

## HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

This chapter provides an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan (2035 General Plan) on hazardous materials and public safety. As established in the Notice of Preparation for the proposed 2035 General Plan (see [Appendix A, Notice of Preparation](#)), urban development and other activities resulting from implementation of the 2035 General Plan may result in degradation of the environment from, or the exposure of the public to, hazardous materials, airport safety hazards, wildland fire hazards, accidental hazardous material releases, and other safety concerns that could impact emergency response and evacuation plans within San Benito County (County). Air quality emissions and hazards are evaluated in Chapter 7, *Air Quality*; seismic and geological hazards are evaluated in Chapter 10, *Geology, Soils, and Minerals*; and flooding hazards are evaluated in Chapter 13, *Hydrology and Water Resources*.

The following environmental assessment includes a review of existing hazards and hazardous materials potentially affected by the implementation of the 2035 General Plan. It includes a description of the existing environmental hazards within the County, including hazardous or contaminated sites, airport safety hazards, wildland fire hazards, and other safety concerns. Also assessed are the effects related to hazards and hazardous materials that could result from urban and other development that would be allowed under the proposed 2035 General Plan.

The existing condition of the natural and man-made hazards in the unincorporated County was determined by, among other things, a review of the regional hazardous databases, and by survey and research. Applicable laws, rules and regulations influencing the hazardous material use and safety conditions were identified by a review of federal and state regulations and local agency general plan goals and policies. Potential impacts related to hazards, hazardous materials, and safety issues, compiled and analyzed based on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) criteria, were determined by comparing potential urban and other development proposed under the 2035 General Plan to the existing environment, using guidelines adopted by state agencies and the County.

## **12.1 SETTING**

The County's environmental and regulatory settings for hazards and hazardous materials are described below are based on the General Plan Background Report (San Benito County 2010b). Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15150, this document is incorporated into the Revised Draft EIR (RDEIR) by reference as though fully set forth herein. Where necessary, information originating from the Report has been updated with the best available and most current data, as previously discussed in Section 4.3. The Report is available for download at: [www.sanbenitogpu.com/docs.html](http://www.sanbenitogpu.com/docs.html). Copies of the Report may be viewed during standard business hours (8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.), Monday through Thursday, at the San Benito County Planning and Building Department, 2301 Technology Parkway, Hollister, California 95023. County offices are closed to the public on Fridays.

### **12.1.1 Environmental Setting**

#### **Wildland Fire Hazards**

Urban and wildland fire hazards in the County create the potential for injury, loss of life, and property damage. Urban fires are discussed in Chapter 17, Public Facilities. The discussion in Chapter 17 includes a description of each of the fire service providers primarily responsible for such fires, including the San Benito County Fire Department, the Aromas Tri County Fire Department, the Hollister Fire Department, and the San Juan Bautista Volunteer Fire Department. While these fire agencies provide wildland fire-fighting services within their respective jurisdictions and through automatic aid agreements, the following discussion focuses only on those entities primarily responsible for wildland fire suppression and on wildland fire hazard and risk in the County. These entities are CAL FIRE and the San Benito County Fire Department. Wildland fires affect grass, forest, and brushlands, as well as any structures on these lands. Such fires can result from either human made or natural causes. The region's topography, type, and amount of fuel, climate, and the availability of water for firefighting are the primary factors influencing the degree of fire risk. Vegetation fires comprise the majority of fires in the County according to CAL FIRE. Most of the fires are caused by human activities involving motor vehicles, equipment, arson, and burning of debris.

As the County continues to grow, the potential for wildland fires will increase as more rural lands are developed. Proper land use planning and investment in fire protection resources in both urban and non-urban areas are key steps to reducing the potentially devastating effects of wildland fires, thereby safeguarding the people and property of the County.

## **CAL FIRE**

CAL FIRE is the State wildland fire agency designated to protect non Federal, unincorporated lands within California. When available, CAL FIRE also assists the County Fire Department with other types of fires within the County. Five CAL FIRE stations and bases are located in the County, and a sixth is located on the San Benito/Santa Clara County border (Pacheco). Stations within the County include the Bear Valley Helitack Base in Bear Valley, the Beaver Dam Station near Bitterwater, the Antelope Station in Antelope Valley, the Hollister Station, and the Hollister Air Attack Base. The Bear Valley, Beaver Dam, Antelope, and Hollister Fire CAL FIRE Stations are all in full operation during the fire season, which runs from May 1st to November 1st. The agency has air tankers housed at the Hollister Airport, a bulldozer housed at Hollister Station, and two battalion chiefs dedicated to the operations within the County. One acts as the County department head and the other acts as an as needed chief officer for emergency scene management. The Bear Valley and Bitterwater stations both have heliport facilities. Minimum total on duty staffing at CAL FIRE facilities within the County is 24 firefighters responding on seven fire engines, one fire bulldozer, and two battalion chiefs. Additional CAL FIRE resources available to the County include a helicopter with water dropping capabilities and firefighting crew, air tankers, air tactical coordinator, and inmate hand crews.

## **Bureau of Land Management**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for fire management and response on its approximately 105,000 acres in the County. BLM staffs a hand crew and bulldozer from May to October each year. BLM has a Direct Protection Agreement (DPA) with CAL FIRE for all BLM lands in the County. CAL FIRE and BLM respond to incidents on BLM property, but CAL FIRE has suppression responsibilities for BLM property for initial attack only. BLM assumes responsibility in the event that a wildland fire goes to extended attack status. The BLM also supports fire protection planning efforts in the County through its involvement in the BFSC, and grant funding for public education or WUI fuel reduction projects.

## **County Wildland Fire Hazards**

Throughout California communities are increasingly concerned about wildfire safety as increased development occurs in the foothills and mountain areas and subsequent fire control measures have affected the natural cycle of the ecosystem. Suppression of natural fires allows the understory to become dense, creating the potential for larger and more intense wildland fires. Wind, weather, climate conditions, steepness of terrain, and naturally volatile or hot burning vegetation provide fuels that contribute to the potential for wildland fires. In easily accessible wildland areas, such as the foothill areas surrounding the urban areas in the County, the risk of fire increases because of a greater chance for human carelessness and historic/current fire management practices. Human activities such as smoking, debris burning, and equipment

operation are often the major causes of wildland fires. Wildland fire hazards exist in varying degrees over approximately 95 percent of the County on the portion of the County's approximately 890,000 acres not covered by water or urban uses. The fire season extends approximately five to six months, from late Spring to Fall, or May through October, and is influenced by a combination of climatic, vegetative, and physiographic conditions. In general, the County's wildfire hazards are dictated by several factors, including the region's topography, vegetation (surface fuels), climate, fire history. Wildfire hazards are also based on where assets at risk are located, such as population centers or housing density. The information summarized below is based on the same data provided in the *San Benito County Community Wildlife Protection Plan* (CWPP).

### **Topography**

The topography of the County is extremely variable. For example, relatively flat terrain about 100 to 300 feet above mean sea level characterizes the northern portion of the County, and steep terrain and higher elevations up to approximately 5,200 feet above mean sea level characterize the southern portion of the County. The regional weather and topographic conditions within the County can have a significant effect on wildland fire behavior and the ability of fire fighters to suppress fires. Steep slopes and canyons, predominant geographical features in the southern portions of the County, are conducive to channeling and dispersing winds that can create erratic wildfire conditions. In addition to weather and topography, vegetation also affects fire behavior and fire hazard potential.

### **Vegetation and Fuels**

Vegetation distribution throughout the County varies by location and topography, with most of the major differences observed between the northern agricultural portions of the County and the southern mountainous region. The California Fire Resource and Protection Program has mapped eleven different vegetation/surface fuel types in the County. Dominant vegetative cover within the County consists of herbaceous annual grassland cover (49.5 percent), distributed primarily in the low lying valley areas and rolling hills south of Hollister. While this fuel type can burn quickly under strong, dry wind patterns, it does not produce the high heat intensity and high flames associated with chaparral fuel types. Other significant vegetative cover types include pine/grass (14.1 percent), light brush (19.7 percent), and tall chaparral (4.8 percent). These vegetation types are primarily associated with the steeper, upland areas in the southern portion of the County. Fire behavior in brush fuel types produces higher flames than those in grassland, although spread rates are typically slower. Fire behavior in woodlands is variable, depending on surface fuel conditions and the presence of ladder fuels, which are combustible materials (both live and dead) that provide a path for a surface fire to climb up into the crowns of shrubs or trees. The rolling foothills on the County's east and west sides just outside Hollister and San Juan

Bautista, although flatter than the southern portion of the County and well grazed, are not immune to extensive burning. There is some fuel loading in the foothill region, especially in those areas unaffected by fire for many years. In hilltop areas, water supplies can be rapidly depleted, hampering fire control efforts. Structures with wood shake roofs, such as many of the older barn structures that dot the County's foothills, ignite easily and produce embers that contribute to fire spread. There are also certain vegetative types that have increased flammability based on the plant physiology, biological function, and physical structure. For example, the native shrub species that compose much of the chaparral vegetation around the foothills near Hollister and San Juan Bautista present a high fire potential. The aftermath of wildland fire produces areas of potential landslide because burned and defoliated areas are exposed to winter rains that saturate the soil. The County has relatively few homes built on slopes with substantial vegetation.

### **Climate**

The overall weather patterns in the County are not only affected by topography, but also by the region's proximity to the Pacific Ocean. While the northwest portion of the County can be influenced by the ocean's weather patterns and humidity levels, the majority of the County has less cloud cover and fog. Instead, temperatures in the majority of the County typically reach up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and the predominant wind direction is from the northwest with average wind speeds between seven and ten miles per hour. Average annual rainfall is approximately 12 inches per year. Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) are tool used in fire protection planning that provide detailed weather planning data on wind speed, relative humidity, fuel moisture, temperature, and precipitation. There are currently four RAWS reporting stations located in the County.

### **Fire History**

Fire history is an important component in understanding fire frequency, fire type, significant ignition sources, and vulnerable areas/communities. According to the CWPP, the topography, vegetation, and climatic conditions in the County combine to create a situation capable of supporting wildfires. The CWPP states that relative to other areas in the central coast region of California, the County has not been subject to large scale conflagrations over the course of recorded fire history. For example, while numerous fires have burned in the County, their sizes remain small relative to other fires in the region (e.g., the Basin Complex Fire in Monterey County in 2008, which burned over 160,000 acres).

Based on historical fire perimeter data, repeated burning has not been observed within the County and fires are concentrated primarily in the Gabilan Range, with a few burning in the Diablo Range and lower valley floor areas. Fuel type is a likely factor affecting the geographic distribution of fires in the County. For instance, grass dominated rangelands in the eastern

portion of the County exhibit small, well-dispersed burn perimeters, while the heavier chaparral fuels in the western portion of the County (Gabilan Range) exhibit a more concentrated distribution of fire perimeters. Notable large wildfires that have burned primarily outside of the County, but also burned areas within the County, include the 1950 Mack Fire and the 1979 Ciervo Fire, both in the extreme southwest corner of the County. In general, the average interval between the burning of large wildfires in excess of 2,000 acres within the County is 5.8 years. Intervals range from one year to 17 years. The last notable fire within the County was the Brown Fire, which in 2008 burned approximately 3,787 acres.

### **Housing Density**

The County's population centers and the distribution of population and housing are other indicators used in fire planning to help evaluate fire risk, project prioritization, and fire threat ratings. For example, a large proportion of the County's population lives in low density housing, with higher density development concentrated in Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and Aromas. Densities often decrease with increased distance from these three urban centers. As a result, fire prevention projects are more likely to occur in these urban centers, outside the unincorporated County, in order to effectively safeguard people and property from wildfire risk and damage.

### **Fire Hazard Models**

To assist state and local entities in assessing the hazards associated with wildland fires, particularly in the wildland-urban interface, CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) has developed a series of computer models to assess fire hazards. FRAP's data collection takes into account many of the factors described above that dictate where fires may and may not occur, and models the data in order to provide detailed analysis and mapping of fuels, fire weather, historical fire occurrences, and ignition location and frequency. All of these inputs have been analyzed and modeled to develop fire hazard severity rankings for lands throughout California. Other models used in wildfire planning determine fire threat based on fuel type, calculate all the fire parameters to determine a rank to prioritize fuel reduction projects, and measure the fire protection agencies' level of successful fire suppression. The following summaries describe wildfire risk in the County based on various combinations of factors that determine risk, such as fire hazard severity zones, fire threat, fuel rank, weather, assets at risk, surface fuels, and level of service for fire protection.

