

3A.1 AESTHETICS – LAND

This section contains a program-level evaluation of visual resources. However, impacts to visual resources would be the same under each individual development phase as under the program (entire SPA) analysis.

3A.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

VISUAL ASSESSMENT AND VISUAL QUALITY CRITERIA

The aesthetic quality of an area is determined through the variety and contrasts of the area's visual features, the character of those features, and the scope and scale of the scene. The aesthetic quality of an area depends on the relationships between its features and their importance in the overall view. Evaluating scenic resources requires a method that characterizes visual features, assesses their quality in relation to the visual character of the surrounding area, and identifies their importance to the individuals viewing them. This process is derived from established procedures for visual assessment developed by Federal agencies, and is commonly used for a variety of project types.

Both natural and created features in a landscape contribute to its visual quality. Landscape characteristics influencing visual quality include geologic, hydrologic, botanical, wildlife, recreation, and urban features. Several sets of criteria have been developed for defining and evaluating visual quality. The criteria developed by the Federal Highway Administration in 1981, which are used in this analysis, include the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity. According to these criteria, none of these is itself equivalent to visual quality; all three must be considered high to indicate high quality. These terms are defined as follows:

- ▶ “Vividness” is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.
- ▶ “Intactness” is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.
- ▶ “Unity” is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole.

The analysis of visual resources for this project uses a qualitative approach for characterizing and evaluating the visual resources of the areas that could be affected by the project. The quality of views of areas that could be affected by the project is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity apparent in views. Viewer sensitivity, also considered in relation to these criteria, is a function of several factors, including the following:

- ▶ visibility of the landscape,
- ▶ proximity of viewers to the visual resources,
- ▶ frequency and duration of views,
- ▶ number of viewers,
- ▶ types of individuals and groups of viewers, and
- ▶ viewers' expectations as influenced by their activity.

The viewer's distance from landscape elements plays an important role in the determination of an area's visual quality. Landscape elements are considered higher or lower in visual importance based on their proximity to the viewer. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant, and therefore visually important, it is to the viewer. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) separates landscapes into foreground, middleground, and background views. Although this should be considered on a case-by-case basis, in general, the foreground is characterized by clear details (within 0.25 or 0.5 mile from the viewer); the middleground is characterized by loss of clear texture within a landscape creating a uniform appearance (foreground to 3–5 miles in the distance); and

the background extends from the middleground to the limit of human sight (USFS 1974). The USFS foreground, middleground, and background view approach is used in this analysis.

REGIONAL SETTING

The SPA is located in eastern Sacramento County, immediately south of the Folsom city limits. The SPA is generally bounded by U.S. Highway 50 (U.S. 50) to the north, White Rock Road to the south, Prairie City Road to the west, and the Sacramento/El Dorado County line to the east.

The SPA is located partially within in the Sierra Nevada foothills and partially within the eastern edge of the Sacramento Valley. The Sierra Nevada foothills consist of gently rolling terrain that grades upward to the east into the higher mountain elevations. The Sacramento Valley is a nearly flat alluvial plain that extends almost 180 miles from the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta on the south and the city of Redding on the north, and approximately 50 miles from the Sierra Nevada mountains on the east and the Coast Range on the west.

VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE SPA

Visual Character

The SPA consists of over 3,500 acres of undeveloped grasslands that is currently used for cattle grazing. The City of Folsom is located to the north (Viewpoint 1, Exhibit 3A.1-1), the community of El Dorado Hills is located to the east (Viewpoint 2, Exhibit 3A.1-1), land owned by Aerojet General Corporation is located to the west (Viewpoint 3, Exhibit 3A.1-1), and undeveloped land within the unincorporated area of Sacramento County is located south of the SPA (Viewpoint 4, Exhibit 3A.1-1). In the background, the Rancho Seco Nuclear Generating Station (a decommissioned nuclear power plant), appears on the skyline to the south; on clear days, the skyscrapers of downtown Sacramento are visible to the southwest; the Sierra Nevada mountain range can be seen to the southeast; and the Coast Range is within view to the west (Viewpoint 5, Exhibit 3A.1-1).

Developed land north and east of the SPA consists of large residential and commercial developments, several of which are currently under construction. Neighborhoods and shopping centers are generally concentrated as units, and are separated by areas of open space. General visual uniformity between developments exists with use of color schemes that tend to be limited to browns, reds, and neutrals (Viewpoint 6, Exhibit 3A.1-1).

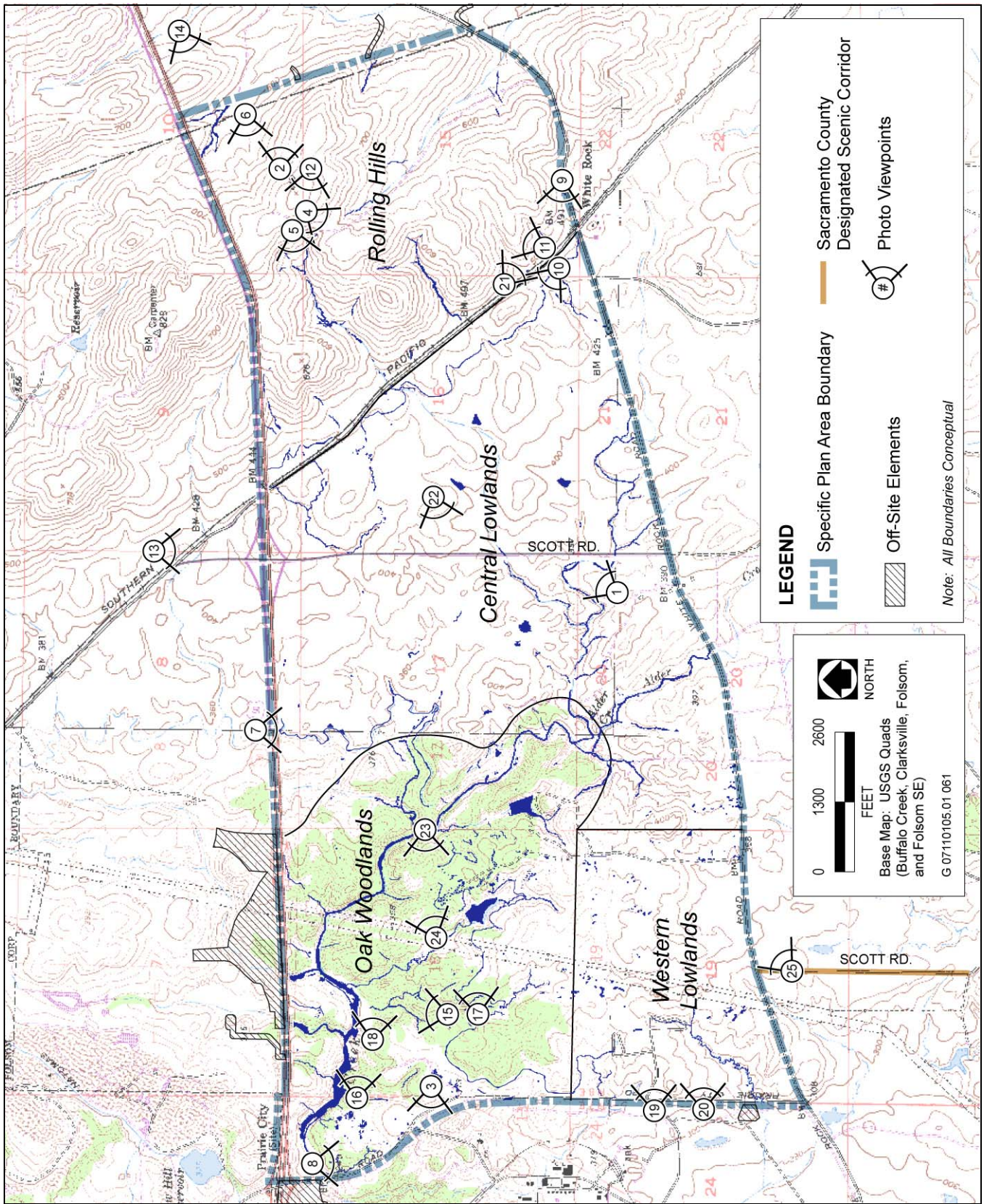
The SPA, as a whole, contains high levels of vividness, intactness, and unity. Because the visual character of this SPA is of high quality, and it is part of a large stretch of undeveloped land along U.S. 50 in eastern Sacramento County that contains oak woodlands and rock outcroppings, it is considered to be a scenic vista.

