

**MONO COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR)

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SUMMARY

PROPOSED PROJECT

The 1992 update of the Mono County General Plan allows for development in and adjacent to community areas and for conservation of resource lands outside of community areas in order to achieve the goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors". The Plan also provides for development outside of community areas. Such development would be primarily low intensity uses, such as low density residential development, agricultural uses, and open space; resource extraction projects may also be permitted in appropriate areas subject to environmental and reclamation requirements. Development would be assessed for conformance with General Plan policies relating to the preservation and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat, the preservation of agricultural lands, the adequate provision of urban services, conformance with the County's Fire Safe regulations, and other environmental issues and constraints. In accordance with General Plan policies and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), development with the potential to adversely impact a resource would be required to assess the potential impact and to suggest project alternatives and mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate the impact.

1992 PLAN COMPARED TO THE EXISTING PLAN

The existing General Plan allows for a potential maximum buildout of 121,829 dwelling units in the unincorporated area, and a potential maximum population of 305,790 persons¹. Assuming that the occupancy rate of 56 percent identified in the 1990 Census remains constant, the potential maximum resident population would be 171,242 persons. The 1992 Plan allows for a potential maximum buildout of **28,623** dwelling units, which results in a potential maximum population of **71,844**, or a resident population of **40,232** persons.

The substantial reduction in dwelling units and population in the 1992 Plan (approximately 77 percent from the buildout identified in the existing plan) results from changes in land use designations and associated changes in maximum densities. In the existing plan, approximately 90 percent of the private land is designated as "Mixed Multiple", which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per acre (except in Hammil Valley where the maximum density is 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres). Most of the lands outside of community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" are proposed for redesignation to "Resource Management", which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres. Lands within community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" are proposed for redesignation to a variety of land use designations, primarily residential and commercial. Lands owned by LADWP were also designated as "MM" in the existing plan. In the 1992 Plan, most of those lands are designated as Open Space ("OS"), which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 80 acres.

¹Based on 2.51 persons per dwelling unit (1990 Census).

The 1992 General Plan provides for a more balanced mix of land uses than does the existing plan. In the existing plan, 370 acres of private land are designated for commercial uses, and 94 acres are designated for industrial uses. The 1992 Plan designates **782** acres for a variety of commercial uses and 102 acres for industrial uses.

Both the existing plan and the 1992 Plan focus development in community areas, with the intention of maintaining open space and valuable resource lands in areas outside of existing communities. The maximum potential buildout and population figures for both plans are somewhat deceptive, since the potential development allowed would probably not occur on many lands outside of community areas given the environmental constraints to development on many of those lands, community desires to maintain agricultural lands and open space, and the cost of providing infrastructure to those sites.

Although buildout under the General Plan Update would result in additional impacts to the existing environment, it would not result in the same degree of impacts as the existing General Plan, which allows for a higher level of development. Based upon the existing number of units, and the number of units that could reasonably be expected to be developed within the 20-year timeframe of this plan, the reduction in number of unit potential should not adversely impact the county's ability to provide for local land use needs, such as affordable housing units or local industrial and commercial needs.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The proposed project would have a number of significant impacts², both beneficial and adverse. The following provides a summary of anticipated significant impacts and proposed mitigation measures for those impacts. These impacts are discussed in greater detail in the Impact Analysis Section of this document. The mitigation measures identified below are summaries of policies from the **1992** General Plan Update; ***mitigation measures are provided in detail as policy and action items in the General Plan Update and are herein incorporated by reference.***

LAND USE

The level of development allowed under the General Plan Update provides a substantial reduction in potential buildout for the unincorporated area from that allowed by the existing Plan. This could impact the county's ability to provide for local land use needs, such as affordable housing, and local industrial and commercial uses.

Providing for community land use needs at full buildout could reduce the amount of land available for other uses, such as open space or agricultural, and could result in leapfrog development, which in turn could result in the inefficient provision of services. Providing for buildout needs could also result in incompatible land uses.

²"Significant effect on the environment" means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historical or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant (CEQA Guidelines § 15382).

Key policies to mitigate these impacts include:

Land Use Countywide

- 1) Designate land in each community area for local land use needs, including industrial and commercial uses.
- 2) Designate sufficient land for a variety of residential uses, in order to provide for affordable housing.
- 3) Provide for growth in and adjacent to existing community areas and require proposed higher intensity development outside of community areas to be addressed through the Specific Plan ~~or PUD~~ process.
- 4) Support the exchange of public lands for community expansion purposes, if necessary.
- 5) Require that necessary services and facilities are available or will be provided as a condition of approval for proposed projects.
- 6) Establish adequate minimum parcel sizes for viable agricultural lands and encourage consolidation of undersized parcels.
- 7) Limit extension of urban services beyond existing Special District sphere of influence boundaries.
- 8) Require the preparation of a Specific Plan for proposed subdivisions in agricultural areas.
- 9) Encourage the development of programs which offer financial incentives to farm owners to reduce reliance on subdivision and sale of land to raise operating capital.
- 10) The primary use of any parcel within an agricultural land use category shall be agricultural production and related processing. Residential uses in the area shall recognize that the primary use of the land may create agricultural "nuisances".

Land Use in Community Planning Areas

- 1) **Antelope Valley** policies discourage subdivisions into six parcels or more outside of community areas and maintain large minimum parcel sizes outside of community areas and the Hwy. 395 corridor.³ Uses of a greater intensity than rural residential are permitted in the Hwy. 395 corridor if they comply with performance standards established in the land use element.
- 2) **Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate** minimizes the impacts of development by establishing minimum parcel sizes based on the sustainable carrying capacity of

³The Highway 395 corridor is defined as the area in the Antelope Valley, outside of communities, along both sides of Hwy. 395, between the West Walker River to the east of Hwy. 395 and the sloping terrain to the west of Hwy. 395.

- the land. In most cases in the planning area, the minimum parcel size is 40 acres.
- 3) In **Bridgeport**, subdivisions outside of the existing community areas are discouraged by establishing a minimum parcel size of 320 acres in the Valley. Subdivisions within the community area are limited to large lots (1 acre minimum).
 - 4) In **Mono Basin**, lands adjacent to Lee Vining are designated for community expansion in order to provide for the orderly growth of the community. Existing lots at Mono City should be developed before adjacent lands are considered for development.
 - 5) Policies to mitigate the impacts of future development in **June Lake** are discussed in the June Lake Area Plan and FEIR, adopted in 1991.
 - 6) **Mammoth Vicinity** policies focus growth in and adjacent to existing developed areas by prohibiting subdivisions of 6 lots or more in the unincorporated area, except in areas designated for Specific Plans or PUDs.
 - 7) Policies for the **Upper Owens River** focus on protecting the natural setting and recreational and agricultural resources in the area by limiting development to guest ranches, related commercial uses, agricultural uses and support residential uses.
 - 8) In **Long Valley**, policies focus on preserving and enhancing single family residential development and on providing for mixed commercial-residential uses by adopting a Mixed Use land use designation.
 - 9) **Wheeler Crest** policies focus on retaining the rural residential character of the planning area by permitting only single family residential and related accessory structures.
 - 10) In **Tri-Valley**, policies encourage the continuation of agricultural uses in Hammil Valley through implementation of the Development Credits Program. Policies for Benton and Chalfant allow for continued growth in those areas and the preservation of the community's rural character.
 - 11) In the **Benton Hot Springs** area, policies focus on preserving the historic nature of the townsite, protecting agricultural uses in the valley, and enhancing wildlife habitat in the area.
 - 12) Policies for **Oasis** promote the continuation of agricultural uses by designating lands as Agriculture.
 - 13) Policies to mitigate the impacts of future development in the **Conway Ranch Specific Plan** area are discussed in the Conway Ranch Specific Plan and FEIR, adopted in 1990.
 - 14) The land use policies from the **Airport Land Use Plans (ALUPs)** for the Mammoth/June Lakes Airport, the Lee Vining Airport, and the Bridgeport Airport (Bryant Field) focus on safety in the airport planning area and ensuring the compatibility of surrounding uses.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Future development, and the resulting increase in residents and visitors, will increase the need for general governmental services. It could impact local fire protection providers and could require the development of community water and sewer systems or expansion of existing systems. Future development could occur in areas that are not adequately served by existing public services and utilities, or ***may create a demand for*** new facilities or expansion of services.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Require that necessary services and facilities are available or will be provided as a condition of approval for proposed projects.
- 2) Through permit conditions and development measures, require development projects to fund the public service and infrastructure costs of the development.
- 3) Ensure that future development does not significantly impact governmental service providers by imposing permit conditions and mitigation measures that offset the impacts of development on governmental services and infrastructure. Such conditions and mitigation measures shall also address impacts to county services from future development which occurs in the incorporated area.
- 4) Encourage and assist special districts to secure grants to improve and expand sewer and water capabilities and fire protection services.
- 5) Limit development to a level which can be reasonably supported by available local water resources.
- 6) Consider the availability and financing of public services and utilities in any decision to convert an area from agricultural to non-agricultural uses.
- 7) Development projects shall demonstrate the availability of adequate structural fire protection prior to or as a condition of permit issuance.
- 8) Regulate the intensity of development in areas lacking adequate structural fire protection.
- 9) Assist fire protection districts in securing adequate funding for capital facilities and ongoing operations to serve new development.
- 10) Direct development towards existing communities, where infrastructure and services are already in place.

HOUSING

The development of new industries, recreational amenities and businesses would result in additional employment which could bring more residents to the area and increase the need for additional housing and also the need for additional short-term visitor accommodations. Depending on the type of employment created, this could substantially affect the need for affordable housing, especially if many of the additional jobs generated are in the traditionally low-paying service sector.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include:

- 1) Ensure that the County's General Plan, Zoning, and Subdivision regulations allow for the development of a variety of housing types.
- 2) Work towards attainment of the identified regional housing needs.
- 3) Meet basic housing construction needs by the construction or placement of approximately 528 units by 1997, if population growth is achieved as expected.
- 4) In conformance with state law, permit mobilehomes on all parcels zoned for conventional single-family residences.
- 5) Adopt the proposed "Mixed Use" General Plan land use designation and zoning district in order to provide for mixed commercial-residential uses and to allow for maximum development of housing, particularly employee housing.
- 6) In communities with a limited private land base and with limited vacant land available for additional residential development, study the possibility of acquiring surrounding public lands for community expansion.
- 7) Encourage the provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of all economic segments and special housing groups; provide density bonuses for affordable housing, continue to allow secondary housing units.
- 8) Require development projects to provide a sufficient number of affordable employee housing units.
- 9) Maintain existing housing stock through rehabilitation, replacement, and conservation.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Future development will increase traffic and will increase impacts on highways and local roads in the county. Increased road use will result in an increased need for road improvements and maintenance. An increased population resulting from future development will result in an increased need for parking facilities, transit facilities and services, and facilities for non-motorized modes of transportation. Increased vehicular traffic resulting from future development will result in corresponding impacts on air quality and noise levels. Increased air traffic could result in corresponding impacts on noise levels and safety.

Key policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Correlate development of the transportation and circulation system with land use development.
- 2) Plan and implement a circulation and transit system to provide, but not substantially exceed, the capacities needed to serve the long range travel demand of residents and visitors at acceptable levels of service and safety, and to support the county's land use objectives of concentrating development in community areas.

- 3) Promote a concise land use pattern in communities that is conducive to transit and non-motorized modes of circulation.
- 4) Require new development, where applicable, to fund related transportation improvements as a condition of project approval; require new subdivisions, where applicable, to provide dedications for improvements such as bicycle and pedestrian paths, transit facilities, and rights-of-way for future public roads.
- 5) Coordinate local transportation planning with Caltrans systems planning for local highways.
- 6) Maintain the existing systems of streets, roads, and highways in good condition.
- 7) Provide for the use of non-motorized means of transportation (pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, etc.) in Mono County.
- 8) Assist with the development and maintenance of local, regional, and inter-regional transit systems in the county.
- 9) Provide for the parking needs of residents and visitors, particularly in community areas and at recreational areas.
- 10) Provide for the development of a transportation and circulation system that preserves air quality in the county; implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to reduce auto emissions, to reduce the number of new facilities needed, and to increase the energy efficiency of the transportation system.
- 11) Policies in the Airport Land Use Plans (ALUPs) for the Mammoth/June Lakes Airport, the Lee Vining Airport, and the Bridgeport Airport (Bryant Field) address compatibility of land uses adjacent to the airports in order to mitigate potential noise and safety impacts.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Future development would reduce and/or alter open spaces and degrade scenic resources and views in the county. Development along the county's highways could detract from the area's visual/scenic qualities, which in turn could impact the recreational economy in the area, since many visitors form an impression of the area from traveling on the highways.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Identify scenic resources and designate those areas for low intensity uses.
- 2) Maintain and expand the scenic highway system in the county.
- 3) Require a visual impact analysis and mitigation measures for proposed projects with the potential to have a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect.
- 4) Require future development to be sited and designed to be in scale and compatible with the surrounding community and/or natural environment.
- 5) Require the undergrounding of utility lines in conformance with the county code.