### **Fire Hazard Severity Zones**

Wildfire hazards and severity zones are based on the anticipated behavior of future fires and used to predict the damage a fire is likely to cause. Determining wildfire hazards and severity zones in the County involves assessing the presence of fire prone vegetation, weather, topography, assets at risk, and the fire protection system's ability to deal with the occurrence of wildfire (i.e., level of service). The FRAP fire hazard model considers several parameters to

determine wildfire hazard severity zones, including: topography, such as steepness of slopes, since fires burn faster as they burn up slope; weather (e.g., temperature, humidity, and wind), which has a significant influence on fire behavior; and the surface vegetation fuel coverage, also known as wildland fuels. Each parameter helps determine where a fire is likely to start, and once ignited, the direction fire will spread, the intensity at which it can burn, and how efficiently fire protection services can respond.

California Public Resources Code Sections 4201 4204 and California Government Code Sections 51175 89 direct CAL FIRE to map areas of significant fire hazards based on fuels, terrain, weather, and other relevant factors. These zones, referred to as Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ), define the application of various mitigation strategies to reduce risk associated with wildland fires. CAL FIRE completed public hearings for the adoption of FHSZ for SRAs in 2007, and adopted FHSZ maps for SRAs in November 2007. In compliance with consultation requirements, CAL FIRE issued draft maps for Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Fuel Rank in Local Responsibility Areas, and transmitted them to local agencies for input.

High and very high FHSZs cover the County, as well as areas with moderate zones and non-wildland/non-urbanized and urban unzoned areas, as shown in [Figure 12-1](#). The unincorporated County lands within the Hollister and San Juan Bautista SOIs fall mostly within non wildland fuel zones and urbanized/developed areas outside hazard zones, with a portion of the western San Juan Bautista SOI falling within moderate and high zones and the eastern Hollister SOI abutting a moderate zone.. For example, the majority of lands to the north and east of Hollister fall within moderate fire hazard severity zones, while the areas to the north, west, and south of both cities fall within high fire hazard severity zones. Other communities such as Paicines and Panoche are within relatively moderate fire hazard severity zones, and Bitterwater and San Benito are within high fire hazard severity zones.

The community of Idria is surrounded by very high fire hazard severity zones. Large portions of the western portion of the County, including Pinnacles National Park, and the area directly north of the park, fall within very high fire hazard severity zones. The remaining portions of the eastern parts of the County are mainly within high fire hazard severity zones, with some scattered very high fire hazard zones covering various southwest parts of the County. There is only one designated “target priority area” within the County. This target priority area is located near the San Juan Canyon within Fremont Peak State Park. This area contains large ranches and some single-family and multi-family residential uses in remote areas.

### **Fire Threat**

Fire threat is a combination of two factors: fire frequency (fire rotation), which is the likelihood of a given area burning, and potential fire behavior (fuel rank). These two factors are combined to create four threat classes ranging from moderate to extreme. Fire threat can be used to estimate the potential for impacts on various assets susceptible to fire. Impacts are more likely to

occur or be more severe for the higher threat classes. Fire threat within the County is classified into five categories: 1) little/none, 2) moderate, 3) high, 4) very high, and 5) extreme.

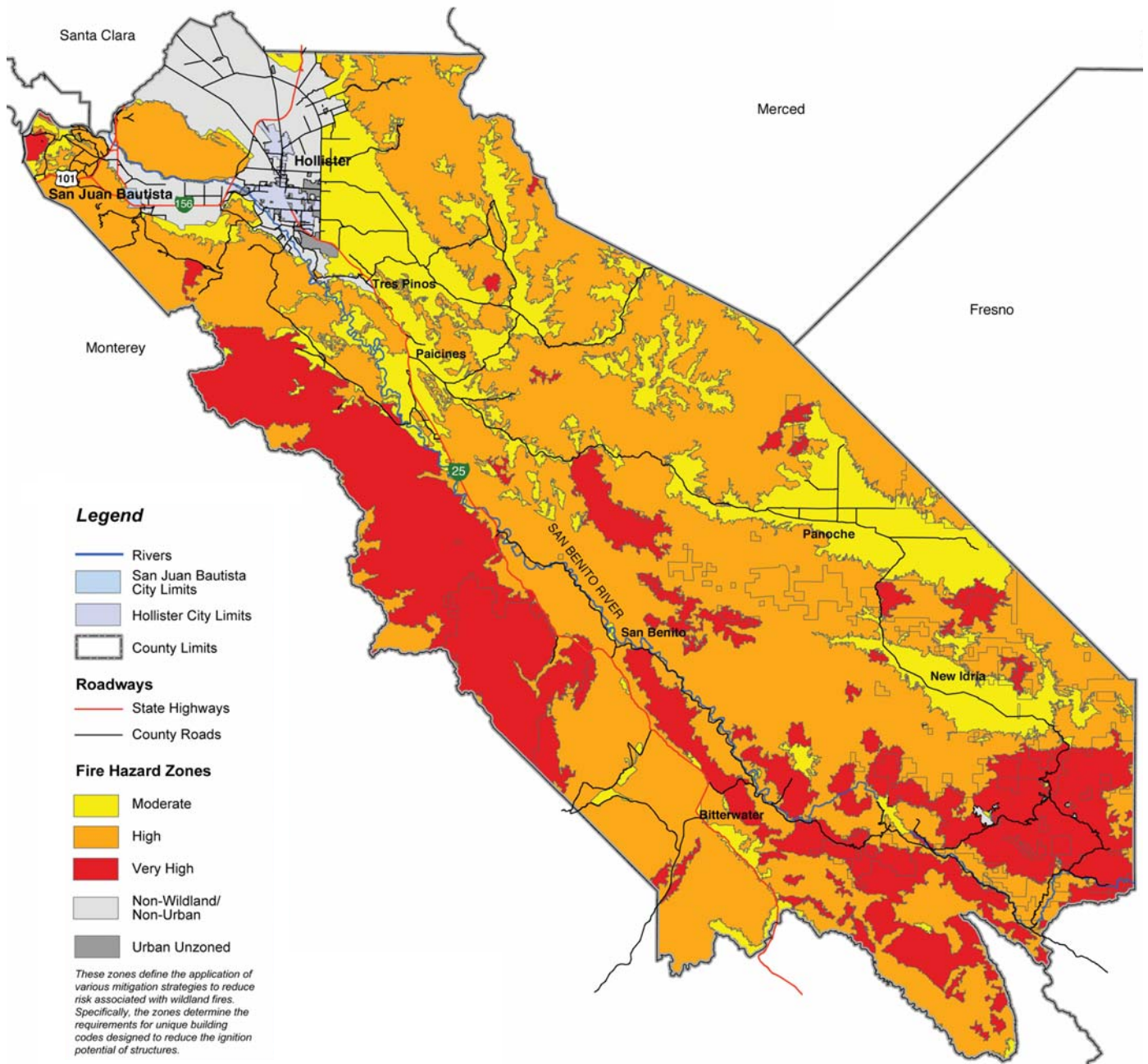
Approximately 38 percent (341,963 acres) of the County is within very high fire threat areas, 38 percent (336,897 acres) of the County is within high fire threat areas, and approximately 15 percent (130,696 acres) is within moderate fire threat areas. The majority of the areas within the County that have high to very high fire threat are in the central and southern portion of the County. The area north of Pinnacles National Park and the area along the County's western boundary, adjacent to Monterey County are within a very high fire threat area.

CAL FIRE has developed a Fuel Rank assessment methodology to identify and prioritize pre-fire projects designed to reduce the potential for large catastrophic fires. The fuel ranking methodology assigns ranks based on expected fire behavior for various combinations of topography and vegetative fuels under a given weather condition (wind speed, humidity, temperature, and fuel moistures). This analysis rates areas in the County using four categories: non-fuel, moderate, high, and very high. As a result of the modeling and consultation, in November 2008 CAL FIRE determined that approximately 65 percent of the County has a high fuel rank, 17 percent has moderate fuel rank, nine percent has very high fuel rank, and eight percent has a non-fuel rank. Most of the high fuel rank areas in the County occur along the Gabilan Range in the western portion of the County, with some high fuel rank areas scattered across the central and southern parts.

CAL FIRE also uses Fire Rotation class intervals, which are calculated based on 50 years of fire history on land areas grouped into "strata" based on fire environment conditions. These strata are defined by climate, vegetation, and land ownership. The Fire Rotation interval is the number of years it would take for past fires to burn an area equivalent to the area of a given stratum. Fire Rotation values are grouped into classes. In the fire threat analysis, more frequent fire is ranked higher to reflect a greater concern for non-fire tolerant assets such as housing. CAL FIRE then calculates a numerical index of fire threat based on the combination of fuel rank and fire rotation, which are grouped into four threat classes. For assessing threat of wildland fire to people, FRAP buffers this Fire Threat attribute depending on whether it is an urban area or an area of little or no threat. This reflects the greater resistance that urban areas and areas of little or no threat (such as agriculture lands) offer to the spread of wildland fire.

Wildland-urban interfaces (WUIs) may be susceptible to high fire risk and hazards because the environment surrounding the edge of the urban area containing assets is undeveloped forest. The WUI is a potential treatment zone where fuel reduction projects may be conducted to reduce wildland fire threats to communities at risk. The WUI areas within the County were defined based on fire threat data and the FRAP generated WUI boundaries for the County.





Not to scale

Source: San Benito County Planning and Building Department 2010, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFIRE) Fire and Resource Assessment Protection Program (FRAP) 2010

Figure 12-1

# Fire Hazard Severity Zones in San Benito County

2035 San Benito County General Plan Revised DEIR



*This side intentionally left blank.*

The result is a modified boundary used to evaluate fire threat and help the community prioritize fuel reduction projects. Based on the fire threat data described above and the location of the County's WUIs, the County CCWP identifies the communities at risk and each community's priority rating. Some designated at risk communities, such as Aromas and San Juan Bautista, are also designated as susceptible to wildfire damage by the California Fire Alliance. However, these communities do not represent the only areas at risk in the County. There are eight additional communities identified in the CWPP with priority ratings: Antelope Valley, Bitterwater, Cienega Canyon, Paicines, Panoche Valley, Ridgemark, San Juan Canyon, and Tres Pinos.

### **W.A.F.L. Score**

In order to target critical fire hazard areas and prioritize projects for ground fuel reduction, the fire plan assessment process uses a W.A.F.L. tool, which considers (W) weather, (A) assets at risk, (F) fuels, and (L) level of service, to provide an aggregate fire hazard score of high, medium, or low. The results are intended to assist fire planning efforts and focus funding on areas that have high values or high risk areas with severe fire weather and a demonstrated low LOS. The W.A.F.L. score is not currently available or complete for the County.

### **Accessibility**

While the northern portion of the County is crisscrossed with major traffic arteries that can provide quick response times to urban and wildland fires, the southern portion of the County is more remote and lacks such arteries. It is mainly accessed along State Route 25. The lack of major traffic arteries increases fire response times and more local roadways, including dirt roads, are required to access fire incidents. Wildfire protection is provided by the City of Hollister Fire Department and CAL Fire. Fire protection services for non-wildfires are discussed in Chapter 17, Public Facilities, of this RDEIR.

### **Water Supply and Availability**

Rural and outlying areas have insufficient on-site water supplies for delivery of adequate streams to control the spread of a fire. Water must be delivered to the scene of the emergency through the use of water tenders, one of which is owned by the County Fire Department. However, if a qualified full time firefighter/driver is not available for immediate dispatch, the delivery of water to the scene may be delayed.

## **Human Made Hazards**

### **Hazardous Wastes Tracking**

The San Benito County Code and State law require reporting of an unauthorized discharge of waste that may impact water quality. SBDEH has a comprehensive regulatory ordinance and inspection program to protect human health and the environment from hazardous wastes. The state (as delegated to the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)) acts as the local enforcement agency (LEA) for the County (Anyeneh 2014), and updates a comprehensive County database that is maintained in RWQCB Geotracker Program, and provides similar assistance to the California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) Envirostor and the CalRecycle SWIS databases. There are three closed landfill disposal sites within the County. There is one open site, the John Smith Landfill, and three open compost sites. Several inactive landfill sites have a regulatory status of open (indicating a cleanup action) and are listed on the RWQCB Geotracker Web Site. As reported on the RWQCB Geotracker website, there are five hazardous waste sites located in unincorporated County. The CalEPA/DTSC sites of interest (listed though Envirostor) include both active cleanup or land restriction status sites, the BLM's Vellecitos Oil Fields approximately 50 miles southeast of Hollister, the former Class I – Hazardous Waste Unit at the John Smith Landfill, and the Joe Asbestos Pit Union Carbide Mine at the southern County boundary.

