

Context

Yuba County occupies portions of California's Central Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills and mountains. Yuba County contains approximately 644 square miles and is generally bounded by the Feather River on the west, the Bear River on the south, and Honcut Creek on the north. The easterly boundary is not defined by natural features, but is generally located along the alignment of State Highway 49.

Regions

Yuba County is composed of three general physiographic regions: the valley, foothills and mountains. The valley is dominated by agriculture (field and tree crops, in particular, rice), and includes Beale Air Force Base (AFB), Marysville, Wheatland, and urbanized unincorporated areas. The foothills and mountain areas include land that has been traditionally used for grazing, timber production, and mining. Rural residential development is an increasing part of the foothill and mountain landscape. Existing land uses are illustrated in Exhibit Context-1.

Communities

The nearest major metropolitan area to Yuba County is Sacramento, which lies approximately 30 miles south of the southern edge of the County, by way of State Highways 70 and 65. Located in Yuba County are the incorporated cities of Marysville, the county seat, and Wheatland. Major unincorporated communities include Linda, Olivehurst-Plumas Lake, and Hallwood on the valley floor and Loma Rica, Browns Valley, Challenge, Brownsville, Oregon House, Dobbins, Camptonville, Smartsville, and Camp Far West in the foothill and mountain region. Bordering counties include Sutter County, Placer County, Nevada County, Sierra County, Plumas County, and Butte County.

Settlement

The county's diverse geography, with access to water and food, provided an ideal place for the settlement of Native Americans. The Gold Rush brought population to the area and established many of the existing communities in Yuba County. As a result of the development boom during and following the Gold Rush, the reclamation of land with flood control structures allowed for the development of a substantial local agricultural industry and enabled settlement in areas that would otherwise be undevelopable.

Yuba County's population as of January 1, 2010, was estimated by the California Department of Finance to be 73,380. Population centers are the incorporated cities of Marysville and Wheatland, as well as the unincorporated communities of Olivehurst-Plumas Lake, Linda, Beale AFB, Challenge-Brownsville, and Loma Rica. The unincorporated population in 2010 was estimated to be 56,955.¹

Local Economy

Traditionally, Yuba County has attracted agricultural-based industries and has relied on these types of industries for employment. Also, since the 1940s, Beale AFB has been a major employer of both military and civilian personnel. According to the Yuba Sutter Economic Development Corporation (YSEDC), in the Yuba-Sutter County area, agriculture is the largest component of the local economy. Agriculture is a billion-dollar industry for the region. One out of every four people in the region is employed either

¹ State of California, Department of Finance, E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, 2001-2010, with 2000 Benchmark. Sacramento, California, May 2010.



directly or indirectly in agriculture. Almost 75 percent of all the land in Yuba and Sutter counties is used for some sort of agricultural purpose. The largest use of agricultural land was for field crops and vegetables. Fruit and nut crops accounted for the second highest use of acreage. Recently, the employment base and local economic activity has started to diversify. In the last decade, many of the new jobs that have been created are in the service sector, government, retail, transportation, public utilities and construction.

Transportation Networks

The Yuba-Sutter region is served by State Highways 70, 65, 20, and 49, and U.S. Highway 99. The region is just north of the intersection of two major interstates, I-5 and I-80. Approximately 11 million people now live within a two-hour drive of the Yuba City/Marysville area. Union Pacific connects the Yuba-Sutter area to the nation's railway system. The rail system is used primarily to transport agricultural goods and other goods produced in the region. Amtrak serves passenger travel needs.