- 6) Establish design review processes in certain communities and along scenic highways.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Future development outside of community areas could preclude or curtail recreational uses or be detrimental to the recreational experience. Further resource use, such as additional water diversions, could impact recreational uses. An expanded resident population could create a demand for additional developed park and recreation facilities.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Plan, design and construct parks and recreation facilities to coincide with projected growth.
- 2) Allow for the imposition of parkland dedications, fees and exactions on new developments that will impact existing park facilities.
- 3) Require specific plans for major developments outside of community areas to ensure that projects are planned in a manner that minimizes impacts to recreational use areas.
- 4) Identify, designate and acquire sites for parks and other recreation facilities of sufficient size and location for future development; develop funding mechanisms to pay for the acquisition and development of park sites and facilities.
- 5) Require high-intensity large-scale development outside of community areas to assess the impacts from that development to surrounding resources, including recreational resources, and to provide project alternatives and/or mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate potential impacts.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Future development could destroy or disturb important and sensitive cultural resources (paleontological, archaeological, or historical), which would represent an irretrievable loss. Increased human usage of the area resulting from the level of development allowed for under the General Plan Update may increase the potential for vandalism and scavenging of sites.

Key policies for mitigation of these impacts include the following:

- 1) Preserve, protect and restore (where appropriate) the county's cultural resources.
- 2) Future development projects shall avoid significant impacts to cultural resources unless a statement of overriding considerations is made during the EIR process. Projects with the potential to significantly impact cultural resources shall be required to provide an analysis of those impacts and to recommend project alternatives or mitigation measures.

- 3) Require proposed projects that may be incompatible with nearby cultural resources to provide project alternatives or mitigation measures to reduce the potential impacts to a level of non-significance.
- 4) Utilize the Specific Plan process, where appropriate, for large projects that may include potentially incompatible land uses, or that may be incompatible with surrounding cultural resources.

AIR QUALITY

The level of development permitted under the General Plan Update could increase air pollution associated with wood burning devices, auto emissions, re-entrainment of particulate matter, and blowing dust associated with agricultural practices and construction activities.

Policies provided to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Maintain air quality by complying with standards and regulations established by the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD).
- 2) Future development projects shall avoid impacts to air quality or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.
- 3) Reduce emissions from wood burning devices; require all new woodburning appliances to be Phase II EPA certified and limit the number of appliances to one per unit.
- 4) Reduce the amount of dust from construction, agricultural practices, and roads through use of dust abatement practices and paving.
- 5) Assist with the development and maintenance of transit systems within Mono County, including local services, inter-regional services, and services for employees of large employers.
- 6) Implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to reduce the need for new or expanded facilities, reduce auto emissions, and increase the energy efficiency of the transportation system.
- 7) Maintain a minimum water level in Mono Lake to minimize dust from the exposed lake shore.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The level of development provided for under the General Plan Update could increase the number of residents and visitors exposed to geologic hazards, such as landslides, earthquakes, volcanoes, and avalanches. Increased development could significantly impact Mono County's many unique geologic features, such as tufa formations and hot springs. In addition, areas containing significant deposits of mineral or geothermal resources could be significantly affected by development that limits access to or alters the integrity of the resource.

Key policies proposed as mitigation for these impacts include the following:

- 1) Deny applications for planning permits where geologic studies provide substantial evidence that the proposed project will be exposed to unreasonable risk from geologic hazards, unless the risk can be mitigated to a level of non-significance.
- 2) Ensure that new construction is designed and built to withstand seismic hazards.
- 3) Facilitate land trades for private lands subject to major geologic hazards.
- 4) Consider enacting a hillside ordinance to address requirements for evaluation of landslide, rockfall, and other geologic hazards on hillsides.
- 5) Limit development that attracts concentrations of people in historical avalanche paths (Conditional Development Areas).
- 6) Inform persons of the presence of geologic hazards during the permit process and/or during the transfer of property.
- 7) Limit the intensity of development in hazard areas through the assignment of appropriate zoning districts and by designating those areas for low intensity uses in the Land Use Element.
- 8) Conserve and protect areas containing significant mineral deposits in a manner that avoids or minimizes land use conflicts.
- 9) Require geotechnical studies for development projects to identify geologic hazards on site and to recommend appropriate measures to avoid unreasonable risks from the hazard.

WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY

Additional diversion of surface or groundwater resulting from increased development would adversely impact the county's water resources, as well as related resources such as vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, wetlands and riparian areas, and recreation. Water quality could be affected by inappropriate development adjacent to water bodies or recharge areas, high intensity development, overgrazing or grazing in proximity to water bodies, and improper or careless construction and road maintenance practices.

Additional development would alter the existing surface hydrology by increasing the amount of impermeable surfaces. Additional impervious surfaces could cause a number of impacts resulting in increased erosion, sedimentation of water bodies, and increases in pollutant loads.

Key policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Limit development to a level which can be reasonably supported by available local water resources.
- 2) Encourage the preparation of water management plans by local water providers.

- 3) Future development projects shall avoid potential significant impacts to local surface and groundwater resources, including water quality, or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.
- 4) Work with local water providers to implement water conservation programs in local communities.
- 5) Water intensive development proposals shall include water conservation measures as a condition of project approval.
- 6) Consider Public Trust implications when reviewing development proposals.
- 7) Establish local mechanisms to regulate groundwater transfers.
- 8) Control erosion from construction.
- 9) Establish buffer zones where recharge occurs, including adjacent to surface waters and riparian areas.
- 10) Minimize impacts of grazing livestock on water quality; consider phasing out grazing in areas where it conflicts with fisheries.
- 11) Chemicals used for road maintenance should be applied in a manner that does not cause degradation of water quality.
- 12) Use of fertilizers, pesticides or other chemicals on vegetation or soil in recharge zones shall be minimized.

ENERGY RESOURCES

Future development of energy resource facilities could result in degradation of visual resources and could significantly impact the natural environment. For example, additional hydropower development could severely affect riparian communities, wildlife, fisheries, and recreational resources. Future development of geothermal resources could adversely affect fumaroles and geothermally influenced pools, streams and springs and associated fish and wildlife.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Geothermal exploration and development projects shall be sited, carried out and maintained in a manner which best protects hydrologic and biologic resources and water quality and quantity. On-going resource monitoring is required.
- 2) Phase geothermal development projects so that operational impacts of a permitted project can be assessed before additional projects may be permitted in the same area.
- 3) Restrict geothermal development in certain areas identified as key habitat or with sensitive resources, e.g. the Hot Creek Buffer Zone.
- 4) Energy development projects shall be carried out with the fewest visual intrusions and with minimal environmental impacts.

- 5) Water diversions for hydroelectric power generation shall not occur on any stream which already has more than 20 percent of its length which is not contained in a wilderness area affected by water diversions or in a watershed which already has more than 25 percent of its average annual inflow diverted.
- 6) Electrical transmission and distribution lines and fluid conveyance pipelines shall meet the utility needs of the public and be designed to minimize disruption of aesthetic quality.

NOISE

Increases in development associated with the General Plan Update could result in new noise sources which could significantly impact the existing noise environment and which might be in violation of standards in the County's Noise Ordinance. Increased traffic resulting from future development would increase highway noise and vehicle congestion, particularly in community areas, both of which could produce significant noise impacts. Increased use of county airports could result in increased noise in surrounding areas.

Policies to mitigate these potential significant impacts include:

- 1) Minimize the impacts of new noise sources on the noise environment.
- 2) Confine the noise impacts from transportation facilities to the smallest feasible land areas and assure that development within or adjacent to those areas is compatible with the level of noise exposure.
- 3) Future development projects shall avoid potential significant noise impacts or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.
- 4) The total noise level resulting from new sources and ambient noise shall not exceed the standards established in Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code (County Noise Ordinance).
- 5) Avoid the juxtaposition of potentially noise incompatible land uses by identifying potential noise sensitive areas and land uses, and avoiding the development of noise sensitive uses (such as schools and residential areas) next to significant noise-generating uses (such as airports, mines, heavy industrial areas).
- 6) Policies in the Airport Land Use Plans (ALUPs) for the Mammoth/June Lakes Airport, the Lee Vining Airport, and the Bridgeport Airport (Bryant Field) address compatibility of land uses adjacent to the airports in order to mitigate potential noise impacts.

VEGETATION

Future development and the associated increase in residents and visitors would result in loss or alteration of plant communities, including special status species, through the replacement of large areas of natural vegetation by structures, paving, or landscaping. An increased population, both residents and visitors, could potentially increase usage of sensitive areas such as lakeshores, streams, wetlands, and riparian areas. Secondary impacts such as surface water contamination and increased erosion could occur. Conversion of native vegetation to other uses could have a secondary impact on wildlife by impacting the amount and type of natural habitat remaining.

Key policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Preserve existing open space by concentrating development in existing communities and encouraging cluster development outside of communities.
- 2) Work with appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals to preserve additional open space permanently.
- 3) Maintain and restore botanical and wildlife habitats in Mono County. Future development projects shall avoid potential significant impacts to animal or plant habitats or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.
- 4) If a project outside of existing communities proposes to introduce non-native vegetation for landscaping, erosion control, or other purposes, an assessment of the effects of the introduced species shall be included in the project analysis.
- 5) Limit road development in valuable habitat areas to the minimum necessary to achieve access.
- 6) Protect and restore threatened and endangered plant and animal species.
- 7) Protect and restore sensitive plants, native plants, and those species of exceptional scientific, ecological, or scenic value.
- 8) Amend the Mono County Zoning and Development Code to include maximum site disturbance standards in appropriate zoning districts.
- 9) Require landscape plans to incorporate the use of native vegetation where feasible.
- 10) During construction, utilize soil conservation practices and management techniques to conserve naturally occurring soils.
- 11) Large-scale projects and certain types of projects may be required to submit a Reclamation Plan with the project application. The plan must comply with the standards in the county's Reclamation Ordinance.
- 12) Ensure access to irrigation facilities for agricultural properties.
- 13) Promote sound grazing management practices to preserve the economic and open space values of the land.
- 14) Ensure a healthy forest resource by working with appropriate agencies to minimize the effects of new development on forest resources.

WILDLIFE

Future development and the associated increase in residents and visitors would result in loss or alteration of wildlife habitat, especially in areas within or adjacent to developed areas. Long-term disturbance to wildlife would result from increased levels of human activity and from increased traffic levels. Continued or expanded agricultural uses, such as grazing, could adversely impact wildlife, as could the creation of "attractive nuisances" such as cyanide ponds or wind and solar energy development facilities. Increased development could have secondary impacts which could significantly impact fish and wildlife resources, such as increased erosion and sedimentation, increased polluted run-off, and increased water extraction.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Preserve existing open space by concentrating development in existing communities and encouraging cluster development outside of communities.
- 2) Work with appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals to preserve additional open space permanently.
- 3) Maintain and restore botanical and wildlife habitats in Mono County. Future development projects shall avoid potential significant impacts to animal or plant habitats or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.
- 4) Projects which have the potential to be attractive nuisances to wildlife shall include an assessment of the potential impacts from those features in the project analysis and proposed mitigation measures.
- 5) The county may initiate cumulative impact assessments for selected wildlife resources if it appears that the combined effects of multiple projects may be significant. Such assessments shall be funded from appropriate development fees.
- 6) Protect and restore threatened and endangered plant and animal species.
- 7) Projects within the Hot Creek Deer Migration Zone shall not be permitted unless a finding is made that potential impacts to deer have been avoided or mitigated to a level of non-significance.
- 8) Work with appropriate agencies to develop and implement programs to minimize deer roadkills.
- 9) Support the acquisition of valuable wildlife habitat by federal land management agencies or land conservation organizations.
- 10) Support efforts to regulate in-stream flows, lake levels and water quality to maintain fisheries and other wildlife values, including riparian habitat.
- 11) Support efforts to manage fisheries in accordance with their biological capabilities, in order to provide richer angling diversity, to increase the wild trout population and to stimulate tourism.

- 12) Promote the non-consumptive use of existing fisheries, where appropriate.
- 13) Consider Public Trust implications when reviewing development proposals.

HAZARDOUS WASTE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Future development will result in an increase in the amount of hazardous waste generated in the county from household and small quantity waste generators and potentially from large-scale industrial development or resource extraction projects. Significant impacts could occur if the county were identified as a general siting area for regional hazardous waste disposal facilities. The transportation of hazardous wastes through populated areas and/or sensitive areas poses potential hazards to the public health and safety of residents and to the quality of the natural environment.

Policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) A hazardous waste minimization element will be part of any Mono County program to collect and dispose of hazardous waste.
- 2) Hazardous waste generated in Mono County will be properly collected, recycled, and disposed.
- 3) Mono County will ensure that the public is informed about proper hazardous waste disposal practices.
- 4) The County will explore methods and opportunities to work cooperatively with Inyo, Kern, and Alpine Counties to manage hazardous waste in the Eastern Sierra.
- 5) The Hazardous Waste Element provides extensive siting criteria for hazardous waste facilities in order to protect the health and safety of residents and visitors, and to protect water quality, air quality, and environmentally sensitive areas.
- 6) Ensure the safe transportation of hazardous waste by minimizing transportation of all untreated hazardous waste, specifying routes and times for transportation of waste, and requiring road improvements.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Future development will increase the number of residents and visitors, as well as the number of structures, and will increase the risk to life and property from natural hazards such as wildland fires, floods, earthquakes, volcanic episodes, avalanches and geologic hazards such as landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows.

