



Date: March 22, 2010  
To: Interested Parties  
From: Steve Geiger, Principal Planner, Sutter County Community Services  
Subject: **NOTICE OF PREPARATION FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE SUTTER COUNTY 2030 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND SCOPING MEETING**

**Public Comment Period: March 22, 2010 through April 20, 2010**

### **Introduction**

Sutter County will be the Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Sutter County 2030 General Plan Update (proposed project). The EIR is being prepared in compliance with the requirements set forth in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to CEQA, the Lead Agency must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform trustee and local agencies as well as the public that an EIR will be prepared. The EIR will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and recommend mitigation measures for any significant impact, as required.

The purpose of the NOP is to provide information describing the project and its potential environmental effects to enable comments regarding the scope and content of the information to be addressed in the EIR. Agencies should comment on such information as it relates to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the project.

The County is comprised of 607 square miles of land or approximately 389,000 acres. The boundaries of the 2030 General Plan or "Policy Area" encompass the entire county, except for the incorporated cities of Live Oak and Yuba City, as shown in Figure 1.

### **Project Background**

The General Plan is a state-required legal document (Government Code section 65300) that provides guidance to local elected officials (decision makers) when making determinations pertaining to the allocation of resources and the future physical form and character of development in cities and counties. The General Plan is the official statement of a jurisdiction regarding the extent and types of development needed to achieve the community's physical, economic, social and environmental goals. The General Plan expresses the County's goals and articulates the County's development and growth intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the general public, property owners, community interest groups, prospective investors, and business interests. The General Plan consists of individual sections or elements that address a specific issue area as well as provides a comprehensive land use planning framework.

Sutter County initiated its General Plan update process in late 2007. At that time, the County Board of Supervisors appointed a 25-member General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to help direct and provide input on the General Plan update. In early 2008, the County prepared a Technical Background Report (TBR) and an Issues Report. The TBR presents the physical, social, and economic information required to support the preparation of the General Plan and serves as the base document from which subsequent planning policies and programs are formulated. The Issues Report identifies and describes the key physical, environmental, economic, cultural, and social issues to be considered in the General Plan update.

Since the beginning of the General Plan update process, the County has held two rounds of community workshops for a total of seven separate workshops. Input received at these workshops, as well as through stakeholder interviews, GPAC meetings, and a joint Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors workshop were used to prepare a set of guiding principles and a vision that established a conceptual foundation for the County's 2030 General Plan. The guiding principles and vision for the future were adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in June 2008. In late 2009, the Board of Supervisors gave staff direction to develop the Draft General Plan and prepare the required environmental documentation based on the Preferred Land Use Map.

The County's existing General Plan was adopted in 1996. Various elements of the General Plan have been amended over time, but the plan itself has not been comprehensively updated since its adoption. A new General Plan is necessary to reflect the current vision for growth in the County, as well as what resources to protect and how the quality of life is defined within Sutter County over the next twenty years.

### **Project Description**

The 2030 General Plan defines comprehensive land use, noise, housing, circulation and infrastructure, public services, resource conservation, and public health and safety goals and policies for the entire County. The 2030 General Plan supports a broad continuation of the current land use pattern within the County, while affording new opportunities for growth and change. It balances the County's vision to maintain and enhance its high quality rural lifestyle, agricultural heritage, and natural resources, with a commitment to promoting a vibrant and sustainable economy that attracts diverse jobs and services.

The proposed General Plan is organized in the following elements:

- Land Use
- Agricultural Resources
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Mobility
- Infrastructure
- Public Services
- Environmental Resources
- Public Health and Safety
- Noise

Sutter County is a rural, agricultural area with over 94 percent of the County area designated for agricultural and open space uses, as shown in Table 1. As of July 2008, the County's total population is

estimated to be approximately 96,095 people, of which approximately 26 percent (25,000 people) live in the unincorporated portion of the County.

<b>TABLE 1 EXISTING LAND USES</b>		
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Percentage of Total County Land</b>
Agricultural	322,240	83%
Residential	14,645	4%
Public and Vacant	2,293	0.6%
Commercial	1,424	0.4%
Industrial	1,743	0.4%
Open Space	44,581	11%
Transportation and Utilities	2,517	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>389,443</b>	<b>100%</b>
Notes: 1. Includes acreages within incorporated cities and rural communities. Source: Sutter County, 2008.		

Within the County there are several rural communities including: Meridian, in the north part of the County adjacent to the western County boundary; Sutter, located in the north-central portion of the County abutting the Sutter Buttes; Robbins, located in the southwest between the Sacramento River and the Sutter Bypass along Highway 113; and the communities of Rio Oso, Trowbridge, Nicolaus, and East Nicolaus, all clustered near the convergence of the Bear and Feather rivers in the southeast portion of the County. Another small community found within the County that does not have an adopted community boundary is Pleasant Grove, located in the southeast portion of the County. There are also two incorporated cities – City of Yuba City and the City of Live Oak – within the County.