Based on the Geotracker listed sites, there is one open cleanup program site located in unincorporated County, the Vellecitos Oil Fields and one land disposal site, the Futures Foundation Land Disposal Site in Paicines (SWRCB 2014). These sites are “open status” due to the stage of investigation or remediation. There are no open LUST cleanup sites in unincorporated County. Existing well field and underground oil and gas transmission lines are identified in Section 8.2, Mineral/Energy Resources, of this document. Hazards associated with potential leaks have been identified and are tracked by the California Energy Commission (CEC), SBDEH, and (Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)). The SBDEH and SBCWD use State and County directed programs to monitor the environmental and water system conditions in the County.

### **Hazardous Materials Response**

The San Benito County Environmental Health Department has developed a Hazardous Materials Response Area Plan. This Plan addresses emergency management of toxic substances, but is not specific to the medical management of toxic substance exposure. The EMS Hazardous Materials Medical Management Protocols identify the medical management of toxic substances. In addition, the County EMS Agency attends and works with the Coastal Region II Operational Area Disaster Medical Health Coordinators to promote collaborative disaster planning among the medical community at large, and integrates such planning with current County efforts. The

EMS Agency continuously works with the San Benito County Public Health Department and local fire agencies to develop a comprehensive medical component to the Hazardous Materials Response Area Plan. This medical component includes up to date Hazardous Materials Medical Management Protocols. In addition, the County Public Health Department has developed a Public Health Emergency Response Plan that outlines plans for responses to biological, chemical, and nuclear catastrophic disasters. While there are no hazardous materials response teams based in the County, teams often respond from neighboring counties when incidents occur.

### **Mercury in Mining Wastes**

Mercury and other heavy metals were used to extract gold from overburden sediments during the dredging process. Residual mercury has been found in fine grained materials within dredge tailings in mined areas in several areas of central and northern California primarily in placer deposits and alluvial sediments. The New Idria mercury mine located approximately 65 miles southeast of Hollister produced almost half of the mercury mined in North America up to 1972. The mine was sold to the Futures Foundation in 1991. Envirostor reports environmental impacts due to acid mine drainage, mercury, iron, nickel, and zinc contamination. The acid mine drainage has been reported to affect creeks in the vicinity of the mine that are part of the San Joaquin River Basin. In May 2003, the County Board of Supervisors sent a proposal to the Central Valley RWQCB requesting investigation, cleanup, and abatement of the pollutants discharged from New Idria. It does not have National Priorities List (NPL) status according to the EPA website, but it is a Superfund and CERCLA site. The closed mine was preliminarily assessed in 1996 and the last site assessment was conducted in 2003.

### **Residual Agricultural Chemicals**

As the County continues to support expansion and intensification of its agricultural economy, risks associated with agricultural chemical (pesticides and organic /inorganic fertilizers) product, residuals, and waste may increase. However, the increased use of natural organics supplements and best farming practices to control insects and fertilize rangeland may decrease the potential risk from increased pesticide use. Pesticide application permits are renewed on an annual basis by the County Agricultural Commissioner. Regulated commercial applications of pesticides are documented only on a monthly basis in an annual report submitted to the County.

### **Land Application of Biosolids**

Land application of biosolids, composed of treated municipal wastewater sludge, does not occur in the County.

### **Methamphetamine**

Based on conversations with County staff, over the past 20 years, less than ten clandestine methamphetamine drug labs have been investigated. This figure is low compared to other nearby counties. The last investigation took place in 2005. Manufacturing or “cooking” of meth generates several different hazardous wastes. Common liquid, solid, and gaseous products (e.g., Drano, fuels, ether, batteries, acids, etc.) are used to make meth, and most are considered hazardous to the environment. These items are often discarded or dumped in the yard, buried, burned, or dumped down a sink or floor drain into septic/sewer systems or natural drainage ways.

### **Airport Safety**

The County has two public airports, one private airport, three heliports, and several private landing strips. The majority of the larger and more frequently used airports are located in the northern portion of the County. However, the California Department of Forestry (CDF) operates one heliport at the Bear Valley Station, another heliport in Hollister, and a helitack station in Bitterwater, south of Pinnacles National Park. The Bear Valley Station and the helitack station in Bitterwater are both in the southern portion of the County.

### **Public-Use Airports**

There are two public use airports located in the County, the Hollister Municipal Airport and Frazier Lake Airpark, both located near Hollister.

#### *Hollister Municipal Airport*

The Hollister Municipal Airport is located in the north central part of the County near the northern edge of the city of Hollister, approximately 45 miles southeast of San Jose and 40 miles northeast of Monterey. It is located on approximately 343 acres at 233 feet above mean sea level. The airport is owned and operated by the City of Hollister, and is classified as a General Utility (GU) airport that accommodates all general aviation aircraft except certain business jets. General Aviation airports are often located in communities that do not receive scheduled commercial service, have adequate activity, and are at least 30 minutes from the nearest airport included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS).

The existing airfield consists of two intersecting runways, each equipped with medium intensity runway lights and runway end identification lights. The main entrance to the airport is on the east side, from San Felipe Road (State Route 156). There are approximately 100 aircraft tiedown spaces and approximately 50 T hangars in the area. Jet fuel is available 24 hours a day from an automated fueling system. Other services at the airport include aircraft maintenance, pilot

supplies, flight instruction, scenic rides, fabric repair, and turbine engine repair. Cropdusting activities serving the surrounding agricultural uses also operate from the airport.

Approximately 200 aircraft were stationed at the airport in 2010. Forecasts suggest that there may be as many as 265 aircraft, including single engine, multi-engine propeller, multi-engine jet, and helicopters based at the airport in 2020. Total operations are also expected to increase from 53,000 operations per year in 1997 to 136,200 by 2020. General operations are forecast to continue to account for the largest share of total operations at the airport through 2020. The airport property is within the Hollister city limits, and areas to the southwest, southeast, and south of the airport are primarily within the city limits or the city's sphere of influence. Most of the surrounding land uses to the southwest and southeast are reserved for light industrial uses, and the area to the southwest of the airport includes an airport overlay zoning district. The majority of the land to the northwest, north, and northeast of the airport is agricultural rangeland, and the areas directly to the west are zoned for light industrial uses.

#### *Frazier Lake Airpark*

The Frazier Lake Airpark is located in the northwest area of the County, approximately eight miles northwest of Hollister, 40 miles southeast of San Jose, and 40 miles northeast of Monterey. The airport is located on 156 acres of land and at an elevation of 153 feet above mean sea level. It is owned and operated by the Frazier Lake Airpark Corporation.

Frazier Lake Airpark is classified as a General Aviation Airport that does not support regularly scheduled commercial air carrier service. Hollister Municipal Airport, which is located approximately six miles to the southeast, is the nearest NPIAS airport to Frazier Lake Airpark. Other general aviation airports in the region include South County Airport, located 10 miles to the northwest, Watsonville Municipal Airport, located 16 miles to the west, and Salinas Municipal Airport, located 19 miles to the south. The existing Frazier Lake Airpark consists of two parallel runways. It is unique in that one of the runways contains irrigated turf and the other runway surface consists of water, which often attracts pilots from other airports due to the experience of landing on a grass or a water surface. The grass runway is approximately 2,500 feet long by 100 feet wide, and equipped with low intensity runway lights. The other runway is the waterway (or seaplane lane) that runs approximately 3,000 feet long by 60 feet wide by 24 inches deep. This runway does not have lights, and is intended for daytime use only. The main entrance to the airpark is on the west side of the airport and the aircraft basing areas are located on the northwest side of the airport. There are 20 aircraft tiedown spaces and hangar space for 89 aircraft.

The number of based aircraft at the airpark is forecast to increase from 100 in 2010 to 123 by 2020. The number of aircraft operations per year was 15,900 in 2010, and annual operations are

expected to increase to 23,900 by 2020. The growth in the forecast is due in part to the forecast population increases.

Federal, State, and local laws and regulations and guidance addressing safety compatibility concerns are provided for public use airports as well as military facilities. Although the San Benito County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) provides recommended safety compatibility criteria and maps both public airports in their respective compatibility plans, implementation of these compatibility measures is the responsibility of the County.

### **Private-Use Airports**

#### *Christensen Ranch Airport*

There is only one known private airport in unincorporated County, the Christensen Ranch Airport, located approximately three miles northeast of Hollister. This private airport contains one 3,000 foot long and 50 foot wide oil treated runway and two based aircraft. Unlike public use airports, certain types of private use facilities (e.g., agricultural and personal use airports in unincorporated areas) do not need operating permits from the California Department of Transportation. Few safety compatibility guidelines and standards exist for these types of facilities, and safety compatibility concerns are addressed primarily through the County's permit process.

### **Heliports**

The heliports and helitack in the County are primarily used for emergency services. One heliport is located near Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital in Hollister. This heliport contains a helipad that is used to provide lifesaving flight air travel to larger hospitals in the area. There is also a heliport owned and managed by the California Department of Forestry (CDF) at the Hollister Air Attack Base and another at the Bear Valley Helitack in Paicines.

### **Other Nearby Airports**

#### *South County Airport*

South County Airport is located in the southeast area of Santa Clara County along US 101, between the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy. It is located on 129 acres of land, and sits at an elevation of 281 feet above mean sea level. The airport is owned by Santa Clara County and it is surrounded by the community of San Martin. It is one of the smallest and least active General Aviation airports in the Santa Clara County. It had approximately 80 based aircraft in 2001, with 240 anticipated by 2012. A maximum of 300 aircraft are expected by 2022. Operations are expected to reach 155,280 by 2017 and 175,560 by 2022 (Santa Clara County ALUC 2008). Because the airport has a full range of aircraft parking, storage facilities, fueling facilities, and



support operations, and is currently developing a new master plan involving a significant expansion, it is expected to experience an increase in flight activity.

### *Watsonville Municipal Airport*

The Watsonville Municipal Airport is located on the northwest boundary of the city of Watsonville in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County. It covers approximately 344 acres, including 53 acres of non-contiguous land. The airport is accessible from U.S. Highway 1, and via Airport Boulevard. Residential uses occur to the north and east of the airport, light industrial uses and the Watsonville Community Hospital are located in the southeast, and much of the land uses along the runway approaches to the north, west, and south consist of agricultural uses. Watsonville Municipal Airport is the only public, general aviation airport in Santa Cruz County. It is owned by the City of Watsonville. It currently has two paved runways serving single and twin engine aircraft and helicopters. In 2002 the airport began working on a master plan to lengthen and improve its runways, install new precision instrument landing systems, expand its terminal and hangar facilities, and provide new access to the site.

## **12.1.2 Regulatory Setting**

### **Federal**

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).** The USEPA is primarily responsible for the enforcement and implementation of federal laws and regulations pertaining to hazardous materials. The County is within USEPA Region 9 (Pacific Southwest), which includes Arizona, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico. Management of hazardous materials is governed by the following laws and agencies: the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986; the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act; the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration; and the Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).** FEMA oversees floodplain safety, manages the national flood insurance program, and prepares Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for communities participating in the federal flood insurance program.
- **Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.** The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires a state mitigation plan as a condition of disaster assistance. There are two different levels of state disaster plans: “Standard” and “Enhanced.” States that develop an approved enhanced state plan can increase the amount of funding available through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The Act has also established new requirements for local mitigation plans.

- **Healthy Forests Restoration Act.** This legislation passed in 2003 gives incentives for communities to engage in comprehensive forest planning. The Act emphasizes the need for federal agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects, and includes statutory incentives for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the BLM to give consideration to the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- **National Fire Plan.** The *National Fire Plan* was developed under Executive Order 11246 in August 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season. Its intent is to actively respond to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future. The Plan addresses firefighting, rehabilitation, hazardous fuels reduction, community assistance, and accountability.
- **BLM-Hollister Field Office 2008 Fire Management Plan.** The BLM *Hollister Fire Management Plan* (FMP) is a fire management plan for all BLM land within the County. The plan identifies conditions related to fire management, and provides recommendations for wildland fire suppression, prescribed fire and non-fire fuel treatment projects, and community involvement. The guidelines in the FMP prioritize public and firefighter safety, hazardous fuel reduction, and wildlife risk reduction through prevention, mitigation, and education. The FMP also identifies four specific fire management units and associated fire fuel treatment objectives: the Panoche Wilderness Study Area, the San Benito Natural Area, the Clear Creek Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern, and the San Joaquin Valley South Special Management Area. There is also an Interim Management Plan for the San Benito Mountain Research Area.
- **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).** The DOT is responsible for overseeing a national program to minimize the risks related to commercial transportation of hazardous materials.