Key policies to mitigate these impacts include the following:

- 1) Deny applications for planning permits where geologic studies provide substantial evidence that the proposed project will be exposed to unreasonable risk from geologic hazards, unless the risk can be mitigated to a level of non-significance.

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN EIR

- 2) Ensure that new construction is designed and built to withstand seismic hazards.
- 3) Facilitate land trades for private lands subject to major geologic hazards.
- 4) Consider enacting a hillside ordinance to address requirements for evaluation of landslide, rockfall, and other geologic hazards on hillsides.
- 5) Limit development that attracts concentrations of people in historical avalanche paths (Conditional Development Areas).
- 6) Inform persons of the presence of geologic hazards during the permit process or during the transfer of property.
- 7) Limit the intensity of development in hazard areas through the assignment of appropriate zoning districts and by designating those areas for low intensity uses in the Land Use Element.
- 8) Regulate the placement of new structures and limit the intensity of development in the 100-year flood plain.
- 9) Require adequate structural fire protection for new development projects.
- 10) Require new construction to comply with minimum wildland fire safe standards in compliance with the Mono County Code.

UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA requires that an EIR describe those significant adverse environmental impacts for which either no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible. The following have been identified as potentially adverse environmental impacts which cannot be completely avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance:

- 1) Conversion of vegetation to impermeable surfaces and related secondary water quality impacts;
- 2) Visual impacts;
- 3) Increase in traffic and related air and noise quality impacts;
- 4) Increase in number of people exposed to natural hazards such as avalanches, volcanic episodes, earthquakes, floods, and fires;
- 5) Reduction in wildlife habitat and increased disturbance to wildlife (increased lighting, noise, and human activities above existing levels);
- 6) Construction impacts (noise, vibration and dust).

The unavoidable impacts identified above are limited in the General Plan Update by policies that promote development in areas adjacent to existing developed areas. The intent of these policies is to avoid leapfrog development, to prevent the unnecessary expansion of roads and other infrastructure as well as services and utilities, and to limit environmental disturbance to lands surrounding developed areas.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives were developed for the proposed project, ranging from "No Development" to "High Intensity Development". The Preferred Alternative, "Orderly Growth of Existing Communities/Conservation of Resource Lands", fell between these extremes and best met the overall General Plan land use goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitor". The "No Development" Alternative was identified as the environmentally superior alternative since it would result in the lowest degree of significant impacts. That alternative, however, failed to recognize the economic needs of the county and failed to meet the General Plan goal of providing for future land use needs.

I. INTRODUCTION

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The existing Mono County General Plan contains 12 elements which have been adopted on an element-by-element basis. These include the seven mandatory elements (Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety) and five optional elements (Seismic Safety, Scenic Highways, Geothermal, Public Facilities, and Recreation). The existing General Plan also includes Area Plans for June Lake, the Mammoth Vicinity (MonoPlan), Long Valley, Wheeler Crest, Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant, as well as a Specific Plan for the Conway Ranch.

The General Plan Update combines information and policies from existing elements and reduces the overall number of elements from 12 to 7 (Land Use, Conservation/Open Space, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Noise, and Hazardous Waste Management). Existing Area Plans were updated for inclusion in the Land Use Element, and land use goals and policies were developed for the following areas: Antelope Valley; Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate; Bridgeport; Mono Basin; the Upper Owens area; **the Benton Hot Springs area** and the Oasis area.

Because the General Plan acts as a foundation for all land use decisions and embodies community goals and public policy on the distribution of future land use, it is critical that the information and policy direction in its elements be current. State law requires periodic reviews and revisions to existing General Plans. Most of the elements of the existing General Plan have not been updated since 1981 and 1982. Changing attitudes, new legal requirements, new information, and growth that has occurred in the County over the past decade are the impetus for this general plan update.

The General Plan update process included the preparation of a **Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)**, the update of general plan policies, and the preparation of this **Environmental Impact Report (EIR)**. The MEA contains information on the physical, environmental and socio-economic setting of Mono County as well as summaries of state laws and applicable local plans. This inventory and analysis of existing conditions in Mono County provides the baseline data upon which general plan policies were formulated. It also functions as the environmental setting for the general plan EIR.

The Mono County General Plan consists of goals, objectives, policies and implementing actions designed to guide the development of the unincorporated private lands in the County over the next 20 years. The EIR focuses on the environmental effects of the General Plan proposals, and includes mitigation measures and alternatives to address potential significant impacts. Since many of the components required for an EIR are contained in the Mono County General Plan and the MEA, this EIR refers to those documents and provides additional information as necessary to fulfill requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

UPDATE PROCESS

Drafts of the MEA and the General Plan Update were reviewed by community and regional planning advisory committees, by the Planning Commission, and by the following technical advisory committees. Comments received from these entities were incorporated into the drafts of the General Plan Update and the MEA.

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN EIR

- Mineral Resource policies in the Conservation/Open Space Element were reviewed by the Mineral Resource Technical Advisory Committee;
- The Hazardous Waste Management Element was reviewed by the Hazardous Waste Technical Advisory Committee;
- The Airport Land Use policies developed for the Lee Vining and Bridgeport airports were reviewed by the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC);
- The Circulation Element Update was reviewed by the Local Transportation Commission (LTC);
- The Update of the Mammoth Vicinity area plan policies was developed in conjunction with the Town of Mammoth Lakes; and
- Cultural resource policies in the Conservation/Open Space Element Update were reviewed by a cultural resources advisory committee.

The County's five Regional Planning Advisory Committees (RPAC's) were established by the Board of Supervisors to assist the Planning Department in developing and updating planning policies for private lands in the County. RPAC's were established for the Antelope Valley, Bridgeport, Mono Basin, Long Valley, and Tri-Valley areas. In addition to the RPAC's, the County has other community planning advisory committees. The Board of Supervisors established the June Lake Citizens Advisory Committee to review and comment on planning issues in June Lake, the Wheeler Crest Planning Advisory Committee to establish area plan policies for Swall Meadows and Pinon Ranch, and the Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate Planning Group to develop area plan policies for that area. Residents of the Upper Owens area met to develop land use policies for that area; ***similarly, landowners in the Benton Hot Springs area met to develop land use policies for their valley.***

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The ***Final*** Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) consists of the **Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)** and the Impact Analysis Section. The MEA functions as the environmental setting for the EIR. The Impact Analysis Section identifies potential significant environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan Update and identifies general plan policies and programs which mitigate those potential impacts. The Impact Analysis Section also contains an alternatives analysis which compares the impacts resulting from higher and lower growth scenarios than the level of growth allowed in the proposed General Plan Update.

General Plans are by nature broad and comprehensive. As a result, the impacts identified and analyzed in this EIR are generalized and emphasize long-range secondary impacts rather than immediate short-range consequences, as allowed by CEQA Guidelines Section 15146.

AUTHORITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS

CEQA requires lead agencies to prepare an EIR in cases where a project may have a significant effect on the environment. After determining that the General Plan Update might have a significant effect on the environment, the Mono County Planning Department retained Environmental Science Associates (ESA) to assist in preparing the General Plan Update EIR.

As defined by CEQA, the purpose of an EIR is to:

- 1) provide information to public agency decision-makers and the general public of the significant environmental effects of a project;
- 2) identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects;
- 3) describe reasonable alternatives to the project; and
- 4) provide substantial evidence on the action of the decision-making body to approve a project even if significant effects are involved.

REQUIRED CONTENTS OF AN EIR

CEQA guidelines require that EIRs contain specific elements. The location of each required element is noted below:

<u>EIR ELEMENT</u>	<u>LOCATION IN EIR</u>
Summary.....	p. i
Project Description.....	p. 7

Master Environmental Assessment (bound separately)

Environmental Setting.....	p. 1--292
References (including Organizations and Persons Contacted).....	p. 293

<u>EIR ELEMENT</u>	<u>LOCATION IN EIR</u>
Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures.....	p. 12
Unavoidable Significant Environmental Effects.....	p. 48
Alternatives to the Proposed Project.....	p. 50
Short-Term Use vs. Long-Term Productivity.....	p. 54
Irreversible Environmental Changes.....	p. 54
Growth Inducing Impacts.....	p. 55
Effects Found Not to be Significant.....	p. 55
Cumulative Impacts.....	p. 56

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN EIR

In accordance with CEQA, the Mono County Planning Department submitted a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the General Plan Update and the Environmental Impact Report to the State Office of Planning and Research and to local agencies. The first NOP was submitted January 19, 1988, and was assigned State Clearinghouse Number (SCH #) 88011112. At that time, the project consisted of an EIR for the Hazardous Waste Management Plan, the Energy Element, and the Conservation/Open Space Element. Five public agencies submitted comments in response to the first NOP. At that time, scoping meetings were also held and comments from public agencies were taken at those meetings.

Since the first NOP was issued, the project has been expanded to include the update of all general plan elements, i.e. Land Use, Conservation/Open Space, Circulation, Housing, Noise, Safety, and Hazardous Waste Management. The Energy Element, which was originally a separate document, has been incorporated into the Conservation/Open Space Element. The scope of the EIR was expanded to address the update of all of these elements. As a result of the changes in the project, a second NOP was submitted to the State Office of Planning and Research on March 7, 1991 and was assigned State Clearinghouse Number (SCH #) 91032012. Four public agencies submitted comments in response to the second NOP. Comments and concerns received through the notification process and the scoping meetings were addressed in the DEIR and draft General Plan Update. Copies of comments received for both NOPs are included in Appendix A.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The public review and comment period was opened for 90 days. Comments received during this period, responses to those comments and additional information have been added to the EIR in the Response to Comments Section. The amended document will be the Final EIR.

The Final EIR and General Plan Update will be available for public review and comment at the Planning Department Offices in Bridgeport and Mammoth Lakes, and at local libraries. Copies will also be available in the Planning Department Offices for purchase at the cost of reproduction. Summaries of the Final EIR and General Plan Update will be available at no charge from the Planning Department.

The Final EIR and General Plan Update will be considered in public hearings before the Mono County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

PUBLIC AGENCIES USING THE EIR

The following public agencies are expected to use the EIR in their regulatory and approval programs:

Federal

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Placement of fill material into "waters of the United States" (404 permit process).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Oversight of 404 permit program implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Endangered Species Act enforcement and regulation.

U.S. Forest Service. Approval of special use permits and land exchanges for future community expansion. Recreational facility expansion approvals. Management of lands surrounding community areas. Management of mine reclamation.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Approval of special use permits and land exchanges for future community expansion. Recreational facility expansion approvals. Management of lands surrounding community areas. Management of mine reclamation.

State

Department of Transportation. Rights-of-way review and approval. Access and safety considerations on state and federal highways.

Department of Fish and Game. Stream alteration permits. Wildlife mitigation planning.

Department of Forestry. Implementation of fire safe regulations. Regulation of timber cutting on private lands.

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. Water quality certifications and approvals, including monitoring.

State Water Resources Control Board. Water rights approvals, if new rights or changes are required.

Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District. Approval of building emissions and air quality monitoring.

State Lands Commission. Lake and streambed protection.

Local

Mono County Airport Land Use Commission. Airport Land Use Plans and associated airport vicinity projects.

Mono County Energy Management Department. Project development approvals.

Mono County Local Agency Formation Commission. Sphere of Influence amendments, annexations and other local governmental agency boundary changes.

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN EIR

Mono County Local Transportation Commission. Regional Transportation Plan and associated transportation projects.

Mono County Planning Department. County zoning map development, various planning permit approvals.

Mono County Public Works Department. Grading permits and construction approvals. Road design and right-of-way approvals. Solid waste and sewage system design approvals.

Mono County Planning Commission. Approval of various planning permits.

Various Special Districts. District capital improvements and facility planning.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

MONO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Mono County is located on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada in the central portion of the state, east of San Francisco and south of Lake Tahoe (see Figure 1). The county is a long, narrow strip of land--108 miles at its greatest length, 38 miles in average width, and 3,103 square miles in area--bounded to the west by the Sierra crest and to the east by the Nevada state line. Although there are several mountain ranges in and adjacent to the county, the Sierra Nevada dominates the landscape--the predominant feeling throughout the county is one of space and panoramic views opening eastward from the Sierra.