Sensitive Viewers

As described above, viewer sensitivity is related to the values and opinions of a particular group and can be generally characterized by the viewer activity, awareness, and local significance of a site. The SPA can be seen by two types of sensitive viewer groups: travelers on roadways and people within the City of Folsom.

Travelers include both the drivers and passengers on the following routes:

- ▶ U.S. 50 (Viewpoint 7, Exhibit 3A.1-1);
- ▶ Prairie City Road (Viewpoint 8, Exhibit 3A.1-1);
- ▶ White Rock Road (Viewpoint 9, Exhibit 3A.1-1);
- ▶ Scott Road (Viewpoint 10, Exhibit 3A.1-1); and
- ▶ Placerville Road (Viewpoint 11, Exhibit 3A.1-1).



Source: Sacramento Area Council Of Governments 2006, RRM Design Group 2008, and AECOM 2009

Landscapes and Viewpoints

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 1: Viewpoint from the central lowlands, looking north towards the City of Folsom. Ephemeral drainage and oak trees are visible in the foreground, and Scott Road is visible in the middleground. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 2: Viewpoint from the rolling hills area in the eastern portion of the SPA looking southeast toward the community of El Dorado Hills in the middleground. Rock outcroppings are visible in the foreground. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 1 and 2)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 3: Viewpoint from the oak woodlands at the western SPA boundary, looking northwest toward the entrance to Aerojet General Corporation facilities west of the SPA. Prairie City Road is in the foreground, oak woodlands on Aerojet General Corporation property are in the middleground, and the City of Folsom is visible in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 4: View from the rolling hills in the eastern portion of the SPA, looking south. An ephemeral drainage, a dirt road, and agricultural fencing are located in the foreground, the central lowlands and oak woodland areas of the SPA are located in the middleground, and the Sacramento Valley is located in the background. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 3 and 4)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 5: View from the rolling hills looking west. The central and eastern lowlands, and oak woodlands on the SPA are visible in the middleground. The Sacramento Valley and the Coast Range are located in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 6: View from the rolling hills near the El Dorado County line towards the community of El Dorado Hills and the Stonebrier residential development. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 5 and 6)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 7: View from the north side of U.S. 50 looking toward the SPA. Note the oak woodlands in the middleground and high-voltage electrical transmission lines and towers in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 8: View from Prairie City Road looking south. Alder Creek is visible in the foreground, the oak woodlands area of the SPA is located on the left side of the photograph, and Aerojet General Corporation property (which is part of the Easton development project) is located on the right side of the photograph. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 7 and 8)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 9: View of the SPA from White Rock Road looking west. Note the quartz rock outcropping on the right side of the photograph. The central lowlands, eastern lowlands, and oak woodlands are located in the middleground of the photograph. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 10: View of the SPA from Scott Road looking northwest. The central lowlands are located in the foreground and middleground, and the City of Folsom is located in the background. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 9 and 10)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 11: View of the SPA from Scott Road looking northeast. Note the radio towers in the middleground, located within the rolling hills area. The City of Folsom is partially visible in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 12: View of the radio towers located within the rolling hills in the eastern portion of the SPA. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 11 and 12)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 13: View from Handy Family Park, located within the City of Folsom. The middleground contains a view of the central lowlands and oak woodlands portion of the SPA. The Coast Range is located in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 14: View from Town Center Boulevard in El Dorado Hills. The radio towers located within the rolling hills area of the SPA are within view in the middleground of the photograph. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 13 and 14)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 15: View of oak trees and water feature within the oak woodlands area of the central portion of the SPA. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 16: View of Alder Creek from within the SPA, looking east. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 15 and 16)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 17: View within the oak woodland area of the SPA, looking east. Electrical transmission lines in the foreground are oriented in an east-west direction, and the high-voltage electrical transmission lines in the middleground are oriented in a north-south direction. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 18: View of the SPA from within the oak woodlands. Note rock outcroppings. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 17 and 18)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 19: View from Prairie City Road, looking east toward the eastern lowlands area of the SPA. Note the scattered oak trees, high-voltage electrical transmission lines, and electrical transmission towers. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 20: View from Prairie City Road looking toward on-site monitoring wells, used to assess the status of remediation of the Area 40 Superfund Site. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 19 and 20)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 21: View from within the central lowlands portion of the SPA, east of Scott Road. Note the rock outcroppings and agricultural fencing in the foreground, and oak woodlands in the background. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 22: View from Placerville Road looking south onto the eastern portion of the SPA. Note the electrical power lines and railroad tracks. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 21 and 22)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 23: View from Scott Road looking west toward the oak woodlands on the SPA. Note the agricultural fencing and rock outcroppings in the foreground. (AECOM 2009)



Viewpoint 24: View from the oak woodlands, just east of the high-voltage electrical transmission lines, looking east. The radio towers in the rolling hills are visible on the horizon, and U.S. 50 is within view on the left side of the photograph. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoints 23 and 24)

Exhibit 3A.1-1



Viewpoint 25: View from Scott Road, south of White Rock Road, looking toward the eastern side of the SPA. Middleground views include the central lowland and the radio towers on the rolling hills. (AECOM 2009)

Representative Photographs (Viewpoint 25)

Exhibit 3A.1-1

Sensitive viewer groups within the city of Folsom, community of El Dorado Hills, and unincorporated portions of Sacramento County include:

- ▶ Residents (Viewpoint 13, Exhibit 3A.1-1); and
- ▶ Employees and patrons at businesses (Viewpoint 14, Exhibit 3A.1-1).

For the purposes of this discussion, the SPA is separated into four distinct landscape areas: oak woodlands, western lowlands, central lowlands, and rolling hills (see Exhibit 3A.1-1). The following is a discussion of each landscape area that considers visual quality and viewer sensitivity.

Oak Woodlands

Visual Character

The oak woodlands are located in the northwestern portion of the SPA. The landscape of this area is characterized by low hills covered with oak trees, and narrow valleys containing ephemeral drainages and creeks (Viewpoint 14, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Views from within the oak woodlands are generally limited to the foreground, and include oak trees, Alder Creek, drainages, ponds, swales, and grassy hills. High-voltage electrical transmission lines and towers run through the middle of this area in a north-south direction, and electrical transmission lines on wooden poles run in an east-west direction (Viewpoint 17, Exhibit 3A.1-1). These are visible from certain viewpoints, although the topography and concentration of trees in this area provides a barrier against these encroachments from the majority of perspectives. Similarly, the City of Folsom and U.S. 50, visible to the north, and radio towers equipped with lights to provide airspace safety are located on the rolling hills area to the east, are visible only from certain locations within the oak woodlands, and are not substantial encroachments on far-reaching views (Viewpoint 24, Exhibit 3A.1-1). In addition, one rural residence is located within the south-eastern corner of the

oak woodlands; however, it is not visible from any existing public roadways or people located within the city of Folsom.

