

9.1 Introduction

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) requires Section 10 permit applicants to specify in an HCP the alternative actions to the take of federally listed species the applicant considered and the reasons the applicant did not select those alternatives. The Endangered Species Consultation Handbook (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service 1998) identifies two types of alternatives commonly used in HCPs: (1) an alternative that would reduce take below levels anticipated for the proposed project, and (2) an alternative that would avoid take and, hence, not require a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This chapter identifies the alternative measures considered that would reduce or avoid the potential for take of species covered in the HCP/NCCP. The FESA does not prohibit take of federally listed plants; therefore, this chapter addresses only the take of covered wildlife species.

9.2 Description of Take Alternatives

The alternatives to take (i.e., take alternatives) addressed in this chapter are the No-Take Alternative, Reduced Development Take Alternative, and Reduced Number of Covered Species Take Alternative. These take alternatives are assessed below in relation to the effects on covered species described in Chapter 5, *Effects Analysis*, for the proposed conservation strategy and covered activities.

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process, the environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (EIS/EIR) for the Yolo HCP/NCCP identifies and evaluates a wider range of project alternatives than the take alternatives listed in this chapter. The analysis of take alternatives in this chapter serves a specific and narrow regulatory purpose, which is separate and apart from the analysis of project alternatives under CEQA and NEPA. The EIS/EIR for the HCP/NCCP identifies a reasonable range of project alternatives and evaluates the potential environmental impacts of those alternatives in relation to the No-Action or No-Project Alternative (Yolo Habitat Conservancy 2017).

9.2.1 No-Take Alternative

Under the No-Take Alternative, the Permittees would not engage in any activities that would result in take of any covered wildlife species and, therefore, would not need an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) from USFWS. Chapter 3, *Covered Activities*, describes the covered activities, which include activities associated with urban and rural community development, agricultural development, industrial development, and utilities. These covered activities are consistent with the approved City of Davis, City of West Sacramento, City of Winters, City of Woodland, and County of Yolo general plans.

The No-Take Alternative would have no adverse effects on covered wildlife species because take would be avoided. The No-Take Alternative would also not provide substantial benefits to covered wildlife species because the HCP/NCCP and its conservation measures would not be implemented. There would be no HCP/NCCP to provide for the conservation of the covered species in the Plan Area through a comprehensive landscape-scale conservation strategy.

The No-Take Alternative would be infeasible because it would prevent development under approved general plans and capital improvement plans. Under this alternative, the City of Davis, City of West Sacramento, City of Winters, City of Woodland, and County of Yolo would not fully implement their approved general plans and planned economic and community development activities such as residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and open space land uses would not occur. These uses include infrastructure, flood protection, and transportation projects.

The general plans of the member cities and County of Yolo, for example, identify areas in which growth is expected to occur. These potential future growth areas include habitat utilized by species covered in the HCP/NCCP. In addition, covered species occur throughout the Plan Area at large. Under the No-Take Alternative, future development would not occur in areas with covered species. Thus, compared to the proposed HCP/NCCP, the No-Take Alternative would result in less growth in the Plan Area as a result of avoiding take.

The No-Take Alternative was rejected because it would (1) severely constrain the implementation of the county and city general plans and thus preclude achieving the objectives for planned growth and development and (2) preclude improvements and the maintenance of infrastructure that supports the health, safety, and economy of the Plan Area (e.g., road construction, improvements, and maintenance; flood protection). The HCP/NCCP provides an integrated way of permitting take of listed (and non-listed) species while allowing the Permittees to implement projects.

9.2.2 Reduced Development Take Alternative

The Yolo Habitat Conservancy (Conservancy) developed the Yolo HCP/NCCP to help implement the general plans of the Permittees. The Permittees developed these general plans with full public input to address local growth and development goals, including consideration of effects on wildlife species and other sensitive biological resources. Each general plan considered alternatives with less development than each jurisdiction proposed and ultimately adopted. The alternative to take with reduced development was designed to incorporate reduced development alternatives for each of the cities and the county.

The Yolo County 2030 Countywide General Plan EIR analyzed three distinct alternatives to the adopted plan: the No-Project Alternative, a Rural Sustainability Alternative, and a Market Demand Alternative. The Rural Sustainability Alternative would have resulted in less development (35 percent less residential, 86 percent less non-residential) than the adopted 2030 Countywide General Plan.

The City of Davis' general plan was adopted in 2001 and updated in 2007. The 2007 update consistently incorporates the land use vision originally adopted by the City of Davis in 1987 (1987 Davis General Plan) that promotes a cohesive, compact, university-oriented city surrounded by agricultural lands, greenbelts, and habitats. The City of Davis places a 1 percent

annual growth cap¹ on new housing development (which equates to approximately 260 units per year), of which no more than 60 percent (156) may be built on land at the urban limits. A referendum (Measure J), adopted in 2001 and extended in 2010, requires a public vote for any change in land use from open space and agricultural lands. This referendum has minimized development pressures to expand the urban sphere.

The City of West Sacramento adopted its first general plan in 1990 and approved a number of revisions from 1992 through 2008. It is currently updating its general plan and considering three alternative growth scenarios that will inform the selection of a preferred alternative for the general plan update. Alternative A, Riverfront Focus Alternative, is a modified version of the base conditions (existing general plan land use diagram). Areas along the Sacramento River waterfront would develop at slightly higher densities, creating more residential and employment capacity in these areas; however, some areas in the southern extent of planned urban development would be less dense than the base conditions. The overall character of development would be similar to what has occurred under the existing 1990 general plan. Alternative A does not expand development beyond the current city limits and, therefore, promotes the preservation of open space and productive farmland surrounding West Sacramento.

