

**BUTTE COUNTY 2021 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
ADDENDUM TO THE
BUTTE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN 2030
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
SCH NO. 2008092062
AND SUPPLEMENTAL EIR
SCH NO. 2012022059**

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1. Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document is an Addendum to the Butte County General Plan 2030 Environmental Impact Report (General Plan EIR), State Clearinghouse (SCH) No. 2008092062. The project analyzed in the General Plan EIR is the Butte County General Plan 2030 (2030 General Plan). The County of Butte (County) certified the General Plan EIR and approved the project in April 2010 (Butte County 2010a, 2010b).

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Sections 15000 et. seq.), recognize that between the date an environmental document is completed and the date the project is fully implemented, one or more of the following changes may occur: (1) the project may change; (2) the environmental setting in which the project is located may change; (3) laws, regulations, or policies may change in ways that impact the environment; and/or (4) previously unknown information can arise. Before proceeding with a project, CEQA requires the lead agency to evaluate these changes to determine whether they affect the conclusions in the environmental document.

Following the adoption of the 2030 General Plan in October 2010, the County proceeded with several key steps to implement the General Plan, including identifying needed changes and corrections, and updating the Zoning Ordinance to bring it into conformance with the 2030 General Plan. In November 2012, the County amended the 2030 General Plan and prepared a Supplemental EIR (SCH No. 2012072025; Butte County 2012) for the amended 2030 General Plan and Zoning Ordinance Update. In February 2014, the County adopted the Butte County 2014 Climate Action Plan (2014 CAP), which was an implementation program (COS-A1.1) of the 2030 General Plan (Butte County 2014). The County prepared the first Addendum to the 2030 General Plan EIR demonstrating that the 2014 CAP did not result in a new impact or a substantial increase in magnitude of impacts evaluated in the General Plan EIR. In October 2016, the County amended the General Plan's Health and Safety Element, Land Use Element, Building Code, and Zoning Ordinance to achieve consistency with state requirements and to understand potential impacts related to an extreme flooding event, characterized as a 200-year flood. The County prepared the second Addendum to the 2030 General Plan EIR demonstrating that the General Plan and Zoning Code revisions did not result in a new impact or a substantial increase in magnitude of impacts evaluated in the General Plan EIR. Together, the 2030 General Plan, the 2014 CAP, and the General Plan EIR with all addenda, are considered the "Approved Project" and the "Certified EIR," respectively.

The "Modified Project" is the 2021 Climate Action Plan (2021 CAP), which is an update to the 2014 CAP. The 2021 CAP analyzes Butte County's progress in meeting its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets and proposes new goals and strategies to achieve more significant and longer-term GHG reductions through 2050 and beyond. The 2021 CAP also presents a work plan and monitoring program for the County to track progress in GHG reduction over time and maintain the status of the 2021 CAP as a qualified GHG-reduction strategy for the purposes of CEQA streamlining.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Addendum to the Certified EIR, herein referred to as “Addendum,” is to analyze the impacts of the Modified Project, as required pursuant to the provisions of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. A detailed description of the Approved Project and the Modified Project is provided in Chapter 2, Project Description, of this document. Pursuant to the provisions of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the County is the lead agency charged with the responsibility of deciding whether to approve the proposed action.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCEDURES

Pursuant to CEQA Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, when an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR or negative declaration shall be prepared for the project unless the lead agency determines that one or more of the following conditions are met:

- Substantial project changes are proposed that will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- Substantial changes would occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken that require major revisions to the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
- New information of substantial importance that was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified, or the negative declaration was adopted shows any of the following:
 - a) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration.
 - b) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than identified in the previous EIR.
 - c) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponent declines to adopt the mitigation measures or alternatives.
 - d) Mitigation measures or alternatives that are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponent declines to adopt the mitigation measures or alternatives.

Where none of the conditions specified in CEQA Guidelines Section 151621 are present, the lead agency must determine whether to prepare an Addendum or whether no further CEQA documentation is required (CEQA Guidelines Section 15162[b]). An Addendum is appropriate where some minor technical changes or additions to the previously Certified EIR are necessary, but there are not any new or substantially more severe significant impacts (CEQA Guidelines Section 15164).

¹ See also Section 15163 of the CEQA Guidelines, which applies the requirements of Section 15162 to supplemental EIRs.

1. Introduction

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, the County has determined that this Addendum to the Certified EIR is the appropriate environmental clearance for the Modified Project. This Addendum reviews the changes proposed by the Modified Project and examines whether, as a result of any changes or new information, a subsequent EIR may be required. This examination includes an analysis of the provisions of CEQA Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 and their applicability to the Modified Project.

