CHAPTER 1.0
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The project consists of the adoption and implementation of the Foresthill Divide Community Plan (FDCP), which consists of the following elements:

- Community Development Element, including Population and Housing, Land Use, Community Design, Public Facilities, and Parks and Recreation
- Resource Management Element, including Natural Resources/Conservation/Open Space, Cultural Resources, and Air Quality
- Transportation and Circulation Element

The FDCP includes a land use and circulation plan for the Plan area. With exception of the property included in the 2,616 acre Forest Ranch Concept Plan area, the proposed project also includes rezoning of properties within the Plan area as necessary and required to achieve consistency with the proposed FDCP land use designations.

1.2 PROCEDURES

Pursuant to Section 15168 of the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines), a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is prepared for a series of related actions that can be characterized as one large project, such as a general plan or specific plan. In contrast, a project EIR, the most common type of EIR, examines the impacts that would result from a specific development proposal or other project.

In conjunction with a private party application that proposed amendments to community plan designation of the existing Foresthill General Plan and associated rezoning to accommodate a proposed 2,615-acre development referred to as "Forest Ranch," a Draft EIR was prepared. The Forest Ranch project was being processed in a parallel but separate process from the Foresthill Divide Community Plan update. A separate Notice of Preparation for this project was circulated for a 30-day review period on December 27, 2001. Comments on that NOP are included as Appendix A.2 of this EIR. A Draft EIR (SCH #2001122105) was circulated for public review on June 4, 2004.

After circulation of these documents, Placer County determined that land use designations proposed for the Forest Ranch project should not be processed as a separate application, but should instead be included as part of the County's update of the Foresthill Divide Community Plan update as a separate option for consideration at the time the update is considered (the "Forest Ranch Concept Plan"). The Forest Ranch Concept Plan is now presented as an option in the Foresthill Divide Community Plan and the Forest Ranch project is not currently being

processed as a separate application. A Final EIR has not been prepared nor has a Final EIR been certified for the Forest Ranch project. If land use designations consistent with the proposed Forest Ranch project are adopted, those designations would occur through the adoption of the Forest Ranch Concept Plan during consideration of the Foresthill Community Plan update, not as a part of the private project that was initiated in 2001.

The EIR for the Foresthill Divide Community Plan update has been substantially revised to include consideration of the Forest Ranch Concept Plan and decisions made by the Planning Commission on November 30th 2005. The Revised EIR for the Foresthill Divide Community Plan update Draft EIR will be re-circulated in its entirety. In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(1), Placer County has determined that the previous comments on both the Foresthill Divide Community Plan update Draft EIR and the Forest Ranch Draft EIR will not require a response in the Final EIR for this recirculated document. Although the previously submitted comments are part of the administrative record, the County will only respond to those comments submitted in response to this recirculated revised Draft EIR.

As defined by Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines, a project is any action that "…has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment…" Section 15093 of the Guidelines requires decision-makers to balance the benefits of a proposed project against any unavoidable environmental effects of the project. If the benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the decision-makers may adopt a statement of overriding considerations, finding that the environmental effects are acceptable in light of the project's benefits to the public.

Under CEQA, the Lead Agency is usually the public agency with authority to approve or deny the project. In this case, the Placer County Board of Supervisors will act as Lead Agency with authority to certify the EIR. Under Section 15381 of the CEQA Guidelines, a Responsible Agency is a public agency other than the Lead Agency that has discretionary approval authority over the project, and will utilize the EIR prepared for the County. No additional public agencies whose discretionary approval is required have been identified. The lead agency is a County government, which has the discretionary authority to amend its land use documents and regulations. Portions of the Plan area are within the jurisdiction of the federal government (U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation); these lands are not subject to the provisions of the FDCP.

The CEQA process requires that the lead agency seriously consider input from trustee agencies, other interested agencies, citizen groups and individuals. CEQA provides for a public process requiring full public disclosure of the expected environmental consequences of the proposed action. The public must be given a meaningful opportunity to comment. CEQA also requires monitoring to ensure that mitigation measures are carried out.

CEQA requires a minimum 45-day public review period for commenting on the Draft EIR. During the review period, any agency, group or individual may comment in writing on the Draft EIR, and the Lead Agency must respond in writing to each comment on environmental issues in the Final EIR. According to Section 15202 of the CEQA Guidelines, CEQA does not require

formal hearings at any stage of the environmental review process; however, it is typical to consider the EIR and its findings during public hearings required for the associated project.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

As described in Section 1.2 above, Placer County has determined that a Program EIR should be prepared for the project.