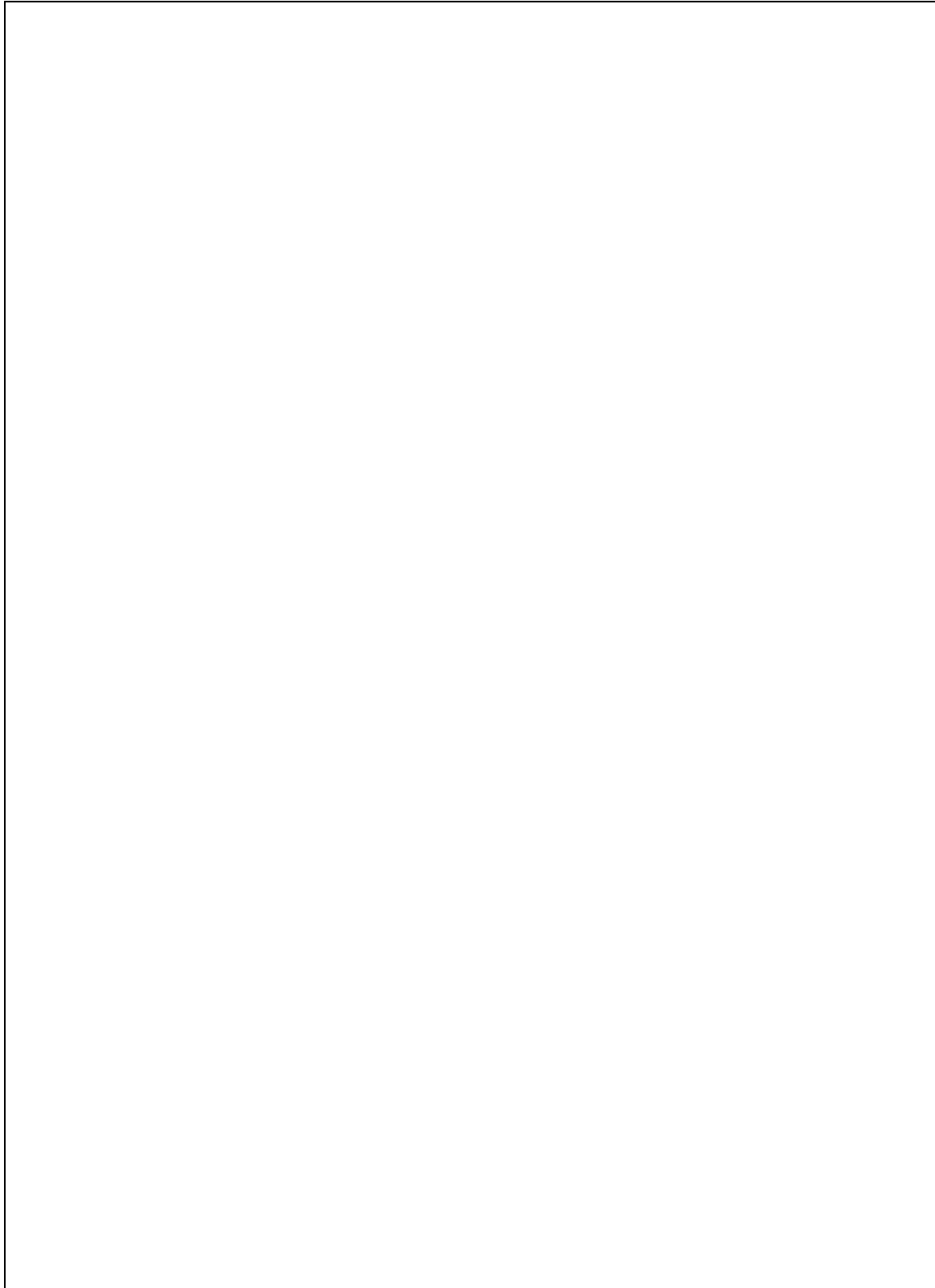
Human use and development of the area has been influenced by its isolation and the difficulty of access. Access remains limited to one main transportation route, U.S. Highway 395, which runs through the county along the foot of the Sierras for approximately 120 miles. By car, Los Angeles is approximately 350 miles south on Hwy. 395, Reno, Nevada, is 160 miles north on Hwy. 395, and the San Francisco Bay Area is approximately 300-350 miles west on various routes connecting to Hwy. 395. Two highways, S.R. 167 and U.S. 6, provide access to Nevada from the central and southern portions of the county. Access both to the east and the west may be closed in winter due to snow--Hwy. 395 then becomes the only access to and through the county.

Mono County is rural and sparsely settled, with a population of 9,956 in the 1990 Census. One half of the county's population (approximately 4,800 people) lives in the Town of Mammoth Lakes, the only incorporated community in the county. The remainder of the population lives in a number of small communities scattered throughout the county. Approximately 94 percent of the county is public **or quasi-public** land administered by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the State of California, or the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Most of the privately owned land in the county is situated along the base of the Sierra Nevada range in the communities of Topaz, Coleville, Walker, Bridgeport, Mono City, Lee Vining, June Lake, Mammoth Lakes, Long Valley, McGee Creek, Hilton Creek/Crowley Lake, Aspen Springs, Sunny Slopes and Wheeler Crest/Paradise. Additional private lands are located on the western flank of the White Mountains in the communities of Benton, Hammil and Chalfant, and in the extreme southeastern corner of the county in the Oasis area. Numerous pockets of private lands surrounded by federal lands are scattered throughout the County.

GENERAL PLAN GOALS

The overall purpose for the proposed General Plan Update is to provide the County with long-term land use planning guidance that balances the need to provide employment, housing, public services, economic growth and recreational opportunities with the need to protect and maintain the County's physical environment. This broader purpose is presented in the General Plan in the form of specific objectives. The objectives are supported in each element by an array of policies or programs; each of these is in turn accompanied by specific actions or implementation measures. The general intent of the proposed policies, programs and actions is to establish a regulatory framework and direction for land use, and to "mitigate" the impact of development allowable under the

FIGURE 1
LOCATION MAP--MONO COUNTY



General Plan. The complete text of objectives, policies and implementation actions can be found in the General Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LOCAL PLANS

Apart from the Mono County General Plan, several federal, state and local agencies and jurisdictions have planning documents that apply to the County. Federal and state agencies have planning authority over their respective holdings; the County has planning authority over private lands and LADWP lands. Countywide land use plans and policies found in the Land Use Element are supplemented by Area Plans which provide land use designations and policies that pertain more specifically to individual community areas. For this General Plan Update, the existing area plans for Wheeler Crest, Long Valley, the Mammoth Vicinity and the Tri-Valley area were updated and included in the Land Use Element. Land use objectives and policies were developed for those communities without area plans, i.e. Antelope Valley, Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate, Bridgeport, Mono Basin, the Upper Owens area, **and the Benton Hot Springs area**. These policies were also included in the Land Use Element. The June Lake Area Plan was updated separately and adopted in February of 1991 with its own EIR. The Town of Mammoth Lakes, the County's only incorporated community, also has a separate General Plan that guides development within the Town's boundaries.

This EIR discusses the relationship of the County's planning documents to other local planning documents, especially in terms of the consistency of the policies in those plans and in the General Plan, and the potential impacts of General Plan policies on resources on federal and state lands.

Relevant local plans include:

Existing Area Plans for the following areas: Mono Plan (Mammoth Vicinity); Benton Valley; Hammil Valley; Chalfant Valley; Wheeler Crest; Long Valley; and June Lake.

Conway Ranch Specific Plan.

Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan.

Mammoth/June Lake Airport Land Use Plan (Airport Land Use Plans have been drafted for the Bridgeport and Lee Vining airports as part of the General Plan Update).

Mono County and Town of Mammoth Lakes Solid Waste Management Plans.

Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD) Non-Attainment Plans.

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) Sphere of Influence Reports.

North and South Lahontan Basin Water Quality Control Plans.

Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Comprehensive Management Plan.

Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Bodie State Historic Park Resource Management Plan, General Development Plan and Environmental Impact Report.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The environmental setting and existing conditions of the project area are described in the **Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)**, which is a separate document. An outline of the contents of the MEA follows:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page Number in MEA</u>
Introduction.....	1
Planning and Socioeconomics.....	4
Land Use.....	20
Community Services and Facilities.....	29
Demographics & Economic Data.....	40
Housing.....	51
Transportation.....	62
Visual Resources.....	80
Outdoor Recreation.....	90
Cultural Resources.....	111
Air Quality.....	123
Geology and Soils.....	129
Hydrology.....	138
Water Quality.....	176
Energy Resources.....	179
Noise.....	201
Special Status Species.....	212
Vegetation.....	221
Terrestrial Wildlife.....	229
Fisheries and Other Aquatic Resources.....	253
Special Habitats and Wildlife Use Areas.....	256
Public Health and Safety.....	261
Hazardous Wastes.....	262
Hazardous Materials.....	281
Geologic Hazards.....	282
Avalanche Hazards.....	284
Flood Hazards.....	287
Fire Hazards.....	289
References (including Organizations and Persons Contacted).....	293

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses potential significant environmental impacts resulting from the Update of the Mono County General Plan. For each area of concern, the analysis first identifies potential impacts and, if necessary, briefly discusses the potential impact; the analysis then lists the policies from the **Mono County General Plan Update** that are intended to mitigate the identified potential impacts.

The analysis in this section is general, in accordance with §15146 of the CEQA Guidelines, which states that "the degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR". The above section from the Guidelines recognizes that the level of analysis which is reasonably feasible in a General Plan EIR will, from necessity, be more general than that which is reasonably feasible in a project-specific EIR.

This EIR addresses potential significant impacts to the following areas of concern:

- 1) Land Use
- 2) Community Services and Facilities
- 3) Housing
- 4) Transportation and Circulation
- 5) Visual Resources
- 6) Outdoor Recreation
- 7) Cultural Resources
- 8) Air Quality
- 9) Geology and Soils
- 10) Water Resources and Water Quality
- 11) Energy Resources
- 12) Noise
- 13) Vegetation
- 14) Wildlife
- 15) Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials
- 16) Natural Hazards

The Impact Analysis assumes that the potential significant impacts identified in the analysis will occur at the full buildout allowed under the General Plan Update. In determining whether the identified impact will be significant (see Footnote 2, p. ii, for a definition of "significant impact"), conditions at full buildout are compared to existing conditions. In many areas of concern, the environment in Mono County is especially sensitive. Impacts that elsewhere might not be considered significant will be significant in Mono County. For example, the visual impacts of future development in more urban areas might not be considered significant; in Mono County they would be due to the existing undeveloped conditions in much of the County.

In analyzing potential significant impacts, it should be noted that many potential impacts are interrelated. For example, an increase in traffic resulting from future development will also cause increases in noise levels and adverse air quality impacts. Although individually these impacts may not be significant, overall they may create a significant adverse impact on the environment.

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

LAND USE

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

A reduction in the potential buildout for the unincorporated area could impact the county's ability to provide for local land use needs, such as affordable housing, local industrial needs, community commercial needs, etc.

Changes in land use designations from the 1982 General Plan to the 1992 Plan result in a substantial reduction in the potential maximum buildout in the unincorporated area (see Table 1 and Figure 2), from 121,829 total dwelling units in the 1982 Plan (as amended by the 1990 Housing Element) to **28,623** dwelling units in the 1992 Plan, a reduction of approximately 77 percent. This reduction in potential dwelling units translates to a reduction in the potential maximum population from 305,790 to **71,844** persons.

In the existing plan, approximately 90 percent of the private land is designated as "Mixed Multiple", which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per acre (except in Hammil Valley where the maximum density is 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres). Most of the lands outside of community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" are proposed for redesignation to "Resource Management", which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres. Lands within community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" are proposed for redesignation to a variety of land use designations, primarily residential and commercial. Lands owned by LADWP were also designated as "MM" in the 1982 plan. In the proposed plan, most of those lands are designated as Open Space ("OS"), which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 80 acres.

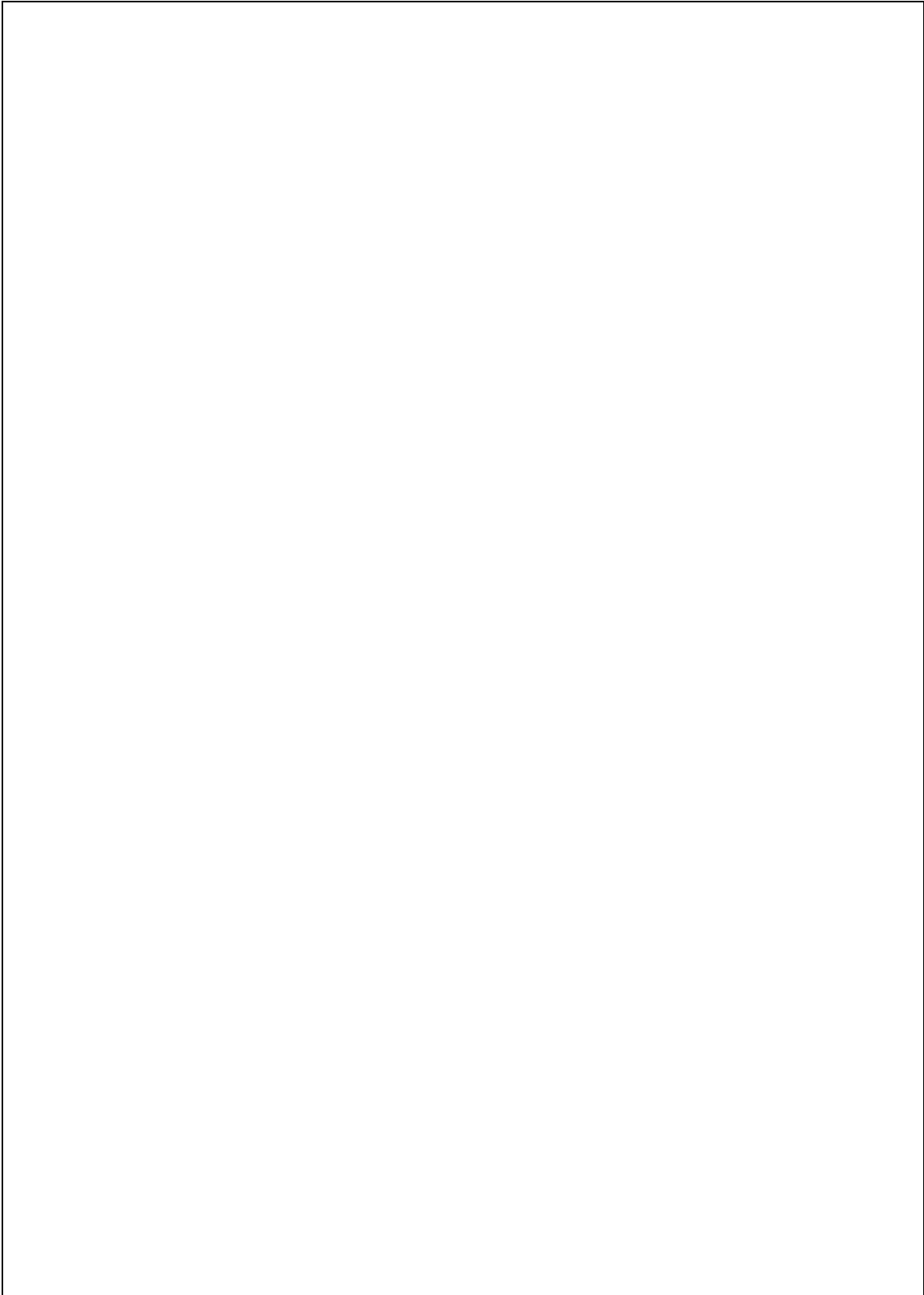
The maximum potential buildout and population figures are somewhat deceptive, since the potential development allowed by the Land Use Element Update would probably not occur on many lands designated Resource Management, Open Space, or Agriculture given the environmental constraints to development on those lands. The Land Use Element Update also focuses development in existing community areas, with the intention of maintaining open space and valuable resource lands in areas outside of existing communities. The maximum potential population figure also assumes one hundred percent occupancy. Assuming that the occupancy rate in the near future remains close to the 56 percent identified in the 1990 Census, the future maximum resident population would be **40,232** persons.