This Addendum does not reevaluate impacts that have already been addressed and/or mitigated by the Certified EIR. Impacts that would remain the same or would not increase the level of severity with implementation of the proposed modifications to the project are assumed to be fully analyzed by and consistent with the Certified EIR and are not analyzed in this Addendum.

1. Introduction

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2. Project Description

2.1 REGIONAL LOCATION

Butte County lies in north-central California at the northeastern end of the Sacramento Valley, approximately 150 miles northeast of San Francisco and 70 miles north of Sacramento. From the northeastern end of the Sacramento Valley, Butte County extends into the foothills at the confluence of the southern Cascade and the northern Sierra Nevada ranges.

Most of Butte County's urbanized areas are in the Sacramento River valley near prime agricultural lands and major transportation corridors. Urbanized areas in the county include the five incorporated municipalities: Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Gridley, and Biggs, as well as numerous smaller unincorporated communities. Land inside the city or town limits of incorporated municipalities is not under the County's jurisdiction. Therefore, the proposed 2021 CAP measures focus on lands in unincorporated Butte County, which contains approximately 78,702 people.

Regional access to the county is provided primarily by major highway corridors. State Routes (SR) 70 and 99 extend in a north-south direction through Butte County and are the principal transportation corridors connecting the county to the region. SR 32 and SR 162 provide subregional connections to areas to the east, northeast, and west of the county and to Interstate 5 (I-5).

2.2 STUDY AREA

The total land area of unincorporated Butte County is approximately 1,030,910 acres of land (1,610 square miles) and can be divided into three general topographical areas: the western 45 percent of the county is a valley area, about 25 percent of the county is foothills to the east of the valley, and the eastern 30 percent of the county is mountainous. The study area for the Approved Project and Certified EIR consists of all land within the unincorporated areas of the county.

2.3 REGULATORY SETTING

There are several regulatory documents intended to address the environmental effects of climate change through reductions in GHG emissions that guided the preparation of the 2014 CAP and the proposed 2021 CAP (Modified Project). The Modified Project was prepared in consideration of the following GHG regulatory provisions:

- California Buildings Standard Code (2019), Title 24 of the CCR, as adopted and incorporated in Chapter 26 – Buildings of the Butte County Code of Ordinances
- Renewables Portfolio Standards (introduced 2002)

2. Project Description

- Executive Order S-3-05 (2005)
- Assembly Bill 32, the California Climate Solutions Act of 2006
- Assembly Bill 1493, automobile CO₂ reduction requirements (introduced 2002)
- Senate Bill 97, modification to the California Public Resources Code (2007)
- Senate Bill 375, California's regional transportation and land use planning efforts (2008)
- Senate Bill 1368, emissions performance standards (2008)
- Low Carbon Fuel Standard (2009)
- Senate Bill 32, 2030 GHG emissions limit (2016)
- Climate Change Scoping Plan (2017)
- CEQA Guidelines Amendments concerning GHG emissions (2010)
- Executive Order B-30-15, adapt to changing climate conditions (2015)
- Executive Order B-55-18, carbon neutrality (no net GHG emissions) by 2045 (2018)
- Innovative Clean Transit, zero-emission bus standard (2018)

2.4 BACKGROUND

2.4.1 Planning Process Leading to Approved Project

The Approved Project process began in 2006 when the County initiated a multi-year effort to comprehensively update the General Plan to provide areas for future growth and conservation until the year 2030. On October 26, 2010, the County completed and adopted the 2030 General Plan (County Resolution 10-152). As part of Butte County's 2030 General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, Action COS-A1.1 requires the preparation of a CAP that ensures GHG emissions in Butte County would not contribute considerably to cumulative GHG emissions and associated climate change effects.

Consequently, on December 11, 2012, the Butte County Board of Supervisors approved a contract with Pacific Municipal Consultants to assist the county in carrying out a process and developing the 2014 CAP. While the 2030 General Plan was the main catalyst for the 2014 CAP, it also builds on the early efforts of County staff. Initiatives have included the work of the Butte County Sustainability Work Team, including an early report on government operations and energy efficiency. In 2004, Butte County also installed a 1-megawatt solar facility at the County Government Center. The planning process lasted approximately one year and consisted of a review of existing activities, in-depth technical analysis, and a collaborative outreach process with County staff, the general public, and agricultural stakeholders. During this time, two community open houses were held to familiarize the public with the CAP process and to accept public input.

