources of stormwater pollution runoff. Compared to the proposed Project, the No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior.

## **ABILITY TO MEET PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The No Project/No Development Alternative would increase the intensity of the environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction and development when compared to the proposed Project. This Alternative would increase potential impacts resulting from alterations of the Project sites' physical characteristics and construction of new structures and uses. By grading for 545 lots, as compared to 315 lots for the proposed Project, this Alternative would result in a greater change to the visual character of the site. The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would increase impacts to recreation, public services and utilities, aesthetics, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, geology/soils, hydrology/drainage and water resources associated with the proposed Project. This Alternative meets the objectives established in the Madera County General Plan and Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan and the objectives established for the proposed Project.

## **7.3 “REDUCED DENSITY” ALTERNATIVE**

### **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE**

For the Reduced Density Alternative, development of 302 dwelling units and associated infrastructure would occur on project site, as compared to 315 dwelling units under the proposed Project. Similar to the proposed Project, the proposed densities would be consistent with the General Plan/ Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan under this Alternative. This Alternative would downsize Phase 5 of the proposed Project, which encompasses lots 108 through 120 (14 one-acre lots). Under this Alternative, the Bobby Jones Court cul-de-sac would be eliminated and four (4) one-acre lots with all driveway entries would be constructed along Opah Drive. This would result in a net reduction of ten (10) lots. Also, under this Alternative, lots 44, 45 and 46 would be eliminated in Phase 2, which would





represent a total residence reduction of 13 lots or 4.1 percent of the proposed Project, as well as a reduction of 40 residents from the projected population increase as compared to the proposed Project. This Alternative would also include one water reservoir to serve the proposed residential uses. The following discussion evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the Reduced Density Alternative as compared to impacts from the proposed Project.

## **IMPACT COMPARISON TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **Land Use and Relevant Planning**

This Alternative would require amending the existing Madera County General Plan/Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan land use designations within the area southeast of the Sierra Meadows Golf Course from Rural Residential (RR) land uses to RER uses and the areas west, east and north of the Sierra Meadows Golf Course from Low Density Residential (LDR) and RR to VLDR uses. Additionally, changes to the existing zoning designations would need to be processed. Since both projects would require amendments to the General Plan/Area Plan land use designation map, as well as include residential densities below the current allowable density provided by the existing land use designations, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Recreation**

Approximately 922 new residents would be generated by this Alternative, as compared to 962 new residences under the proposed Project. The *Madera County General Plan Policy Document* has identified a park space standard of 3.0 acres of improved parkland per 1,000 residents. In consideration of the County's target parkland, the population increase generated by the proposed Project would create a demand for parkland. In contrast, development under the Reduced Density Alternative would create a demand for approximately 2.8 acres of parkland. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Public Services and Utilities**

Fire and Police Protection. The Reduced Density Alternative would result in development of 302 residential lots on the project site; thus; there would be an increase in the demand for fire and police protection services would occur over existing conditions. Similar to the proposed Project, this Alternative would result in the need for expansion or construction of fire protection facilities and potentially police protection facilities. Since development under this Alternative would result in approximately 13 fewer residences and 40 fewer residents as compared to the proposed Project, it is concluded that less demand would be placed on fire and police protection services under this Alternative. Thus, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Schools. The Reduced Density Alternative would generate a total of approximately 176 students, with 85 students (0.28 students per unit x 302 units) allocated to Yosemite Joint Union High School District (YJUHS) and 91 students (0.3 students



per unit x 302 units) allocated to Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District (BLJUESD). The proposed Project would generate approximately 183 students, with approximately 88 students to the YJUHS and 95 students to the BLJUESD. The Reduced Density Alternative would generate approximately 7 fewer students than the proposed Project. Since existing elementary school enrollments are close to or exceed the capacity at the two schools that would serve the project site, increases in students would further strain resources. Since the Reduced Density Alternative would generate fewer impacts on existing educational resources, it would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Libraries. The Reduced Density Alternative would generate approximately 40 fewer residents as compared to the proposed Project; however, as with the proposed Project, the addition of the new residents would not significantly impact libraries serving the project site. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Water and Sewer. Given that the Reduced Density Alternative would result in development of 302 residential lots on the project site, the need to provide water and sewer treatment facilities for the project site would be less of an impact than with the proposed Project. Since groundwater supplies and surface water supplies within Miami Creek are limited, this Alternative would produce a smaller impact to water resources. Thus, compared to the proposed Project, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed project.

