

# Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

The environmental impacts discussed in this EIR were identified through the Notice of Preparation (NOP) process. Each impact discussed in this section of the EIR will be addressed under one of four subheadings - risk of upset, resources, physical impacts, and human impacts.

### *RISK OF UPSET*

*Risk of upset involves environmental hazards that can potentially cause loss of property or life, including forces like fire, earthquakes, and flooding, or nuisances that can disrupt the physical or mental well-being of persons, such as noise.*

#### **4.01 SEISMIC AND GEOLOGIC HAZARDS**

In 1973, five counties in the southern San Joaquin Valley jointly completed the **Five County Seismic Safety Element**. Tulare County was one of the five counties. The Element identified existing seismic and geologic hazards within the County.

Seismic hazards, such as earthquakes, can cause loss of human life and property damage, disrupt the local economy, and undermine the fiscal condition of a community. Secondary seismic hazards, including subsidence and liquefaction, can cause building and infrastructure damage.

##### **4.011 Existing Conditions**

The **Five County Seismic Safety Element**, adopted by the County of Tulare in 1974, indicates that the planning area is in the V1 Seismic Zone. This zone has a relatively thin layer of sedimentary rock overlaying a granitic basement. The potential for ground shaking in this zone is "high" but due to the underlying geology and the distance from active faults, the potential for loss of life or property damage is "minimal".

The nearest active faults are the San Andreas, 65 miles west; the Owens Valley, 75 miles east; and the White Wolf; 75 miles south. Recent earthquakes have occurred along all three faults. On May 2, 1983, an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter Scale

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occurred along the San Andreas Fault. This earthquake caused extensive damage in Coalinga, just 55 miles to the east; minimal damage was recorded in the planning area.

### **4.012 Environmental Impacts**

The planning area is situated in a region where strong ground shaking can occur. However, the effects of this ground shaking will only have a minimal impact on buildings and infrastructure inside the planning area, according to the Five County Seismic Safety Element and recent experiences with the 1983 Coalinga earthquake. Construction of new and renovation of existing buildings are required to conform to the Uniform Building Code (1997 Edition), Earthquake Regulations - Zone 3.

Construction in the planning area will be performed consistent with the 1997 Uniform Building Code, Chapter 16: Structural Forces, and Title 24, Parts I and II, of the California Code of Regulations. These building code regulations and standards will insure that potential seismic and geologic hazards are reduced to an insignificant level.

### **4.013 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring**

Mitigation measures are not required for impacts that are insignificant.

### **4.014 Residual Impact**

Insignificant.

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## 4.02 FLOODING

Flooding can be caused by water spilling over the banks of watercourses or ponding due to insufficient drainage facilities. The first type of flooding can threaten life and damage property while the second type of flooding is more of a nuisance and is generally localized, sometimes causing minor property damage.

The most recent significant floods that occurred in Tulare County were in 1955 (prior to the construction of Terminus Dam), 1968/69, 1983/84 and 1996/97. These four flood events occurred along the Kaweah floodplain.

### 4.021 Existing Conditions

#### Regional Flooding

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (Community Panels 065066 0480 B and 065071 001 B), the Woodlake planning area is laced with two major watercourses that are within a 100-year floodplain. The St. Johns River, which forms the southern boundary of the planning area, is subject to significant flooding during major flood events, the last occurring in 1996/97. The St. Johns River floodway is in the A19 Zone, areas of 100-year flood; base flood elevations and flood hazard factors to be determined.

The other areas in the planning area that are subject to flooding are in the AH Zone, areas of 100-year shallow flooding, where depths are between one and three feet and no flood hazard factors are determined. In the AH Zone, Structures, including single family dwellings, schools and commercial buildings, can be constructed in the AH Zone but the ground floor elevation of the structure must be higher than the flood contour line detailed on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

#### Local Flooding

Localized flooding occurs during intense rainfall events where local storm drainage facilities can not handle the runoff from impervious surfaces in the city. Woodlake's Storm Drainage Master Plan will facilitate the maintenance and construction of citywide storm drainage improvements, which include ponding basins and collection and transmission lines.

