



4.0 BASIS FOR CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Section 15355 of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, as amended, provides the following definition of cumulative impacts: “Cumulative impacts’ refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” Pursuant to Section 15130(a) of the aforementioned Guidelines, cumulative impacts of a project shall be discussed when the project’s effect is cumulatively considerable, as defined in Section 15065(c) of the Guidelines. Section 5.0 of this EIR provides a cumulative impact assessment for each applicable environmental issue, and does so to a degree which reflects each impact’s severity and likelihood of occurrence.

As indicated above, a cumulative impact involves two or more individual effects. Per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130, the discussion of cumulative impacts shall be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness. Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b), the following elements are necessary in an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:

1. Either:
 - a. A list of past, present and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the Agency, or
 - b. A summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact.
2. A summary of the expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects with specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available; and
3. A reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects. An EIR shall examine reasonable, feasible options for mitigating or avoiding the project’s contribution to any significant cumulative effects.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b), this EIR includes cumulative impact assessments for each applicable environmental issue area based upon a summary of projections in the Madera County General Plan (adopted in 1995) and refined in the Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan (adopted in 1999). An EIR was not prepared for the Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan; however, an EIR is included with the 1995 Madera County General Plan, which focuses on the cumulative impacts of development/buildout under the General Plan through 2010. The cumulative impact assessments reference the impact conclusions in the General Plan EIR for each applicable environmental issue area. This EIR then provides an analysis of any feasible options for mitigating or avoiding the project’s contribution to any significant cumulative effects. Based upon this analysis, the EIR provides a



conclusion of the significance of cumulative impacts associated with project build-out conditions.

It is recognized that not all phases of project development may be complete by 2010 and project construction may extend until 2015. Thus, to determine impacts of Year 2015 conditions, it would be necessary to apply an assumed growth rate of two and one-half percent (2.5%) to Year 2010 conditions and then conduct an analysis for each environmental issue area. For purposes of conducting the cumulative impact analysis, it is assumed that the impact conclusions in the 1995 General Plan EIR for Year 2010 conditions are also applicable to Year 2015 conditions.

Additionally, based upon correspondence with Madera County Road Department, the cumulative traffic and noise assessments are based upon forecast Year 2025 conditions and not Year 2015 conditions. According to the Madera County Road Department, the cumulative traffic assessment should be based upon the most up-to-date Regional Transportation Model (Year 2025 traffic conditions) available at the Madera County Transportation Commission. Since long-term operational noise impacts are based upon the available traffic data, the cumulative noise assessment is also reflective of Year 2025 conditions.

The 1995 Madera County General Plan considers the project area and shows Oakhurst as a regional retail shopping and commercial service center and the largest concentration of employment in Eastern Madera County, with approximately 2,870 employees as of 1990. The General Plan envisions that the North 41 Corridor Area, which includes communities along SR-49 and along SR-41 north of State Route 45, including Ahwahnee, Oakhurst, Coarsegold, Yosemite Lakes Park and the Bass Lake area, would have a population of 33,000 persons and employment of 8,300 persons by 2010. According to the Ahwahnee/Nipinnawasee Area Plan, by 2020, these projections are anticipated to increase to 40,600 and 11,000 respectively.