Although buildout under the General Plan Update would result in additional impacts to the existing environment, it would not result in the same degree of impacts as the existing General Plan, which allows for a higher level of development. Based upon the existing number of units, and the number of units that could reasonably be expected to be developed within the timeframe of this plan, the reduction in number of unit potential should not adversely impact the county's ability to provide for local land use needs, such as affordable housing units. The General Plan Update designates sufficient acreage to provide for **25,061** additional dwelling units, well beyond the 528 units identified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development as necessary to fulfill Mono County's regional housing needs in the next five years. In addition, the General Plan designates land in most community areas to provide for local industrial and commercial needs.

TABLE 1
TOTAL DWELLING UNIT POTENTIAL--1982 & 1992

	1982 General Plan	1992 General Plan
Antelope Valley	34,979	4,495
Bridgeport Valley	12,472	27,94
Mono Basin	2,168	1,779
June Lake	2,639	2,514
Long Valley	6,618	7,177
Tri-Valley	16,350	6,642
Outside Planning Areas	46,603	3,222
TOTAL	121,829	28,623
NOTES:		
Bridgeport Valley includes Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate.		
Mono Basin includes Conway Ranch, Mono City, Lee Vining.		
Long Valley includes Upper Owens area, Crowley Lake communities, Wheeler Crest, Paradise.		
Dwelling units Outside of Planning Areas for 1982 were calculated based on GP zoning which provided for 1 dwelling unit per acre.		

**FIGURE 2
TOTAL DWELLING UNIT POTENTIAL--1982 VS. 1992**



POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

In providing for community needs at full buildout, the development of residential, commercial and industrial uses could conflict with and reduce the amount of land available for agricultural, recreational, open space and natural resource land uses and opportunities.

Agricultural land uses in the Antelope Valley and the Chalfant and Hammil communities in Tri-Valley may be particularly susceptible to development pressures due to the proximity of those areas to the growing communities of Gardnerville/Minden and Carson City in the State of Nevada and the City of Bishop in Inyo County. Additional large-scale resource or recreational development, such as potential alpine ski areas along the San Joaquin Ridge (provided for in the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan) could also reduce existing open space as well as place additional impacts on existing communities.

The Land Use Element Update directs development to occur in or adjacent to existing community areas. By concentrating development in existing communities, large expanses of open space, agricultural lands, and valuable resource lands in areas outside of existing communities can be preserved, and the juxtaposition of potentially incompatible land uses can be minimized. Land use designations were assigned to property throughout the unincorporated area of the county using the following criteria:

- Does the area include natural hazards that limit development, such as flood zones, Alquist-Priolo zones, unstable soils or steep slopes, etc.?
- Does the area include natural resources that limit development, e.g. wetlands, significant habitat, deer migration routes, etc.?
- What are the existing uses in the area?
- Is infrastructure available for development (i.e. sewer, water, roads, fire protection)?
- What is the existing land division pattern in the area and what are the lot sizes?
- Does the area have open space value (e.g. visuals, wildlife habitat, agricultural preservation)?
- What is the community vision for the future of the area?

The application of these criteria, along with the Plan's emphasis on concentrating development in existing communities, should reduce potential conflicts between potential future development and agricultural, recreational, open space and natural resource land uses and opportunities.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Policies described in the General Plan elements could be inconsistent with planning documents and policies of other agencies and jurisdictions, which in turn could fragment land use and resource management planning in the county.

MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN EIR

Apart from the Mono County General Plan, several federal, state and local agencies and jurisdictions have planning documents that apply to lands in the county. Federal and state agencies have planning authority over their respective holdings; the County has planning authority over private lands and LADWP lands. In addition, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) have adopted policies and plans that govern land use on certain lands. General plan policies are required to be consistent with Airport Land Use Plan (ALUP) policies and with LAFCO policies.

In an area in which 94 percent of the land is publicly owned, general plan policies should be consistent with land management policies of the federal and state agencies that manage the public lands. The general plan update has been developed with extensive input and cooperation from federal, state, and local agencies in order to minimize potential conflict or overlap. A number of policies in the update require or promote a continuation of interagency coordination.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Development on private lands outside of community areas could result in leapfrog development patterns, which could in turn result in service inefficiencies, impacts on the economic health of existing communities, and the premature conversion of agricultural lands, open space, and recreational lands.

LAND USE MITIGATION MEASURES

Land Use Element--Countywide Land Use Policies

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

Objective A, Policy 11, Action 11.1

Objective B, Policy 1

Objective C, Policy 1

Objective C, Policy 2, Actions 2.1, 2.2

Objective D, Action 1.1

Objective E, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective E, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Objective F, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

Objective F, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective H, Policy 1

Objective H, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Land Use Element--Community Policies

Antelope Valley

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Objective A, Policy 3, Action 3.4

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Bridgeport

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective A, Policies 2--3

Mono Basin

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Objective B, Policy 1

Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Mammoth Vicinity

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Upper Owens River

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4

Long Valley

Objective B, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.3--1.4

Wheeler Crest

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.2

Tri-Valley

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.17

Objective B, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Benton Hot Springs Valley

Policy 2, Actions 2.1, 2.3

Policy 3

Oasis

Objective A, Policy 1

Note: Environmental Impact Reports have previously been certified for the Conway Ranch Specific Plan and the June Lake Area Plan. As a result, policies from those documents which mitigate significant impacts resulting from development in those areas have not been included in this document.

Conservation/Open Space Element--Goal I, Agriculture, Grazing & Timber Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.5

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4

Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development, and the resulting increase in residents and visitors, will increase the need for general governmental services, as well as place an additional burden on existing community infrastructure and services.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Future development could impact local fire protection providers.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Future development, and the resulting increase in residents and visitors, will increase the need for health care facilities and emergency medical services.

Acute care hospital facilities and a paramedic program are necessary but expensive services which the County is finding difficult to supply.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Future development may require the expansion or reorganization of existing school facilities.

Growth, or lack of growth, in certain areas of the County could impact local schools. Schools in some communities are currently near capacity, while some are under-utilized.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

Future development may occur in areas that are not adequately served by existing public services and utilities, or will require installation of new facilities or expansion of services.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

Future development may require the development of community water and sewer systems or expansion of existing systems.

Certain areas in the County currently have water supply problems and need to consider the establishment of a community water system in order to provide a more reliable and cost-effective water supply. Future development in those areas will increase this need. Future development in certain areas may also reach the level where the Regional Water Quality Control Board requires a community wastewater system in order to protect groundwater resources.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 7

Future development will increase the generation of solid waste which will impact existing landfills.

The County Department of Public Works is currently proposing to convert four landfills in the County to waste transfer stations and to maintain two landfills in the County. One landfill will primarily serve the Town of Mammoth Lakes and southwestern Mono County; one will primarily serve the unincorporated area. State-mandated source reduction and recycling programs are expected to reduce the amount of waste disposed of at the landfills. However, at buildout the amount of solid waste generated in the County, even with source reduction and recycling programs, could increase substantially.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES MITIGATION MEASURES

Land Use Element--Countywide Policies

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective H, Policy 3, Action 3.1

Housing Element

Policy A, Objective 2, Programs 2.1--2.2

Conservation/Open Space Element--Water Resources Section

Goal I, Objective B, Policy 1

Goal I, Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Goal I, Objective B, Policy 3, Action 3.1

Goal I, Objective B, Policy 4, Action 4.1

Goal I, Objective B, Policy 6, Actions 6.1--6.3

Goal I, Objective C, Policies 2--4

Conservation/Open Space Element--Agriculture, Grazing, & Timber Section

Goal I, Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.4

Safety Element

Goal II, Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4

Goal II, Objective B, Policy 3, Action 3.4

Goal II, Objective B, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.2

HOUSING

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

The development of additional recreational facilities and opportunities would increase the need for short-term visitor accommodations.

Developing additional recreational facilities and opportunities would attract additional visitors and could increase the demand for visitor accommodations and second homes. It could also increase the number of low and moderate income permanent and seasonal workers and as a result increase the demand for affordable housing.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

The development of new industries and businesses would result in additional employment which could bring more residents to the area and increase the need for additional housing. Depending on the type of employment, this could substantially affect the need for affordable housing, especially if many of the additional jobs generated are in the traditionally low-paying service sector.

HOUSING MITIGATION MEASURES

Housing Element

Policy A, Objective 1, Programs 1.1--**1.7**

Policy B, Objective 1.1--1.10

Policy B, Objective 2, Programs 2.1--**2.11**

Policy B, Objective 3, Program 3.1

Policy C, Objective 1

Policy C, Objective 2

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Portions of the existing roadway system may not be sufficient to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes from future development.

At full buildout, additional highway capacity would probably be needed to serve visitors and residents. Regional and recreational traffic could increase in the future as the result of growth elsewhere. Similarly, at buildout additional local roads would probably be needed to serve increased local traffic.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Future development will increase road use and will result in an increased need for road improvements and maintenance. Many roads in communities throughout the County are privately owned, unimproved roads which, because of their substandard conditions, have not been accepted into the County Road Maintenance System.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Future development and associated increases in population could greatly increase the demand for parking facilities.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Increased vehicular traffic resulting from future development will result in corresponding impacts on air quality and noise levels.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

Future development in some areas will be impacted by severe winter weather conditions which will limit access to some areas and could jeopardize the health and safety of an increasing number of residents and visitors. Limited winter access could also affect the economic health of the area. New development in some community areas will increase snow removal problems by increasing traffic flows, reducing the area available for snow storage, and increasing demand for parking areas.

Severe winter weather conditions in Mono County cause unique circulation and traffic problems. These include snow accumulation, degradation of road signs and lane markings, icy and hazardous driving conditions, and drainage problems, including local flooding from snowmelt.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

Future development will increase the need for public transportation, both within and between communities in the County.

Limited regional transit between various communities is currently available. However, the limited nature of this system means that most residents and visitors must rely on private transportation. In order to reduce traffic congestion and the associated increases in air and noise pollution, particularly in community areas, the need for a transit system will increase as future development occurs. This need will increase substantially if additional large-scale recreational development occurs.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 7

The lack of facilities for non-motorized modes of transportation throughout the County creates safety problems. The increased use of roadways by recreationalists using non-motorized means of transportation, such as biking, pedestrians in the winter, and hiking or horseback riding, may lead to an increased potential for safety problems.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 8

Increased road development, and increased traffic, on both local and regional systems will create additional impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Road construction can lead to reductions in habitat, as well as an increased potential for roadkills, particularly of deer, due to increased traffic and a greater number of roads.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 9

Currently, there are safety hazards from traffic on state highways that pass through communities. Increased development in those communities and increased traffic throughout the County and improvements on state highways could lead to increased potential for safety problems in communities along highways.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 10

Future development may place an additional demand for services on the County's limited aviation system.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION MITIGATION MEASURES

Circulation Element

- Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1
- Objective A, Policy 2, Action 2.1
- Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4
- Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.2
- Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3
- Objective B, Policy 2
- Objective B, Policy 5, Actions 5.1

- Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3
- Objective C, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

- Objective D, Policy 1, Action 1.1
- Objective D, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.6
- Objective D, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

- Objective E, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.8
- Objective E, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2
- Objective E, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.5
- Objective E, Policy 5

- Objective F, Policy 1
- Objective F, Policy 3
- Objective F, Policy 4

- Objective G, Policy 1
- Objective G, Policy 2
- Objective G, Policy 3

- Objective I, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4
- Objective I, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2

VISUAL RESOURCES

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development would remove, reduce and/or alter open spaces and degrade scenic resources and views in the County.

