

## 5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 5.1 through 5.14 of this draft environmental impact report (EIR) present the environmental impact analysis for the anticipated effects of the adoption of the El Dorado County General Plan. Issues evaluated in these sections consist of a full range of environmental topics originally identified for review in the notice of preparation (NOP) (Appendix A). The environmental issues are:

- < Land Use and Housing (Section 5.1)
- < Agriculture and Forestry (Section 5.2)
- < Visual Resources (Section 5.3)
- < Traffic and Circulation (Section 5.4)
- < Water Resources (Section 5.5)
- < Utilities (Section 5.6)
- < Public Services (Section 5.7)
- < Human Health and Safety (Section 5.8)
- < Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources (Section 5.9)
- < Noise (Section 5.10)
- < Air Quality (Section 5.11)
- < Biological Resources (Section 5.12)
- < Cultural Resources (Section 5.13)
- < Lake Tahoe Basin (Section 5.14)

### STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Each section in this chapter presents a detailed evaluation of a particular resource area and includes a discussion of existing conditions (both physical and regulatory), potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed General Plan, and revised or additional policies proposed to mitigate significant environmental impacts.

**Existing Conditions.** The Existing Conditions subsection presents relevant information on both the physical environment and the regulatory/planning environment of the county. The discussion of physical conditions addresses all lands under County jurisdiction in El Dorado County and in the surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with §15125 of the State

CEQA Guidelines. Nearly half (46.4%) of the land in the county is under the jurisdiction of governmental entities other than the County; these areas include incorporated cities, state and federal public lands, and Native American reservations. Unless otherwise noted, the existing (baseline) conditions described for each issue area are those in existence at the time the NOP was issued and the environmental process commenced (August 2001). This subsection also presents information on the laws, regulations, and plans that relate to the resource area being evaluated.

**Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures.** The Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection identifies the environmental impacts of adoption of the General Plan and identifies mitigation measures to reduce significant and potentially significant impacts. This discussion focuses on the four equal-weight project alternatives described in Chapter 3, Description of Equal-Weight Alternatives, which are analyzed at an equal level of detail in this chapter. The relevant thresholds of significance used to identify impacts and methodology used in the analysis are presented before the evaluation of impacts. Throughout the discussion, impacts are identified numerically and sequentially. For example, impacts discussed in Section 5.1 are identified as 5.1-1, 5.1-2, and so on. An impact statement presented at the beginning of each impact discussion provides a summary of the impact and its level of significance for each of the alternatives. Following the impact statement, the discussion identifies the relevant General Plan policies for the different alternatives and presents an analysis of the impact for two distinct planning scenarios: the project planning horizon (2025) and buildout (these concepts are explained further below). The impact analysis includes evidence and explanation supporting the conclusion on the level of significance for the impact.

The mitigation measure discussion presents revisions to the General Plan policies or proposes new policies to reduce significant and potentially significant impacts. Distinct mitigation measures are provided for each of the four equal-weight alternatives as appropriate. When revisions to policies are presented, deleted text is shown in “strikeout” font, and additions are double underlined. Each mitigation measure is identified numerically to correspond with the number of the impact being reduced by the measure. For example, Impact 5.1-1 would be mitigated with Mitigation Measure 5.1-1. This subsection also describes whether the mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels. Significant and unavoidable impacts are identified in this subsection and are summarized in Section 7.4.

The discussions of cumulative impacts and growth-inducing impacts are presented in Sections 7.1 and 7.2, respectively.

## **APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

The environmental analysis included in this EIR addresses project impacts at both the project planning horizon (2025) and buildout. The planning horizon represents an approximate 20-year period within which current land use planning decisions are expected to have foreseeable implications. Beyond that point, gauging the effects of current planning under dynamic conditions is extremely difficult. “Buildout” refers to the theoretical maximum buildout of all lands in accordance with assigned land use designations. Although highly unlikely, the buildout scenario demonstrates potential land use patterns that should be considered in the land use planning process. The analysis of impacts under the 2025 scenario is generally more detailed than the buildout analysis because of the uncertainties associated with projecting buildout conditions. For 2025, the analysis is quantitative where appropriate and possible. For buildout, the analysis is qualitative except in certain circumstances that are noted for specific topical areas.

Each of the four equal-weight alternatives carries with it a distinct land use map and policy set. These components of each alternative represent the foundation for the environmental impact analysis. In addition, land use forecasts have been prepared for each of the four equal-weight project alternatives that are based directly on the land use maps. These forecasts, described in detail in Chapter 4, Land Use Forecasts and Development Estimates, show the incremental change and approximate location in housing and jobs for each alternative through 2025 and buildout. This information was used to determine where potential environmental conflicts may occur. The proposed General Plan policies and existing regulations were then evaluated with respect to these potential impacts. In many cases, policies and regulations were found to minimize potential environmental effects; in those cases where they do not, potential significant environmental impacts exist and mitigation is proposed.

The portion of the County within the Lake Tahoe Basin is analyzed separately in this EIR. As discussed in Section 1.3, the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact rests in TRPA primary land use planning and permitting authority over lands within the Basin. TRPA’s Regional Plan for the Tahoe Basin functions as a region-wide general plan for the basin. Local land use plans and regulations must be at least as environmentally protective as the Regional Plan and implementing regulations adopted by TRPA. TRPA has prepared a number of environmental documents analyzing the impacts of the Regional Plan and implementing regulations. CEQA permits local governments to rely on these documents when adopting a General Plan. In accordance with CEQA, TRPA’s environmental documents have been reviewed, and their conclusions are summarized in Section 5.14, Lake Tahoe Basin, of this EIR.

For each environmental impact identified in this EIR, a statement of the level of significance of the impact is provided. Impacts are assessed as one of the following categories:

- < The term “no impact” is used when the environmental resource being discussed would or may not be adversely affected.
- < A “less-than-significant impact” would or may cause a minor, but acceptable adverse change in the environment.
- < A “significant impact” would or may have a substantial adverse effect on the environment but could be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation. Impacts may also be considered potentially significant if the analysis cannot definitively conclude that an impact would occur as a result of the implementation of the proposed general plan.
- < A “significant and unavoidable impact” would or may cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment, and no known feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.