Alternative B, Riverfront, District, and Corridor Intensification Alternative, provides for the highest density and intensity development of the three alternatives. Development would be concentrated primarily in mixed-use districts and along mixed-use corridors. Nearly all of the higher density and intensity development would be concentrated in the northern part of the city. The densities, locations of development, and mix of uses would support pedestrian and bicycle mobility and create the potential for increased transit use. Alternative B assumes the greatest amount of redevelopment in the northern area of the city, creating new residential and employment opportunities.

Alternative C, City Limits Expansion Alternative, would expand the city beyond its existing city limits to the north and south, annexing over 2,000 acres to the city for new development. The northern and southern expansion areas would develop as master planned residential communities, and the Notch² area would develop as an industrial job center. The land use designations within the existing city limits would remain the same as in the existing general plan.

The City of Winters' general plan was adopted in 1992. In 2009, the city council extended the general plan horizon year from 2010 to 2018. At that time the city council determined that the existing city general plan planning area was adequate to accommodate all projected growth through 2018. By not expanding the urban limit line from its 1991 location, the City of Winters has ensured that adverse effects on wildlife habitat will be minimized regardless of the general plan alternative adopted.

The City of Woodland's general plan was adopted in 1996, with a modest "technical" update in 2002. The general plan and EIR examined a variety of land use alternatives. The City of Woodland rejected an east and west expansion alternative because of concerns regarding encroachment on prime agricultural lands outside the city's urban limit line and because of the

¹ City Council Resolution No. 05-27.

² A 606-acre area northwest of the city and south of the Sacramento Bypass.

prohibitively expensive cost of extending infrastructure and essential services to these areas. A 2005 amendment to the general plan replaced a pre-existing 2015 population cap of 60,000 with a cap of 5,000 new single-family homes through 2020. A 2006 amendment by the voters established a permanent urban limit line (ULL) around the existing city limits. This ULL contains 3,148 acres; the current size of Woodland is 9,624 acres. The City is currently updating its general plan and analyzing four alternative growth scenarios. Scenario 1, Infill Only, depicts development on infill sites only, in the downtown area, along key corridors, and in the Spring Lake Specific Plan Area. Aside from continued development of Spring Lake, no development would take place in any of the new Specific Plan Areas. Scenario 2, Moderate Infill, SP-1A Fully Develops, SP-2 Partially Develops, assumes that a moderate amount of infill development occurs. This scenario assumes 100 percent buildout of SP-1A (Southeast Specific Plan Area) and a 25 percent buildout of SP-2 (Spring Lake Specific Plan Area). Scenario 3, Moderate Infill, SP-1A Fully Develops, SP-3 Partially Develops, assumes that a moderate amount of infill development occurs. The remaining need for residential development is accommodated in SP-1A (100 percent buildout) and in SP-3, the Spring Lake area (50 percent buildout). Scenario 4, High Infill, Full Buildout of SP-1A, 1B, and 1C, produces the highest amount of residential and non-residential development, with approximately 9,000 new housing units by 2035—a 1.7 percent growth rate.

Further reducing development through the Reduced Development Take Alternative would not allow for sufficient development to achieve sustainability in terms of supporting a jobs/housing balance within the community areas, lowering the number of vehicle miles traveled, and providing basic levels of community-serving water, wastewater, storm drainage, and public services for each of the Permittees. Further restricting development through the Reduced Development Take Alternative would not allow the Permittees to meet local growth and development goals.

9.2.3 Reduced Number of Covered Species Take Alternative

The Reduced Number of Covered Species Take Alternative would reduce the proposed covered species list to those that are listed as threatened or endangered under FESA or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and eliminate from the list species that are not currently protected under FESA or CESA.

Application of this criterion would result in a list of eight wildlife species: palmate-bracted bird's beak, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, California tiger salamander (Central California Distinct Population Segment [DPS]), giant garter snake, Swainson's hawk, western yellow-billed cuckoo, least Bell's vireo, and bank swallow. This revised list would not include four wildlife species that are covered by the proposed alternative: western pond turtle, white-tailed kite, western burrowing owl, and tricolored blackbird³.

This alternative would provide some benefits to the Permittees in the short term because narrowing the list of covered species would reduce the Permittees' obligations to implement avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for these species, thereby reducing costs. Covering fewer species, however, would result in a biologically inferior program relative to the

³ At the time the take alternatives were developed and refined in 2015, tricolored blackbird was not listed by the state. For the purposes of this analysis the species is excluded from this take alternative despite its current state listing status.

preferred approach. Also, the monitoring program addresses all covered species. The Conservancy will use the results of monitoring throughout the permit term and beyond for adaptive management decisions, which will benefit a wider range of species (covered and not). In addition, over the long term, this alternative would not provide take authorization for any species that has a high probability of listing under the FESA or CESA over the permit term. This could require development of individual permits for actions that result in take of these species in the future, when they become listed. Obtaining individual permits for these species could delay covered activities and increase costs above that of the preferred alternative. This alternative would result in less protection of and mitigation for rare and sensitive species and could result in greater long-term costs; therefore, this alternative was rejected.

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