## State

- **California Fire Plan.** The *2010 Strategic Fire Plan for California* is the state's road map for reducing the risk of wildfire. The plan was finalized in June 2010, and directs each CAL FIRE unit to prepare a locally specific fire management plan. In compliance with the California Fire Plan, individual CAL FIRE units are required to develop fire management plans for their areas of responsibility. These documents assess the fire situation within each of CAL FIRE's 21 units and six contract counties. The plans include stakeholder contributions and priorities, and identify strategic areas for pre-fire planning and fuel treatment as defined by the people who live and work with the local fire problem. The plans are required to be updated annually.

- **Wildland Urban Interface Building Standards.** In September 2005 emergency regulations amending the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24, Part 2, known as the 2007 California Building Code (CBC), were adopted to increase protection of buildings located in WUI areas and reinforce implementation of Public Resource Code Section 4291. On September 20, 2007 the Building Standards Commission approved these emergency regulations. These codes include provisions for ignition-resistant construction standards in the wildland urban interface. These regulations were subsequently updated in 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2013. The broad objective of the WUI Fire Area Building Standards is to establish minimum standards for materials and material assemblies and provide a reasonable level of exterior wildfire exposure protection for buildings in WUI Fire Areas. Protecting a building from wildfire takes a two pronged approach: removing flammable materials from around the building, and constructing the building of fire resistant material.
- **Fire Prevention and Suppression.** In recognition of the severity of wildland fire hazards in certain areas of California, the State enacted legislation (California Public Resources Code Section 4291) requiring local jurisdictions to adopt minimum recommended standards pertaining to road standards for fire equipment access, standards for identifying streets, roads, and buildings, minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use, and fuel breaks and greenbelts to achieve fuel reductions. With certain exceptions, all new development and construction in State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) after July 1, 1991, must meet the new standards. The State requirements would not supersede more stringent local regulations should they be developed. As such, the County includes many of these standards in its subdivision ordinance (Appendix B of the ordinance). Changes in 2005 to Public Resources Code Section 4291 expand the defensible space clearance requirement maintained around buildings and structures from 30 feet to a distance of 100 feet. These guidelines are intended to provide property owners with examples of fuel modification measures that can be used to create an area around buildings or structures to create defensible space.

A defensible space perimeter around buildings and structures provide firefighters a working environment that allows them to protect buildings and structures from encroaching wildfires, and minimize the chance that a structure fire will escape to the surrounding wildland. These guidelines apply to any person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure in, upon, or adjoining any mountainous area, forest covered lands, brush covered lands, grass covered lands, or any land that is covered with flammable material, and located within a SRA.

- **San Benito-Monterey Fire Unit Fire Management Plan.** The *San Benito-Monterey Unit 2009 Fire Plan* is to prevent the ignition and spread of unwanted, human-caused fires, with an emphasis on reducing losses as a result of large, damaging fires. The plan identifies the

process that the San Benito-Monterey CAL FIRE Unit will take to achieve this goal. The plan utilizes fire history, fuels data, weather data, and assets at risk to identify and prioritize target areas that will receive the majority of pre-fire management activities. The plan also includes proactive pre-fire suppression activities, and public information and education programs. The Unit encompasses over three million acres, which includes over two million acres within the SRA, representing one of the largest state responsibility jurisdictions in the state.

- **State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).** The SWRCB has primary responsibility to protect water quality and supply. The RWQCB is authorized by the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1969 to protect the waters of the state. The RWQCB provides oversight for sites where the quality of groundwater or surface waters is threatened.
- **California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)/Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC).** The DTSC, a division of CalEPA, has primary regulatory responsibility over hazardous materials in California, working in conjunction with the USEPA to enforce hazardous materials laws and regulations.
- **California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Health Administration (CalOSHA).** CalOSHA assumes primary responsibility for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations within the state.
- **California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).** Caltrans regulates the transportation of hazardous materials on state highways. Both Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) use a system of placards, labels, and shipping papers required to identify the hazards of shipping each class of hazardous materials. Caltrans is required to implement regulations established by the DOT through the CHP.
- **California Office of Emergency Services (OES).** OES prepares the *California Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan* (SHMP). The SHMP identifies hazard risks, and includes a vulnerability analysis and a hazard mitigation strategy. The SHMP is federally required under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 in order for the state to receive federal funding. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires a state mitigation plan as a condition of disaster assistance.

## County

- **1992 General Plan.** Areas susceptible to fire hazards were identified in the *1994 Environmental Resources and Constraints Inventory* of the *1995 San Benito County General Plan*. Most of these hazard areas were located in the northern portion of the County. The

County also has prepared fire hazard maps available for public review at the County Planning Department. Most policies related to hazards and hazardous materials are found in the 1995 General Plan's Open Space and Conservation Element and its Safety Element.

- **Hollister Municipal Airport Comprehensive Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (2012) and the Frazier Lake Airpark Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2001).** Both plans establish land use compatibility guidelines, noise restriction areas, height restriction areas, safety restriction areas, and overflight restriction areas. The plans are intended to safeguard the safety of the residents and businesses around the airports, and to ensure that future development and land uses do not negatively impact the continued operations of the airports.
- **Health and Human Services Agency (H&HSA).** The Public Health Services Department was combined with Social Services in 1992 to become the County's H&HSA. It implements local, state, and federal goals and mandates for health improvements. It also provides services and enforces regulations set forth in the California Health and Safety Code.
- **Subdivision Ordinance, Fire Design Standards.** Chapter 23.27, *Fire Design Standards*, of Title 23, *Subdivisions*, of the San Benito County Code provides standards for roadway widths, turn-arounds, defensible space measures such as setbacks, the height of street signs and addresses, and general water standards for fire hydrants to ensure adequate fire protection water delivery systems are available.

## 12.3 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The analysis evaluates whether implementation of the proposed urban and other development that would occur under the 2035 General Plan program could result in significant adverse hazards and public safety effects.

### 12.3.1 Significance Criteria

As set forth in Appendix G to the State CEQA Guidelines, Section VIII, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, the following criteria have been established to quantify the level of significance of an adverse effect being evaluated pursuant to CEQA. The numeration of each criterion below corresponds to the questions in the checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (e.g., VIII.a, VIII.b). Implementation of the 2035 General Plan would result in significant hazards or a hazardous materials impact if it would:

- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. (VIII.a)
- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. (VIII.b)
- Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. (VIII.c)
- Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. (VIII.d)
- For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. (VIII.e)
- For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. (VIII.f)
- Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. (VIII.g)
- Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands. (VIII.h)

### **12.3.2 Analysis Methodology**

The hazard and public safety evaluation includes a review of natural and man-made hazards in the County potentially affected by the implementation of the 2035 General Plan, and the projected urban and other development envisioned under the Plan. The assessment consists of a qualitative review of the existing conditions in the unincorporated portion of the County, and determines whether or not the 2035 General Plan goals and policies would contain adequate measures and provisions to address potential impacts associated with hazards and public safety and to otherwise compare the project's impacts against the applicable thresholds to determine the level of significance.

As discussed in Section 4.5.7, Potential Growth Scenarios, the EIR analysis considers two possible growth scenarios: Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. For this programmatic level of analysis, there will be no difference in the impacts that would result from the two growth scenarios

because the County would apply the 2035 General Plan policies, including additional policies from mitigation measures contained in the certified EIR, addressing potential hazard and public safety impacts equally in approving development, regardless of location. Given the site-specific nature of the impacts at issue, it is anticipated that additional project-level review of hazard and public safety impacts would be required for particular development proposals under the 2035 General Plan that may be considered in the future.

### 12.3.3 Environmental Impacts

The following discussion examines the potential impacts of the proposed project based on the impact threshold criteria described above. Table 12-1 summarizes 2035 General Plan policies that would mitigate environmental impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials, including an explanation of how the policy would avoid or reduce impacts.

**Table 12-1 2035 General Plan Goals and Policies that Mitigate Hazards and Hazardous Materials Impacts**

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<b>Health and Safety Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal HS-1: Emergency Preparedness</b> To maintain the necessary level of fire, EMS, law enforcement, and disaster preparedness for the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of people living, working, and residing in San Benito County.</p>	Limits impacts related to hazardous materials and safety impacts to County residents and visitors by ensuring the necessary level of disaster preparedness is maintained for the protection of the County’s public health.	1,5,6
<p><b>Policy HS-1.4: Maintain State of Readiness</b> The County shall maintain local law enforcement, fire, and health services in a state of readiness to insure adequate protection during a disaster for the citizens of San Benito County.</p>	Reduces impacts related to the use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste by ensuring that the County law, fire, and health services are in a state of readiness to ensure adequate protection is provided for the citizens of San Benito County, reducing overall impacts related to emergency response to the extent feasible.	1,5

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Policy HS-1.5: Mutual Assistance Programs</b></p> <p>The County shall continue its mutual assistance programs and work closely with the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, as well as State and Federal authorities, in assuring emergency preparedness and response in the event of a major disaster.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts related to hazardous material incidents and emergency response and evacuation plans by continuing to support mutual assistance programs with the two incorporated cities in the County to assure emergency preparedness and response programs are in place in the event of a major disaster.</p>	1,5
<p><b>Policy HS-1.6: Emergency Preparedness Exercises</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate with local and regional jurisdictions to conduct emergency and disaster preparedness exercises to test operational and emergency plans.</p>	<p>Requires the County to coordinate with local and regional jurisdictions to conduct emergency and disaster preparedness exercises to reduce public safety and environmental effects in the event of a hazardous waste release or spill and to test operational and emergency plans, at the same time identifying and minimizing potential impacts to the execution of such emergency plans.</p>	1,5
<p><b>Policy HS-1.7: Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan</b></p> <p>The County shall develop, maintain, and implement a Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan to address disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, dam or levee failure, hazardous material spills, epidemics, fires, extreme weather, major transportation accidents, and terrorism.</p>	<p>The preparation, implementation, and maintenance of a Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan would ensure that hazardous waste spills or releases due to the improper use, transport, storage, or disposal of such materials is minimized during major disasters by planning mitigation programs and plans in the event that such disasters or accidents occur and would address disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, dam failure, levee failure, and other events, ensuring that when such disasters occur, the County is prepared.</p>	1,5



Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<p><b>Policy HS-1.8: Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Plan</b></p> <p>The County shall collaborate with the Bay Area Urban Security Initiative (UASI) on a regional catastrophic preparedness plan as part of the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program, which was created by Congress to develop all-hazard regional catastrophic event plans and preparedness for UASI urban areas and participating governments.</p>	<p>Helps ensure the County is prepared in the event that a regional catastrophe occurs through collaborating with the UASI, ensuring that County efforts are similar to those in the larger region, and would facilitate incorporation of new techniques and measures to safely and efficiently execute emergency response and evacuation plans. .</p>	<p>1,5</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-1.9: Emergency Operations Center</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to maintain the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as the single point for centralized management and coordination of emergency response and recovery operations during a disaster or emergency.</p>	<p>Ensures one central EOC is maintained to promote efficient and coordinated emergency response efforts in the event of an emergency, reducing impacts on the implementation of an emergency or evacuation plan; also reducing impacts related to the routine use, transport, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.</p>	<p>1,5</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-1.10: Location of Critical Facilities</b></p> <p>The County shall not approve critical and emergency facilities (e.g., hospitals, health care facilities, emergency shelters, Sheriff substations, fire stations) and their access routes in hazardous areas unless it is unavoidable or designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes or eliminates potential impacts.</p>	<p>Avoids siting critical and emergency facilities in hazardous areas to the extent feasible, thereby ensuring that adequate emergency response services are provided in the event of an accidental hazardous spill or release and minimizing the likelihood an emergency response or evacuation plan would be physically impaired by not approving emergency facilities in hazardous areas.</p>	<p>1,5</p>