Solid Waste. The Reduced Density Alternative would produce less solid waste when compared to the proposed Project. Thus, this Alternative would result in less of an impact to existing landfills. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Utilities. The Reduced Density Alternative would result in an increase in demand for utility services (i.e., gas, electric) beyond existing levels, but at levels less than those of the proposed Project. The need for modification and addition of utilities into the project site would be less than for the proposed Project. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

### **Aesthetics/Light and Glare**

The visual character of the site, which consists of undeveloped foothill woodland habitat, would be modified under the Reduced Density Alternative. Given that this Alternative proposes 302 residential lots, fewer changes to the site character are anticipated with respect to landform alteration, aesthetics and light and glare. Due to the location of the existing vegetation and topography, distant views of the foothills/mountain ranges would be similar to those of the proposed Project. Although development under this Alternative would involve fewer amounts of native habitat being removed for the proposed residential uses, impacts to the site's visual character, effects to scenic vistas and cumulative aesthetic impacts would be significant and unavoidable, similar to the proposed Project. Thus, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.



## **Traffic and Circulation**

The Reduced Density Alternative would create new interior roads within the project area and would increase project-related traffic above current levels. Similar to the proposed Project, this Alternative would contribute to the projected intersection deficiency at Harmony Lane and State Route 49. However, this Alternative would result in fewer new trips on the local road system when compared to the proposed Project. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

## **Air Quality**

Fewer vehicular trips would be generated under this Alternative than for the proposed Project, which would also produce less mobile and energy source emissions. With fewer homes, less particulate emissions would be generated. This Alternative would result in fewer local and regional air pollutant emissions. Thus, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

## **Noise**

Given that approximately 13 fewer residential lots would occur under this Alternative, long-term noise levels associated with vehicular traffic would be proportionally lower than the noise levels under the proposed Project. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

## **Biological Resources**

The Reduced Density Alternative would impact existing on-site biological resources with the development of 302 residential lots, as compared to 315 residential lots of the proposed Project. This Alternative would result in fewer amounts of trees removed and effects to habitat for sensitive plant and wildlife species as fewer amounts of grading would be required for the decreased number of residential lots, as compared to the proposed Project. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

## **Cultural Resources**

Development under either the proposed Project or the Reduced Density Alternative has the potential to impact on-site cultural resources. Although the Reduced Density Alternative would alter a greater quantity of land than the proposed Project, both would require monitoring by qualified archeological and/or paleontological experts. Thus, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

## **Geology and Soils**

Under this Alternative, fewer residents and structures would be exposed to seismic hazards than the proposed Project. The proposed Project would involve grading for 315 residences, while grading required for this Alternative would occur for



development of 302 residential lots. The amount of grading associated with this Alternative would result in proportionally fewer potential impacts resulting from slope stability than the proposed Project. Additionally, by eliminating lots 44, 45 and 46, the extensive grading necessary to create access to these lots via Sam Snead Court would be eliminated. The Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed project.

### **Hydrology and Drainage**

The Reduced Density Alternative would involve less development in the project area than the proposed Project. The amount of impermeable surface area (i.e., roads, driveways, etc) would be less with this Alternative than the proposed Project. This Alternative would involve fewer residences and vehicles on-site, thus decreasing sources of stormwater pollution runoff. Also, by eliminating the Bobby Jones Court cul-de-sac and building only four (4) one-acre lots in Phase 5, as compared 14 one-acre lots under the proposed Project, there would be a substantial reduction of any potential silt exposure along Miami Creek during construction activities. Compared to the proposed Project, the Reduced Density Alternative would be considered environmentally superior.

### **ABILITY TO MEET PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The Reduced Density Alternative would decrease the intensity of the environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction and development of the proposed Project. This Alternative would decrease potential impacts resulting from alterations of the Project sites' physical characteristics and construction of new structures and uses. Although this Alternative would involve decreased residential densities, aesthetic impacts would remain significant and unavoidable, similar to the proposed Project. The Reduced Density Alternative would result in reduced impacts to recreation, public services and utilities, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, geology and soils, and hydrology and drainage associated with the proposed Project. Although this Alternative includes 302 single-family homes, it closely meets the Project objectives, which include the development of a single-family residential subdivision consisting of 315 single-family homes.