Most of Woodlake's storm water ends up in either Bravo Lake or the St. Johns River. There are a number of small ditches and drainage swales that channel water through

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Woodlake towards these two major water features. Sometimes during intense rainfall events these small channels will overflow into adjacent yards and structures. The damage is often minimal and the floodwaters often recedes within hours. In addition, local streets will fill with water during intense rainfall events. Sometimes the water will rise above the curb and inundate adjacent yards. The inundation recedes within hours once the storm passes and the drainage lines and drop inlets have a chance to catch up with the flood flows.

### **4.022 Environmental Impact**

#### **Regional Flooding**

The Woodlake General Plan precludes any type of development from occurring in the A 19 Flood Zone, which is situated along the St. Johns River. This restriction insures that life and property will be protected should significant flooding occur along the St. Johns River.

Other areas in the planning area that are subject to flooding are situated in the AH Flood Zone. Development is permitted in this flood zone so long as the base floor elevation of the structure proposed for construction exceeds the flood contour elevation of the AH zone. This construction condition insures that property damage will not occur should flooding occur in this particular flood zone.

#### **Local Flooding**

Implementation of Woodlake's Storm Drainage Master Plan, will reduce the impact of localized flooding throughout the planning area to an insignificant level.

### **4.023 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring**

#### **Regional Flooding**

Woodlake's adoption of FEMA's regulations for development in the flood zones will reduce the impact of flooding on development to an insignificant level and therefore does not require mitigation measures or monitoring.

#### **Local Flooding**

Mitigation measures are not required for impacts that are insignificant.

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## 4.024 Residual Impact

Insignificant.

## 4.03 NOISE

Sound is a disturbance created by a moving or vibrating source in a gaseous or liquid medium or the elastic stage of a solid and is capable of being detected by the hearing organs. Sound may be thought of as the mechanical energy of a vibrating object transmitted by pressure waves through a medium to a hearing organ, such as a human ear. For traffic sound, the medium of concern is air. Noise is defined as sound that is loud, unpleasant, unexpected, or undesired.

Sound is actually a process that consists of three components: the sound source, the sound path, and the sound receiver. All three components must be present for sound to exist. Without a source to produce sound, there is no sound. Likewise, without a medium to transmit sound pressure waves, there is no sound. Finally, sound must be received; a hearing organ, sensor, or object must be present to perceive, register, or be affected by sound or noise. In most situations, there are many different sound sources, paths, and receptors rather than just one of each. Acoustics is the field of science that deals with the production, propagation, reception, effects, and control of sound.

Sound, or pressure, is measured within the human hearing range as decibels on the A scale (dBA). As the pressure of sound waves increases the sound appears louder and the dBA level increases logarithmically. On the average, a person will describe an activity with a dBA ranging from 85 to 105 as "very loud" while a noise level of 20 to 40 dBA will be described as "faint". A dBA of 130 has been identified as the threshold of pain; 0 dBA as the threshold of audibility.

When measuring roadway traffic noise, the State Office of Noise Control, uses cumulative noise exposure information in terms of day-night average noise level L (dn) contour values. A 60 dB (L10) noise contour along a highway would represent a 60 decibel reading that is occurring ten percent of the time that measurements are being conducted.

### California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is the foundation of environmental law and policy in California. The main objectives of CEQA are to disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities and to

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identify ways to avoid or reduce those effects by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures. Under CEQA, a substantial noise increase may result in a significant adverse environmental effect; if so, the noise increase must be mitigated or identified as a noise impact for which it is likely that only partial (or no) mitigation measures are available. Specific economic, social, environmental, legal, and technological conditions may make noise mitigation measures infusible.

## **California Streets and Highways Code, Section 216**

Section 216 of the California Streets and Highways Code relates to the noise level produced by the traffic on, or by the construction of, a State freeway measured in the classrooms, libraries, multipurpose rooms, and spaces used for pupil personnel services of a public or private elementary or secondary school. The code states that if the interior noise level produced by freeway traffic or the construction of a freeway exceeds 52 dBA Leq, Caltrans shall undertake a noise abatement program in any such classroom, library, multipurpose room, or space used for pupil personnel services to reduce the freeway traffic noise level therein to 52 dBA Leq or less by measures including, but not limited to, installing acoustical materials, eliminating windows, installing air conditioning, or constructing sound baffle structures.