Because the oak woodlands are located within gently rolling terrain, the edges of this area and some peaks in elevation provide broad views of thousands of acres of open space. Although development exists to the east of the SPA, it is not visible to viewers within the oak woodlands, and the resulting view is that of vast undeveloped land. The southern edge of the oak woodlands provides a middleground view of the eastern lowland and a background of gently rolling grasslands. This presents the viewer with a sense of continuous, undeveloped open space covered in low-lying vegetation. Although industrial buildings on Aerojet General Corporation property are visible at some locations across Prairie City Road, views to the west are dominated by oak woodlands and grass-covered hills. (Viewpoint 8, Exhibit 3A.1-1.) The oak woodlands are viewed by travelers on U.S. 50, Prairie City Road south of U.S. 50, rural residents near and within the SPA, and people in the southern portion of the City of Folsom. It is an area of high visual quality. The visual assessment criteria for the oak woodlands landscape area are provided below.

- ▶ **Vividness:** The oak woodlands are essentially covered in vegetation consisting of grasslands and tree cover. This landscape is traversed by numerous water features including seasonal wetlands, stock ponds, creeks, ephemeral drainage, and most notably Alder Creek, located at the northern extent of the oak woodlands (Viewpoint 16, Exhibit 3A.1-1). The vividness of this landscape remains year-round. During the winter months, the oak trees lose their leaves and the annual grasses become green, while during summer months when the oak trees are covered in leaves, the grasses lose their color, becoming light brown. In contrast, the alluvial plain created by Alder Creek remains vegetated year-round, and provides an undeveloped riparian landscape. Vegetation near Alder Creek includes oak trees, shrubs such as blackberry, and riparian vegetation including cattails. Two sets of electrical transmission lines travel through the oak woodlands: one in a north-south (high-voltage lines) direction and the other in an east-west direction. The north-south line is the larger encroachment of the two, consisting of two sets of towers standing well above the tree line, as compared to the east-west line, which tends to blend in with the surrounding landscape (Viewpoint 17, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Although these electrical transmission lines are substantial encroachments on the oak woodland landscape from points where they are visible, in general they do not impede the view. Because the oak woodlands offer a memorable landscape that provides a distinct pattern within the project vicinity, it is considered to have high levels of vividness.
- ▶ **Intactness:** As described above, two sets of electrical transmission lines exist within the oak woodlands. These, in addition to agricultural accessories, including fences and dirt roadways, disrupt the integrity of the landscape. However, the oak woodlands cover approximately one-quarter of the SPA, and although both sets of electrical transmission lines bisect this area and other encroachments exist, the trees and topography generally obstruct their view. In addition, water features such as ponds, Alder Creek, and seasonal wetlands, compliment the landscape and provide a sense of visual order (Viewpoint 18, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Therefore, although encroachments exist within the oak woodlands, due to their locations and the nature of the landscape, they do not substantially degrade the visual integrity of the area.
- ▶ **Unity:** Unity within the oak woodlands is marked by gently rolling hills covered with trees, grasses, and a variety of water features. Similar to the discussion above, encroachments, including electrical transmission lines, dirt roadways, and agricultural accessories do not substantially disrupt the coherence of the view. The overall view of the oak woodlands provides a sense of visual coherence and compositional harmony.

Viewer Sensitivity

Travelers on U.S. 50, Prairie City Road, and White Rock Road; residents and people within the City of Folsom; and a rural residence located on the SPA, have a clear view of the oak woodland area (Viewpoint 8, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Encroachments may be visible to the motorist, but do not intrude upon the landscape to a degree that would destroy the vividness, intactness, or unity of the site. In addition, the view of the SPA is located along the

longest stretch of undeveloped land on U.S. 50 within eastern Sacramento County, of which several miles are oak woodlands, which is viewed every day by thousands of motorists traveling into and out of Sacramento during the daily working commute. For these reasons, viewer sensitivity is considered to be high.

Western Lowlands

Visual Character

The western lowlands are located in the southeastern portion of the SPA. The landscape of this area is characterized by less topographical variation than other areas of the SPA (i.e., oak woodlands and rolling hills), and is covered with annual grasses and scattered trees (Viewpoint 19, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Views within the western lowlands are generally limited to the middleground and background, due to the generally flat land. Foreground views are limited to annual grasses and scattered trees. Views to the south and east of the western lowlands provide a continuation of open space. To the west, scattered industrial buildings, dirt piles, and chain-link fencing, located on Aerojet General Corporation property, are visible. These industrial buildings and structures are located more than one-quarter mile from the edge of the SPA, and while they are visible, they are not a substantial disruption to the views from the area as a whole. In the background, the City of Folsom is visible to the north; and on clear days, one can see the Sierra Nevada mountain range to the east and Mount Diablo to the southwest. As described below, the vividness, unity, and intactness are considered to be of high value. The visual assessment criteria for the western lowlands landscape area are provided below.

- ▶ **Vividness:** As described above, the western lowlands are characterized by a relatively flat area of the SPA, covered with annual grasses and scattered trees. Various encroachments exist in this part of the SPA, including fencing for agricultural purposes, electrical transmission lines, and monitoring wells installed in Area 40 (a Federally listed Superfund Site) (Viewpoint 20, Exhibit 3A.1-1). However, these items are located in close proximity to each other in the western portion of the site and do not provide a substantial distraction to the landscape as a whole. Furthermore, views from the SPA adjacent to White Rock Road and Prairie City Road provide an expansive view of agricultural land to the south and east, characterized by flat vegetation and terrain. Certain vantage points in this area offer a rare opportunity to view undisturbed open space with a clear view of the Sacramento Valley to the south, the undeveloped foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains to the east, and oak woodlands to the north.
- ▶ **Intactness:** As described above, multiple encroachments exist within the western lowlands (Viewpoint 19, Exhibit 3A.1-1). However, the majority of this area provides vast views of undeveloped grasslands, which most people would consider to be aesthetically pleasing. Although encroachments exist, they are few in number, and are concentrated in the western portion of the western lowlands area, resulting in an overall highly intact landscape.
- ▶ **Unity:** The western lowlands as a landscape provide a viewer with high levels of visual coherence. This area is exemplary of California's Central Valley rangeland, including gently rolling hills, which contrasts with development in the area. Although there are several encroachments within the area, they are few in number and do not detract from the overall sense of unity; furthermore, the area is essentially surrounded by open space, allowing for scenery with high levels of visual coherence and compositional harmony.

Viewer Sensitivity

Viewers of the western lowlands include travelers along Prairie City Road and White Rock Road. Viewers on both roads can see encroachments (fences and electrical transmission lines) from certain vantage points that degrade the view. However, the general experience of driving on both Prairie City Road and White Rock Road includes far-reaching views of pristine, gently rolling hills covered in annual grasses, and the presence of the Sierra Nevada and Coast Range in the distance. Motorists are likely to find this area to be highly aesthetically pleasing and a welcome change to dense development in nearby areas; thus, viewer sensitivity is considered to be high.