Visual resources in Mono County are among the region's most important natural assets and a vital part of the recreation-based economy. Evaluating impacts to visual and aesthetic resources is a highly subjective process. The significance of the impact will depend to some extent on viewing distance, whether the proposed development is in the foreground, the middle distance, or the panoramic viewshed. Many of the County's scenic resources are outside of the private land base; visual impacts to those areas are governed by Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management visual management policies. Development on private lands could affect visual resources on public lands due to the long sightlines and panoramic vistas in much of the County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

New development would change the existing visual character of community areas. Development of structures whose size, design and scale are visually incompatible with the surrounding natural environment, as well as incongruent landscaping, signs and utility lines and facilities, would degrade scenic resources and views, especially from public roadways.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

New development along the County's highways, especially along state and county designated scenic highways, could detract from the area's visual/scenic quality. It could also affect the area's recreational economy as many visitors form an impression of the area from traveling along the highways.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Roadway improvements (e.g., roadway straightening, construction of new roads, etc.) could detract from surrounding scenic resources.

VISUAL RESOURCES MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Visual Resource Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1
Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4
Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.5

Objective B, Policy 1
Objective B, Policy 2
Objective B, Policy 3
Objective B, Policy 4

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Objective C, Policy 1, Action 1.1
Objective C, Policy 2, Actions 2.1, 2.6, 2.7
Objective C, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3
Objective C, Policy 5
Objective C, Policy 6, Actions 6.1--6.2

OUTDOOR RECREATION

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development activities may preclude or curtail active and passive recreational projects and opportunities, especially in areas adjacent to communities. In areas outside of communities, the siting of future development, such as large-scale recreational development or resource development activities, could impact recreational resources and users or be detrimental to the recreational experience.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Existing and future water diversions could affect fishery stocks and water-based recreation.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

An expanded resident population will place additional demands on the County's existing park facilities and may create a demand for additional park and recreation facilities.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Population increases and increases in the level of recreational use could place additional demands on public lands. This could place an extra burden on management of those lands.

OUTDOOR RECREATION MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Outdoor Recreation Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1
Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1, 2.4
Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.6

Objective B, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2

Land Use Element--Countywide Section

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3
Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.3

Objective F, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2

CULTURAL RESOURCES

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development could destroy or disturb important and sensitive cultural resources (paleontological, archaeological, or historical), which would represent an irretrievable loss.

Many of the sensitive cultural resource sites in the County are on public lands managed by the Forest Service or the BLM. Those agencies have programs to identify, preserve, and protect cultural resources. Management of cultural resources on private lands is governed by CEQA requirements and General Plan policies regarding the identification and preservation of significant cultural resources.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Increased human usage of the area may increase the potential for vandalism and scavenging of sites, particularly in easily accessible areas.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Future development, or redevelopment, could impact historical structures within communities.

CULTURAL RESOURCES MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Cultural Resources Section

Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

Objective C, Policy 2

Objective C, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4

Land Use Element--Countywide Section

Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.3

AIR QUALITY

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Development permitted under the General Plan Update could increase the emissions of particulate matter, gaseous organic compounds, carbon monoxide and other air pollutants. Air pollution associated with vehicle use, such as engine exhaust and dust re-entrainment from road travel, would also increase as a result of resident and visitor population growth.

Currently, air pollution is not considered a serious problem in most of the county, although air quality disturbances are significant in some communities. The most significant sources of air pollution are emissions from wood burning devices, automobile exhaust, re-entrainment of particulate matter, and blowing dust. Blowing dust is particularly a problem in the Tri-Valley area and Mono Basin. Emissions from wood burning devices are a problem in Mammoth Lakes, June Lake and other valleys, where winter temperature inversions trap and concentrate emissions. Air pollution caused by dust re-entrainment from vehicle traffic is most prevalent during winter road cindering and summer travel on dry unpaved dirt roads. Portions of the county are also impacted by migrating air pollution from the Central Valley.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Construction activities that involve earthwork have the potential to generate significant amounts of windblown dust. Disturbed soils, stockpiled soils, and other construction activities which affect soil stability are subject to dispersal and suspension when exposed to high winds. Areas with direct wind exposure would be more susceptible to dust emissions than those with topographical, vegetative or other natural or manmade wind buffers. Exposed soil surfaces that are left unprotected and are not revegetated may be more susceptible to soil erosion affecting air quality.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Agricultural practices may create short-term localized air quality impacts such as blowing dust or pesticides.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Certain types of future development, such as resource or recreational development activities or industrial activities, may have the potential to generate dust, fumes or odors which could have adverse air quality impacts.

AIR QUALITY MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element-- Public Health and Safety Section

Objective A, Policy 1

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Objective A, Policy 2
Objective A, Policy 3, Action 3.1
Objective A, Policy 4
Objective A, Policy 5
Objective A, Policy 6, Actions 6.1--6.2
Objective A, Policy 7, Action 7.1
Objective A, Policy 8, Action 8.1
Objective A, Policy 9, Actions 9.1--9.3

Circulation Element--Countywide Section

Objective E, Policy 1, Actions. 1.1--1.8
Objective E, Policy 4

Objective I, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4
Objective I, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Grading and earthwork associated with future development may contribute to slope failure on steep hillsides with shallow soils, may alter local conditions on specific construction sites by disrupting, compacting or overcovering soils, and may alter existing topography. Improper land use practices, such as overgrazing, the creation of overly steep slopes and unauthorized use of off-road vehicles can cause significant soil erosion. Removal of vegetation from construction sites may expose soils to wind and water erosion. Increased surface runoff caused by any of these practices may result in increased erosion hazards and increased siltation in downstream water courses. Other potential significant adverse effects associated with development include visual impacts if disturbed soils are not properly stabilized and revegetated, and reductions in wildlife populations due to loss of habitat.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Mono County contains many unique geologic features, such as hot springs and tufa formations, that could be adversely affected by future growth and development and associated increases in recreational use of the area.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Areas containing significant deposits of mineral or geothermal resources could be significantly affected by development that limits access to or alters the integrity of the resource. The processes for extracting and gaining access to mineral and energy resources could also seriously affect surrounding geology and soils and sensitive biological habitats or species.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Additional development could increase the number of residents and visitors exposed to geologic hazards, such as landslides, earthquakes, volcanoes and avalanches.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS MITIGATION MEASURES

Safety Element--Goal I, Geologic Hazards

- Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7
- Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.4
- Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4,3
- Objective A, Policy 5, Actions 5.1--5.3

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Safety Element--Goal III, Avalanche Hazards

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

Safety Element--Goal IV, Increasing Public Awareness of Hazards

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Objective C, Policy 1

Land Use Element--Countywide Section

Objective G, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

Conservation/Open Space Element--Mineral Resource Section

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.5

WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Additional diversion of surface or groundwater resources resulting from increased development would adversely impact the County's water resources as well as related resources such as vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, wetlands and riparian areas, and outdoor recreation.

Surface waters in Mono County have been extensively diverted for hydroelectric power or to supply water for export. Environmental damage to surface flow may be caused by water diversions and reduction of stream flows, especially during drought periods. Examples of such damage would be loss of fishery and other wildlife habitat, and degradation of water quality. Future export of volumes of water for use outside the County or outside the basin-of-origin may be detrimental to local water users and the natural environment within the county.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Increased growth and development associated with the General Plan Update could result in the overuse and/or waste of water.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Water quality is threatened by certain land uses and by land management and development practices such as: overgrazing of livestock, grazing that occurs in proximity to water bodies, inappropriate development adjacent to waterbodies or recharge areas, high intensity recreational use, and resource development activities. Water quality could also be threatened by improper or careless construction practices and road maintenance.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Additional development would alter the existing surface hydrology by replacing existing vegetation and permeable surfaces with impermeable surfaces. Associated grading and earthwork would also alter drainage patterns. An increase of impermeable surfaces could lead to additional sheet flows of stormwaters and snowmelt, and cause increased erosion, sedimentation of streams and lakes, and increases in pollutant loads. Short-term construction impacts, such as erosion from construction sites and unimproved roads, could also add significant amounts of sediment and silt to water bodies.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

The intensification of existing land uses could generate additional pollutants such as oil, grease and other petroleum products, solid waste and road salts and cinders. These pollutants could be carried into the waterways and could degrade surface and groundwater quality.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

Increased runoff caused by additional impermeable surfaces could result in unnaturally high streamflows. Under certain conditions, these higher than normal flows would cause streambank erosion, the re-suspension of settled solids and the loss of habitat for resident populations of fish and insects.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 7

Sheet flow caused by additional impermeable surfaces would cause excessive damage to road shoulders and road surfaces on unprotected and unimproved road sections. Uncontrolled runoff over paved sections would cause premature degradation and failure of improved sections.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 8

Surface and groundwater quality may be threatened by improper methods of sewage treatment and disposal and/or solid waste and hazardous waste disposal.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 9

Increases in impervious surface coverage resulting from new development would reduce infiltrations from snowmelt and rainfall. A significant reduction in infiltration rates would eventually cause a lowering of local and downstream groundwater tables which could adversely affect groundwater dependent vegetation, spring flow and spring-dependent biological resources and domestic well water users. Groundwater quality would also be affected if flow reductions resulted in increases in mineral concentrations.

WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Goal I, Water Resources

- Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1
- Objective B, Policy 4
- Objective B, Policy 5, Action 5.1
- Objective B, Policy 6, Actions 6.1--6.3

- Objective C, Policies 2--4

- Objective D, Policy 1
- Objective D, Policy 2

- Objective E, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.5
- Objective E, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Conservation/Open Space Element--Goal II, Water Quality

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1
Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.5
Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4
Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.3
Objective A, Policy 5, Action 5.1

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2
Objective B, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2
Objective B, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4
Objective B, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.2

Conservation/Open Space Element--Goal I, Agriculture, Grazing & Timber Section

Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.5

ENERGY RESOURCES

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

The level of development allowed under the General Plan Update will increase the short-term and long-term demand for energy resources. Short-term energy consumption will increase during the construction phase, while long-term energy requirements will be necessary for additional recreational facilities, lighting and heating. Gasoline consumption for residents and visitors will also increase.

Significant impacts on energy resources are not anticipated as a result of the General Plan Update. ***Southern California Edison expects to meet its electrical requirements for the next several years. In addition, the electric loads of the area are within the parameters of the overall projects load growth which SCE is planning to meet in this area.***

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Future development of geothermal energy resources could adversely affect fumaroles and geothermally influenced pools, streams and springs and associated fish and wildlife.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Geothermal development has the potential to cause adverse impacts to surface water quality from surface disturbance or spills of either drilling fluids or geothermal fluids, and/or to deplete the thermal resource that maintains stream temperatures, particularly in Hot Creek.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Additional hydropower development would significantly impact the natural environment.

Certain streams in Mono County flowing east from the Sierra Nevada are already extensively diverted for hydroelectric power. Water diversions for hydroelectric power generation can severely affect riparian communities, wildlife, fisheries and recreational resources. Aesthetic impacts which have been caused by existing diversions of water which would otherwise flow in the streams and by the pipelines and pen stocks diverting water to the power houses are equally significant impacts.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

Future development of energy resource facilities could pose potential hazards to the public health and safety and to the quality of the natural environment.

When siting for solar and wind energy resource facilities, safety factors such as seismic hazards must be considered as energy generating equipment (panels on rooftops, water storage containers etc.) could cause structural damage in an earthquake. Also, reflected light from solar collectors could be distracting to passers-by, especially motorists. Energy facilities could also be "attractive nuisances" for wildlife and could result in the loss of wildlife.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

The development of energy resource facilities could result in degradation of visual resources.

Structures necessary to capture energy, and convert and distribute electrical power often cover large areas. The siting of solar and wind energy resource facilities can at times require substantial surface area, thus causing alterations in existing topography and/or land uses. Similarly, transmission lines are often visually obtrusive, particularly in Mono County's open visual environment.

ENERGY RESOURCES MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Energy Resources Section

Goal I

Objective B, Policy 1, Action 1.2

Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4

Objective D, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.6, 1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 1.14, 1.18

Objective E, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

Objective F, Policy 1

Goal III

Objective B, Policy 1

Objective C, Policy 1

Objective D, Policy 1

Goal IV

Objective A

Goal V

Objective A, Policy 1

Objective A, Policy 2

Goal VI

Objective A, Policy 1

Objective A, Policy 2

Goal VII

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.5

Objective A, Policies 4--9

Objective B, Policies 1--3

NOISE

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Impacts associated with development, such as additional traffic, short-term construction noise and increased recreational activities/events would raise the existing ambient noise level and could generate noise levels in violation of standards in the County's Noise Ordinance.

Maintaining the existing ambient noise level is extremely important in retaining the County's recreational appeal. The ability to enjoy the area's outdoor recreation activities without the disturbance of loud and obtrusive noises is important to the community's quality of life and tourist economy.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Planned land uses could prove to be incompatible due to high noise levels near sensitive receptors.

The General Plan Update promotes the expansion or development of mixed-use neighborhood commercial/residential development near employment centers to reduce the number of vehicle miles generated by land use development and consequently air emissions. Implementation of this policy would result in noise impacts to certain uses within the mixed use area.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Increases in development and in population associated with the General Plan Update could allow for new noise sources (e.g. resource development activities, industrial activities, certain recreational activities, commercial development) whose noise levels could significantly impact the existing noise environment and which might be in violation of standards in the County's Noise Ordinance.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Traffic increases resulting from future development would increase highway noise and vehicle congestion, particularly in community areas, both of which could produce significant noise impacts.