## **Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol for New Highway Construction Projects**

The Protocol specifies the policies, procedures, and practices to be used by agencies that sponsor new construction or reconstruction projects. NAC specified in the Protocol are the same as those criteria specified in 23 CFR 772. This report defines a noise increase as substantial when the predicted noise levels with project implementation exceed existing noise levels by 12 dBA Leq(h). The Protocol also states that a sound level is considered to approach an NAC level when the sound level is within 1 dBA of the NAC identified in 23 CFR 772. For example, a sound level of 66 dBA is considered to approach the NAC of 67 dBA, but 65 dBA is not.

### **4.031 Existing Conditions**

For detailed noise information on the Woodlake region, the reader is referred to the following environmental impact reports. These reports are on file at the Woodlake Planning Department.

*Tulare County Noise Element EIR, 1975*  
*Tulare County Noise Element EIR, 1987*

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*Tulare County 2001 RTP EIR, 2001*

The 1987 Tulare County Noise Element, prepared by Brown-Buntin Associates and QUAD Consultants through a contract with the Tulare County Association of Governments, identified significant stationary noise sources in the county and in its eight incorporated cities through a community noise survey.

Results from the Community Noise Survey, which was conducted to determine ambient noise levels in areas of Woodlake, are listed in Table No. 6. As expected, the primary source of noise that increases the ambient noise levels throughout any planning area is traffic, particularly truck traffic.

Brown-Buntin used the Federal Highway Administration's Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model to develop noise contours for major roadways in Woodlake. Noise contours specific to the planning area for 1986 and projected for the year 2010 are listed below in Table No. 7. The noise model calculates the distance the 60 and 65 decibel noise contours are located from the centerline of the roadway being analyzed. These distances are based of average annual daily traffic, traffic speed, and percent of truck traffic.

**Table No. 6  
Community Noise Survey**

<b>Location</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>LN</b>	<b>Lmax (source)</b>	<b>Estimated Ldn</b>
Redwood/Crestwood	46	33	63 (traffic)	45 dB
Cypress/Sequoia	53	38	69 (school bus)	52 dB
Miller/Brown Park	50	37	64 (truck)	49 dB
Palm/Ropes	52	38	64 (traffic)	51 dB

LD = Average of two 15-minute samples obtained between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

LN = Average for one 15-minute sample obtained between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Ldn = Average estimated from LD and LN

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**Table No. 7  
Traffic and Noise Level Data**

Roadway	<u>Average Annual Daily Traffic</u>		<u>Distance to Contours in Ft</u>			
	1986 (ADT)	2010 (ADT)	<u>1986</u> 65 dB	60 dB	<u>2010</u> 65 dB	60 dB
SR 216 ( RD 196 to SR 245)	4200	5695	56'	120'	68'	147'
SR 245 (SR 198 to A. 352)	4000	5424	81'	174'	99'	213'

Source: Noise Element, Technical Reference Document, 1987

The City of Woodlake adopted Tulare County’s Noise Element as its own in 1989. This Element contained goals and policies that regulate the location of noise sensitive and noise producing uses. The Element also sets community noise exposure levels, measured in decibels, for various land use categories. For example, the “normally acceptable” noise levels for residential uses, including single family dwellings, duplexes and mobile homes, is 45 to 60 Ldn. For interior noise levels for residential uses the “acceptable” noise level is 45Ldn. These standards are set forth in the policy section of the Noise Element.

## **4.032 Environmental Impact**

Development consistent with the General Plan during the planning period will increase the volume of traffic on roadways in the planning area. These higher traffic volumes will increase the ambient noise levels in adjacent residential neighborhoods, especially on dwellings that front or back onto surrounding collector or arterial roadways.