Central Lowlands

Visual Character

The central lowlands are located in the middle portion of the SPA. The landscape of this area is characterized by gently rolling hills covered with annual grasses and scattered trees, water features, and rock outcroppings (Viewpoint 21, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Foreground views consist of far-reaching grassland, rock outcroppings, agricultural fencing, scattered ruins of former structures, various ephemeral drainages, and ponds. Middle ground views consist of farmland to the south, oak woodlands to the west, the City of Folsom and U.S. 50 to the north, and the rolling hills area of the SPA to the east. In the background, the Sierra Nevada mountains are visible to the east, and Mount Diablo is within view to the southwest. As described below, the vividness, intactness, and unity of this area is considered to be of high value. The visual assessment criteria for the central lowlands landscape area are provided below.

- ▶ **Vividness:** The central lowlands are characterized by a relatively flat area of the SPA that is covered with annual grasses and the occasional oak tree. In contrast to the western lowlands, the central lowlands have more topographical variation, and contain more water features, agricultural accessories, and rock outcroppings. Encroachments consist of agricultural fencing, electrical transmission lines, remnants of buildings, Scott Road, Placerville Road, and abandoned railroad tracks (Viewpoint 22, Exhibit 3A.1-1). However, even with these encroachments, the majority of this area provides expansive views of undeveloped grasslands dotted with rock outcroppings and oak woodlands (Viewpoint 23, Exhibit 3A.1-1). The view is memorable and highly vivid.
- ▶ **Intactness:** As described above, fencing, electrical transmission lines, building remnants, roadways, and abandoned railroad tracks encroach upon the landscape of this area. These types of structures often exist within agricultural land and do not act as a substantial distraction to the landscape as a whole. Furthermore, the topography of the area shields views of these encroachments at many locations within the area, resulting in high levels of intactness.
- ▶ **Unity:** The shallow hills and valleys, water features, and agricultural features within the central lowlands provide a classic view of California annual grassland. This area has high levels of unity.

Viewer Sensitivity

Travelers along U.S. 50 have views of both the developed City of Folsom to the north and the open space at the SPA to the south. Some motorists and passengers may be visually drawn toward the large buildings, lighting, and other human-made structures within the City of Folsom. However, the central lowlands appear as the beginning of the Sierra Nevada mountains while traveling east, and of the Sacramento Valley while traveling west. Due to the change in landscape, viewers are likely to be drawn toward the SPA, rather than the City of Folsom while traveling adjacent to this area. Similarly, travelers on the majority of Scott and Placerville Roads have expansive views of the entire SPA, which most people would consider to be highly aesthetically pleasing. In addition, the City of Folsom, located north of the SPA, has been developed at a higher elevation than the central lowlands area, and many homes and businesses contain windows that face toward the SPA. This orientation indicates a visual preference toward the SPA, and therefore high viewer sensitivity.

Rolling Hills

Visual Character

The rolling hills area is located in the eastern portion of the SPA, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. The landscape of this area is characterized by steep hills and shallow narrow valleys, containing ephemeral drainages and creeks, and covered with annual grasses and scattered oak trees (Viewpoint 22, Exhibit 3A.1-1). Foreground views consist of grassland, rock outcroppings, agricultural accessories, various ephemeral drainages,

and ponds. Middleground views consist of farmland to the south and west, the City of Folsom and U.S. 50 to the north, and the community of El Dorado Hills to the east. In the background, the Sierra Nevada mountains are visible to the southeast, grasslands and agricultural fields to the south, and the Coastal Range to the west. On a clear day, skyscrapers within the City of Sacramento, and Mount Diablo, are visible to the southwest. As described below, the vividness, intactness, and unity of this area is considered to be of high value. The visual assessment criteria for the rolling hills landscape area are provided below.

- ▶ **Vividness:** The rolling hills are covered in annual grasses, scattered trees, and several ephemeral drainages and perennial marshes. The hills offer a vantage point for views of the Sacramento Valley, and thousands of acres of undeveloped grasslands and oak woodlands. Views toward this portion of the SPA provide striking and distinctive views of essentially pristine rolling hills. Motorists, in particular, are likely to appreciate the contrast between this portion of the SPA and nearby developed land. The rolling hills are a unique feature, bordered on the north and east with developments, and open space and farmland to the south and west. This area is considered to be highly vivid.
- ▶ **Intactness:** Radio towers equipped with lighting to provide airspace safety are located in the northeastern corner of the rolling hills are visible due to placement at a relatively higher elevation than the rest of the SPA (Viewpoint 11, Exhibit 3A.1-1). As with other areas within the SPA, fencing and dirt roads also act as encroachments. However, the landscape is generally unchanged from its natural state. With the exception of the immediate land surrounding the radio towers and corresponding service road, there is no grading or other human-caused alteration to this area. Because the existing encroachments are minor, this area is considered to have high levels of intactness.
- ▶ **Unity:** As discussed above, the rolling hills are essentially free from discernible encroachments. The landscape is characterized by grassy hillsides, exemplary of the Sierra Nevada foothills. With the exception of the northern and eastern edge of this area where one may be visually drawn toward nearby developments, the landscape as a whole contains high levels of visual coherence and compositional harmony.

Viewer Sensitivity

Travelers along U.S. 50 may be visually drawn toward development within the City of Folsom to the north. However, the presence of unaltered open space is likely to be appreciated in a region that has become increasingly more developed in recent years. Additionally, nearby housing units are directed toward the SPA, which is likely due to the spectacular view offered by the SPA as a whole. The rolling hills area is integral to this view, as it contains only a minimal amount of grading and the radio towers. Most people would look upon this area with appreciation for its natural beauty. Viewer sensitivity is considered to be high.

SCENIC ROADWAY DESIGNATION

Scott Road, from White Rock Road south to Latrobe Road, is a designated scenic corridor in the Sacramento County General Plan (Exhibit 3A.1-1, Viewpoint 25). While this portion of Scott Road is not located within the SPA, the rolling hills, central lowlands, and western lowlands of the SPA are visible from the scenic corridor. According to the Scenic Highways Element of the Sacramento County General Plan, the visual character of the roadway, characterized as grasslands and cattle-grazing lands, was considered to be particularly scenic and thus warranted scenic corridor protection.

3A.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

No Federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws are applicable to the Proposed Project or alternatives under consideration.

STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

California Department of Transportation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages the California Scenic Highway Program. The goal of the program is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would affect the aesthetic value of the land adjacent to designated highways. However, there are no state-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the SPA (Caltrans 2008).

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

Sacramento County General Plan

The following goals and policies of the Sacramento County General Plan (1993) are applicable only to the Proposed Project and the other alternatives under consideration.

Conservation Element

GOAL: Open space lands in Sacramento permanently protected through coordinated use of regulation, acquisition, density transfer, and incentive programs.

- ▶ **Policy OS-1:** Permanently protect, as open space, areas of natural resource value, including wetlands preserves, riparian corridors, woodlands, and floodplains.
- ▶ **Policy OS-2:** Maintain open space and natural areas that are interconnected and of sufficient size to protect biodiversity, accommodate wildlife movement and sustain ecosystems.

Scenic Highways Element

GOAL 1: To preserve and enhance the aesthetic quality of scenic roads without encouraging unnecessary driving by personal automobile.

- ▶ **Policy 10:** To provide scenic corridor protection for Scott Road from White Rock Road south to Latrobe Road, Michigan Bar Road, and Twin Cities Road from Highway 160 east to Highway 99.

El Dorado County General Plan

The following goals and policies of the El Dorado County General Plan (2004) are applicable only to the two local roadway connections from the Folsom Heights property off-site into El Dorado Hills under the Proposed Project Alternative. There are no El Dorado County goals and policies that are applicable to the No Project Alternative or the other four action alternatives.

Land Use Element

Topography and Native Vegetation

- ▶ **Policy 2.3.1.1:** The County shall continue to enforce the tree protection provisions in the Grading Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance and utilize the hillside road standards.

