

# I Introduction

This Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared on behalf of the City of Lemoore in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This chapter outlines the purpose of and overall approach to the preparation of the EIR on the proposed 2030 Lemoore General Plan (hereafter referred to as the “General Plan” or “Plan”). Lemoore is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the proposed General Plan complies with CEQA.

## I.1 PURPOSE

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The EIR of the proposed General Plan has three primary purposes:

- First, the EIR will help the City of Lemoore meet California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for analysis of environmental impacts by including a complete and comprehensive programmatic evaluation of the physical impacts of the proposed General Plan and its alternatives.
- Second, the EIR will inform residents and members of the City Council and Planning Commission of the environmental impacts prior to the Commission and Council taking action on the Plan. This information will assist City officials in reviewing and adopting the proposed Plan.
- Third, the EIR will assist local decision-makers in determining appropriate amendments to Lemoore’s land use regulations and other implementation actions, based on a balanced assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan.

The EIR also identifies further measures that decision-makers may want to incorporate into the General Plan or implementation programs to minimize environmental effects.

The proposed General Plan consists of policies and proposals to guide the future growth of the City of Lemoore within its Planning Area (see Chapter 2 for discussion and map of planning and jurisdictional boundaries). The Planning Area includes all areas within and adjacent to the current City Limits that have a potential for long-term development or conservation. Not all land within the Planning Area is anticipated to be utilized for urban growth. This Draft EIR evaluates the potential impacts of the adoption of the proposed General Plan. In addition, the EIR will be used as a reference for subsequent environmental review of specific plans, infrastructure improvements, zoning amendments, impact fees and development proposals.

CEQA requires that the agency with the primary responsibility over the approval of a project (the lead agency) evaluate the potential impacts of the project in an EIR. The City is required to prepare an EIR on the General Plan in order to provide the City Council, as the ultimate decision maker, with an informational document for use in evaluating the proposed Plan. After adoption, the EIR will serve the additional function of providing direction to the City in implementation of the new Plan. The EIR also identifies mitigation measures to minimize significant impacts and evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed Plan. The “No Project Alternative” discusses the

result of not implementing the proposed General Plan or any of the alternatives. An environmentally superior alternative also is identified as part of the alternatives analysis.

This Draft EIR will be used by Lemoore residents, elected officials, and City staff during the public review process. The Draft EIR and Final EIR, which includes responses to public comments received during the 45-day comment period, will be certified by the Lemoore City Council prior to consideration of the proposed General Plan. The proposed Plan and the EIR have been prepared concurrently and policies in the proposed Plan take into consideration the EIR discussion of impacts and mitigation measures.

## **I.2 GENERAL PLAN PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

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The General Plan update was initiated in 2005 but work only began in earnest in the summer of 2006. To help prepare the General Plan, a General Plan Steering Committee (GPSC) was formed. This committee was charged with serving as ambassadors to the community during the preparation of the new Plan and with reviewing and commenting on interim products prepared by the project consultants. The committee included representatives from the Lemoore Planning Commission, Lemoore City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Historic Preservation, Lemoore High School, Lemoore Naval Air Station, Lemoore Senior Citizens, as well as recreation, service clubs, and local business.

The GPSC met on a frequent basis to address concerns and guide the planning process. Three community-wide meetings were held, one in July of 2006 to discuss general planning concerns and conduct a visioning exercise, one in November of 2006 to present and discuss the sketch plan designs, and another in April of 2007 to discuss the Preferred Plan Concept. Discussions were organized in small groups and each group was given the opportunity to report back to the workshop as a whole. A wide variety of viewpoints were expressed by participants from all segments of the community. Public feedback at these workshops and those expressed indirectly through GPSC meetings have been incorporated into the planning process. Additionally, stakeholder interviews and joint City Council/Planning Commission study sessions were also held to formulate draft policies. Finally, in order to update the community on the planning progress, several newsletters were prepared and distributed to residents during the entire General Plan update process. All of the documents, maps, and meeting agendas were also made available for public download through the City of Lemoore website, at [www.lemoore.com](http://www.lemoore.com).