## **7.4 “MULTIPLE RESERVOIRS DESIGN” ALTERNATIVE**

### **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE**

Development of the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project in that it would take into account the entire 487-acre property, as well as adjacent land to be utilized for water storage facilities. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would include the same number of proposed dwelling units (315 dwelling units), at the same density, as the proposed Project. The difference between the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative and the proposed project is that the Proposed Project includes one 227-acre foot reservoir, while the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would include a series of nine (9) reservoir facilities to provide water storage for the proposed project. The nine reservoirs would be generally located in the same area as the water reservoir included in the proposed Project. The total capacity of the nine reservoirs would be same as the



reservoir for the proposed Project. Although the nine reservoirs would have varying capacity, each dam would be below the capacity and embankment height threshold levels to qualify for jurisdiction under the California Department of Water Resources Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD). The reservoir under the proposed Project would be under DSOD jurisdiction.

## **IMPACT COMPARISON TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **Land Use and Relevant Planning**

Similar to the proposed Project, this Alternative would require amendments to the land use designations in the Madera County General Plan and the Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan. Similar changes to the zoning designations would also be required. Since both projects would require amendments to the General Plan/Area Plan land use designation map and would include residential densities below the current allowable density provided by the existing land use designations, the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Recreation**

Approximately 962 new residents would be generated by this Alternative or the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar recreation impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Public Services and Utilities**

Fire and Police Protection. Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar fire protection service impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Schools. Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar impacts to schools are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Libraries. Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar impacts to libraries are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Water and Sewer. Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar water and sewer impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed



Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Solid Waste. Approximately 962 new residents would be generated by this Alternative or the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar solid waste impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

Utilities. Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. The need for modification and addition of utilities into the project site would be similar for this Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Aesthetics/Light and Glare**

The visual character of the site that would include the proposed residential uses, which consists of undeveloped foothill woodland habitat, would be permanently modified under both the proposed Project and the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative. As a result, aesthetic impacts for the proposed Project and the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be significant and unavoidable. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would include two reservoirs that would be visible from the adjacent stretch of Opah Drive, as compared to the one large reservoir of the proposed Project. Under both the proposed Project and the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative, the downstream portion of the earthen dam feature(s) would be visible. Under both scenarios, this portion(s) of the dam would likely consist of riprap that would integrate the vegetative characteristics of the existing natural environment. The proposed water reservoir facilities would not obstruct short- or long-range views from surrounding land uses across the project site of the existing foothill woodland habitat or the distant foothill/mountain ranges. Potentially, removal of vegetation associated with the water reservoir(s) would enhance long-range views. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Traffic and Circulation**

Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar traffic and circulation impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Air Quality**

Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. Accordingly, similar air quality impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.



## **Noise**

Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. However, construction related impacts under the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would not likely involve blasting to excavate the multiple reservoirs, as compared to the proposed Project. Thus, the proposed Project could temporarily expose sensitive surrounding land uses (i.e., residences) to higher single-event levels than the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative. However, blasting noise generated by the proposed Project would be monitored by geophysical firm to ensure that noise and vibration impacts are reduced to less than significant levels. Accordingly, similar noise impacts are anticipated to occur for the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative and the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

## **Biological Resources**

Development under either the proposed Project or the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative has the potential to impact on-site biological resources. The proposed Project would impact approximately two (2) acres of ephemeral drainage habitat in the location of the proposed 227-acre reservoir. As numerous areas of ephemeral drainage habitat are located in the area of the nine reservoirs under the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative, there is the potential that impacts to ephemeral drainage habitat are greater under this Alternative. Thus, the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

## **Cultural Resources**

Development under either the proposed Project or the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative has the potential to impact on-site cultural resources. Although the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would alter a greater quantity of land than the proposed Project (at the reservoir locations only), both would require monitoring by qualified archeological and/or paleontological experts. Thus, the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would be considered neither environmentally superior nor inferior to the proposed Project.