Short-term changes in the noise environment will involve the construction of projects throughout the planning area, ranging from buildings to roadways and from infrastructure to parks. Noise is typically generated by heavy construction equipment - bulldozers, trucks, concrete mixers, backhoes, and generators. Short-term noise only occurs during the construction period of a project. Construction is typically restricted to daytime hours, and the duration of each noise event is very short. For these reasons, short-term noise impacts are not considered to be a significant impact.

The long-term changes in the noise environment will involve increased traffic-generated noise along major roadways in the planning area, such as State Routes 245

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and 216. The 60 and 65 decibel noise contours depicted in Table No. 4 above will engulf more land along these major roadways over time, eventually reaching the distances estimated for the year 2010.

By the end of the planning period, 2028, traffic-generated noise will increase by approximately 5 decibels according to Tulare County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The findings of the RTP for the Woodlake area are detailed in Table No. 8.

**Table No. 8  
Traffic and Noise Level Data**

Roadway	Average Annual Daily Traffic		Decibels	
	2001 (ADT)	2025 (ADT)	2001 decibels	2025 decibels
SR 216 (RD 196 to Blair)	3,100	12,600	53 dB	58 dB
SR 216 ( SH 245 to Castle Rock)	7,900	6,100	57 dB	62 dB
SR 245 ( A. 352 to SR 216)	4,300	4,900	67 dB	55 dB
SR 245 (city limits to SH 198)	3,600	5,500	62 dB	54 dB

Source: Tulare County Regional Transportation Plan, EIR, 2001

The long-term noise trend indicates that more sensitive land uses, like single family dwellings and schools, will be exposed to higher levels of noise. Persons that are living or working in buildings that are not properly insulated or designed to attenuate noise could be adversely impacted by increased noise emanating from adjacent roadways. These persons could suffer from loss of sleep, stress, or interference with speech and concentration. Land uses that are adversely impacted by noise can also suffer from a reduction in real estate value. This impact can lead to a blighted condition because persons will be unwilling to invest, maintain or upgrade property that is noise impacted.

In Woodlake, fortunately, most of the uses that front onto to the state highways are commercial or industrial, or if they are residential uses, they have a significant front yard setback, which attenuates noise levels before it reaches the front of the residential dwelling. Many of the homes that front onto the state highways have setbacks that range from 50 to 150 feet, measured from the edge of the travel way to the front of the residential dwelling. This distance separation between the source of the traffic noise and the receiving point, which is the front of the residential dwelling, will reduce noise

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by about 3 dBA per doubling of distance (The Noise Guidebook, U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development). In other words, if the noise level at 50 feet from the centerline of a roadway is 58 dBA then at 100 feet from the centerline it will be 55 dBA and 52 dBA at 200 feet.

For 2025, according to Tulare County's Regional Transportation Plan, noise levels along Woodlake's two state highways will range from 54 to 62 dBA. The Plan states that these noise levels will occur at typical setback distances from the nearest travel way.

Residential structures built consistent with the Uniform Building Code and California Title 24 energy standards will realize a 20 dBA reduction in noise from the exterior to the interior of the building (The Noise Guidebook, U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development). Given this noise reduction, noise levels inside residential structures along Woodlake's two state highways will range from 34 to 42 dBA. This noise level falls into the "normally acceptable" community noise levels for interior residential environs.

One park, Miller-Brown Park, fronts onto the north side of State Highway 216 two blocks east of State Highway 245. Tulare County's Regional Transportation Plan indicates that by 2025 this roadway will have a noise level of 62 dBA at a point approximately 25 feet from the edge of the highway's right-of-way. The parking lot that serves this park is situated between State Highway 216 and the park itself. The parking lot has an approximate depth of 100 feet. This distance (depth) serves to reduce the level of outdoor noise at the actual park from 62 dBA down to about 56 dBA. According to Woodlake's Noise Element, noise levels that are below 70 dBA fall into the "normally acceptable" category for parks and playgrounds.

### **4.033 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring**

Noise emanating from roadways can be mitigated in one of three ways: (1) reduce the noise at the source by improving pavement surfaces, reducing traffic counts or depressing the roadway; (2) reduce the noise at the receiving point by installing noise attenuating sound walls, landscaping, earthen berms, or insulating the building so that noise levels are reduced in the interior; or (3) increase the distance between the noise source and the receiving point by establishing building setback distances from the roadway.