The proposed General Plan will be considered by the City Council at public hearings following public review of this Draft EIR. If approved, the proposed Plan will become the City's new General Plan and be used to guide land use decision-making to the year 2030 or until a subsequent General Plan is adopted.

## **I.3 EIR APPROACH AND ASSUMPTIONS**

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The proposed EIR for the 2030 Lemoore General Plan is a program EIR, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 as: "...an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) Geographically; (2) As logical parts in

the chain of contemplated actions; (3) In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts which can be mitigated in similar ways.”

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects developed over a planning horizon.<sup>1</sup> A program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. Second, it allows the lead agency to look at the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

As a program EIR, this document focuses on the overall effects of the proposed General Plan in the Planning Area; the analysis does not examine the effects of potential site-specific projects that may occur under the overall umbrella of this program in the future. In fact, this EIR assumes that specific development projects and infrastructure improvement proposals submitted to Lemoore will necessitate independent environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of CEQA. The nature of long-range planning is such that many proposed policies are intended to be general, with details to be determined during implementation. Thus, many of the impacts and mitigation measures can only be described in general or qualitative terms.

In order to put into effect many of the proposed General Plan policies, the City will adopt or approve specific actions—zoning regulations, zoning map amendments, development impact fees, specific plans, capital improvement programs, development projects, etc.—that would be consistent with the policies of the Plan. This program EIR does not preclude the need for environmental review of specific plans and individual projects subsequent to Council adoption of the proposed General Plan.

CEQA mandates that lead agencies adopt mitigation monitoring and reporting programs for projects identified as having significant impacts where mitigation measures have been identified. Mitigation monitoring and reporting programs are intended to ensure compliance during project implementation. These programs provide the additional advantage of providing staff and decision-makers with feedback on mitigation effectiveness and can inform the development of future mitigation measures.

The proposed General Plan is intended to be self-mitigating, in that the policies and programs of the proposed Plan are designed to anticipate and mitigate possible environmental impacts. This EIR clearly shows how the impacts of future development in Lemoore will be mitigated through implementation of the policies and programs of the proposed Plan. Any residual impact after implementation of these proposed policies and programs is identified as measured against the significance criteria established for each impact area. The significance criteria are identifiable quantitative, qualitative, or performance levels for each environmental effect; compliance with significance criteria indicates that the effect is significant.

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<sup>1</sup> In this case, the EIR reviews programs proposed by the 2030 Lemoore General Plan. It has a planning horizon of 23 years, counting from the year 2007.

This EIR represents the best effort to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed General Plan given its long-term planning horizon. It can be anticipated that conditions will change; however, the assumptions herein are the best available at the time of preparation and reflect existing knowledge of natural resources, community needs, and patterns of development and travel.

The proposed General Plan EIR is based on the following key assumptions:

- *Full Implementation.* This EIR assumes that all policies in the proposed General Plan will be fully implemented and all development will be consistent with the proposed General Plan Land Use Diagram. Key elements of the proposed General Plan include establishment of an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), increased densities and intensities of development to encourage more compact urban form, job producing land uses, an expanded parks and open space system, a grid network of streets to increase connectivity and decrease congestion, and new residential uses to meet both affordability and homeownership goals.
- *Buildout in 2030.* This EIR assumes that buildout of the proposed General Plan will occur by 2030. It is understood that development under the proposed General Plan will be incremental and timed in response to market conditions. And while the proposed General Plan includes policies intended to control the amount and location of new growth, it does not include interim “phases” (development scenarios) as this is considered speculative.

#### **I.4 ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THIS EIR**

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The issues evaluated in this EIR were determined during the initial phase of the project. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR on the City of Lemoore General Plan Update was circulated in August of 2006 and the City received comments during a 30-day review period. The NOP and the comments received are in Appendix A of this EIR. These comments, along with input received during public workshops and meetings helped to identify the major planning and environmental issues and concerns in the General Plan and helped establish the framework and focus of the environmental analysis.