Hillsides and Ridge Lines

- ▶ **Policy 2.3.2.1:** Disturbance of slopes thirty (30) percent or greater shall be discouraged to minimize the visual impacts of grading and vegetation removal.

Corridor Viewsheds

- ▶ **Policy 2.6.1.2:** Until such time as the Scenic Corridor Ordinance is adopted, the County shall review all projects within designated State Scenic Highway corridors for compliance with State criteria.

Lighting Standards

- ▶ **Policy 2.8.1.1:** Development shall limit excess nighttime light and glare from parking area lighting, signage, and buildings. Consideration will be given to design features, namely directional shielding for street lighting, parking lot lighting, sport field lighting, and other significant light sources, that could reduce effects from nighttime lighting. In addition, consideration will be given to the use of automatic shutoffs or motion sensors for lighting features in rural areas to further reduce excess nighttime light.

Conservation and Open Space Element

Wetlands

- ▶ **Policy 7.3.3.5:** Rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, and wetlands shall be integrated into new development in such a way that they enhance the aesthetic and natural character of the site while disturbance to the resource is avoided or minimized and fragmentation is limited.

City of Folsom General Plan

The following goals and policies of the City of Folsom General Plan (1993) are applicable to the Proposed Project and the other four action alternatives. There are no City of Folsom goals and policies that are applicable to the No Project Alternative.

Open Space and Conservation Element

- ▶ **Policy 1.1:** New developments shall preserve and/or enhance to the maximum degree feasible, the existing natural vegetation, landscape features and open space, consistent with the Goals and Policies of this Plan.
- ▶ **Policy 1.2:** Existing viewsheds and opportunities for viewsheds should be incorporated into the design of new developments.
- ▶ **Policy 3.2:** Developments should be compatible with the natural features and the buildings that surround them. Compatibility will be measured by the size and configuration of buildings in a project, the use of materials and landscaping, the preservation of existing vegetation and landscape features, and the location of entrance and exit routes on the SPA.
- ▶ **Policy 6.1:** The Sphere of Influence shall include those parcels of land adjacent to the city limit whose development could have significant visual, traffic, service and environmental impacts on Folsom so that the City may influence the ultimate development of those parcels.

City of Folsom Hillside Development Guidelines

On February 14, 1995, the City of Folsom Planning Department adopted Resolution No. 4604—Hillside Development Guidelines—the purpose of which is to illustrate key design principles and issues that City staff will use in evaluating applications for development of any site within hillside areas of the City. The guidelines address street design, grading, site design, parking, drainage, architecture, landscaping, visual impact, and preservation of natural features, and are based on the City’s Hillside Development Procedures and Standards Ordinance (Ordinance No. 798).

3A.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND MITIGATION MEASURES

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The thresholds for determining the significance of impacts for this analysis are based on the environmental checklist in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. These thresholds also encompass the factors taken into account under NEPA to determine the significance of an action in terms of its context and the intensity of its impacts. The Proposed Project or alternatives under consideration were determined to result in a significant impact related to aesthetic resources if they would do any of the following:

- ▶ have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- ▶ substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- ▶ substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- ▶ create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

This visual impact analysis is based on field observations conducted by AECOM in February 2009 and a review of maps and aerial photographs. Analysis of the project's impacts was based on evaluation of the changes to the existing visual resources that would result from project implementation. In making a determination of the extent and implications of the visual changes, consideration was given to:

- ▶ specific changes in the visual composition, character, and valued qualities of the affected environment;
- ▶ the visual context of the affected environment;
- ▶ the extent to which the affected environment contained places or features that have been designated in plans and policies for protection or special consideration; and
- ▶ the numbers of viewers, their activities, and the extent to which these activities are related to the aesthetic qualities affected by the project-related changes.

It should be noted that an assessment of visual quality is a subjective matter, and reasonable people can disagree as to whether alteration in the visual character of the SPA would be adverse or beneficial. For this analysis, a conservative approach was taken, and the potential for substantial change to the visual character of the SPA is generally considered a significant impact.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Impacts that would occur under each alternative development scenario are identified as follows: NP (No Action/No Project), NCP (No USACE Permit), PP (Proposed Project), RIM (Resource Impact Minimization), CD (Centralized Development), and RHD (Reduced Hillside Development). The impacts for each alternative are compared relative to the PP at the end of each impact conclusion (i.e., similar, greater, lesser).

IMPACT Substantial Adverse Effect on a Scenic Vista. *Project implementation would result in the degradation of the*
3A.1-1 *visual quality of a scenic vista.*

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

The high scenic quality of the landscape at the SPA is based on the existing vast views of grasslands, rolling hills, and oak woodlands. The No Project Alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 residential units and associated agricultural land uses in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but no off-site water facilities would be developed. The development of rural housing and associated agricultural activities would not substantially degrade the scenic quality of the SPA, because the general character would remain intact. Under the No Project Alternative, scenic vistas in the SPA would generally remain the same as under the existing conditions. Therefore, this **direct** impact would be **less-than-significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

[Lesser]

On-Site Elements

NCP, PP, RIM, RHD

A scenic vista is generally considered a view of an area that has remarkable scenery or of a resource that is endemic to the area. The SPA is located on approximately 3,500 acres of undeveloped open space. The scenery consists of grasslands on rolling hills and narrow valleys, waterways, and oak woodlands. Existing development is generally limited to the perimeter, and includes agricultural fencing, electrical transmission lines, and radio towers. Because the SPA contains high levels of vividness, intactness, and unity, and due to its location along U.S. 50 where it is seen by thousands of motorists, viewer sensitivity is considered to be high. This region is part of the Sierra Nevada foothills and the Central Valley, and is exemplary of those landscapes and of resources that are endemic to the area.

Project implementation would substantially degrade this scenic vista. The compositional harmony of this area relies upon the flow of oak woodlands, to gently rolling grasslands, to steep vegetation-covered hillsides. The No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives would include a minimum of 30% open space pursuant to the LAFCo Resolution, which would therefore provide preservation of the existing scenic qualities on over 1,000 acres of the SPA. However, the scenic qualities of the SPA are reliant on coherence between the different landscape types (see Viewpoint 21, Exhibit 3A.1-1.) Furthermore, while implementation of the No USACE Permit or Resource Impact Minimization Alternative would result in an additional several hundred acres of open space as compared to the Proposed Project Alternative, they would not result in substantially less alteration of scenic vistas. Views along nearby roadways would change to housing developments, schools, and general commercial endeavors. In addition, viewsheds that include the SPA are part of thousands of acres of open space that would no longer exist. Instead, this area would contain development that would substantially degrade the existing scenic view of the landscape. This area would become of similar visual quality to nearby developed land, and would no longer be considered a unique or scenic vista.

Because the project-related alterations would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, this **direct** impact is **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure 3A.1-1: Construct and Maintain a Landscape Corridor Adjacent to U.S. 50.

The project applicant(s) for all project phases shall fund, construct, and maintain a landscaped corridor within the SPA, south of U.S. 50. This corridor shall be 50 feet wide, except that the landscaped corridor width shall be reduced to 25 feet adjacent to the proposed regional mall. Landscaping plans and specifications shall be approved by Caltrans and the City of Folsom, and constructed by the project applicant(s) before the start of earthmoving activities associated with residential or commercial units. Landscaped areas would not be required within the preserved oak woodlands. As practicable, landscaping shall primarily contain native and/or drought tolerant plants. Landscaped corridors shall be maintained in perpetuity to the satisfaction of the City of Folsom.