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The 2014 CAP process included a detailed inventory of GHG emissions, an inventory of Butte County government actions, the preparation of a Climate Change Preparedness Plan, identification and evaluation of emission-reduction measures, the development of a draft 2014 CAP for review by the public, and public hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The 2014 CAP was a comprehensive strategy to reduce GHG emissions and streamline the environmental review of GHG emissions of future development projects within the county consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b) to achieve the state-recommended GHG emissions-reduction target of 15 percent below 2006 emissions levels by 2020 and to establish a clear path for future and continued emissions reductions beyond 2020. The 2014 CAP also included an implementation program and a framework to monitor and report progress.

2.4.2 Planning Process Leading to Proposed Modified Project

The Modified Project process began in 2020 and included stakeholder outreach and community workshops. The Modified Project preserves the structure and format of the 2014 CAP while providing updated information, an expanded set of GHG-reduction measures, and a longer-term planning horizon to the year 2050.

Butte County's 2014 CAP established a GHG emission-reduction target of 15 percent below 2006 levels by 2020, consistent with the guidance for local governments in the first Climate Change Scoping Plan. The reduction target was also projected to reflect the timeline of the 2030 General Plan, resulting in an additional reduction target of 42 percent below 2006 levels by 2030, which uses the 15-percent reduction target by 2020 as an interim target. In 2006, the unincorporated community-wide GHG emissions were 748,850 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO_{2e}). In 2019, community-wide GHG emissions totaled 649,870 MTCO_{2e}, a 13-percent reduction in GHG emissions between 2006 and 2019. GHG emissions from County operations increased between 2006 and 2019, climbing from 38,730 to 45,500 MTCO_{2e}. The decrease in community-wide emissions was substantial but fell short of the 2014 CAP's goal of reducing GHG emissions 15 percent below 2006 levels by 2020. Emissions from County operations rose by 17 percent instead of decreasing as targeted by the 2014 CAP, primarily as a function of waste generated by the Camp Fire. A breakdown of GHG emissions for both community-wide and County operations is provided in Chapter 2 of the 2021 CAP.

The Modified Project revises the GHG emissions targets of the 2014 CAP, which would reduce GHG emissions 40 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2030 and 80 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2050, consistent with state recommendations for local government GHG reduction targets.

2.5 PROPOSED CHANGES

The Modified Project, as an update to the 2014 CAP, updates the GHG emissions inventory to ensure consistency with the State of California's current guidance and best practices consistent with the General Plan policy direction to update the GHG reduction program every five years. It forecasts projected GHG emissions out to the year 2050, in contrast to the 2030 horizon of the 2014 CAP. The Modified Project also recommends new GHG emission measures to address areas not covered in the 2014 CAP in the form of 15 strategies that are organized into the following six sectors:

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- Energy Sector
- Water and Wastewater Sector
- Transportation and Land Use Sector
- Solid Waste Sector
- Agriculture Sector
- Government Operations Sector

These strategies and associated actions require, encourage, or incentivize activities that would result in the reduction of GHG emissions in the county.

- **Strategy 1.** Continue efforts to promote energy conservation and efficiency opportunities for all residents, building/property owners, and renters in the unincorporated county, including support and promotion of programs for lower-income and disadvantaged populations.
- **Strategy 2.** Continue efforts to promote energy conservation and efficiency opportunities for all nonresidential uses in the unincorporated county, including County facilities, office space, commercial space, and industrial space.
- **Strategy 3.** Work with property owners and property management groups to increase overall building electrification and adoption of modern, efficient appliances in residential rental properties.
- **Strategy 4.** Support efforts to increase renewable and carbon-free energy generation, including wind, solar, and biomass, and to ensure customer access to such renewable energy.
- **Strategy 5.** Continue efforts to promote water conservation for all residents, building/property owners, and businesses in the unincorporated county, including support and promotion of programs for lower-income and disadvantaged populations, and large water users.
- **Strategy 6.** Pursue Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, implemented through local land use decisions and through partnerships with local employers that reduce VMT countywide.
- **Strategy 7.** Prioritize bicycling and walking as safe, practical, and attractive travel options countywide.
- **Strategy 8.** Reduce carbon emissions from transportation by facilitating a transition to efficient or clean-fuel vehicles.
- **Strategy 9.** Encourage hybrid and clean-fuel construction and landscaping equipment countywide.
- **Strategy 10.** Reduce the amount of solid waste sent to local landfills through innovative programs and partnerships.
- **Strategy 11.** Reduce emissions from disposal and decomposition of organic waste.
- **Strategy 12.** Work to reduce GHG emissions associated with agricultural equipment, in partnership with regional partners, agencies, and members of the agricultural community.
- **Strategy 13.** Track trends in agricultural operations and encourage existing and new farming techniques that reduce GHG emissions from crop cultivation.
- **Strategy 15.** Implement projects and programs to reduce GHG emissions associated with Butte County operations.