The first step toward completion of this Draft EIR was the initial analysis of the environmental setting. This analysis compiled specific information on the current conditions, the characteristics of the City, and the major issues it faces. Information on the environmental setting provides background regarding relevant issues and is used to evaluate potential impacts. Based on the initial analysis of the environmental setting, as well as the NOP comments and public meetings, the following issues are analyzed in this EIR:

- Land Use and Agriculture
- Transportation
- Public Utilities and Services
- Parks , Recreation, and Public Open Space
- Biological Resources

- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Seismic and Geologic Hazards
- Hazardous Materials and Wildfires
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Quality
- Energy Use and Climate Change

Each potential impact is addressed in Chapter 3: Settings, Impacts, and Mitigation, of this EIR.

## **1.5 DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE**

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Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines permits documents of lengthy technical detail to be incorporated by reference in an EIR. Specifically, Section 15150 states that an EIR may "incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public...." Incorporated documents are to be briefly summarized in the EIR and be made available to the public for inspection or reference. The City of Lemoore General Plan Update Draft EIR incorporates by reference the documents noted below, which are available at the City of Lemoore Planning and Community Development Department, 210 Fox Street, Lemoore, CA, 93245, as well as the City's website at: [http://www.lemoore.com/planning/general\\_plan\\_update.htm](http://www.lemoore.com/planning/general_plan_update.htm)

- *Lemoore General Plan Update: Map Atlas (October 2006)* – This document provides baseline information regarding existing conditions that will influence future development in the City of Lemoore. The Atlas uses maps to illustrate the supply of available land in the City, which will help guide the decision-making process regarding future growth and conservation. The Atlas maps highlight information for natural resources, land uses, and civic and transportation infrastructure throughout the City and its Sphere of Influence.
- *Lemoore General Plan Update: Sketch Plan Workbook (October 2006)* – This document, also referred to as the Sketch Plans, presents various land use and transportation alternatives that may be incorporated into the proposed General Plan and compares these with the current General Plan.

Other project and program EIRs that have been prepared for projects in the Lemoore Planning Area have been reviewed during preparation of this EIR. These EIRs address approved development and development currently underway.

## **1.6 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR**

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The proposed General Plan and EIR provide specific guidance for implementation of Plan concepts and establish a basis for coordinated action by the City, adjacent jurisdictions, Kings

County, and regional, State, and federal agencies, including that coordination involving the use of this EIR for the consideration of future development. The City of Lemoore, as the Lead Agency, will use this EIR in consideration of the proposed General Plan, as well as amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and other actions to implement the General Plan. This document will provide environmental information to several other agencies affected by the project, or those which are likely to have an interest in the project. Agencies, boards and commissions that are expected to have an interest in this EIR or to use it in their decision-making include, but are not limited to, the following:

## **FEDERAL AGENCIES**

*United State Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).* The USFWS is responsible for conserving and protecting wildlife, endangered species, and their habitats for the benefit of the public at large.

*United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).* The USDA is responsible for conservation and monitoring of agricultural lands.

*United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).* The USACE is empowered to regulate the protection and conservation of all waters of the United States which include navigable rivers and wetlands.

## **STATE AGENCIES**

*California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).* Caltrans is responsible for approval of roadway improvements along all State highways within California. It is also responsible for design, construction, and future improvements to State highways.

*California Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA).* The CEPA is the primary State agency concerned with degradation of the environment and how it affects human physical and mental health. It is responsible for the prevention of pollution of sources of public water supplies, the establishment of ambient air quality standards, and the monitoring of environmental pollution.

*State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).* The SWRCB has the responsibility to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources, and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.

*California Air Resources Board (CARB).* The CARB is charged to attain and maintain healthy air quality, conduct research into the causes of and solutions to air pollution, and systematically attack the serious problem caused by motor vehicles, which are the major causes of air pollution in the State.

*California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).* The CDFG is responsible for the protection, conservation, propagation and enhancement of California's wildlife resources.

*California Department of Water Resources (CDWR).* The CDWR is responsible for the planning of future water needs through the California Water Project which builds, operates, and maintains water facilities.

*California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)*. The CDFA establishes legislation and regulations in the California Food and Agricultural Code which are enforced through county departments of agriculture.

*California Energy Commission (CEC)*. The CEC is the State's primary energy policy and planning agency.