Future noise levels along Woodlake's most heavily traveled roadways, detailed in Table No. 8, will not reach levels that are considered to be significant. The existing residential setback distances along these roadways, 50 to 100 feet, and the attenuation of noise by building walls, windows and doors, reduces the impact of traffic noise on residential

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uses to an insignificant level. Commercial and industrial uses located along these roadways are not noise sensitive and therefore are not adversely impacted by traffic noise.

For new residential development along Woodlake's two state highways, the construction of a 6- to 7-foot solid block wall will reduce traffic noise inside the subdivision beyond typical standards. In other words, traffic-related noise within the subdivision will be minimal. This design approach was recently utilized on a single family residential subdivision on the east end of State Highway 216. The subdivision was conditioned to install a 6-foot block wall along the highway frontage.

### Mitigation Measure

1. All new residential subdivisions or apartment complexes proposed to front onto State Highways 245 and 216 shall be required to install a 6- to 7-foot block wall between the travel way and the residential structures.

### Mitigation Monitoring

1. The Planning Department will require the installation of a solid block wall as a condition of approval for residential development that fronts onto State Highways 216 and 245.

### **4.034 Residual Impact**

Future noise levels caused by higher traffic volumes along Woodlake's state highways will not have a significant impact on persons living or working along these roadways. As an added measure to reduce noise, new residential subdivisions or apartment complexes will be required to install solid block walls.

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## RESOURCES

*The project can potentially have an adverse impact on the resources of the planning area, including biotic, cultural, scenic and agriculture.*

### 4.04 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agricultural land is a nonrenewable natural resource. Consumption of this resource is considered to be an irreversible environmental impact. Conversion of prime agricultural land to nonagricultural uses or impairment of its productivity is considered a significant environmental impact under CEQA.

The California Department of Resource Conservation defines prime farmland as land having the best combination of soil quality, growing season, and water quality. Within the planning area, prime farmland would be those lands having soils with a soil capability class of I or II, a Storie Index greater than 85, and a permanent source of irrigation water. Unique farmland has special combinations of soil quality, location, growing season and water supply needed to produce specific high value crops.

In 1998, Tulare County had about 191,404 acres of important farmland, as classified by the State Department of Conservation, under production. In Tulare County from 1994 to 1996, land use conversion from agriculture to urban uses averaged about 1250 acres per year. On a regional scale, the American Farmland Trust has estimated that from 1975 to 1989 urbanization has claimed 3600 acres per year in the 10-county Central Valley. By 2010, the Trust estimates that another 360,000 will become urbanized.

#### 4.041 Existing Conditions

Woodlake's urban development boundary (UDB) line encompasses about 2,552 acres; 1,689 acres are inside Woodlake's city limits. About 190 acres of land within the city limits and 863 acres outside the city limits but inside the UDB are under agricultural production - citrus, olives and row crops. The State Resources Agency has classified most of this agricultural land as "prime" farmland or farmland of "Statewide Importance".

Approximately ten percent of this farmland is under the Williamson Act and can not be developed for a period of 10 years unless the agricultural preserve was properly protested by the City of Woodlake when the preserve was formed. The preserve, if

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properly protested, would be dissolved upon annexation into the City. A Notice of Non-Renewal can be filed by the owner of property under a preserve. With this filing the agricultural preserve will expire after a period of 10 years. After this time period, the property, with proper zoning, can be developed to a nonagricultural use.

### 4.042 Environmental Impacts

The proposed general plan in the near-term (2018) will lead to the urbanization of 37 acres of agricultural land; in the long-term (2028), between 253 and 283 acres of agricultural land will be removed from production. A nonrenewable resource like agricultural land, when converted to an urban use, is considered an irreversible change in the environment. The removal of the maximum possible number of acres from agricultural production identified by the general plan, 283 acres, amounts to about .001 percent of the total important farmland area identified by the California Department of Conservation for Tulare County for the year 1998. While this percentage is small, it is part of a cumulative impact on this resource when its acreage is added to the urbanization of land caused by other cities in the county.