The General Plan identifies five new Growth Areas which include those portions of the County that are either in close proximity to, and may connect with, existing public infrastructure and services, can financially support the cost of independently providing such public services, or can rely on individual services with the intensity of uses correspondingly limited. The Growth Areas are described in more detail below.

1. Spheres of Influence (SOI) – The SOI for the County’s incorporated cities, Yuba City and Live Oak, including the possible future expansion of Yuba City’s SOI. It is intended that future growth in the SOI areas would occur subject to a comprehensive and coordinated City-County planning effort likely followed by annexation to and provision of urban services from the cities.
2. Sutter Pointe – The Sutter Pointe Specific Plan was approved in June 2009 and is located in the southern unincorporated portion of the County. Sutter Pointe is planned as a mixed-use urban

community and has been structured to fully fund required urban services and facilitate future incorporation as an independent new city.

3. Rural Planned Communities – There are two Rural Planned Communities designated by the 2030 General Plan; one in the community of Sutter, and the other overlapping the communities of East Nicolaus and Trowbridge. These areas are subject to future comprehensive planning processes to establish new mixed-use communities, provide a full level of public services, and consider possible future incorporation as new cities.
4. Industrial/Commercial Reserve – Industrial/Commercial Reserve land uses are located along the Highway 99 corridor, north and south of the City of Yuba City. While the potential exists that public services and infrastructure may be extended to these uses from Yuba City, the type and intensity of development may be limited by the County based upon the availability of such services.
5. Tudor Industrial/Commercial – Industrial/Commercial use along Highway 99 within the community of Tudor. The type and intensity of development allowed in this area may be limited by the County based upon the availability of public infrastructure and services.

Table 2 indicates the growth assumptions for the General Plan based on the number of new residential units, jobs, and increase in population. The Sutter Pointe Specific Plan is called out separately because it encompasses a large area of the County (7,500 acres) and was approved by the Board of Supervisors and the EIR certified in 2009. The 2030 General Plan does not propose making any land use changes to the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan.

To estimate the amount of new growth that is anticipated to occur within the County over the next 20 years, County staff considered a range of factors including existing infrastructure constraints, physical or environmental limitations and socioeconomic trends. Based on this analysis the County developed its Land Use Diagram and assigned specific land uses and densities/intensities to those new growth areas. Due to current market conditions and growth projections for the region, the County used density/intensity assumptions for new growth that are expected to occur within the timeframe of the General Plan, reflecting a foreseeable buildout scenario.

The EIR analysis focuses on the 2030 General Plan adjusted buildout assumptions that include full buildout of the Sutter Pointe project by 2030 or 2040.

**TABLE 2  
2030 SUTTER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS**

	<i>Existing (2009)<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Sutter Pointe Specific Plan<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>2009-2030 Net New Growth<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>2030 General Plan Adjusted Buildout<sup>4</sup></i>
<b>Total Units</b>				
<b>Low Density<sup>5</sup></b>	9,048	1,441	4,727	15,216
<b>Medium Density</b>	720	12,014	0 <sup>6</sup>	12,110
<b>High Density</b>	0	4,025	450	4,475
<b>Population<sup>7</sup></b>	28,505	46,758	14,885	88,420

Notes:

1. Source: Sutter County, 2009.
2. Sutter County, Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Draft EIR, December 2008. This project was approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 30, 2009. The project is not yet constructed.
3. Does not include Sutter Pointe Specific Plan.
4. The 2030 Sutter County General Plan only includes growth assumptions for the unincorporated county. Due to current market conditions and growth projections for the region, the County used density/intensity assumptions for new growth that are expected to occur within the timeframe of the General Plan, reflecting a foreseeable/adjusted buildout scenario.
5. Includes the following low density residential uses: AG-20, AG-40, AG-80, AG-RC, AP/APR, RAN, ER, and LDR.
6. No existing units would be lost, but approximately 78 acres currently designated as medium density residential would be redesignated as other uses. There is still the potential for new MDR units to be built on land designated for MDR in the 2030 General Plan.
7. Persons per household assumptions: low density = 2.93; medium density = 2.77; high density = 2.30. Persons per household rates from the Sutter County, Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Draft EIR, December 2008.