The General Plan Update focuses on providing additional transit services within and between communities and on providing additional facilities for non-motorized modes of transportation. Implementation of these policies would decrease traffic and congestion, thereby decreasing noise impacts associated with traffic.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

An increase in airport activity at the Bridgeport, Lee Vining or Mammoth/June Lakes Airport could produce significant noise impacts.

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Lee Vining and Mammoth/June Lake airports are located outside of town limits, and residential land uses are generally not affected by aircraft noise from those airports. In Bridgeport, residential land uses are affected by aircraft noise due to the proximity of the airport to a residential area. However, the low level of activity at the Bridgeport airport minimizes this impact. For the Mammoth/June Lakes Airport and the Lee Vining Airport, noise impacts may extend beyond the standard noise impact area. In the very low ambient noise environment of those airports, any operations of moderately loud aircraft are potentially audible, especially when winds are calm.

NOISE MITIGATION MEASURES

Noise Element

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

Objective B, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Objective B, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.2

Objective C, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

Objective C, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective C, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

VEGETATION

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development and the associated increase in residents and visitors would result in loss or alteration of plant communities, including the replacement of large areas of natural vegetation by structures, paving, or landscaping.

Removing existing vegetation could have secondary effects on important resource values such as wildlife, water supply and quality and visual quality. Natural vegetation, in addition to providing wildlife habitat, plays an important role in catching and filtering stormwater runoff and snowmelt. It prevents erosion and helps to retain soil moisture by providing a protective cover. Vegetation also helps maintain the scenic values throughout the County by providing visual contrast and by screening developed areas.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Activities and land uses allowed under the General Plan Update could remove and/or damage special status plant species.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Expanding the housing and recreational facility base would attract additional visitors to the area, which could potentially increase usage of sensitive areas such as lakeshores, streams, wetlands and riparian areas. This additional usage could cause trampling of vegetation and soil compaction. Secondary effects such as surface water contamination and increased erosion could result. Most of the disturbance would occur in areas adjacent to developed lands and recreational facilities, where use is anticipated to be greatest.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Increased water diversions for local water consumption could impact streamside riparian habitat and, if groundwater sources are developed, lower water tables and impact the overlying vegetation.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

Unmanaged grazing activities could adversely affect vegetation, particularly wetlands and riparian areas.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

Changes in current agricultural practices, particularly irrigation patterns, could impact existing plant communities.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 7

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The use of non-native plant species for landscaping or for recreational development, such as golf courses, could impact plant communities by the introduction of "escaped exotics", and could have a secondary impact on wildlife by replacing natural habitat with other vegetation.

VEGETATION MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Open Space Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective A, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.13

Conservation/Open Space Element--Biological Resources Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 1.12

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.5

Objective A, Policy 4

Objective A, Policy 5, Action 5.1

Objective A, Policy 7

Conservation/Open Space Element--Water Resources Section

Objective D, Policy 2

Conservation/Open Space Element--Agriculture, Grazing, & Timber Section

Goal I

Objective A, Policy 1

Objective B, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.2

Goal II

Objective A, Policy 1

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

WILDLIFE

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development and the associated increase in residents and visitors would result in loss or alteration of wildlife habitat, especially in areas within or adjacent to developed areas.

The degree to which wildlife use of these habitats is altered will depend on the present use and condition of the habitat, the type of development that occurs, the amount and type of habitat affected and the potential mitigation required. The degree of impact to individual wildlife species would depend upon the distribution, abundance, mobility, habitat requirements and sensitivity to disturbance of each species.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Long-term disturbance to wildlife would result from increased levels of human activity associated with increased development and outdoor recreation.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Increased traffic resulting from increased development and associated increases in outdoor recreational use would impact wildlife, particularly deer.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Special status animal species could be affected by activities and land uses allowed under the General Plan Update.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

Fishery habitat and stocks could be threatened by increased water extraction for domestic needs, by exploitation of thermal resources for geothermal power (particularly in Hot Creek), by polluted run-off entering the County's waterways from development areas, by increased siltation and sedimentation resulting from construction activities, and by other development activities which result in increased use of the resource.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 6

Use of chemicals, either for pesticide control, resource development projects or other uses, could adversely affect wildlife.

IV. IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

POTENTIAL IMPACT 7

The creation of "attractive nuisances", such as cyanide ponds or wind and solar energy development facilities, could adversely affect wildlife.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 8

Continued and/or expanded agricultural uses, including grazing, could adversely impact wildlife.

WILDLIFE MITIGATION MEASURES

Conservation/Open Space Element--Open Space Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1

Objective A, Policy 2, Action 2.1

Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.13

Conservation/Open Space Element--Biological Resources Section

Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.15

Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3

Objective A, Policy 4

Objective A, Policy 6, Actions 6.1--6.4

Objective A, Policies 7-8

Objective A, Policy 9, Actions 9.1--9.4

Objective A, Policy 10, Actions 10.1--10.3

Objective A, Policy 11, Actions 11.1--11.2

Conservation/Open Space Element--Water Resources Section

Objective D, Policy 2

Circulation Element

Objective B, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

HAZARDOUS WASTES AND MATERIALS

POTENTIAL IMPACT 1

Future development would result in an increase in household and small quantity waste generators which would increase the amount of hazardous waste generated in the County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 2

Future potential industrial development or resource development projects, such as energy or mineral resource extraction projects, could result in an increase in the amount of hazardous waste generated in the County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 3

Improper or mismanaged hazardous waste could affect surface and groundwater resources and/or air quality.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 4

Significant impacts could occur if Mono County were identified as a general siting area for regional hazardous waste disposal facilities.

The General Plan Update recognizes that each county is responsible for disposal and management of its own hazardous waste; however, the Plan also notes that counties are encouraged to enter into inter-jurisdictional agreements to balance economic efficiency in the size of facilities. Thus, under the Plan, facilities that are larger than needed to manage the requirements of Mono County may be built if the project meets local planning criteria and serves public needs.

POTENTIAL IMPACT 5

The transportation of hazardous wastes through populated areas and/or other sensitive use areas poses potential hazards to the public health and safety of residents and to the quality of the natural environment.

As truck traffic increases in the County, particularly on Hwys. 395 and 6, the transportation of hazardous materials will become an increasing concern. A spill of hazardous materials would affect the health and safety of residents and visitors, as well as the health and safety of any wildlife in the area. It could also affect surface and groundwater resources and vegetation in the area. In addition, a hazardous materials spill could impact the emergency services providers in the County and have a devastating impact on the local tourist economy. The County currently does not have a hazardous materials unit.

HAZARDOUS WASTES AND MATERIALS MITIGATION MEASURES

Hazardous Waste Management Element--Reduction Section

- Objective A, Policy 1, Action 1.1
- Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.5, 4.9
- Objective A, Policy 6, Action 6.1

Hazardous Waste Management Element--Regional Cooperation Section

- Objective A, Policy 1

Hazardous Waste Management Element--Hazardous Waste Facility Siting

- Goal I, Objective A, Policy 1

- Goal I, Objective A, Policy 2

- Goal II, Objective A, Policies 2--4
- Goal II, Objective B, Policies 1--8
- Goal II, Objective C, Policies 1--13
- Goal II, Objective D, Policies 1--4
- Goal II, Objective E, Policies 1--6
- Goal II, Objective F, Policies 1--4

NATURAL HAZARDS

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Future development in the County will increase the number of residents and visitors, as well as the number of structures, and will increase the risk to life and property from natural hazards.

Natural hazards in the County include wildland fires, floods, earthquakes, volcanic episodes, avalanches and geologic hazards such as landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows. The impacts of these hazards are lessened to some degree by the location of some private land predominantly in hazard free zones.

NATURAL HAZARDS MITIGATION MEASURES

Safety Element--Goal I, Geologic Hazards

- Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7
- Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.4
- Objective A, Policy 4, Actions 4.1--4.3
- Objective A, Policy 5, Actions 5.1--5.3

Safety Element--Goal II, Flood and Fire Hazards

- Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.6

- Objective B, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.4
- Objective B, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.3
- Objective B, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.4

Safety Element--Goal III, Avalanche Hazards

- Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2
- Objective A, Policy 2, Actions 2.1--2.2
- Objective A, Policy 3, Actions 3.1--3.3

Safety Element--Goal IV, Increasing Public Awareness of Hazards

- Objective A, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.2

- Objective C, Policy 1

Land Use Element--Countywide Section

- Objective G, Policy 1, Actions 1.1--1.3

V. IMPACT SUMMARY

UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA requires that an EIR describe those significant adverse environmental impacts for which either no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible. The following have been identified as potentially adverse environmental impacts which cannot be completely avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance:

- 1) Conversion of vegetation to impermeable surfaces and related secondary water quality impacts;
- 2) Visual impacts;
- 3) Increase in traffic and related air and noise quality impacts;
- 4) Increase in number of people exposed to natural hazards such as avalanches, volcanic episodes, earthquakes, floods, and fires;
- 5) Reduction in wildlife habitat and increased disturbance to wildlife (increased lighting, noise, and human activities above existing levels);
- 6) Construction impacts (noise, vibration and dust).

Existing environmental conditions in the County would be affected by the unavoidable impacts identified above under the existing General Plan or under the proposed General Plan Update. The extent of the impacts would be less under the General Plan Update since the overall density in the Update is less than that which is currently allowed by the existing General Plan.

The unavoidable impacts identified above are limited in the General Plan Update by policies that promote development in areas adjacent to existing developed areas. The intent of these policies is to avoid leapfrog development, to prevent the unnecessary expansion of roads and other infrastructure as well as services and utilities, and to limit environmental disturbance to lands surrounding developed areas. ***Policies in the General Plan Update also require projects to develop alternatives and/or mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate potential impacts.***

CONVERSION OF VEGETATION

Conversion of vegetation to impermeable surfaces will result in increased surface runoff. Although General Plan policies and requirements of the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board should mitigate most impacts, surface runoff may carry contaminants such as petroleum products, cinders, sediment and litter which will degrade water quality. Converting vegetation to impermeable surfaces over groundwater recharge zones could reduce the amount of recharge in those areas and could affect groundwater quality.

VISUAL IMPACTS

General Plan policies address siting and design considerations for future development, as well as landscaping and visual screening requirements, in order to minimize potential visual impacts. However, in some areas of the County and depending on the size and type of development, these policies may not reduce visual impacts to a level of insignificance. In some areas of the County, particularly outside of developed

community areas in the wide open basins or plateaus, any development will be visually obtrusive.

TRAFFIC INCREASES

Increased development and increased recreational use of the area resulting from General Plan policies would increase traffic levels and congestion. The heaviest impacts will be on the main travel routes in the county, Hwys. 395, 120, 6, 203, and 158. Mitigation of traffic impacts on those roadways will require coordination with Caltrans. Mitigation of traffic impacts in community areas with unimproved private roads will require local homeowners to address the problem, with help from the County or a Special District. Transit and non-motorized modes of circulation will also assist in mitigating impacts.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Increases in the resident and visitor populations and additional development would expose more people and property to the impacts from natural hazards such as avalanches and earthquakes. General Plan policies focus development away from hazard areas and thereby minimize impacts from natural hazards in all but the most severe events.

IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE HABITAT

Future development would have significant unavoidable impacts on wildlife habitat. Development would result in the loss or alteration of wildlife habitat and increased disturbance of wildlife activities from increased human use of the area. The General Plan contains policies that limit development in wetlands and riparian areas, as well as policies to protect significant habitat areas, such as deer migration corridors and holding areas. Even with these General Plan policies, the cumulative loss of wildlife habitat through conversion to urban uses is an unavoidable significant impact.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Noise, vibration and dust associated with construction activities can be mitigated but cannot be completely avoided. Adverse impacts would include disturbances of wildlife, visual impacts, and air quality degradation. Minor local water quality impacts may also be unavoidable even with the implementation of mitigation measures. Although construction impacts are short-term and largely mitigable, they are essentially unavoidable.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires the evaluation of a "range of reasonable alternatives to the project ... which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project" (Guidelines § 15126 (d)). The alternatives developed for the Update of the **Mono County General Plan** were evaluated based on their potential to fulfill the proposed overall General Plan land use goal of

"maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors."

The alternatives focus on development of the privately owned lands within the **unincorporated area of the** County. Portions of the alternatives are somewhat speculative, since future development and land use needs in the County could be significantly impacted by development on National Forest lands and BLM lands. For example, large-scale recreational development on federal lands, such as the development of additional alpine ski areas in the area between Mammoth Mountain and June Mountain, would significantly impact existing communities as well as undeveloped private lands.

ALTERNATIVE 1--NO DEVELOPMENT (EXISTING CONDITIONS)

Description

The "No Development" alternative would allow for no additional development in the unincorporated area of Mono County. Existing development in the unincorporated areas is confined primarily to community areas (Topaz, Coleville, Walker Bridgeport/Twin Lakes, Mono City, Lee Vining, June Lake, Long Valley, McGee Creek, Crowley Lake/Hilton Creek, Aspen Springs, Sunny Slopes, Wheeler Crest, Paradise, Chalfant, Hammil, Benton) and to small pockets of resort oriented development throughout the County (e.g. Lundy Canyon, Virginia Lakes, Upper Owens River). A Specific Plan for a large resort development has been approved for Conway Ranch, although no development has occurred yet. This alternative is based on the following assumptions:

- that the Forest Service will not permit any additional large-scale development and therefore there will be no need for additional community development to provide support services for that development;
- that there will be no additional land exchanges from public ownership to private ownership to allow for additional development; and
- that the Town of Mammoth Lakes will grow to the buildout level proposed in the Town's General Plan.