A secondary impact associated with the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses involves land use conflicts. As agricultural land in the planning area is converted to urban uses, land use conflicts will arise as existing farming operations interface with urban uses. This urban encroachment could prevent farmers from carrying out many of their normal management practices (e.g. pesticide application). Farming practices can generate dust, noise, and odors. This can have an adverse impact on surrounding residents and it places an additional burden on the farmer to minimize these impacts. In addition to the farmer potentially receiving complaints from surrounding neighbors, the farmer can be adversely impacted by vandalism, theft and nuisance activities from neighboring residents.

Urbanization of agricultural land can also have an economic impact on the local economy because land taken out of production reduces the amount of money that flows into the local economy from agriculture. The report Risks, Challenges and Opportunities: Agriculture, Resources and Growth in a Changing Central Valley, prepared by the American Farmland Trust, indicated that for every one dollar of farm sales four dollars of farm-related economic activity occurs

Another secondary effect of the proposed project would be its adverse impact on the scenic qualities of the planning area. As urban uses are constructed on agricultural land, the amount of man-made improvements will begin to dominate what was once an open space feature. Persons who once had a view of an open field will experience a loss of open space as urban improvements replace agriculture.

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## 4.043 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

Conversion of prime agricultural land to an urban use must be considered a significant, unavoidable impact. In Woodlake, the amount of land that will be converted to urban uses over the planning period (20 years) is small compared to the amount of land under production in Tulare County, however, the project will have a cumulative impact on the urbanization of agricultural land.

### Mitigation Measures

1. Increase residential densities and building intensities within the planning area. This increased-density-model is proposed in the goals, policies and actions chapters of the General Plan.
2. The City of Woodlake should adopt an Agricultural Mitigation Fee. This fee would be prepared consistent with AB 1600.

## 4.044 Residual Impact

The project's impact on agricultural resources can not be mitigated, however, it can be minimized with the adoption of the above mitigation measures. Therefore, the proposed project will have an adverse irreversible impact on agricultural resources.

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### 4.05 BIOTIC RESOURCES

Biotic resources are considered to be a nonrenewable natural resource. Consumption of this resource is considered to be an irreversible environmental impact. Should certain species of plant or animals become extinct or have their numbers so reduced that they can not effectively increase their populations, the resource then becomes a nonrenewable resource.

#### 4.051 Existing Conditions

A document entitled, Biological Resources Evaluation for Woodlake Airport Improvement Project, was prepared by Live Oak Associates, Inc. in 2003 to determine what kind of impact the expansion of the Woodlake Airport would have on biotic resources in Woodlake. Live Oak conducted a review of (1) the California Natural Diversity Database (CDFG 2002); (2) the Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California (CNPS 2001); and (3) a list of the federally listed special status species prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and (4) manuals and references related to plants and animals of California's Central Valley. These information surveys primarily focused on the Woodlake U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute quad sheets, which contains the General Plan's entire planning area.

The Live Oak Report concluded that six potential species might frequent or exist on the 30-acre site adjacent to the Woodlake Airport. These species include vernal pool fairy shrimp, vernal pool tadpole shrimp, San Joaquin kit fox, western spadefoot toad, burrowing owl, and California horned lark. Other identified species not found on the airport site but potentially within the General Plan planning area include: Greene's Tuctoria, Spiney-sepaled Button Celery, Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle, Swainson's Hawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, California Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, and White-tailed Kite. For the entire list of species that could exist within the Woodlake planning area the reader is referred to Appendix A of this report.

The General Plan planning area contains a variety of biotic habitats, each of which, can support a unique mix of plant and animal species. Habitats found in the planning area include vernal pools, foothill grassland, non-native Valley grassland, riparian woodland, ponds and marshes, lakes and agricultural lands.

The planning area contains rivers, ditches, creeks and a lake, all of which, support a unique set of plants and animals. Along the St. Johns River, a significant riparian woodland exists. This community supports oaks, sycamores, willow, cottonwood, and a significant understory. Noted species that have been sited in this woodland include the American Bald Eagle and the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle.