Land Cover

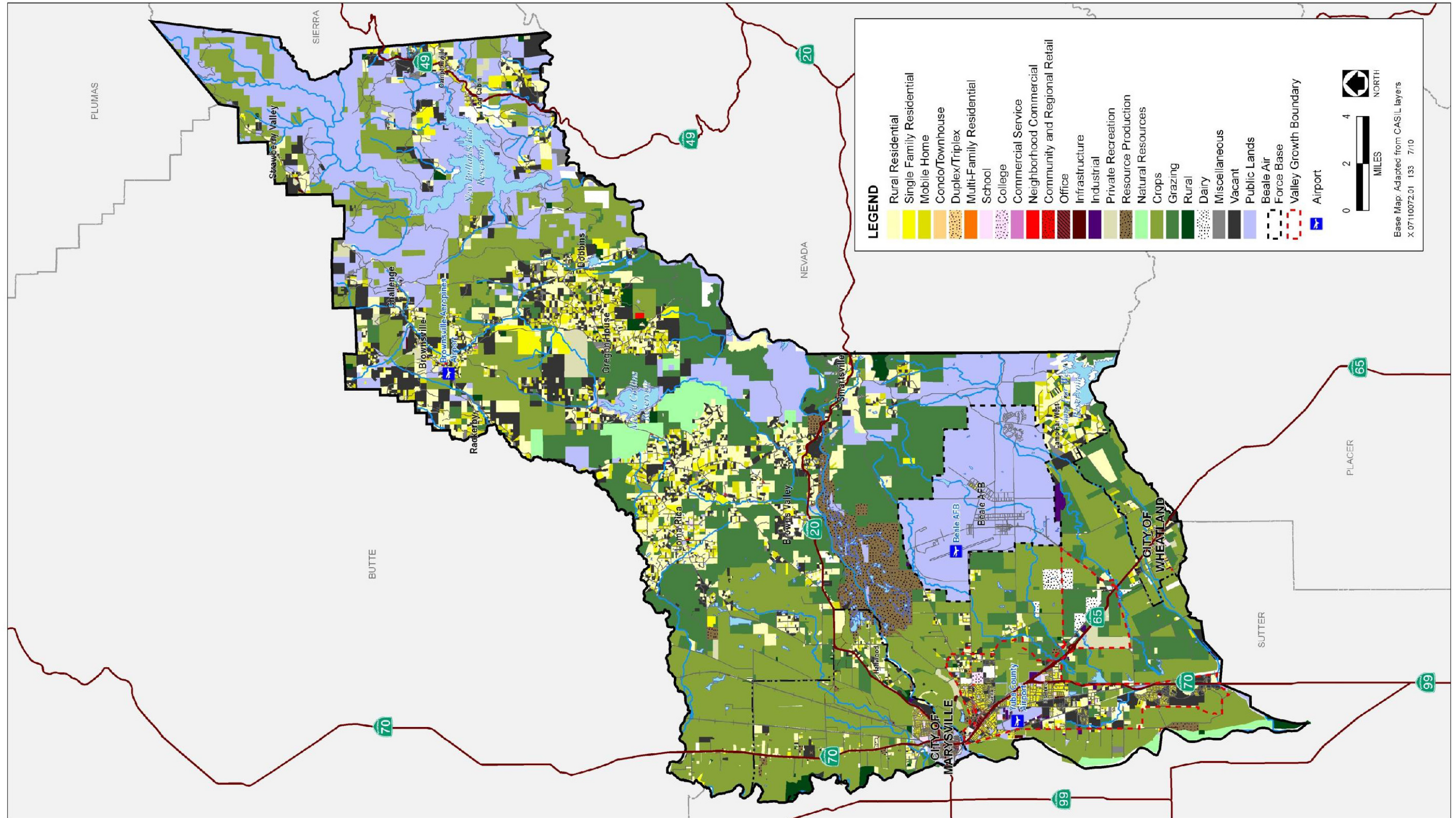
Sierran mixed conifer forest, ponderosa pine forest, and Douglas-fir forest cover most of the mountain areas of the County (above roughly 2,800 feet). Shrub-dominated habitats exist at scattered locations throughout the County and are described in the county vegetation data as mixed chaparral occurring at the lower elevations and montane chaparral occurring at the higher elevations. Montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood, blue oak-foothill pine, and blue oak woodland are located primarily at middle and lower elevations in the western half of Yuba County. Annual grassland covers approximately 42,701 acres and is the primary herbaceous-dominated habitat in Yuba County. Annual grassland is common at lower elevations (i.e., at elevations below roughly 2,500 feet) in the western region of the County. This habitat comprises mostly nonnative annuals, primarily of Mediterranean origin, but can also include a variety of native herbaceous species. Nonnative grasslands have replaced most native perennial grasslands in Yuba County and throughout most of California.

Waterways

Yuba County is located in the northern portion of California along the eastern edge of the Sacramento Valley within the Sacramento River Basin. It is one of the largest basins in California, encompassing approximately 26,500 square miles. The County is predominantly drained by the Feather, Yuba, and Bear Rivers, which flow into the Sacramento River and ultimately into the Pacific Ocean through San Francisco Bay. The melting snow pack in the Sierra Nevada, in combination with the operation of numerous reservoirs within the system, maintains flows in Sacramento year round. The primary drainages in Yuba County are the Bear River, North, Middle, and mainstem Yuba Rivers, Dry Creek, Honcut and South Honcut Creeks, and the Feather River. Reservoirs include Englebright, Merle Collins, New Bullards Bar, Lake Francis, and Camp Far West.

Development Trends

Some parts of Yuba County have changed substantially since the last General Plan update in 1996, including Olivehurst - Plumas Lake, Linda, and the City of Wheatland. Large areas along State Route (SR) SR-65 and SR-70 have been developed or approved for development. Most foothill areas of the County have not experienced substantial development, with most land use change occurring through minor subdivisions and small projects. Many foothill and mountain areas are publicly held open space, grazing lands, or otherwise rural and agricultural in nature, and would be expected to continue in this manner indefinitely.



Source: Yuba County Assessor's Office, 2007; Adapted by AECOM, 2010

Exhibit Context-1. Existing Land Use