## **Geology and Soils**

Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. The water reservoir facility and dam features of the proposed Project would be subject to the design and safety requirements of the DSOD. Compliance with the DSOD regulations, along with Madera County Standards, would ensure that potential safety impacts as a result of geology-related hazards are reduced to less than significant levels. In contrast, the multiple water reservoirs proposed under the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would not be subject to DSOD safety and design standards. The network of reservoirs and dams under this Alternative would be more susceptible to safety impacts from geology-related hazards as a result of not designing the dams to DSOD standards. Additionally, the overall design would create increased opportunity for dam failure due to the dam



configuration and number of dams. Thus, the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **Hydrology and Drainage**

Residential development proposed under this Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. The water reservoir facility and dam features of the proposed Project would be subject to the design and safety requirements of the DSOD. Compliance with the DSOD regulations, along with Madera County Standards, would ensure that potential flooding impacts are reduced to less than significant levels. In contrast, the multiple water reservoirs proposed under the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would not be subject to DSOD safety and design standards. The network of reservoirs and dams under this Alternative would be more susceptible to flooding impacts as a result of not designing the dams to DSOD standards. Additionally, the overall design would create increased opportunity for dam failure due to the dam configuration and number of dams. Thus, the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be considered environmentally inferior to the proposed Project.

### **ABILITY TO MEET PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

Residential development proposed under the Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would be similar to the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoirs Design Alternative would not decrease the intensity of any environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project, but would increase impacts to biological resources, geology and soils, and hydrology and drainage. In particular, by not constructing the network of reservoirs to DSOD design and safety requirements, the potential for dam failure and associated flooding impacts may increase under this Alternative. This would present significant safety issues to surrounding land uses, as well as the proposed residential uses, in the vicinity of the water reservoir(s) area. This Alternative is consistent with the Project objectives, which are to provide up to 315 single-family homes, on lots ranging from 7,000 sf. up to five (5) acres on approximately 487 acres of land.

## **7.5 “ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR” ALTERNATIVE**

The proposed Project would generate impacts related to public services and utilities, recreation, aesthetics, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils and hydrology and drainage. All impacts, with the exception of those identified for aesthetics, air quality, and biological resources can be mitigated to less than significant levels. The identified aesthetic, air quality, and biological resources impacts remain significant and unavoidable, even with the imposition of mitigation measures.

The No Project/Existing Designation Alternative would increase impacts from those anticipated for the proposed Project. The Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would increase impacts to biological resources, geology and soils, and hydrology and drainage. The Reduced Density Alternative would result in fewer impacts to recreation, public services and utilities, aesthetics, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, geology and soils, and hydrology and drainage. The No Project/No Development Alternative would eliminate and/or reduce all environmental impacts from those anticipated for the proposed Project. Thus, the No Project/No





Development Alternative would be the Environmental Superior Alternative. However, as cited in Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines: *“If the environmentally superior alternative is the “No Project” Alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.”* Although the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative would meet the Project Objectives, it would present significant safety issues for surrounding land uses and the proposed residential uses in the water reservoir(s) area. Thus, the Multiple Reservoir Design Alternative is not being considered as the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The Reduced Density Alternative is concluded as the environmentally superior alternative, since it not only would reduce impacts as compared to the proposed project, but also more closely meets the objectives of the proposed project by including the development of 302 single-family homes.

**Table 7-1  
Comparison of Alternative Environmental Impacts with Proposed Project**

Issue	No Project/No Development	No Project/ Existing Designation	Reduced Density	Multiple Reservoir Design
Land Use and Relevant Planning	□	□	=	=
Recreation	□	■	□	=
Fire and Police Protection	□	■	□	=
Schools	□	■	□	=
Libraries	□	=	=	=
Water and Sewer	□	■	□	=
Solid Waste	□	■	□	=
Utilities	□	■	□	=
Aesthetics/Light and Glare	□	■	=	=
Traffic and Circulation	□	■	□	=
Air Quality	□	■	□	=
Noise	□	■	□	=
Biological Resources	□	■	□	□
Cultural Resources	□	=	=	=
Geology and Soils	□	■	□	□
Hydrology and Drainage	□	■	□	□
= Impact is equivalent to impact of proposed Project (neither environmentally superior nor inferior). □ Impact is less than impact of proposed Project (environmentally superior). ■ Impact is greater than impact of proposed Project (environmentally inferior).				