Implementation: Project applicant(s) of all project phases.

Timing:

1. Plans and specifications: before approval of grading plans and building permits
2. Construction: before the start of earthmoving activities associated with residential and commercial units
3. Maintenance: in perpetuity

Enforcement: City of Folsom Community Development Department and Caltrans

CD

The Centralized Development Alternative would contain approximately 40% more open space than the Proposed Project Alternative. Development would be concentrated toward the center of the SPA, leaving the oak woodlands and rolling hills portions less developed than under the Proposed Project Alternative. However, because commercial development in the rolling hills would still occur south of U.S. 50, the majority of the sensitive viewers (commuters traveling along U.S. 50), would likely consider the scenic qualities to be degraded. Viewers within the community of El Dorado Hills and motorists traveling within the southern portion of Scott Road (past the commercial development) and along White Rock Road would see the preserved view of the hillside.

The existing SPA is considered to be of high quality. This designation is reliant on sweeping views of the Central Valley, and the vividness, intactness, and unity of the existing SPA as a whole. Although preservation of the majority of the rolling hills and oak woodlands would leave certain scenic vistas within the SPA, in general, scenic views would be substantially altered. This impact would be **direct** and **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur [*Lesser*].

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 3A.1-1.

Off-Site Elements

The proposed off-site detention basin would be located on Aerojet General Corporation property, west of Prairie City Road. This landscape is similar to the western lowlands with the exception of an approximately 8-foot-high chain link fence surrounding its perimeter. The detention basin would be constructed with bermed sides, and would therefore appear as a steeply graded hill of bare soil. Although this would degrade the landscape, this area is not particularly scenic due to fencing and industrial buildings visible in the background. Because the area associated with the detention basin is not a scenic vista, impacts associated with construction of the detention basin would be **direct** and **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

The proposed freeway interchange improvements, the El Dorado County road connections, and the Rowberry Drive Overcrossing would be located in areas that are currently surrounded by existing urban development that

does not contain a scenic vista. Therefore, the impacts would be **direct** and **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

Construction of the proposed sewer force main underneath U.S. 50 would require digging a trench for pipeline placement, then back filling and completely covering all disturbed ground. Because these impacts would be short-term, temporary impacts, and no longer visible upon completion of construction, and because they would occur in a developed urban area that does not contain a scenic vista, they would be **direct** and **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation measures are required.

Implementation of the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Centralized Development, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternative would permanently and substantially alter the scenic vista at the SPA. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3A.1-1 would reduce the impact of substantial alteration of a scenic vista, but not to a less-than-significant level. No other feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce impacts associated with the alteration of scenic vistas from project development to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact remains **significant and unavoidable**.

IMPACT **Damage to Scenic Resources Within a Designated Scenic Corridor.** *Project implementation could damage*
3A.1-2 *the character of the viewshed from a County-designated scenic corridor.*

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

Although the SPA does not contain, nor is it visible from, a state-designated scenic highway, Scott Road south of White Rock Road is a designated scenic corridor in Sacramento County because it is considered to be located within an especially scenic rural portion of Sacramento County. The Scenic Highways Element of the Sacramento County General Plan describes views from this roadway as consisting of grasslands and cattle-grazing lands. The No project alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 residential units and associated agricultural land uses in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but would not include the construction of any off-site water facilities. However, the development of up to 44 rural residences scattered over 3,500 acres would have little or no impact on the existing grasslands and cattle-grazing lands in the SPA; therefore, this **direct** impact would be **less-than-significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. [*Lesser*]

On-Site Elements

NCP, PP, RIM, CD, RHD

Views of the SPA from Scott Road, south of White Rock Road, consist of grasslands on rolling hills and scattered oak trees. Encroachments of these views are generally limited to agricultural fencing, electrical transmission lines, and radio towers; all of which are typical of rural landscapes. As discussed above under the No Project Alternative, the Scenic Highways Element of the Sacramento County General Plan describes views from this roadway to consist of grasslands and cattle-grazing lands. These views are exemplary of rural Sacramento County landscape.

Project implementation would substantially damage views from the portion of Scott Road designated as a scenic corridor. The Proposed Project and the other four action alternatives would result in conversion of the existing grassland and cattle grazing land to urban development over several thousand acres. After project implementation, the site would contain views of housing developments, landscaping, and alteration of topography from grading activities that would no longer provide exemplary views of rural Sacramento County landscape that would

substantially damage the existing character of the landscape. These views would damage the scenic character of the northern portion of Scott Road.

Because the project-related alterations would have a substantial damage on scenic resources within a County-designated scenic corridor, this **direct** impact would be **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure: No feasible mitigation measures are available.

Off-Site Elements

The off-site elements would not be visible from the portion of Scott Road that is designated as a scenic corridor in the Sacramento County General Plan. Therefore, there would be **no direct** or **indirect impact**.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation measures are required.

Implementation of the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Centralized Development, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives would permanently and substantially alter the scenic character of the SPA from open space to urban development, and would therefore substantially damage the viewshed from the northern portion of Scott Road. These changes are inherent to the change from a rural to urban development pattern, and no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce impacts associated with the damage of scenic resources within a County-designated scenic corridor. Therefore, this impact remains **significant and unavoidable**.

IMPACT **Substantial Degradation of Existing Visual Character or Quality of the Site and its Surroundings.** *Project 3A.1-3 implementation would substantially degrade the visual character of the SPA through conversion of rolling hills and oak woodland to developed urban uses.*

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

The No Project Alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 residential units and associated agricultural land uses in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but no off-site water facilities would be constructed. Because the site is generally suitable only for dryland farming (i.e., livestock grazing), agricultural activities are likely to be similar to those already occurring on the SPA. However, the additional rural residences, agricultural buildings, and other agricultural development that could occur would still degrade the visual character of the SPA from open space to rural housing and associated agricultural land uses, although to a much lesser extent than under the Proposed Project. Therefore, this **direct** impact would be **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Lesser]*

On-Site Elements

NCP, PP, RHD, RIM

The SPA consists of approximately 3,500 acres of grasslands and oak woodlands set on undeveloped rolling hills. Under the Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Reduced Hillside Development, and No USACE Permit Alternatives, substantial alterations would occur to all landscape areas within the SPA. At full buildout, the visual character of the SPA would consist of developed urban land uses with small areas of open space and parks. The majority of the existing oak woodlands in the central portion of the SPA would also be retained.

SPA development, upon annexation to the City of Folsom, is required to preserve at least 30% as natural open space. Under the No USACE Permit and Resource Impact Minimization Alternatives, open space preservation

would be increased by several hundred acres. This would be driven primarily by avoidance of existing water features (i.e., wetlands) and would entail less commercial and residential developments. However, the visual character would not be substantially more preserved than the Proposed Project. Although there would be an overall increase in open space preservation, this would generally occur as pathways between residential and commercial development. Motorists on surrounding roadways and other sensitive viewers would no longer have views of expansive grasslands within the SPA. Increasing the space between dwelling units, schools, and other buildings would not substantially decrease the resulting degradation of visual character within the SPA.

Implementation of the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives would result in conversion of grassy hillsides to urban areas, generally consisting of housing units and commercial developments. Views would be permanently altered to urban development, substantially degrading viewsheds located on Scott Road, Placerville Road, White Rock Road, U.S. 50, and for people located within the community of El Dorado Hills, the City of Folsom, and nearby rural residences.