Section 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines provides the following description of when a program EIR is used:

> (a) General. A program EIR is 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 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 effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

Sections 15168(c) and (d) also describe the use of a program EIR with later activities.

> (c) Use With Later Activities. Subsequent activities in the program must be examined in the light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared.
>
> (d) Use With Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations. A program EIR can be used to simplify the task of preparing environmental documents on later parts of the program…

Refer to the full text of Sections 15168(c) and (d) for greater detail on the process of using a program EIR for later activities.

Analysis contained in the Initial Study prepared for this project (see Appendix A.1) and responses to the Notice of Preparation have identified the following areas, organized to correspond to the subjects addressed in the Foresthill Divide Community Plan, which may result in potentially significant impacts requiring in-depth review and which are analyzed in this EIR. All impacts are analyzed in comparison to existing conditions in the Plan area.

Population and Housing. This section addresses the growth inducing potential of the FDCP and impacts on the housing stock. Although these impacts were found to be less than significant in the Initial Study, CEQA requires that an EIR address the growth-inducing impacts of a project.

Land Use. This section focuses on impacts on agricultural and timber resources or operations, impacts related to land use conflicts, and impacts related to changes in land use designations and zoning districts from the 1981 Foresthill General Plan.

Community Design. This section addresses visual and aesthetic impacts related to FDCP adoption, including impacts on scenic vistas, scenic highways, and light and glare.

Public Facilities. Subjects addressed in this section include impacts on police and fire protection, education/schools, water supply, sewage disposal, drainage and water quality, public utilities, and impacts on other public services (solid waste, general government, cemeteries, libraries, and postal facilities), along with recommended mitigation measures.

Parks and Recreation. This section addresses impacts on existing park and recreation facilities and programs, as well as the demand for new facilities and programs which may be created by the FDCP.

Natural Resources/Conservation/Open Space. This section evaluates the available data to determine whether the project has any potential to disturb species of special concern or adversely affect habitat, and recommends measures that are necessary to mitigate potential impacts. This section also identifies impacts and mitigation measures related to agricultural and forest resources, soils, geologic hazards, water resources, open space and conservation.

Cultural Resources. Existing cultural resources (archaeological and historical) in the Plan area are described in this section, and impacts and mitigation measures are identified.

Air Quality. The air quality section addresses the direct and cumulative air quality impacts of the FDCP and rezoning, which is within the Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCAPCD). This section addresses the overall magnitude of emissions resulting from the implementation of the Community Plan, as well as measures that could be implemented to reduce project emissions.

Transportation and Circulation. The transportation and circulation section evaluates and summarizes existing and cumulative conditions in the Plan area, including an analysis of roadway capacities and future cumulative traffic conditions. Circulation improvements are identified which will reduce potential impacts.

Noise. The noise section evaluates impacts on noise-sensitive uses of noise-generating activities, including new stationary noise sources and traffic noise associated with major roadways in the Plan area.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

Sections 15122 through 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines identify the content requirements for Draft and Final EIRs. An EIR must include a description of the environmental setting, environmental impact analysis, mitigation measures, alternatives, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

This Draft EIR is organized in the following manner:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary defines the general characteristics of the proposed FDCP and provides a concise summary matrix of the Community Plan's environmental impacts and associated mitigation measures. The Executive Summary also summarizes the alternatives to the FDCP.

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and overview of the EIR and describes the characteristics and uses of a program EIR.

CHAPTER 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposed FDCP, including intended uses of the EIR, project objectives, background information, and physical and technical characteristics of the proposed Community Plan. This chapter also discusses the relationship of the FDCP to the Placer County General Plan. The proposed rezoning of the Plan area is also described, including new zoning districts. The Forest Ranch Concept Plan is also described including the most up-to-date information regarding the physical and technical characteristics of the Concept Plan in relation to the proposed project.

CHAPTER 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Chapter 3 analyzes the environmental topics listed below and described previously in Section 1.3. Each subsection contains a description of the existing setting of the Plan area, identifies Plan- and zoning-related impacts in comparison to existing conditions and feasible mitigation measures, and summarizes findings and conclusions.

- Population and Housing
- Land Use
- Aesthetics
- Public Facilities
- Parks and Recreation
- Natural Resources/Conservation/Open Space
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality

- Transportation and Circulation
- Noise
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Global Climate Change

The following format is used in this Draft EIR for impact evaluation and development of mitigation measures for identified impacts.