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<p><b>Policy HS-1.11: Road Capacity</b></p> <p>The County shall require roads to be of adequate capacity for use in times of emergency.</p>	<p>Ensures that adequate capacity is provided on all County roads in the event of a hazardous material spill, release, or disaster. Reduces the likelihood an emergency response or evacuation plan would be physically impaired by requiring roads to provide adequate capacity for use in times of an emergency.</p>	1,5
<p><b>Policy HS-1.12: Disaster Volunteer Program</b></p> <p>The County shall continue the Volunteers for Disaster Response program for medical and non-medical professionals to help deliver volunteer resources during a public health disaster.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials by supporting the Volunteers for Disaster Response program where medical and non-medical professionals are available to help deliver vital resources in the event of a public health disaster.</p>	1,5
<p><b>Policy HS-1.13: Education Programs</b></p> <p>The County shall sponsor and support educational programs regarding emergency response, disaster preparedness protocols and procedures, and disaster risk reduction.</p>	<p>Supports educational programs regarding emergency response and disaster preparedness to ensure that hazards are minimized and controlled in the event of a hazardous material spill or release. Minimizes impacts that may impair the implementation of an emergency response and evacuation plan by sponsoring and supporting educational programs designed to improve emergency response protocols and procedures.</p>	1,5
<p><b>Policy HS-1.14: Development Restrictions in High Risk Areas</b></p> <p>The County shall discourage development in areas that may be more severely impacted by climate change, including areas at high risk of wildfire or flooding, unless proper design mitigation is included in the project.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts related to wildfire hazards that could be increased due to climate change effects by prohibiting development in areas that may be more severely impacted by climate change, including areas at high risk of wildfire.</p>	6

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Goal HS-4: Fire Hazards</b> To minimize the risk of wildland and urban fire hazards.</p>	<p>Reduces the safety impacts to County residents by minimizing the overall risk of wildland and urban fire hazards.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-4.1: Community Wildfire Protection Plan</b> The County shall maintain and implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan as a mechanism for community input and identification of areas presenting high fire hazard risk.</p>	<p>Minimizes fire hazards by implementing the CWPP to facilitate community input and identification of areas presenting high fire hazard risk.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-4.2: Fire Protection Water Standard</b> The County shall develop, maintain, and implement appropriate fire protection water standard to be applied to all urban and rural development.</p>	<p>Reduces risk of fire hazards by maintaining an appropriate fire protection water standard for all urban and rural development.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-4.3: Improve Water Systems</b> The County shall coordinate with water purveyors to improve water systems in areas where substandard water supplies and/or flow currently exist.</p>	<p>Minimizes fire risks related to the loss of property by coordinating with water purveyors in the area to improve water systems where substandard water supplies or flow pressure exist.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-4.4: Development in Fire Hazard Zones</b> The County shall require development in high-fire-hazard areas to be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes the risk from fire hazards and meets all applicable State and County fire standards.</p>	<p>Minimizes fire risks related to the loss of property, specifically residences, by requiring development in high fire-hazard areas to be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes the risk from fire hazards, and meets all applicable state and County fire standards.</p>	<p>6</p>

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Policy HS-4.5: Fire-Resistant Vegetation</b></p> <p>The County shall require development in high-fire-hazard areas to have fire-resistant vegetation, cleared fire breaks separating communities or clusters of structures from native vegetation, or a long-term comprehensive vegetation and fuel management program consistent with State codes 4290 and 4291 for wildland fire interface and vegetation management.</p>	<p>Avoids wildland fire hazards by requiring residences in high fire hazard areas to use only fire-resistant vegetation and to clear areas as defensible space, consistent with state code requirements for the wildland fire interface.</p>	6
<p><b>Policy HS-4.6: Clear Zones</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage clear zones and weed abatement around new and existing residential structures in high-fire-hazard areas and assist property owners in identifying how clear zones should be maintained.</p>	<p>Reduces wildland fire hazards by promoting the installation of defensible space zones, or “clear zones,” around residential structures in high to extreme fire hazard severity zones.</p>	6
<p><b>Policy HS-4.7: Range Improvement and Vegetation Management Programs</b></p> <p>The County shall actively support and cooperate with the California Department of Forestry's Range Improvement and Vegetation Management Programs with particular emphasis on their impact on water quality and production, resource management, range management, wildlife habitat management, fire defense improvements, and public safety where determined to be appropriate by the County.</p>	<p>Reduces wildland fire hazards by coordinating and supporting the California Department of Forestry's Range Improvement and Vegetation Program that emphasizes resource management, range management, wildlife habitat management, fire defense improvements, and public safety.</p>	6
<p><b>Goal HS-5: Air Quality</b></p> <p>To improve local and regional air quality to protect residents from the adverse effects of poor air quality.</p>	<p>Protects County residents from poor air quality and minimizes impacts related to hazardous material accidents by ensuring that hazardous air toxics are minimized.</p>	1,2,3

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<p><b>Policy HS-5.2: Sensitive Land Use Locations</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure adequate distances between sensitive land uses and facilities or operations that may produce toxic or hazardous air pollutants or substantial odors.</p>	<p>Limits development of new sensitive land uses near hazardous waste sites, or new sensitive uses near existing hazardous waste sites, and reduces impacts related to the transport and usage of hazardous materials, and the likelihood that a hazardous waste accident would impact nearby sensitive land uses by ensuring adequate distances are maintained between such uses and facilities that produce toxic or hazardous air pollutants.</p>	<p>1,3</p>
<p><b>Goal HS-6: Hazardous Materials and Waste</b></p> <p>To safeguard and protect the health and safety of people, the environment, and personal property from the potential dangers associated with a hazardous materials release.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts related to hazardous materials by safeguarding the health and safety of the people, environment, and personal property in the County from the dangers of hazardous materials.</p>	<p>1,3</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-6.1: Hazardous Materials Storage and Disposal</b></p> <p>The County shall require proper storage and disposal of hazardous materials to prevent leakage, potential explosions, fires, or the escape of harmful gases, and to prevent individually innocuous materials from combining to form hazardous substances, especially at the time of disposal.</p>	<p>Ensures that all hazardous materials used, stored, transported, and disposed of in the County comply with local, state, and federal safety standards.</p>	<p>1,3</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-6.2: Hazardous Waste Management Plan</b></p> <p>The County shall maintain and implement the Hazardous Waste Management Plan.</p>	<p>Keeps the County's Hazardous Waste Management Plan up-to-date, thereby ensuring regulations and procedures are updated and properly enforced.</p>	<p>1</p>

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Policy HS-6.3: Consistency with Hazardous Waste Management Plan</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure that all applicable land use decisions concerning zoning, subdivision, conditional use permits or variances granted for the operation or expansion of an off-site hazardous waste facility are consistent with the County Hazardous Waste Management Plan before approving a development application.</p>	<p>Ensures proper hazardous waste permits are in place at waste facilities reducing the potential for impacts related to the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy HS-6.4: Hazardous Materials Incident Response Area Plan</b></p> <p>The County shall maintain and implement when necessary the Hazardous Materials Incident Response Area Plan.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts related to the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials by implementing a Hazardous Materials Incident Response Area Plan to ensure procedures are in place in the event of a hazardous spill or event.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy HS-6.5: Transportation Routes</b></p> <p>The County shall restrict transport of hazardous materials within San Benito County to designated routes.</p>	<p>Enables the County to support applicable safety procedures on a local level for the transport of hazardous materials on County roadways.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy HS-6.6: Household Hazardous Waste Program</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to sponsor household hazardous waste collection days to help residents lawfully dispose of household hazardous waste that is not accepted by the landfill.</p>	<p>Helps to reduce impacts related to the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials by providing a method for residents to dispose of hazardous substances.</p>	1

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<p><b>Policy HS-6.7: Small Business Hazardous Waste Program</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to work with small businesses that generate, store, or accumulate hazardous waste to help them comply with regulations for the proper treatment, storage, and disposal of these wastes.</p>	<p>Helps to reduce impacts related to the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials by encouraging the County to work with small businesses that generate and store hazardous substances.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-6.8: Information on Hazardous Waste Management</b></p> <p>The County shall provide the public, industry, agriculture, and local government with the available information needed to enable them to take rational and cost effective actions to minimize, recycle, treat, dispose of or otherwise manage hazardous wastes within the County.</p>	<p>Helps to reduce impacts related to the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials by providing the public and other businesses with industrial or agricultural operations to have the appropriate information to take cost-effective actions to minimize hazards in the County, and to properly manage hazardous waste. Ensures that County residents know how to properly handle hazardous wastes, minimizing improper use and disposal of such substances.</p>	<p>1,3</p>
<p><b>Goal HS-7: Airport Hazards</b></p> <p>To promote the safe operation of public and private airports and protect the safety of County residents.</p>	<p>Requires consistency with each airports' CLUP/CLUCP to ensure the safety of airport operation and compatibility of the lands near the airports.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><b>Policy HS-7.1: Land Use Compatibility</b></p> <p>The County shall prohibit land uses within unincorporated areas that interfere with the safe operation of aircraft or that would be exposed to hazards from the operation of aircraft.</p>	<p>Minimizes land use compatibility issues by requiring new development to be consistent with all applicable safety policies and land use compatibility guidelines contained in the CLUP/CLUCP for each public use airport in the County.</p>	<p>4</p>

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Policy HS-7.2: Coordination with ALUC</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate with the ALUC on land use planning around airports and submit development proposals for land within the airport area of influence for review by the ALUC for consistency with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts related to airport safety hazards by ensuring the County coordinates with the ALUC on land use planning around airports, and submits development proposals for land within the airport influence area to the ALUC for consistency with each public airport's CLUP/CLUCP.</p>	4
<p><b>Policy HS-7.3: Compliance with FAA Regulations</b></p> <p>The County shall require development within the airport approach and departure zones to be in compliance with Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Administration Regulations (FAA regulations that address objects affecting navigable airspace).</p>	<p>Reduces airport safety hazards by requiring development within each public airport approach and departure zones to be in compliance with Part 77 of the Federal Administration Regulations.</p>	4
<p><b>Policy HS-7.4: Locations for New Air Strips</b></p> <p>The County shall require sites for proposed air strips to be outside of air traffic control zones and a safe distance from existing airports (generally three miles), and to be a reasonable distance from residential areas and compatible with the surrounding uses.</p>	<p>Requires sites for proposed air strips to be outside air traffic control zones and a reasonable distance from residential areas, and to be compatible with surrounding land uses, thereby minimizing airport safety hazards.</p>	4
<p><b>Policy HS-7.5: Transmission Tower and Lines</b></p> <p>The County shall review all proposed radio, television, power, or related transmission towers and lines for appropriate location and possible air travel conflicts during the discretionary application process.</p>	<p>Limits conflicts to air travel by requiring the County to review all proposed radio, television, power, and related transmission lines/towers for appropriate locations.</p>	4



Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<b>Land Use Element</b>		
<p><b>Policy LU-1.9: Airport Land Use Coordination and Consistency</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate planning and zoning with the San Benito County Airport Land Use Commission and ensure that all land uses and regulations within the Hollister and Frazier Airports areas of influence are consistent with the adopted San Benito County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans.</p>	<p>Minimizes hazard impacts related to airport safety by ensuring that the County coordinates with the San Benito County ALUC in order that all land uses and regulations within the Hollister and Frazier Airports influence areas are consistent with the two public airport’s adopted Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><b>Goal LU-6: Employment and Industrial Development</b></p> <p>To promote the development of new industrial and employment uses in the unincorporated parts of the County that are compatible with surrounding land uses and meet the present and future needs of County residents.</p>	<p>Ensures new industrial and employment uses in the County are compatible with the surrounding land uses, minimizing the likelihood of impacts related to hazardous spills or releases and the routine storage, use, and transport of hazardous materials.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy LU-6.5: New Industrial Heavy Areas</b></p> <p>The County shall require a general plan amendment for the establishment of new heavy industrial uses, not located within Industrial Heavy (IH) designated lands. Applicable CEQA environmental review shall be required for consideration of any such general plan amendment to minimize near- and long-term effects on the environment. In some limited situations, the County may allow new small-scale isolated industrial operations or quarries as overlay zoning in other land use designations, if not located within Industrial Heavy (IH)</p>	<p>Reduces land use inconsistencies between industrial operations and sensitive uses by requiring such uses be analyzed for consideration in a General Plan amendment to minimize near- and long-term effects on the environment.</p>	<p>1</p>