Reasonable people may differ as to the aesthetic value of undeveloped grasslands and oak woodlands, and whether development of urban uses in the SPA would constitute a substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. However, given the large scale of this urban development and the rural nature of its setting, a conservative approach has been taken for this analysis, and the degradation of visual character at the SPA is considered to be substantial, and impacts on visual resources from project implementation are considered to be **direct** and **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measures 3A.1-1 and 3A.7-4.

CD

The Centralized Development Alternative would preserve a substantial portion of the rolling hills in the eastern portion of the SPA. To achieve this preservation, the residential development that would be constructed on the hillside under the other action alternatives would be shifted to the central portion of the SPA. However, commercial development would still occur on the hillsides along U.S. 50. Because of the commercial development in the rolling hills that would occur south of U.S. 50, the majority of the sensitive viewers, which are commuters traveling along U.S. 50, would not be able to see any preserved viewshed. Only those motorists traveling further south on Scott Road (past the proposed commercial development) or motorists along White Rock Road would see the preserved view of the hillside.

At full build-out, approximately 75% of the rolling hills area would be preserved under this alternative, thus keeping a substantial portion of the SPA as open space and preserving its visual character. However, the remaining two-thirds of the SPA would still be developed with urban uses. The sweeping view of the Central Valley, coupled with oak woodlands and grass-covered hillsides, creates the visual character of the SPA as a whole. By developing the central and western lowlands, these views would no longer exist as they do now. Housing units, commercial developments, and other structures would take the place of open space. Development in the central portion of the SPA would disrupt the existing landscape components, alter the visual coherence, and create substantial encroachments on viewsheds, all of which would degrade the visual character of the SPA. Therefore, this impact is considered **direct** and **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Lesser]*

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measures 3A.1-1 and 3A.7-4.

Off-Site Elements

The landscape at the proposed detention basin site is similar to the western lowlands with the exception of an approximately 8-foot-high chain link fence. The detention basin would be constructed with bermed sides, and would therefore appear as a steeply graded hill. The basin would be highly visible to motorists traveling on White

Rock Road and Prairie City Road, and would result in a **direct, significant** impact from degradation of the existing visual character. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure: No feasible mitigation measures are available.

The proposed freeway interchange improvements, El Dorado County road connections, and the Rowberry Drive Overcrossing would be built in landscaped areas that are already surrounded by urban development. Construction of these features would not substantially alter the visual character because the footprint of these features is already located with a developed area. Therefore, this **direct** impact would be **less than significant**. Construction of the proposed force main underneath U.S. 50 would require digging a trench for pipeline placement, then back filling and completely covering all disturbed ground. Because these impacts would be temporary, short-term impacts, and no longer visible upon completion of construction, and would occur in an area that already consists of urban development, they would be **direct** and **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation measures are required.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3A.1-1 and 3A.7-4 would reduce significant impacts associated with substantial adverse effects on a scenic vista under the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, and Reduced Hillside Development, and Alternatives by reducing the extent of grading within the SPA and providing a 50-foot-wide landscaped corridor between U.S. 50 and the SPA. However, views of new housing developments, schools, and general commercial endeavors would only be slightly obstructed and hillside grading would remain pronounced. Once open space is converted to urban land uses, it is a permanent change in land use and to the visual character. Project implementation would still substantially alter a scenic vista. Therefore, this direct is considered **significant and unavoidable**.

IMPACT **Temporary, Short-Term Degradation of Visual Character for Developed Project Land Uses During**
3A.1-4 **Construction.** *Project implementation would involve four phases of construction over a 20-year-buildout period. Construction activity would involve the temporary and short-term use of staging areas for construction equipment and materials, which would be visible to adjacent project land uses that have already been developed.*

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

The No Project Alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 residential units and associated agricultural land uses in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but no off-site water facilities would be constructed. Development of these 44 rural residences would be minor considering the size of the SPA, would be scattered over approximately 3,500 acres, would involve very small amounts of scattered construction activity at different times, and views during construction would likely be blocked by the varied topography and oak woodlands. Therefore, this **direct** impact would be **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Lesser]*

NCP, PP, RIM, CD, RHD

The presence and movement of heavy construction equipment and staging areas could temporarily degrade the existing visual character and/or quality of the SPA and surrounding area for existing developed land uses. Project implementation would involve four phases of similar types of construction over a 20-year-buildout period. During this time, adjacent project development, including sensitive land uses such as residential housing, schools, and parks, would be occupied while construction is occurring in a different phase.

Construction activities would require the use of various types of equipment, such as scrapers, graders, dozers, and trucks as well as signs, cones, and trash receptacles. Project construction would involve the temporary use of fenced staging areas for construction equipment and materials. Although these staging areas would be located in disturbed areas, construction equipment and materials would be visible to residents, employees at existing businesses, and at parks and school sites over a 20-year duration.

Thus, construction activities would temporarily degrade the existing visual character of the SPA in the vicinity of developed areas. This impact is **direct** and **significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure 3A.1-4: Screen Construction Staging Areas.

The project applicant(s) for all project phases shall locate staging and material storage areas as far away from sensitive biological resources and sensitive land uses (e.g., residential areas, schools, parks) as feasible. Staging and material storage areas shall be approved by the appropriate agency (identified below) before the approval of grading plans and building permits for all project phases and shall be screened from adjacent occupied land uses in earlier development phases to the maximum extent practicable. Screens may include, but are not limited to, the use of such visual barriers such as berms or fences. The screen design shall be approved by the appropriate agency to further reduce visual effects to the extent possible.

Mitigation for the off-site elements outside of the City of Folsom's jurisdictional boundaries shall be coordinated by the project applicant(s) of each applicable project phase with the affected oversight agency(ies) (i.e., El Dorado and/or Sacramento Counties, and Caltrans).

Implementation: Project applicant(s) of all project phases.

Timing: Before approval of grading plans and building permits and during construction for all project phases.

Enforcement:

1. For those improvements that would be located within the City of Folsom: City of Folsom Neighborhood Services Department and City of Folsom Community Development Department.
2. For the two local roadway connections from Folsom Heights into El Dorado Hills: El Dorado County Community Services Department.
3. For the U.S. 50 interchange improvements: Caltrans.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3A.1-4 would reduce significant impacts associated with temporary visual-quality degradation for developed land uses from concurrent construction staging areas under the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Centralized Development, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives by providing visual screening. However, because screening may not always be feasible (i.e., projects covering a large area or tall buildings); this temporary, short-term impact is considered **potentially significant and unavoidable**. Additionally, some of the off-site elements fall under the jurisdiction of El Dorado County or Caltrans; therefore, neither the City nor the project applicant(s) would have control over their timing or implementation.

IMPACT Creation of a New Source of Substantial Light or Glare that would Adversely Affect Day or Nighttime
3A.1-5 Views in the Area. *Project implementation would require lighting of new development, which would cause new and increased light and glare.*

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

The No Project Alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 rural residential units in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but no off-site water facilities would be constructed. Development of the 44 rural residences would be scattered over approximately 3,500 acres, the amount of new light and glare would be minimal, and most views would be blocked by the varied topography and oak woodlands. Therefore, this **direct** impact is considered **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Lesser]*

NCP, PP, RIM, CD, RHD

Light associated with urban development can result in spillover lighting and glare effects. Spillover lighting is artificial lighting that spills over onto adjacent properties and could cause an annoyance to neighboring residents by disturbing sleep patterns. Glare is intense light that shines directly, or is reflected off a surface, into a person's eyes. Use of building materials such as reflective glass and polished surfaces can cause glare. During daylight hours, the amount of glare depends on the intensity and direction of sunlight. Glare is particularly acute at sunrise and sunset because of the low angle of the sun in the sky.