1) INTRODUCTION

2) SETTING

3) IMPACT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The standard or threshold by which impacts are measured is identified, with the objective of determining if an impact will be significant. Where no locally adopted or other specific standards exist, the thresholds established in Appendix G (Environmental Checklist) of the State CEQA Guidelines are used.

4) IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact #: Each impact is described and listed by number for future reference. A conclusion is made regarding the significance of the impact, both before and after mitigation.

Mitigation Measure #: Each mitigation measure is described and listed by number for future reference, and includes a reference (by number) to which impact or impacts it applies. This section also includes a statement whether or not the recommended measure will reduce the impact below the level of significance, based on the impact evaluation criteria.

Forest Ranch Concept Plan: The Forest Ranch Concept Plan as a component of the FDCP has been analyzed throughout the EIR. To address incorporation of the Forest Ranch Concept Plan as a component of the FDCP, impacts and corresponding mitigation measures attributable to the Forest Ranch Concept Plan have been included in the EIR.

CHAPTER 4.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires that an EIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project and avoid and/or lessen the environmental effects of the project. This alternatives analysis provides a comparative analysis between the FDCP and selected alternatives:

- No Project/Development Consistent with the 1981 General Plan Alternative
- Highest Density Alternative
- Lowest Density Alternative
- Reduced Density Alternative

CHAPTER 5.0 MANDATORY CEQA SECTIONS

This chapter contains required discussions and analyses of various issues mandated by CEQA. The following topics are addressed in this section:

- Significant Environmental Effects That Cannot Be Avoided
- Significant Irreversible Impacts
- Cumulative Impacts
- Growth Inducing Impacts

In accordance with Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Draft EIR contains a brief statement indicating the reasons why certain subjects have been found to pose no significant project-related impacts and are therefore not discussed in detail in this EIR.

CHAPTER 6.0 MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

Chapter Six provides a monitoring and reporting program that summarizes the environmental issues, the mitigation measures, and the agency or agencies responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the mitigation measures.

LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED

This section presents a list of persons that were consulted during the preparation of the Draft EIR.

REFERENCES

This section presents a list of references that were used during the preparation of the Draft EIR.

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This section presents a list of all authors and other persons who contributed to the preparation of the Draft EIR.

APPENDICES

Appendices are attached to this Draft EIR, including the Notice of Preparation and responses to the NOP, and technical studies prepared for this EIR.

1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, Placer County prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this EIR on September 25, 2001. The County is identified as the lead agency for the proposed FDCP and rezoning. The NOP was circulated to local, state and federal agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed FDCP and rezoning. Comments and concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of this Draft EIR and can be found in Appendix A.1.

This document constitutes the Revised Draft EIR. The Revised Draft EIR contains a description of the FDCP and rezoning, description of the environmental setting, identification of FDCP and rezoning impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of FDCP alternatives. Upon completion of the Revised Draft EIR, the County will file a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the State Clearinghouse to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161).

PUBLIC NOTICE/PUBLIC REVIEW

Concurrent with the NOC, the County will provide public notice of the availability of the Revised Draft EIR for public review, and invite comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The public review and comment period will be 90 days. Although no public hearings on the Revised Draft EIR are required by CEQA, the County expects to hold one public hearing during the review period. Public comment on the Revised Draft EIR will be accepted in both written and oral form at a public hearing conducted by the Placer County Planning Commission.

All comments or questions regarding this Revised Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Mr. Loren Clark, Assistant Director
Natural Resources and Special Projects
Placer County Planning Department
3091 County Center Drive, Suite 280
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 745-3000
Email: lclark@placer.ca.gov

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, the Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to all public comments, both written and oral, received during the review period and at any public hearing. The County Planning Commission will review the Draft EIR and provide comments on the Draft EIR for the Board of Supervisors to consider. The County Board of

Supervisors will review and consider the Final EIR prior to their decision to take specific actions related to the FDCP.

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR

If the County finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete," the County may certify the Final EIR in writing in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, and if applicable, Section 15093. Section 15091 specifies that the lead agency shall state findings, in writing, of any environmental impacts and the changes made to lessen the impact or the reason why such mitigation is infeasible. Section 15093 requires a statement of overriding considerations in cases where the lead agency deems the project's benefits outweigh unavoidable environmental risks. The rule of adequacy generally holds that the EIR can be certified if:

1) the EIR shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and

2) the EIR provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the project in contemplation of environmental considerations.

MITIGATION MONITORING

CEQA Section 21081.6(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15097 require lead agencies to adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. Any mitigation measures adopted by the County as conditions for approval of the Community Plan will be included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to verify compliance. This Program is adopted by resolution at the time of Community Plan approval.