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
designated lands, at the discretion of the Planning Director. New or expanded heavy industrial uses on Industrial Heavy (IH) designated lands shall require a use permit and applicable CEQA environmental review.		
<b>Circulation Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal C-1: Roadways</b></p> <p>To provide an adequate road system that is safe, efficient, reliable, and within the County's ability to finance and maintain.</p>	Reduces impacts to emergency response services by providing a safe, efficient, and reliable roadway system in the County.	5
<p><b>Policy C-1.5: Mitigating Transportation Impacts</b></p> <p>The County shall assess fees on all new development to ensure new development pays its fair share of the costs for new and expanded transportation facilities.</p>	Minimizes impacts to emergency response and evacuation plans by requiring new development to finance and construct all off-site circulation improvements necessary to mitigate a project's transportation impacts.	5
<p><b>C-1.7: Policy Consistency with City Standards</b></p> <p>The County shall require the street network for development proposals within or near the Sphere of-Influence of the cities of Hollister or San Juan Bautista to be built to applicable city standards and to be consistent with the city General Plan and development policy.</p>	Reduces impacts to emergency response and evacuation plans by requiring the street network for development proposals within or near the sphere of influence of the cities of Hollister or San Juan Bautista to be built to applicable city standards.	5
<p><b>Policy C-1.10: Street Network Plans</b></p> <p>The County shall require project applicants to prepare a street network plan for any subdivision proposal located near existing, approved, or proposed development (County or city). The plan shall illustrate how adjoining properties will inter-connect over the long-term and how the plan will improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. The plan shall include an interim access plan and a</p>	Requires project applicants to prepare a street network plan for any subdivision proposal located near existing, approved, or proposed development. This will allow for the proper integration of new developments into the circulation system, which will in turn provide for continued adequate emergency access, response, and evacuation.	5

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
long-term plan that consolidates vehicular access onto arterials/collectors (via street network design, or some other method).		
<p><b>Policy C-1.12: Level of Service (LOS) Standard</b></p> <p>The County shall endeavor to maintain a General Plan target goal of LOS D at all locations. If a transportation facility is already operating at an LOS D or E, the existing LOS should be maintained. Exceptions should be considered where achievement of these levels of service would cause unacceptable impacts to other modes of transportation, the environment, or private property.</p>	The maintenance of LOS D on all County roadways, to the extent feasible, would help ensure that roadways do not become so congested that emergency response vehicles are prevented from easily and quickly traveling to and from incidents.	5
<p><b>Policy C-1.13: Upgrade Private Roads</b></p> <p>The County shall require existing private roads to be upgraded to County standards as a condition of approval for any project that will be served by such roads.</p>	Lessens impacts related to the implementation of an emergency response plan by requiring existing private roads to be upgraded to County standards as a condition of approval for any project that will be served by such roads.	5
<p><b>Goal C-6: Air Transportation</b></p> <p>To promote the safe and efficient use of aviation facilities.</p>	Reduces impacts to airport safety hazards by promoting the safe and efficient use of aviation facilities.	4
<p><b>Policy C-6.1: Private Airstrip Control</b></p> <p>The County shall control the location, development, and use of private airstrips and agricultural landing fields.</p>	Minimizes impacts related to airport safety by controlling the location, development, and use of private airstrips and agricultural landing fields.	4
<p><b>Policy C-6.3: Planes at Private Air Strips</b></p> <p>The County shall limit the airplanes at any private air strip, except the Frazier Lake Airpark, to those of the air strip owners.</p>	Limits airplanes at any private airstrip to those of the airstrip owners, reducing private airport safety hazards.	4

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact HAZ-#
<b>Public Facilities and Services Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal PFS-7: Solid Waste and Recycling</b></p> <p>To provide solid waste facilities that meet or exceed State law requirements, and use innovative strategies for economical and efficient collection, transfer, recycling, storage, and disposal of solid waste.</p>	<p>Ensures that solid waste facilities at a minimum meet state law requirements, minimizing the likelihood that such facilities would impact the public health and safety of administration, faculty, and students at existing or proposed school sites.</p>	2
<p><b>Policy PFS-7.4: Landfill Encroachment</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure that landfills and transfer stations are protected from encroachment by incompatible uses such as schools and homes.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts related to hazards near private school sites by ensuring that landfills and transfer stations are protected from encroaching incompatible land uses, and by minimizing the likelihood that new sensitive uses would be sited near landfills or transfer stations.</p>	2
<p><b>Goal PFS-10: School and Library Facilities</b></p> <p>To collaborate with school districts and other education providers to develop high quality education facilities and programs that serve existing and future residents.</p>	<p>Reduces the likelihood that hazardous emissions would be emitted within one quarter-mile of a public or private school by ensuring collaboration between school districts and other education providers.</p>	2
<p><b>Policy PFS-10.2: School District Consultation</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage early consultation between school districts and the County when proposing new, or modifying existing, school site locations.</p>	<p>Encourages early consultation between school districts when proposing new or modifying existing school sites, thereby reducing the potential that new schools or school modification projects would be situated near a hazardous waste site or operation known to emit hazardous pollutants.</p>	2

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact HAZ-#</b>
<p><b>Policy PFS-10.3: New School Location</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage school districts to site new schools in locations that are consistent with current and future land uses. The County shall also encourage the siting of new schools near residential areas with safe access for students to walk or bicycle to from their homes.</p>	<p>Encourages school districts to site new public schools at locations consistent with the current and future land uses to minimize incompatibility between the school and adjacent uses.</p>	2
<p><b>Policy PFS-10.6: Incompatible Land Uses near Schools</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate with school districts to reduce the effects of incompatible land uses and noise adjacent to school facilities.</p>	<p>Encourages limitations on the siting of public schools near hazardous sites or operations that emit hazardous pollutants by ensuring coordination occurs between school districts and the County to reduce land use incompatibilities.</p>	2

*Source:* San Benito County 2011, 2014; EMC Planning Group 2014; Planning Partners 2012.

***Impact HAZ-1: Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials (VIII.a), or through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment (VIII.b).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan would lead to urban development and other land use activities that would require the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials and wastes within the County; this could result in reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Because the implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan goals and policies, in combination with federal, state and local laws regulations designed to reduce the effects of the routine use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials, would minimize public health and environmental hazards, this would be a less than significant impact.

Unincorporated County contains a total of five hazardous waste sites. As a result of current and future activities with implementation of the 2035 General Plan, the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials would increase in unincorporated County, in particular for industrial uses, agricultural uses, farming activities, and commercial uses. Because the implementation of

the 2035 General Plan would result in an intensification of land uses within unincorporated County, there would be a likely increase in the amount of hazardous materials transported, stored, used, and disposed of in the County.

Land uses within the 2035 General Plan industrial land use designation would generate the greatest quantities of hazardous materials because of the supplies and products typically used during industrial and manufacturing activities. Further, new development would likely increase the amount of hazardous materials transported along the County's designated transportation routes, such as U.S. Highway 101 and State Routes 156, 146, 25, and 129. Accidental releases of hazardous materials could impact air quality, surface and groundwater quality, and sensitive biological resources. For example, air quality conditions could worsen due to the release of hazardous pollutants, water quality could be impaired due to leaking underground storage tanks or from agricultural wastes, and sensitive species could be exposed to hazardous material spills.

Currently, the San Benito County Sheriff's OES provides emergency management services for the County. The OES also works in cooperation with other entities, including local law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services departments, to ensure that a safe and efficient system is in place to respond to emergencies.

The RWQCB, the County's designated CUPA and part of the H&HSA, oversees the various state and local hazardous material programs. In this capacity, the County is responsible for providing regulatory oversight for prevention, investigation, and clean-up at sites that manufacture, store, use, and have hazardous contamination or leaking underground storage tanks. The County has an aggressive ordinance for ensuring the safety of the public from hazardous materials generated or used within the County, including an inspection program; see Chapter 11.07, *Hazardous Substances*, in the County Code. Compliance with CUPA programs and plans, in conjunction with other federal and state programs and the 2035 General Plan policies, would reduce the impact of reasonably foreseeable accidents or upset conditions involving the release of hazardous materials.

The County also regularly updates the *Hazardous Materials Incident Response Area Plan* (2008), as required by Policy HS-6.4. The Plan serves as the County's emergency response plan for hazardous material incidents. Several implementation programs are proposed to improve the County's ability to respond to hazardous incidents. Program HS-B requires the County to conduct a biannual disaster simulation exercise to clarify and test staff emergency duties. According to Program HS-C, the County will review the *Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan*, required by Policy HS-1.7, every two years to determine if updates are needed. Similarly, Program HS-D requires the County to prepare and implement a regional catastrophe preparedness plan. These implementation programs contain preparedness measures, planning steps, and response strategies to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate emergencies involving hazardous materials spills and releases into the environment, further minimizing impacts related to hazards.

While the likelihood of hazardous material releases cannot be completely eliminated, the 2035 General Plan Health and Safety and Land Use Elements contain goals and policies that address the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. [Table 12-1](#) includes goals and policies from the 2035 General Plan that state the County's intent to protect residents, visitors, and property by providing safe use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes.

As shown in [Table 12-1](#), the 2035 General Plan provides numerous policies intended to protect the health and safety of residents and visitors from the improper use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. Several of these policies focus on providing emergency preparedness plans, programs, and assistance in the event of an emergency, such as the improper use of a hazardous material or a hazardous spill or release. Under Goal HS-1, the County would maintain the necessary level of disaster preparedness for the protection of public health and a safe environment. Supporting this goal are numerous policies designed to ensure the County prevents, prepares for, responds to, recovers from, and mitigates natural and man-made disasters and emergencies.

Health and Safety Element Goal HS-6 aims to safeguard and protect the health and safety of County residents, the environment, and personal property from hazardous materials. The Health and Safety Element also contains Goal HS-5 and Policy HS-5.2 to ensure that adequate distances are maintained between sensitive land uses and facilities or operations that produce toxic or hazardous air pollutants. The combination of adherence to applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, as well as implementation of planning tools, public education programs, and land use buffers, would reduce the likelihood the public or the environment would be impacted by the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

Land use policies and the land use diagram, outlined in the 2035 General Plan Land Use Element, are designed to avoid impacts related to the release of hazardous materials. These policies and the land use diagram aim to reduce land use conflicts and minimize the potential for exposure to contamination related to hazardous materials. It is a County policy to ensure a thorough review of new development proposals. The Land Use Element contains Goal LU-6 which ensures new industrial and employment uses in the County are compatible with the surrounding land uses, helping to reduce the likelihood of impacts related to hazardous spills or releases and the routine storage, use, and transport of hazardous materials. Also, the land use diagram was organized to place similar land uses near each other to improve land use compatibility and reduce the likelihood that hazards related to incompatible land uses affect sensitive land uses. These types of policies ensure that incompatible land uses are not located near each other, which helps to minimize the possibility that the routine use, transport, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials would create a significant public health or environmental hazard.

Although there are numerous policies in place to protect the health and safety of residents and visitors from hazardous materials, and the activities and businesses in the County are generally well monitored and inspected, the routine use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste will occur within various land uses projected to continue under the 2035 General Plan. Similarly, the risk of upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment would remain, and the prevention of these types of accidental risks would not be completely avoided. Whereas the State of California Hazardous Materials Transportation Act and the County both have programs and policies in place that seek to limit the possibility of hazardous material releases and events that have the potential to result in the risk of death, injury, and property loss, there is still the potential for increased accidents to occur related to hazardous materials given the amount of anticipated development, with a variety of different land uses, that is permitted under the 2035 General Plan. However, for the above reasons as well as because the County CUPA program currently inspects most County businesses regarding the monitoring of the storage and movement of hazardous materials, and because the County is proposing several updates to the County's *Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan* and *Regional Catastrophe Preparedness Plan*, impacts related to hazardous materials would be reduced. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan goals and policies, in combination with compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations designed to reduce the effects of the routine use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials as well as the impacts associated with accidental releases of said materials, would reduce potential public health and environmental hazards. This would be a less than significant impact.

***Impact HAZ-2: Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school (VIII.c).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan would lead to urban and other development and the intensification of land uses that could emit hazardous emissions or result in the handling of hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school, depending on the location of the individual development project being proposed.

School sites are considered sensitive uses that need to be protected when planning for new growth. Because the 2035 General Plan would result in an increased population, it would also increase the number of students that need to enroll in school, and increase the need to construct additional school facilities. As a result, new school sites could be located near land uses that could be expected to emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances, or waste. New industrial uses that use or emit hazardous materials could also be sited near existing schools.