## **REGIONAL AND LOCAL AGENCIES**

*Kings County*. This jurisdiction acts as a Responsible Agency for the proposed Plan as Lemoore is located within Kings County. In addition, policies within the General Plan may lead to the annexation of areas currently under the County's jurisdiction. Aside from land use matters, the County also have responsibility over waste collection in Lemoore through Kings Waste and Recycling Authority (KWRA) and emergency planning through Kings County Office of Emergency Services (KCOES).

*Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG)*. The KCAG is a cooperative body of local governments in Kings County established to exchange planning information between the member agencies as related to area-wide development with emphasis on transportation. They are also the coordinating agency for the Valleywide Blueprint Project.

*San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD)*. The SJVAPCD serves as the regional air quality control district and has the responsibility for the implementation of the California Clean Air Act.

*Kings County Water District (KCWD)*. The KCWD does not provide water service to the City but provides water management to the area immediately up-gradient from Lemoore. As such, its activities are of importance to the City.

*Lemoore Union Elementary School District (LUESD)*. The LUESD is the primary provider of elementary and middle school public education to children of the City of Lemoore and outlying territory within the District Area.

*Lemoore Union High School District (LUHSD)*. The LUHSD is the primary provider of high school public education to children of the City of Lemoore and outlying territory within the District Area.

*Kings County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)*. This agency is responsible for processing land annexation, Sphere of Influence, and incorporation applications in Kings County.

### *City of Lemoore*

A list of City Departments, Commissions, and Boards that will use this EIR in consideration of future development is provided in Section 2.6 of this EIR.

## **I.7 APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF THE PLAN AND EIR**

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CEQA guidelines require the lead agency (the City of Lemoore) to notify and seek comments from all “Responsible and Trustee Agencies” during the EIR preparation process. This includes every public agency that has jurisdiction by law with respect to the program; Kings County within which the City is located; and State, federal and local agencies that exercise authority over resources that may be affected by the proposed General Plan (Code Sections 21104, 21153). The City sent notices pertinent to the program EIR throughout the summer of 2006. Examples of agencies contacted include the California Department of Conservation and local Native American tribes, For a full list of agencies contacted and comments received, please refer to the appendices at the back of this EIR.

In addition to contacting Responsible and Public Agencies, CEQA guidelines require the lead agency provide opportunities for public participation during the EIR preparation process. “CEQA contains a ‘substantive mandate’ that public agencies refrain from approving projects with significant environmental effects ‘if there are feasible alternatives or mitigation measures’ that can substantially lessen or avoid those impacts.” (Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, 1999, page 13) Although the Lead Agency must consider the information included in an EIR, conclusions therein do not control approval of a proposed project. It is through public comments that other agencies wield authority and power to influence the process. Before approving a project, CEQA guidelines require the lead agency to respond to each significant effect defined in the EIR, as well as to each EIR comment received from the public. The public is kept abreast of the General Plan and EIR process through public meetings, newsletters, and the City website.

## **I.8 ORGANIZATION OF EIR**

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The Draft EIR is organized into the following main chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Project Description.** This chapter includes a detailed description of the proposed General Plan. The Project Description presents the proposed General Plan Land Use Diagram, the proposed land use classification system, key policies and buildout estimates.
- **Chapter 3: Settings, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.** This chapter analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan. Impacts are organized by major topic and are, with a few exceptions, in the order that issues are addressed in the proposed General Plan. Each topic area includes a description of the environmental setting, significance criteria, impact analysis, and policies in the proposed General Plan that would avoid or reduce the impacts. If further mitigation is found to be required, recommendations are presented.
- **Chapter 4: Analysis of Alternatives.** This chapter compares the impacts of the proposed General Plan with three land use alternatives including a No Project Alternative and two alternatives that portray different quantities and types, and arrangements of proposed new development. Chapter 4 concludes with a determination of the Environmentally Superior Alternative.



- *Chapter 5: CEQA Required Conclusions.* Chapter 5 provides a summary of significant environmental impacts, including unavoidable, irreversible, growth-inducing, and cumulative impacts.

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