The Modified Project revises the County's GHG emissions targets from the 2014 CAP, which was designed to reduce GHG emissions 15 percent below 2006 emissions levels (equivalent to 1990 levels) by 2020. The 2021 CAP is projected to reduce Butte County's GHG emissions to 512,940 MTCO₂e by 2030 and 195,660 MTCO₂e by 2050. This would reduce emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, and to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Thus, implementation of the 2021 CAP would achieve the County's 2030 and 2050 GHG reduction targets. Because the 2021 CAP is an actively-managed document, it has the flexibility to be modified as the science and regulatory framework around climate change is refined and improved over time.

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3. Environmental Analysis

As a plan-level document, the Modified Project does not include any site-specific designs or propose to develop specific projects that would result in a physical change to the environment. Rather, the proposed 2021 CAP strategies and associated actions relate to public education and outreach efforts regarding methods of reducing GHG emissions, administrative actions to monitor progress, and to encourage participation in programs such as the following:

- **Strategy 3.** Work with property owners and property management groups to increase overall building electrification and adoption of modern, efficient appliances in existing residential rental properties.
- **Strategy 4.** Support efforts to increase renewable and carbon-free energy generation, including wind, solar, and biomass, and to ensure customer access to such renewable energy.
- **Strategy 7.** Prioritize bicycling and walking as safe, practical, and attractive travel options countywide.
- **Strategy 9.** Encourage hybrid and clean-fuel construction and landscaping equipment countywide.
- **Strategy 10.** Reduce the amount of solid waste sent to local landfills through innovative programs and partnerships.
- **Strategy 15.** Implement projects and programs to reduce GHG emissions associated with Butte County operations.

As shown here, the strategies either apply to existing buildings that have already completed the environmental analysis, address operational characteristics of the county, or encourage options for actions that would reduce GHG emissions.

The 2021 CAP does not result in any new development potential or construction of facilities beyond those considered in the General Plan EIR. All development constructed as a result of implementation of 2021 CAP measures and actions would be subject to all existing County development standards as well as environmental review according to existing Butte County and CEQA requirements. Because the proposed 2021 CAP does not result in new development potential beyond that identified in the 2030 General Plan, and all future development is subject to existing development standards, implementation of the proposed CAP would not result in new or additional impacts in the following subject areas:

- Aesthetics/Visual Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Hazards and Safety
- Air Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Utilities

Additionally, the goals, policies, and actions in the 2030 General Plan reduce impacts to these areas to less-than-significant levels. As demonstrated in the Certified EIR, all impacts were found to be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation except for the significant and unavoidable impacts to the environmental topics of agriculture, hydrology and water quality, noise, and transportation and circulation. Implementation of the 2021 CAP may affect these determinations by increasing the potential impact.

3.1 AGRICULTURE

The proposed project would not result in new agricultural resource impacts that were not addressed in the County's General Plan EIR. No provisions implemented under the 2021 CAP would result in agriculture-related impacts, and no cumulative impacts would occur. There are no changed circumstances or new information meeting the standards for requiring further environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. Environmental effects associated with agricultural impacts of the 2030 General Plan were evaluated in the General Plan EIR (see General Plan EIR, Section 4.2). No changes in land use patterns are proposed by the 2021 CAP. Adoption and implementation of the 2021 CAP would not result in new or more severe impacts beyond what was addressed in the General Plan EIR and would not meet any other criteria under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3).

3.2 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

The proposed 2021 CAP does not increase the potential for development in the county and therefore would not result in additional hydrology and water quality impacts beyond those addressed in the General Plan 2030 EIR. There are no physical development provisions in the proposed 2021 CAP that would result in hydrology-related impacts. The proposed 2021 CAP does not contain any construction approvals and therefore would not trigger additional flood hazards beyond those considered in the General Plan 2030 EIR. There are no changed circumstances or new information meeting the standards for requiring further environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. Environmental effects associated with hydrology and water quality impacts of the 2030 General Plan were evaluated in the General Plan 2030 EIR (see General Plan EIR Section 4.8). No changes in land use patterns are proposed by the 2021 CAP. Adoption and implementation of the 2021 CAP would not result in new or more severe impacts beyond what was addressed in the General Plan EIR and would not meet any other standards under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3).