New school sites that may be needed near communities where future growth would be directed, such as proposed development areas located east and southwest of the City of Hollister, would be assessed for their potential to expose faculty, students, and staff to hazardous materials. There are several state regulations that govern school districts' school site selections that would ensure that hazardous exposures would be minimized to a safe level. For example, school projects funded under state programs, including the Office of Public School Construction, must comply with several requirements pursuant to the California Education Code, CEQA (Public Resources Code § 21151.8), and the California Code of Regulations that address hazards. School site selection, pursuant to state requirements, would minimize exposure to hazardous conditions. Examples of potential hazards related to school siting include properties with known historic industrial uses may have existing soil and groundwater contamination that would pose health risks to nearby sensitive receptors, such as students. It is also possible that the contamination from hazardous uses could migrate to within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

In collaboration with protections found in state law, the 2035 General Plan Health and Safety and Public Facilities and Services Elements contain policies that would encourage the protection of the safety of the residents, students, faculty, staff, and visitors at public school sites. [Table 12-1](#) lists the policies intended to protect the health and safety of administration, faculty, and students at proposed school sites.

As listed in [Table 12-1](#), there are several goals and policies in the Health and Safety Element that, through various planning activities would limit the potential for business operations that emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials to be located within one-quarter mile of a proposed school. Similarly, there are several policies in the Health and Safety Element designed to prevent new schools, or modifications of existing schools, to be sited near hazardous sites. Therefore, while many of the policies in the Health and Safety Element promote the safe usage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials, and prevent improper usage that could lead to hazardous spills, accidents, or releases, the Public Facilities and Services Element focuses on recommending that hazardous facilities meet state law requirements, prevent incompatible encroaching land uses, and promote careful site selection for new and expanded school facilities. However, the 2035 General Plan lacks goals and policies that limit the siting of land uses that may emit hazardous materials near existing public and private schools.

Public Resources Code § 21151.8 states that an environmental document shall not be approved for any school site unless certain precautions are documented, including, but not limited to removing or remediating hazardous contamination, siting school facilities away from pipelines that contain hazardous substances, and siting school facilities at least 500 feet from traffic corridors. Upon the completion of an adequate environmental document and complying with additional state school siting requirements, a public school district may site a new school within a land use or zoning district in the County that is not designated for school uses according to

Government Code § 53090 and 53091. This authority effectively releases public school districts from the need to comply with County land use requirements, including the policies of the 2035 General Plan that would limit the siting of a new or expanded public school near existing hazardous waste sites.

It is also County policy to review project site plans of all development proposals on a case-by-case basis. This process would also help reduce the potential for locating potentially hazardous land uses near schools, or siting new schools near hazards or incompatible land uses. Under state regulations, the County can only make recommendations to school districts on the siting of existing and expanded public school facilities, thereby limiting the County's land use discretion. The combination of federal and state laws and regulations governing the siting of new public school facilities, and the goals and policies as outlined in the 2035 General Plan that apply to public and private schools, would reduce risks related to hazardous emissions and the potential harmful effects of hazardous materials near proposed private school sites. Without an additional policy measure to minimize the siting of land uses that emit hazardous materials near existing public and private school sites, however, this would be a potentially significant impact.

### **Mitigation Measure:**

*HAZ-2. Add the following policy to the 2035 General Plan Public Facilities and Services Element:*

*Policy PFS-10.8: New Land Uses Near Schools*

*The County shall prohibit the siting of new land uses or facilities that use, store, emit, treat, or dispose of large quantities of hazardous materials within one-quarter mile of an existing public or private school facility.*

Because this mitigation measure would result in additional protection for existing private and public school sites, and potentially lead to additional mitigation for effects to private and public school facilities arising from the development of urban and other uses and related infrastructure identified in the 2035 General Plan, there would be no additional impacts beyond those identified for such development in Chapters 5 through 22 of this RDEIR.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-2, together with the implementation of the goals and policies of the 2035 General Plan and adherence with the applicable requirements of state and federal laws and regulations, would reduce the potential that new development and related infrastructure projects that have the potential to emit hazardous materials within the unincorporated portion of the County be sited near existing public or private schools. Therefore, for the foregoing reasons, this impact would be less than significant with mitigation.

***Impact HAZ-3: Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment (VIII.d).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan would lead to urban development and other activities that could be situated at a location that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 and, as a result, could create a significant hazard to the public or environment. This would be a potentially significant impact.

As explained in the Environmental Setting section above, there is one open cleanup program site and one land disposal site in unincorporated County that are “open status” due to the stage of investigation or remediation. Among the sites, some have a history of contamination due to hazardous materials spills, leakage from underground storage tanks, landfills, or other releases that are subject to federal and state environmental laws and regulations. Many of these sites are undergoing assessment or remediation overseen by the state or the RWQCB.

Other sites, particularly active and former agricultural and mining sites, may also contain chemicals, including heavy metals and organic compounds that can persist in the soil and contain residues that could pose health risks to sensitive receptors. As a result, land development allowed under the 2035 General Plan could create a hazard to the public or the environment if development occurs on contaminated sites. While many contaminated sites are likely to have development restrictions prior to clean-up and remediation, the possibility remains that future development under the 2035 General Plan could expose the public and the environment to site contamination hazards.

In addition to various state programs that require the clean-up of contaminated sites, the County would regulate hazardous material concerns and site contamination on a case-by-case basis as part of the development site review process for any future project within the County. Further, the 2035 General Plan contains various goals and policies intended to reduce the impacts of hazardous sites due to contamination, and to ensure the safety of County residents, visitors, and businesses. [Table 12-1](#) lists the goals and policies intended to protect the health and safety of County residents from contaminated sites. In the Health and Safety Element, Goal HS-5 and its supporting policies would improve local and regional air quality to protect residents from the adverse effects of poor air quality. Goal HS-6 is designed to safeguard and protect the County’s health and safety. Policy HS-6.1 supports this goal by ensuring the proper storage and disposal of hazardous materials.

The outlined goals and policies would reduce the likelihood that new development due to population growth may occur on or near a hazardous materials site on a list compiled pursuant

to Government Code Section 65962.5, which would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. In addition, as described above in Section 12.2.1, hazardous materials are subject to regulation by the County code, which has an aggressive ordinance for ensuring the safety of the public from hazardous materials generated or used within the County. As the LEA, the RWQCB helps maintain and update a comprehensive County database that is maintained for tracking purposes by the RWQCB Geotracker Program, the DTSC Envirostor, and the CalRecycle (formerly California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB)) SWIS databases. The regulations enforced by the RWQCB as well as other applicable federal and state laws and regulations, together with the 2035 General Plan policies outlined in [Table 12-1](#), would help to ensure proper site assessment and remediation procedures would occur prior to any new development. Therefore, the potential for new development in areas with residual contamination that could pose health hazards to the County's residents and visitors would be less than significant.

***Impact HAZ-4: For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, or located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area (VIII.e, VIII.f).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan could lead to urban development and other land use activities within the area regulated by an airport land use plan, or where such a plan has not been adopted, within the vicinity of a public or private airport, resulting in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. Because the intent of the 2035 General Plan is to ensure that existing and future land uses function without imposing safety hazards or nuisances upon existing uses, the 2035 General Plan land uses are designed to be consistent with land use restrictions and compatibility criteria adopted by the ALUC in accordance with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for the areas around the two public airports in the County. However, although the 2035 General Plan contains goals and policies to ensure that development within the vicinity of public airports does not result in safety hazards, additional measures may be necessary to ensure that future development near private airport facilities does not pose safety hazards. Therefore, while public safety impacts associated with public airport hazards would result in a less than significant impact, public safety impacts associated with private airports could be potentially significant.

The County contains two public airports, one private airport, and three heliports. The Council of San Benito County Governments (SBCOG) serves as the ALUC, established in 1989, for the County. It makes recommendations to the City of Hollister City Council and the County Board of Supervisors regarding any commercial or residential development near public use airports in

the County. The ALUC ensures the orderly growth of the County's two public airports and the area surrounding the airports. The ALUC also functions to safeguard the general welfare of County residents working and residing near the airports.

In 2001, the ALUC adopted comprehensive land use plans (CLUPs) for both the Hollister Municipal Airport and the Frazier Lake Airpark. In 2012, the ALUC adopted an updated comprehensive land use compatibility plan (CLUCP) for the Hollister Municipal Airport. The basic function of the CLUP/CLUCP is to promote land use compatibility between the airports in the County and the land uses that surround them. The CLUP/CLUCP also set compatibility criteria applicable to local agencies reviewing development proposals and preparing land use plans and zoning ordinances and to landowners designing new development near the Hollister Municipal Airport and Frazier Lake Airpark. However, safety zones and information on the County's private-use airports and heliports are not included in either plan. Because most of these private facilities have only a few aircraft operations because they are used for emergency purposes, the level of risk due to air safety hazards is low given the relatively low amount of overall activity.

Under Policies HS-7.1 and LU-1.9, the 2035 General Plan is required to be consistent, to the extent feasible, with the policies adopted by the ALUC. These policies are reflected in each individual airport's plan and its corresponding land use compatibility (i.e., safety) zone maps. Because the 2035 General Plan contains this consistency policy, any land uses not consistent with the CLUP/CLUCP would need to be modified to the extent feasible to ensure consistency. However, local agencies do not need to change land use designations to bring them into consistency with ALUC criteria if the current designations reflect existing development. Instead, applicable plans would need to establish policies to ensure that the non-conforming uses would not be expanded, and that redevelopment in the area would be made consistent with the compatibility criteria. [Table 12-2](#) lists the two public airports within the County and the surrounding existing and proposed land uses, which are the same under both growth scenarios.

The private airports and heliports are located at various locations within the County. Many of these facilities consist of private airstrips associated with agriculture-related uses, situated in rural areas of the County. Siting private airport uses in rural areas designated for agricultural uses may pose fewer land use conflicts to sensitive uses; however, safety impacts may still occur. Further, any new development near airport facilities that contains multiple stories, large concentrations of people, sensitive uses such as nursing homes or school sites, or facilities with large antennas or extensive lighting could obstruct and create hazards to aviation. The location of new development could also result in safety hazards to the people who reside and work near the airports due to noise, nuisances, and accidents related to aircraft. All new development proposals near the existing private airport or any proposed airport would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure consistency with relevant land use plans and policies and to adequately address the above concerns.

**Table 12-2 San Benito County Public Airports**

<b>Hollister Municipal Airport (Located in incorporated City of Hollister)</b>	
Size	343 acres
Location	North central portion of San Benito County, northern edge of the City of Hollister, 45 miles southeast of San Jose, 40 miles northeast of Monterey.
Existing Land Use	Mainly agricultural uses to the north, northwest, east, and southeast. Some light industrial, industrial business park, public/institutional, open space, and high density residential located to the southwest of the airport.
Proposed Land Use	Continued agricultural uses. No expansion of existing commercial and residential uses to the southwest of airport.
<b>Frazier Lake Airpark (Located in unincorporated County)</b>	
Size	156 acres
Location	Northwest portion of San Benito County, approximately eight miles northwest of Hollister, 40 miles southwest of San Jose, and 40 miles northeast of Monterey.
Existing Land Use	Surrounded by mainly agricultural uses. Floodplains are located to the north and southeast of the airport.
Proposed Land Use	Continued agricultural uses.

*Source:* ALUC 2001, 2011.

Safety impacts include three main components of aircraft accident risk: the spatial distribution of accidents relative to airport runways; the frequency of accident occurrence; and the potential consequences of an accident. These components vary depending upon the types of aircraft that use a runway, the types of flight procedures available, other airport characteristics, and the nature of land uses surrounding an airport.

The basic strategy for minimizing risks to people near airports is to limit the number of people who might gather in areas most susceptible to aircraft accidents. In addition, certain land uses represent special safety concerns regardless of the number of people associated with those uses. Land uses of particular safety concern are those where the occupants have reduced effective mobility or are unable to respond to emergency situations. These uses include children's schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and other uses in which the majority of occupants are children, elderly, handicapped, or otherwise disabled. Residential uses also require a greater degree of protection. Other types of land use sensitive to airport risks include an industrial or public use where the consequences of an accident will affect a wide geographical area. The third category of risk sensitive land uses is those that process or store hazardous materials (e.g., oil refineries, chemical plants). Materials that are flammable, explosive, corrosive, or toxic pose special safety

compatibility concerns to the extent that an aircraft accident could cause release of the materials, and thereby pose dangers to people and property in the vicinity.