**Potential Environmental Effects**

The environmental analyses presented in the Draft EIR will describe the existing conditions in the County and surrounding areas. Relevant federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the current Sutter County General Plan goals and policies will be summarized. The methods of analysis and any assumptions that are important to understand the conclusions of the analysis will be described along with the standards of significance used to determine impacts of the project. Feasible mitigation measures will be identified for each significant impact. At this time it is anticipated that the following issue/technical sections will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Climate Change
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Flooding, Storm Drainage, and Water Quality
- Land Use and Agricultural Resources
- Noise
- Population, Housing and Employment
- Public Services (law enforcement, fire, emergency services, parks and recreation, schools, solid waste)
- Public Utilities (water supply, wastewater, dry utilities)
- Transportation/Circulation

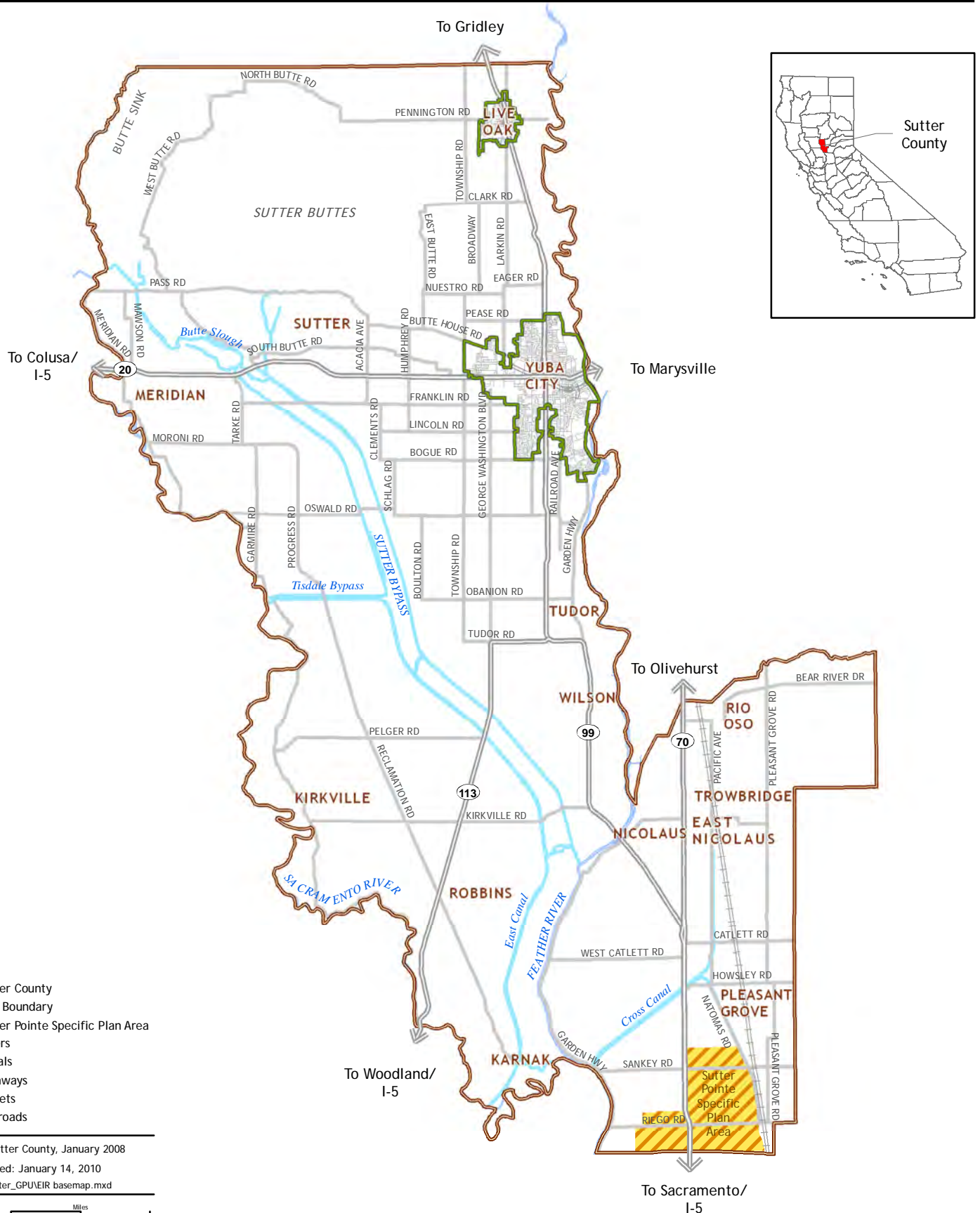
### **Public Scoping Meetings**

Two public scoping meetings will be held on April 8, 2010 from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm and from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm in the Sutter County Health Department Auditorium, 1445 Veterans Memorial Circle, Yuba City, California.

### **Submitting Comments**

Comments and suggestions regarding the scope of the EIR analysis are invited from all interested parties. Please submit your comments in writing (emails are acceptable) to Steve Geiger, Principal Planner (address below) by no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 20, 2010. Please include the contact person's full name and address if you wish to be added to the mailing list for future EIR-related notices. If you have any questions regarding the proposed 2030 General Plan or General Plan process, please contact Steve Geiger, contact information listed below.

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- Legend**
- Sutter County
  - City Boundary
  - Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Area
  - Rivers
  - Canals
  - Highways
  - Streets
  - Railroads

Source: Sutter County, January 2008  
 Date Revised: January 14, 2010  
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