3.3 NOISE

The proposed 2021 CAP does not result in any new development potential or construction of facilities that affect project or cumulative ambient noise levels beyond levels considered in the General Plan 2030 EIR. Implementation of measures and actions under the 2021 CAP would be subject to all County development standards regarding noise as well as further CEQA analysis of project-specific impacts. There are no changed circumstances or new information meeting the standards for requiring further environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. Environmental effects associated with noise impacts of the 2030 General Plan were evaluated in the General Plan 2030 EIR (see General Plan EIR Section 4.10). No changes in land use patterns are proposed by the 2021 CAP. Measures implemented under the 2021 CAP would not result in increased noise levels in the county. Adoption and implementation of the CAP would not result in new or more severe impacts beyond what was addressed in the General Plan 2030 EIR and would not meet any other standards under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3).

3. Environmental Analysis

3.4 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

The 2021 CAP would not result in new significant impacts or increase the severity of significant transportation and circulation impacts beyond what was addressed in the General Plan 2030 EIR. There would be no degradation of levels of service at roadway segments and intersections analyzed under the General Plan 2030 EIR, and no new cumulative traffic impacts would occur. There are no changed circumstances or new information meeting the standards for requiring further environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. Environmental effects associated with transportation impacts of the 2030 General Plan were evaluated in the General Plan 2030 EIR (see General Plan EIR Section 4.13). No changes in land use patterns are proposed by the 2021 CAP. Adoption and implementation of the 2021 CAP would not result in new or more severe impacts beyond what was addressed in the General Plan 2030 EIR and would not meet any other standards under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3). The result of the 2021 CAP measures listed previously would be to reduce the generation of GHGs by decreasing the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the county. Therefore, implementation of the goal and measures would result in a reduction in GHG emissions, which would be beneficial.

The 2021 CAP is projected to reduce Butte County's GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, and to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, which places Butte County on a trajectory toward achievement of its 2030 and 2050 GHG reduction targets and continued GHG emission reduction that will support increased reduction activities in the future. Because the 2021 CAP is an actively managed document, it has the flexibility to be modified as the science and regulatory framework around climate change is refined and improved over time. Butte County has successfully decreased GHG emissions by 13 percent (98,980 MTCO_{2e}) between 2006 and 2019. Like the 2014 CAP, the proposed 2021 CAP will reduce GHG emissions for Butte County through a mix of mandatory and voluntary measures listed previously (GHG emissions measures in the form of strategies). Therefore, implementing the Modified Project would not result in a substantial increase in magnitude of the significant and unavoidable impacts of the Approved Project.

Furthermore, these measures in the 2021 CAP are beneficial, designed to reduce an environmental impact, specifically GHG emissions. The Modified Project does not grant any permission to build (entitlements) any development that would result in physical changes to the environment or have the potential to result in physical impacts on the environment. The Modified Project as implemented would remain consistent with the analysis in the Certified EIR; all impacts would be nearly equivalent to the impacts previously analyzed in the General Plan 2030 EIR. In addition, there have been no substantial changes in the circumstances under which the Modified Project is undertaken that would require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(2). The strategies and actions in the 2021 CAP would result in beneficial effects that promote green building practices, such as use of environmentally friendly building materials, reduced water and energy use, and waste reduction. There have been no substantial changes in the environmental conditions or land use patterns in the county not contemplated and analyzed in the General Plan 2030 EIR that would result in new or substantially more severe environmental impacts in association with implementation of the 2021 CAP.

3. Environmental Analysis

Finally, there is no new information of substantial importance that was not known or could not have been known at the time of certification of the General Plan 2030 EIR that identifies a new significant impact not discussed in the General Plan EIR, a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant impact, mitigation measures or alternatives previously found infeasible that would now be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the Approved Project, or mitigation measures or alternatives that are considerably different from those analyzed in the General Plan 2030 EIR, which would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment.

Based on the information provided in this Addendum, implementation of the proposed 2021 CAP would not result in any new impacts or increase the severity of previously identified significant impacts analyzed in the Certified EIR. The proposed modifications to the Approved Project would not result in a substantial change to the project, so additional environmental review is not necessary.

4. References

Butte County, 2010a. *Butte County General Plan 2030 EIR Draft Environmental Impact Report*. SCH No. 2008092062.

Butte County, 2010b. *Butte County General Plan 2030 Final Environmental Impact Report*. SCH No. 2008092062.

Butte County, 2012. *Butte County General Plan 2030 EIR Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report*. SCH No. 2012072025.

Butte County, 2014. *Butte County Climate Action Plan*. February 2014.

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