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Bravo Lake, a 350-acre irrigation lake managed by Wutchumna Water District, attracts a wide variety of migratory birds. Noted species that have been observed at this lake include the American Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, and Long-billed Curlew. Ponds and marshes adjacent to Bravo Lake may attract the Tri-colored Blackbird and Western Pond Turtle.

A portion of the northeast quadrant of the planning area contains foothill grassland. This environment is frequented by Golden Eagles and various species of hawks and owls.

Most of the open space in the Woodlake planning area is dominated by agriculture. Citrus, olives, and grazing land are the dominant crops. These lands may have noted animal species frequent that frequent their environs, such as the San Joaquin kit fox and burrowing owls.

### **4.052 Environmental Impacts**

According to CEQA, a “project” is deemed “significant” if its impact on the biotic environment causes physical changes within the planning area that would adversely effect habitat, wetlands, migratory birds, birds of prey, or species of special status designated by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Any “take”, defined as “to hunt, pursue, catch, kill, capture of a species of special status, requires a “permit” from these agencies and is also deemed “significant” under CEQA.

The Woodlake General Plan could implement physical changes that would have an adverse impact on any of the biotic resources mentioned or on any one of the species listed in Appendix A of this report. The adoption of the General Plan will facilitate development, which includes but is not limited to road building, infrastructure installation, construction of urban improvements, and consumption of natural resources. Development could physically remove habitat or create conditions that might adversely impact species of special status. Conditions that might cause these impacts could include increased noise levels, hunting pressures, introduction of domestic pets, increased urban runoff that contains contaminants, diversion of natural watercourses, or use of off-road vehicles.

A number of mitigation measures can be implemented that will minimize adverse impacts on biotic resources caused by development. Precluding development on land that contains sensitive habitat is the most effective measure towards minimizing impacts on biotic resources.

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For example, if a residential subdivision (development) is proposed on a parcel of land that contains riparian woodland, the City of Woodlake, as a condition of approval, could modify the subdivision design to place the riparian area in a “conservation” area thereby protecting the habitat from being damaged by development. Other measures that will mitigate the project’s impact on biotic resources have been provided by Live Oak Associates in their biological resources evaluation of the Woodlake Airport. These measures are broad enough so they can be applied to the entire planning area.

### 4.053 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

1. Protection of Existing Habitat. Native habitat will be protected by erecting fencing between the development site and the habitat. Prior to construction, the construction crew will be briefed on the need to protect the fenced habitat and the regulatory implications of the inadvertent disturbance of the habitat.

2. Conservation Easements. If a development results in the destruction of habitat, the City of Woodlake shall preserve existing habitat at a ratio of 2:1. For example, if the project results in the destruction of .1 acres of vernal pool or riparian habitat, the City would preserve .2 acres of vernal pool or riparian woodland on or off site.

3. Burrowing Owls. A pre-construction survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist for burrowing owls 30-days on the onset of construction if a biological survey finds that this species has a high probability of existing on the development site. If construction will occur during the breeding season (February through July), the active nest burrows will be fenced off until breeding season is over. During the non-breeding season, resident owls can be relocated after consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game.

4. California Horned Lark. During the breeding season (March through July) habitat suitable for nesting of California horned larks shall be surveyed 30 days prior to the onset of construction. If no active nests are identified in habitats suitable for nesting, the project can then proceed.

5. Degradation of Water Quality in Watercourses. Protection of graded slopes from sheet, rill or gully erosion shall be accomplished with erosion control fabric, hydromulch containing the seed of native soil-binding plants or straw mechanically imbedded in exposed soils.

Hay bale check dams shall be installed below graded areas to prevent sediment from being carried into the adjacent watercourse. Use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to insure that sediments, oils, pesticides and fertilizers, and other contaminants are

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diverted into grassy swales, bio-swales, or retention/detention basins.

## **4.054 Residual Impacts**

The implementation of the mitigation measures detailed above will reduce the project's impact on biological resources to a less than significant level.