Analysis

Retaining the existing conditions would require instituting stringent growth control measures. While this alternative would maximize protection of the physical environment (e.g., open space, biological resources) and would have significantly fewer impacts on the physical environment than the proposed General Plan Update, growth restrictions would also prohibit the County from fulfilling its proposed overall General Plan land use goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic

integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors."

Regardless of the County's growth, significant environmental impacts associated with the buildout of the Town would occur in the unincorporated Mammoth vicinity area. Traffic on roads within the County, especially on Hwy. 395, would increase substantially. Growth in Mammoth would also create impacts to air quality, water **resources**, visual resources, and wildlife in the surrounding unincorporated area. Growth in Mammoth Lakes would also adversely impact the County's ability to provide services such as public health and social services.

ALTERNATIVE 2--1982 GENERAL PLAN (NO PROJECT)

Description

The no project alternative would leave the 1982 General Plan in place. Under the existing plan, the total dwelling unit potential is 121,829 and the maximum potential population is 305,790 persons. The existing plan contains policies to focus development in existing communities in order to protect natural resources and recreational areas in the County; policies to coordinate service availability and capacity with future development; and policies to provide a mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open space, to fulfill the needs of residents and visitors in the County. This alternative assumes the following:

- that the Town of Mammoth Lakes will grow to the buildout level proposed in the Town's General Plan which would have resulting significant individual and cumulative effects on the unincorporated area (see Alternative 1).

Analysis

The overall development direction provided by the existing plan is maintained in the proposed plan. However, the proposed plan significantly expands and clarifies policies found in the current plan and formulates a standard approach to development projects based on compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed General Plan has also been updated to reflect proposed current and future development and buildout.

One substantial change between the existing General Plan and the proposed plan involves the land use designations. In the existing plan, approximately 90 percent of the private land is designated as "Mixed Multiple", which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per acre (except in Hammil Valley where the maximum density is 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres). Most of the lands outside of community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" are proposed for redesignation to "Resource Management" which allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres. Lands within community areas which are currently designated as "Mixed Multiple" (e.g. in Walker) are proposed for redesignation to a variety of residential and commercial designations. In addition, most lands owned by LADWP, which were designated as "MM" in the 1982 plan, are designated as Open Space ("OS") in the proposed plan, which allows for 1 dwelling unit per 80 acres.

Implementation of this alternative would leave existing land use designations in place. As a result, this alternative would allow higher density development on privately owned land outside of community areas. Impacts to traffic, noise, air quality, biological

resources, visual resources and open space would result from the increased population allowed for under this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE 3--HIGH INTENSITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

Description

This alternative would allow for intensive development throughout the unincorporated area. Existing communities would be developed to their buildout potential with high density uses and possibly expand as a result of land exchanges with federal land management agencies. Private land outside community areas could also be developed intensively, leading to the development of a variety of residential, commercial, industrial and resort development. Large parcels of agricultural land in the Antelope Valley, the Bridgeport Valley, and the Tri-Valley could be converted to urban type uses. Pockets of private land adjacent to Crowley Lake, along the Upper Owens River, north of the Scenic Area in the Mono Basin, and throughout the County could be extensively developed . This alternative assumes the following:

- that the Town of Mammoth Lakes will grow to the buildout level proposed in the Town's General Plan which would have resulting significant individual and cumulative effects on the unincorporated areas (see Alternative 1).

Analysis

Significant environmental impacts would increase under this alternative as compared to the proposed General Plan Update. Intensive development outside existing communities would require expansion of existing roadways which would in turn allow for greater traffic increases as well as related noise and air quality impacts. More open space would be lost under this alternative, and impacts to visual, cultural and biological resources would increase. Intensive development in many areas of the County would have severe environmental impacts and the feasibility of providing services such as sewer and water services and fire protection to newly developed areas would be questionable. The availability of a sufficient water supply would be a paramount concern. Since this alternative could severely compromise the natural and recreational resources of the county and thereby the tourist economy, intensive development countywide would not achieve the overall General Plan land use goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors." Finally, it is doubtful that over the next twenty years housing demand would justify such extensive development.

ALTERNATIVE 4--ORDERLY GROWTH OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES, CONSERVATION OF RESOURCE LANDS (PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE-PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

Description

This alternative would focus development in existing community areas. Development outside of community areas would be primarily low intensity uses, such as low density residential development, agriculture, and open space; higher intensity uses could be permitted subject to the preparation of a specific plan and associated environmental review of the project; resource extraction projects might also be permitted in appropriate

areas subject to environmental and reclamation requirements. Development would be assessed for conformance with General Plan policies relating to the preservation and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat, the preservation of agricultural lands, the adequate provision of urban services, conformance with the county's fire safe regulations, and other environmental issues and constraints. This alternative would achieve the overall General Plan land use goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors."

This alternative assumes that the Town of Mammoth Lakes will grow to the buildout level proposed in the Town's General Plan which would have resulting significant effects on the unincorporated areas (see Alternative 1).

Analysis

Implementation of this alternative would promote the orderly growth of existing communities and would likely result in some impacts to traffic, noise, air quality, biological and visual resources due to the increased population density allowed under this alternative.

SELECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The three development alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4) would result in significant environmental impacts, while the no development alternative (Alternative 1) would result in no significant environmental impacts. Implementation of any of the three development alternatives would result in the same *types of* significant impacts which were identified and analyzed in the Impacts Analysis Section of this document. The difference among the significant impacts resulting from each alternative is the difference in the intensity of the impacts caused by each alternative; the difference in intensity results from the differing levels of development intensity allowed by each alternative. Alternative 4, the Orderly Growth of Existing Communities as presented in the General Plan Update, would result in a number of significant environmental impacts. Alternative 2, the 1982 General Plan, would result in a greater intensity of significant impacts due to the higher overall density allowed in that plan. Alternative 3, High Intensity Development, would result in an even higher intensity of significant environmental impacts, due to the even higher overall density proposed in that alternative.

Aside from Alternative 1, No Development, the environmentally superior alternative would be Alternative 4 since that alternative would result in the lowest degree of significant impacts.

SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 4, Orderly Growth of Existing Communities as presented in the General Plan Update, is the preferred alternative because it best achieves the overall General Plan goal of "maintaining and enhancing the environmental and economic integrity of Mono County while providing for the land use needs of County residents and visitors." Of the three development alternatives, Alternative 4 is the environmentally superior alternative.

Overall, Alternative 1, No Development, is the environmentally superior option. However, Alternative 1 fails to recognize the economic needs of the County and fails to meet the General Plan goal of providing for future land use needs.

SHORT-TERM USE VS. LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

The Mono County General Plan is designed to ensure that decisions concerning short-term uses of the environment are made within the context of long-term environmental goals. The General Plan attempts to provide for orderly growth, jobs and housing and the appropriate expansion of public services to meet resident and visitor needs, in a manner consistent with preservation of environmentally sensitive lands and natural resources.

Although some growth and development allowed under the General Plan Update could occur in the short-term, the land uses established under the Plan would continue into the future. In the County's effort to meet the short-term needs of the population (e.g., housing construction and roadway improvements), cumulative and long-term impacts could arise (e.g., loss of open space, increases in air pollutant emissions). In both the short-term and long-term, some localized County land resources could be consumed by housing and other development such as public and recreational services and facilities, and energy and other resource extraction projects. The long-term consequences resulting from permitting these projects could include the loss of localized areas of open space, biological resources, geologic resources, scenic resources, cultural resources, and mineral and energy resources.

The specific impacts of future development will depend on future discretionary actions. The General Plan Update recognizes that the County's recreational and scenic resources form the basis of the economy and that protecting natural *and cultural* resources is crucial in order to protect the local economy. General Plan policies require that future development is sensitive to the environmental qualities in the area proposed for development; ***General Plan policies also limit development in environmentally sensitive areas.***

IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The EIR must identify the extent to which the proposed project's primary and secondary effects would commit nonrenewable resources to uses that future generations would be unable to retrieve. Implementation of policies and actions in the General Plan Update would result in the following irreversible changes:

Permanent loss of open space (locally significant);

Increased ozone, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, reactive organic compounds and other particulate emissions associated with increased automobile trips and industrial, recreational, and mineral resource development (particulates--significant);

Loss of some individuals from animal and plant populations and loss of habitat (locally significant);

Reduction of natural energy resources (locally significant);

Reduction of mineral resources (locally significant);

Localized degradation and loss of visual resources (locally significant);

Localized degradation and loss of cultural resources (significant).

GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

A project is considered growth inducing if it tends to directly foster or encourage population growth or, through economic growth, indirectly fosters population growth. Implementation of the Mono County General Plan may foster population and/or economic growth in the following ways:

- 1) The creation of new employment opportunities, e.g. through permitting of industrial, commercial, recreational, or resource development projects, could result in the migration of new workers to the region;
- 2) The construction of new housing units would bring newcomers to the region;
- 3) The expansion of recreational facilities would result in an increase in the number of visitors to the County and would cause a significant increase in peak populations;
- 4) An influx of new residents and visitors would require the creation and/or extension of public services and utilities (including roadway improvements) which in turn could induce further growth and the establishment of new or expanded service areas within the region.

These changes would increase the potential for secondary, population-generated impacts such as further encroachment of urban development into natural areas, the removal of important natural or cultural resources, or encroachment into areas with natural hazards or other sensitive conditions. It should be noted, however, that in comparison with the growth inducing impacts of the 1982 General Plan, which allowed for a buildout of 121,829 dwelling units, this plan has a significantly lower buildout of **28,623** dwelling units, and an associated significant reduction in growth inducing potential.

EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

All impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan are identified as potentially significant prior to mitigation. Depending upon the scope and size of subsequent proposed actions allowed by the updated General Plan, and the effectiveness of mitigation measures, the impacts could be either "not significant" or "significant." However, in order to present a conservative analysis all impacts are

presented as potentially significant prior to mitigation and subject to further environmental analysis at the time of project approval.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are effects which may be individually insignificant but which when combined with one or more other effects, become significant or increase or compound other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact section in this EIR considers the implementation of other agencies' plans within the County. Other County plans, such as the June Lake Area Plan and the Conway Ranch Specific Plan, have been incorporated into this General Plan to ensure internal consistency. The major projects associated with other agencies' plans are:

- 1) the buildout of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, as described in the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan and EIR;
- 2) the potential development of mineral, energy, water, timber, recreational facilities, or other resources allowed by the BLM Resource Management Plan and the Inyo and Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans, the Proposed June Mountain Development Plan, 1987, and the Sherwin Bowl EIS.

Implementation of projects allowed in these plans would contribute to the impacts associated with buildout under the Mono County General Plan by increasing the amount of traffic, and exacerbating corresponding noise and air quality impacts; by removing and/or degrading geological, biological, water, open space, energy, visual, and cultural resources; and by increasing the demand for public services and utilities. Although cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan Update would be significant, they would be less than the cumulative impacts resulting from the 1982 General Plan since the overall density in the General Plan Update has been reduced from the level allowed under the 1982 General Plan.

The buildout of Mammoth Lakes and June Lake and the development of Conway Ranch have been analyzed in the EIRs for their respective plans. A discussion of the specific impacts from future ski area development is somewhat speculative until there is a better idea of the scope of any future development (except for the Sherwin Bowl Ski Area, which is analyzed in the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan and EIR). Similarly, the impacts, including cumulative impacts, of other future development projects cannot be addressed specifically until a project is proposed. A cumulative impacts analysis is currently being prepared by the Inyo National Forest for the Mammoth/June corridor. The County is participating in that process to ensure consideration of the socioeconomic and land use impacts of potential development in that area--whether it be recreational development such as ski areas, geothermal development, water development, or other development.

To ensure a consistent approach to land management, the General Plan Update was prepared in cooperation with the Town of Mammoth Lakes, the Inyo and Toiyabe National Forests, and the Bureau of Land Management, and formally recognizes the land use policies of these agencies. ***In addition, the General Plan Update contains policies which require the county to coordinate future planning efforts with applicable federal, state, and local agencies. and to cooperate in implementing***

the resulting plans. Coordinated, planned development is expected to reduce traffic, maintain air quality, provide adequate services and infrastructure to serve the development, and to avoid or minimize impacts to a variety of natural resources. The General Plan also requires proposals for development on federal lands to address potential impacts to services and infrastructure in nearby communities and to provide mitigation measures for those potential impacts as well as for potential environmental impacts of the project.

These policies are mitigation measures for potential significant cumulative effects resulting from implementation of the General Plan. Other mitigation measures are not feasible, since other development in the county that would contribute to cumulative impacts on the environment is either on public lands or on lands managed by the Town of Mammoth Lakes. In both cases, the county has no jurisdiction on future planning and development for those lands and must rely on a cooperative, coordinated approach to planning and development in order to protect the county's natural resources while allowing for use of private lands.