The principal means of minimizing hazards to occupants of aircraft is to preclude land use features that create physical, visual, or electronic hazards to flight, or cause a loss in airport utility. Airspace protection includes several different land use characteristics, such as limitations on the height of structures, lighting features, smoke or glare generation, attractiveness to birds, adverse effects on runway approach, and other operational restrictions.

Of the two public airports within the County, neither contains land uses outlined in its individual CLUP/CLUPC that are inconsistent with the proposed land uses illustrated under the 2035 General Plan Land Use Diagram. Consistency with each airport's CLUP/CLUPC under General Plan policies, including HS-7.1 and LU-1.9, ensures there are no conflicts with land uses, noise, and other safety hazards that may result in jeopardized safety operations. Both public airports and their land uses are consistent with the land uses outlined in the 2035 General Plan as discussed below.

The Hollister Municipal Airport influence area, which extends into unincorporated County areas, located along the northern edge of the City of Hollister, contains land use compatibility criteria, referred to as noise restriction areas, height restriction areas, and safety restriction areas, that prohibit the development of sensitive uses within the airport's influence area that surrounds its runway. The majority of unincorporated lands within the Hollister Municipal Airport's influence area consist of agricultural land uses, with the exception of urban uses such as commercial, high-density residential and public/institutional uses located to the immediate southwest of the airport. While some non-conforming uses exist, specifically to the southwest of the airport influence area, none of these uses would be extended within the airport's influence area. Similarly, the Frazier Lake Airpark includes land use compatibility criteria and zones. The criteria prohibit the development of sensitive uses within its airport's influence area. All uses proposed for the influence area surrounding the Frazier Lake Airpark will remain agricultural uses under the 2035 General Plan. Likewise, all land uses within unincorporated County surrounding the Hollister Municipal Airport would remain agricultural uses, with the exception of existing non-conforming commercial, residential, and public/institutional land uses located to the southwest of the airport.

Implementation of 2035 General Plan would result in new residential and commercial land uses and development of other land uses as well. While the exact locations of new development is not currently known given the general nature of the 2035 General Plan and the programmatic level of review in this RDEIR, with the exception of several planned development areas and new communities, the majority of development is anticipated to occur on land that has already been designated for urban uses. Many of these areas are situated outside the influence areas of public and private airports. However, it is likely that some new development may occur within the

vicinity of public and private airport influence areas. While the County's two public use airports are located near urbanized areas, no extension of non-conforming uses would occur near the public airport's influence areas that are not permissible according to the ALUC compatibility criteria. Any development proposed along urbanized fringe areas (e.g., outside the urban area boundary or city sphere of influence) or near agricultural uses would be allowed based on consistency with each public airport's CLUP/CLUCP and discretionary review by the County.

As stated above, the overall intent of the 2035 General Plan is to ensure consistency between existing and future land uses. Specifically, the 2035 General Plan is required by state law to be consistent with each public airport's CLUP/CLUCP, pursuant to Government Code § 65302.3, which establishes that each county and city affected by a CLUP must make its general plan and applicable specific plans consistent unless it adopts specified findings pursuant to Public Utilities Code § 21676. As a result, such plans would also need to specifically address compatibility issues and avoid conflicts with the compatibility planning criteria, which means that the plans must function without posing safety hazards.

The 2035 General Plan consists of numerous goals and policies that would reduce land use compatibility issues and safety concerns that could impact the capability and functionality of the County's aviation system. [Table 12-1](#) lists the policies applicable to the safe operation of airports and the safety of County residents. The Land Use Element contains policies that minimize the risk to people on the ground near airports, and to occupants of the aircraft. Policy LU-1.9 ensures that airport and the surrounding land use plans are consistent.

The Health and Safety and Land Use Elements contain a number of policies that establish requirements for compatible development, some of which focus on promoting land use consistency and others that apply screening, adaptive reuse, and performance standards. The Health and Safety Element contains Goal HS-7 and its supporting policies to ensure that the County promotes the safe operation of private airports by prohibiting land uses within the unincorporated areas that interfere with the safe operation of aircraft, coordinating with the ALUC on land use planning activities around airports, and by requiring development within airport approach and departure zones to be in compliance with FAA regulations. Together, these policies would promote land use consistency and compatibility around airports.

The 2035 General Plan contains a number of specific policies to reduce land use compatibility issues, minimize airport-related nuisances, and ensure that airport safety zones are established for public airports. There are similar safety provisions outlined for private airports. Policy HS-8.5 within the Health and Safety Element provides criteria for the safe location of new air facilities in the County. However, this policy applies only to new proposed facilities. Within the Circulation Element under Goal C-6, Policy C-6.1 and Policy C-6.3 would minimize impacts related to airport safety by controlling the location, development, and use of private airstrips and agricultural landing fields, and by limiting the use of aircraft to only the owners of the airstrip.



While these three policies limit the use of the private airstrips and the types of aircraft operated out of the airstrip, none specifically address the surrounding land use compatibility, or the likely safety impacts that may result from new development. While impacts related to the siting of new sensitive uses next to the two public airports would result in a less than significant impact, impacts related to the siting of new sensitive uses near any of the private airports, often near agricultural operations, could be expected to impact the safety of people residing or working in the areas around these airports. Therefore, impacts related to the siting of new uses near private airports would be a potentially significant impact.

**Mitigation Measure:**

*HAZ-4. Amend the following policy in the 2035 General Plan Health and Safety Element:*

*HS-7.4: Locations for New Air Strips or for New Development Adjacent to Existing Air Strips.*

*The County shall require sites for proposed air strips to be outside of air traffic control zones and a safe distance from existing airports (generally three miles), and to be a reasonable distance from residential areas and compatible with the surrounding uses. Similarly, the County shall encourage proposed residential uses or uses that result in a concentration of persons to be located at a reasonable distance from existing air strips to ensure safety.*

Because implementation of this mitigation measure would result in the additional protection against airport safety hazards arising from the development of urban and other uses and related infrastructure identified in the 2035 General Plan, there would be no additional impacts beyond those identified for such development in Chapters 5 through 22 of this RDEIR. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-4 would result in a reduction in the potential safety hazards due to new development that would occur near private airstrips by ensuring that development near both public and private airstrips addresses land use compatibility issues.

***Impact HAZ-5: Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan (VIII.g).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan would lead to urban development and other activities that would increase the demand for emergency services within the County. Urbanization would also result in increases in vehicular traffic that could, in turn, decrease the level of service of County roadways and impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Because the 2035 General Plan contains policies to avoid emergency response and evacuation related impacts, increased traffic and increased demands on emergency services would not physically impair the

implementation of an adopted emergency response and evacuation plan. This would be a less than significant impact.

Urban and other development proposed to occur under the 2035 General Plan would involve new urban and other uses and population growth that would result in an increased demand for emergency services. Such growth would involve an increase in the current number of vehicles traveling on County roadways. As a result, in the long term, roadways and related facilities could become impaired due to traffic congestion, increased roadway use, and a decrease in the County roadway's levels of service. Roadways that operate at unacceptable levels of service would be unable to accommodate efficient, timely, and safe access and emergency response, potentially interfering with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan (see Chapter 19, *Transportation and Circulation*, for a summary of the County roadways that would be affected).

There are a number of policies in the 2035 General Plan Health and Safety, Public Facilities and Services, and Circulation Elements that address the County's emergency preparedness. [Table 12-1](#) lists all proposed 2035 General Plan polices designed to prevent impacts to emergency response services. There are numerous policies under the Health and Safety Element designed to support the implementation of adopted emergency response and evacuation plans. In general, each policy is designed to ensure that coordination occurs with the appropriate agencies to ensure that response systems are in place to prepare, plan, and respond to unplanned events. The Circulation Element outlines other policies that would ensure County roadways provide adequate capacity. Further, all future development and redevelopment would be required to comply with state building and fire codes and local standards (e.g, minimum street widths, turning radius, emergency access), further reducing the impacts population growth and traffic would have on the state and County's ability to quickly implement emergency and evacuation plans.

As shown in [Table 12-1](#), the proposed 2035 General Plan contains many policies in both the Health and Safety and Circulation Elements to assure continued access by emergency responders, including exercises to acquaint responders to typical traffic conditions within the County. Even though the implementation of the 2035 General Plan would result in significant, unmitigated traffic congestion in portions of the County as set forth in Chapter 19, *Transportation and Circulation*, the effect of the proposed policies would result in continued emergency access that would not adversely affect the response time of service providers. For this reason, the impact would be less than significant.

***Impact HAZ-6: Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands (VIII.h).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

Implementation of the proposed 2035 General Plan would lead to urban development and other activities that would increase the need to expand existing fire protection services, and could expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Because the 2035 General Plan contains specific goals and policies designed to prevent wildfire hazards related to wildland fuel reduction, emergency response, and design solutions, this would be a less than significant impact.

Both urban and wildland fire hazards exist in the County. According to CAL FIRE, the expanding wildland urban interface area and increasing urban populations create a potential for large, damaging, and costly wildfires. According to the 2010 *San Benito County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, the majority of the County falls within a high fire hazard severity zone, particularly the lands in the northernmost and eastern portions of the County (see [Figure 12-1](#)).

Both Hollister and San Juan Bautista fall within urbanized developed areas, outside hazard zones. However, several rural communities, including Paicines and Panoche, fall within moderate fire hazard severity zones; the communities of Bitterwater and San Benito fall within high fire hazard severity zones; and the community of New Idria falls within a very high fire hazard severity zone. The westernmost perimeter of the County, including the Pinnacles National Park, also falls within very high fire hazard severity zones. Many of these communities are identified in the San Benito CWPP as being “at-risk” communities. Further, the California Fire Alliance identifies Aromas and San Juan Bautista as at-risk communities susceptible to wildfire damage. As the County continues to grow and more rural lands are developed, the potential for urban development within areas that are susceptible to wildland fire hazards would increase. The 2035 General Plan would allow urban and other types of development near both existing cities and foothill areas, located closer to high fire hazard severity zones.

Development in rural areas is likely to be exposed to the greatest risks related to wildland fire hazards since the threat from wildfires in these areas is moderate to high. This is due to higher fuel loads and fewer water resources for fire suppression. The rural unincorporated areas likely to be most exposed to high wildland fire threats are located in the far western and southern parts of the County, near the small communities of Paicines, Panoche, Bitterwater, and New Idria. As the County continues to experience increased residential and other types of development within areas of unincorporated County designated for agricultural, rangeland, and rural residential uses, such development would occur within the moderate to very high fire hazard severity zones.

As a result, there will be increasing pressure to maintain adequate and safe roadways for emergency access and evacuation, upgrade fire safety facilities, and safeguard and serve the growing demand for wildland fire protection.

There are several 2035 General Plan goals, policies and implementation programs contained in the Health and Safety Element related to increasing fire response capabilities, supporting fire prevention measures, and encouraging design solutions that provide better fire response and accessibility to reduce wildfire impacts. [Table 12-1](#) lists all applicable policies related to wildland fire hazards and safety.

The Health and Safety Element Goal HS-4 and its supporting policies would reduce the overall safety impacts to County residents by minimizing the risk of wildland and urban fire hazards. Other related policies that address the effects of climate change on development would also minimize impacts related to wildland fire hazards, such as Policy HS-1.11. This policy discourages development in areas that may be more severely impacted by climate change, including areas at high risk of wildfire, unless proper design mitigation is included in the project. Also, Implementation Program HS-I would ensure the County reviews the CWPP every two years. These policies help reduce wildfire impacts, particularly for new residential and other development located closer to the wildland urban interface.

In addition to the proposed goals and policies outlined in the Health and Safety Element, adherence with other federal and state laws, policies and regulations would help to reduce wildfire risks. State laws and regulations include the Public Resources Code for Fire Safe Regulations (§§ 4290-91), as referenced in Policy HS-4.5 and related fire and health and safety codes, which establish minimum road standards, signage to help first responders, private water supply standards to ensure sufficient fire flow, and defensible space requirements. The California Building Commission's Wildland-Urban Interface Code, adopted in late 2005 and updated in January 2008, also includes provisions for ignition-resistant construction standards in fire prone areas.

Proposed 2035 General Plan goals and policies, in combination with compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, would reduce wildfire risks and impacts. This would be a less than significant impact.