Currently, the SPA consists of grasslands and oak woodlands, with a few utility-related structures (e.g., electrical transmission lines, radio towers). With the exception of lighting used on tall structures for airspace safety purposes and one on-site rural residence, there are currently no artificial light installations. Implementation of proposed development would require lighting for roadways; commercial, office, and industrial buildings; parking lots; residences; and other public facilities such as schools and parks. In addition, nighttime lighting or the presence of reflective surfaces on buildings in the commercial, office, and industrial areas (e.g., reflective window glazing) may result in light and glare shining onto motorists on U.S. 50, White Rock Road, Placerville Road, Scott Road, and Prairie City Road, and to residences within the City of Folsom and the community of El Dorado Hills.

Because of the scale of proposed development and because project implementation would introduce a substantial quantity of light into a rural landscape, overall light and glare effects are considered **significant** and **direct**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5: Establish and Require Conformance to Lighting Standards and Prepare and Implement a Lighting Plan.

To reduce impacts associated with light and glare, the City shall:

- ▶ Establish standards for on-site outdoor lighting to reduce high-intensity nighttime lighting and glare as part of the Folsom Specific Plan design guidelines/standards. Consideration shall be given to design features, namely directional shielding for street lighting, parking lot lighting, and other substantial light sources, that would reduce effects of nighttime lighting. In addition, consideration shall be given to the use of automatic shutoffs or motion sensors for lighting features to further reduce excess nighttime light.
- ▶ Use shielded or screened public lighting fixtures to prevent the light from shining off of the surface intended to be illuminated.

To reduce impacts associated with light and glare, the project applicant(s) of all project phases shall:

- ▶ Shield or screen lighting fixtures to direct the light downward and prevent light spill on adjacent properties.
- ▶ Place and shield or screen flood and area lighting needed for construction activities, nighttime sporting activities, and/or security so as not to disturb adjacent residential areas and passing motorists.
- ▶ For public lighting in residential neighborhoods, prohibit the use of light fixtures that are of unusually high intensity or brightness (e.g., harsh mercury vapor, low-pressure sodium, or fluorescent bulbs) or that blink or flash.
- ▶ Use appropriate building materials (such as low-glare glass, low-glare building glaze or finish, neutral, earth-toned colored paint and roofing materials), shielded or screened lighting, and appropriate signage in the office/commercial areas to prevent light and glare from adversely affecting motorists on nearby roadways.
- ▶ Design exterior on-site lighting as an integral part of the building and landscape design in the SPA. Lighting fixtures shall be architecturally consistent with the overall site design.
- ▶ Lighting of off-site facilities within the City of Folsom shall be consistent with the City's General Plan standards.
- ▶ Lighting of the off-site detention basin shall be consistent with Sacramento County General Plan standards.
- ▶ Lighting of the two local roadway connections from Folsom Heights off-site into El Dorado Hills shall be consistent with El Dorado County General Plan standards.

A lighting plan for all on- and off-site elements within the each agency's jurisdictional boundaries (specified below) shall be submitted to the relevant jurisdictional agency for review and approval, which shall include the above elements. The lighting plan may be submitted concurrently with other improvement plans, and shall be submitted before the installation of any lighting or the approval of building permits for each phase. The project applicant(s) of all project phases shall implement the approved lighting plan.

Mitigation for the off-site elements outside of the City of Folsom's jurisdictional boundaries must be coordinated by the project applicant(s) of each applicable project phase with the affected oversight agency(ies) (i.e., El Dorado and/or Sacramento Counties).

Implementation: Project applicant(s) of all project phases.

Timing: Before approval of building permits for each project phase.

Enforcement:

1. For all on-site and off-site facilities that would be located within the City of Folsom: City of Folsom Neighborhood Services Department and City of Folsom Community Development Department.
2. For the off-site detention basin: Sacramento County Planning Department.
3. For the two local roadways off-site into El Dorado Hills: El Dorado County Community Services Department.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5 would reduce significant impacts associated with effects from new sources of light and glare to a **less-than-significant** level under the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Centralized Development, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives by establishing on-site lighting standards in the specific plan, requiring conformance with established general plan standards, and requiring the project applicant(s) of all project phases to prepare and implement lighting plan. However, some of the off-site elements (two roadway connections in El Dorado County and detention basin in Sacramento County) fall under the jurisdiction of El Dorado and Sacramento Counties; therefore, neither the City nor the project applicant(s) would have control over their timing or implementation.

IMPACT **New Skyglow Effects.** *Project implementation would require lighting of new development that would result in the generation of new and increased skyglow effects, obscuring views of stars, constellations, and other features of the night sky.*
3A.1-6

On-Site and Off-Site Elements

NP

Skyglow is artificial lighting from urbanized uses that alters the rural landscape and, in sufficient quantity, lights up the nighttime sky, thus reducing the visibility of astronomical features. The No Project Alternative could include development of up to approximately 44 rural residential units in Sacramento County under the existing AG-80 zoning, but no off-site water facilities would be constructed under this alternative. Development of these 44 rural residences would be scattered over approximately 3,500 acres, and the amount of nighttime lighting would be minimal (likely limited to security lighting at front or back doorways). Therefore, this **direct** impact is considered to be **less than significant**. **No indirect** impacts would occur. [*Lesser*]

NCP, PP, CD, RHD, RIM

The SPA consists of undeveloped agricultural grazing land, radio towers on the hillside, and electrical transmission lines. Existing light sources are associated with one rural residence and lighting on utility towers to provide airspace security. The existing land uses are not a substantial source of nighttime lighting. Therefore, these areas generate no substantial sources of skyglow into the night sky. However, a substantial increase in the amount of nighttime light would result from the development of the SPA with urban land uses including residences, commercial and industrial land uses, and schools and parks over approximately 2,500 acres, which would obscure views of the stars, constellations, and other features of the night sky.

Because project implementation would introduce a substantial quantity of nighttime light over a large area of a rural landscape that is essentially dark under existing conditions, overall skyglow effects are considered a **significant** and **direct** impact. **No indirect** impacts would occur.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5 would partially reduce significant impacts associated with effects from skyglow under the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Resource Impact Minimization, Centralized Development, and Reduced Hillside Development Alternatives. Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5 would require the development and implementation of an on-site lighting plan and by requiring conformance with general plan standards for the off-site facilities. However, because of the scale and location of the SPA and the off-site elements, screening or shielding of light fixtures to direct light downward or the use of low-pressure sodium or other lighting would not reduce the effects of new skyglow on the night sky to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

3A.1.4 R RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Implementation of mitigation measures contained in this section would reduce impacts associated with new light and glare to a less-than-significant level. Impacts related to substantial alteration of a scenic vista, damage to designated scenic corridor, and substantial degradation of visual character due to development would be significant and unavoidable because no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3A.1-4 would help to reduce the temporary, short-term degradation of visual character during construction; however, additional feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. Although Mitigation Measure 3A.1-5 may reduce impacts associated with the new skyglow effect, additional feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, these impacts would remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

In addition, some of the off-site elements (two roadway connections in El Dorado County and detention basin in Sacramento County) fall under the jurisdiction of El Dorado and Sacramento Counties; therefore, neither the City nor the project applicant(s) would have control over the timing or implementation of mitigation measures for these off-site elements. Because the City does not control implementation of mitigation measures for off-site improvements constructed in areas under the jurisdiction of El Dorado and Sacramento Counties, Impacts 3A.1-4 and 3A.1-5 are considered potentially significant and unavoidable for off-site improvements which would be located in Sacramento or El Dorado County jurisdiction.