

3.11 Public Services

This section describes existing public services in the county, identifies future service needs resulting from construction of the proposed project, and assesses the proposed project's impacts on public services (police and fire). Mitigation measures are recommended for those impacts that were determined to be significant. The analysis describes existing public services in the project area and evaluates these services relative to future service needs resulting from construction of the project. It does not evaluate the impacts associated with construction of additional public facilities; such impacts are analyzed in other sections of this document (e.g., Air Quality, Noise, Traffic and Transportation). The County general plan was reviewed to establish baseline conditions and projected growth patterns; in addition the fire district and sheriff's office were consulted to assess projected needs.

As described in the Initial Study for the Hatchet Ridge Wind Project, there are no anticipated impacts related to schools and public recreation facilities because population growth would not occur as a result of the proposed project, and demands on local school districts and parks are not expected to change. Accordingly, these topics are not addressed further in this EIR.

3.11.1 Existing Conditions

This section discusses the existing conditions in the project area.

Environmental Setting

Study Area

The study area as it pertains to the analysis of public services comprises the service area for the particular service being discussed. The study area for law enforcement services is the Burney area of Shasta County, and the study area for fire and emergency services is Shasta County.

Law Enforcement

General public safety and law enforcement services for the unincorporated areas of Shasta County, which include the project area, are provided by the Shasta County Sheriff's Office. The closest station to the project site is in Burney, with eight deputy positions currently filled (three positions are currently unfilled), two sergeants, an interim lieutenant, and two non-sworn service officers. The station currently has eight 4-wheel-drive vehicles and one 2-wheel drive vehicle. There is one canine unit. The Burney sheriff station estimates that response time to Hatchet Ridge could be anywhere from 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on the weather and the location of officers at the time of dispatch (Turner pers. comm.).

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

In August 1992, the Fountain Fire burned 64,000 acres in eastern Shasta County, including the proposed project area. Sierra Pacific Industries replanted the burned areas along Hatchet Ridge in 1996 with ponderosa pine; the vegetation in the area is still recovering. Figure FS-1 in the Shasta County General Plan indicates that the proposed project is located in a *Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone* (Shasta County 2004).

As noted in the setting section of Chapter 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, fire agencies serving the unincorporated areas of Shasta County comprise the Forest Service, the National Park Service, Cal Fire, volunteer fire companies, and community fire districts. The nineteen volunteer fire companies are operated under the jurisdiction of SCFD. The community fire districts, on the other hand, are separate legal entities with legally drawn boundaries. Community fire districts have boards of directors and budgets separate from that of SCFD. Many of the community fire districts overlap with Cal Fire and Forest Service jurisdictions. Local agencies are consequently responsible primarily for non-wildland fires, while state and federal agencies respond primarily to wildland fires. In practice, however, all agencies work together and overlap duties when the need is present.

The Forest Service is responsible for wildland fire control on Forest Service-administered lands. The Forest Service also protects approximately 200,000 acres of private lands adjacent to or within Forest Service boundaries through an agreement with Cal Fire. The National Park Service provides protection for national parks. In the project area, the National Park Service provides protection for Lassen National Park.

Cal Fire provides wildfire protection to undeveloped forested areas of the southern Cascades. Cal Fire is largely concerned with the prevention and control of wildland fires and deterring the spread of fires into developed areas, although in the project area Cal Fire typically responds to structure fires as well (Cooley pers. comm.). Cal Fire would primarily respond to fire calls in the area in conjunction with local SCFD stations, while SCFD would respond to both fire and medical calls. The nearest Cal Fire station is in Burney, approximately 8 miles from the southern end of the project area. Cal Fire staffs its Burney station on a seasonal basis, typically from June to October (during the fire season) (Cooley pers. comm.). With two fire engines and three staff members per engine, Cal Fire anticipates having six–seven fulltime paid staff at the Burney station starting in June 2007. Additionally, one fulltime staff member is stationed at the Burney fire station during summers to serve as the bulldozer operator for firefighting activities (e.g., cutting fire lines). Cal Fire estimates that it would take approximately 10 minutes to respond to calls at the southern end of the project area (Young pers. comm.).

SCFD is responsible for structure fires and medical calls, although SCFD stations also respond to wildland fires year-round (Cooley pers. comm.). SCFD comprises 19 volunteer fire districts. These districts provide fire protection and medical assistance to the local communities on a volunteer basis. The project area is within the boundaries of the Montgomery Creek Volunteer Fire Company, which has two fire stations: one in Montgomery Creek approximately 13 miles from the project site and one in Round Mountain approximately 17 miles from the project site. The Montgomery Creek fire station would be the first station called to the project site for structure fires on a year-round basis and for wildland fires outside the fire season, with an anticipated response time of approximately 15 minutes. In 2006 the company responded to 196 incidents, the majority of which were medical incidents (Carroll pers. comm.).

Although the project area is within the Montgomery Creek Volunteer Fire Company boundaries, Burney FPD (also part of SCFD) is closer to the project area than the Montgomery Creek Volunteer Fire Company's stations and would typically be an additional responder on calls (Carroll pers. comm.). The Burney FPD has two stations, one in Burney approximately 8 miles from the project area, and one in Johnson Park approximately 12 miles from the project area. Cal Fire's and Burney FPD's stations in Burney are the nearest fire stations to the project area. Currently, there are approximately 20 volunteer firefighters and three paid positions in the Burney FPD. The Burney FPD responded to 382 calls from its Burney station and 81 calls from its Johnson Park station in 2006, for a total of 463 responses by the Burney FPD. Of those,

none were responses to calls for fire protection of the Hatchet Ridge area. The Burney FPD has stated that response to the proposed project area would be approximately 10 minutes (May pers. comm.).

Regulatory Setting

There are no federal regulations that apply to public services.

State

Public Resources Code 4290

PRC 4290 was adopted for the purpose of establishing minimum wildfire protection standards in conjunction with building, construction, and development in SRAs. Under PRC 4290, the future design and construction of structures, subdivisions, and developments in SRAs must provide for basic emergency access and perimeter wildfire protection measures as specified in PRC 4290. These measures provide for road standards for emergency access; signing and building numbering; water supply reserves; and fuel breaks and greenbelts. Local standards that exceed those of PRC 4290 supercede PRC 4290.

SRAs are those lands that meet the conditions listed below.

- Are covered wholly or in part by forests or by trees producing or capable of producing forest products.
- Are covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth, or grass, whether of commercial value or not, that protect the soil from excessive erosion, retard runoff of water, or accelerate water percolation, if such lands are sources of water that is available for irrigation or for domestic or industrial use.
- Are in areas principally used or useful for range or forage purposes and are contiguous to the lands described above.

Shasta County General Plan

5.4.3 Objectives

FS-1 Protect development from wildland and non-wildland fires by requiring new development projects to incorporate effective site and building design measures commensurate with level of potential risk presented by such a hazard and by discouraging and/or preventing development from locating in high risk fire hazard areas.

FS-2 Protection of life and property from crime by encouraging new development projects to incorporate effective defensible space design techniques.

5.4.4 Policies

FS-a All new land use projects shall conform to the County Fire Safety Standards.

FS-b Known fire hazard information should be reported as part of every General Plan amendment, zone change, use permit, variance, building site approval, and all other land development applications subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

FS-e Development in areas requiring expanded levels of police and fire services shall participate in adopted County programs designed to offset the added costs for providing the expanded level of services.

3.11.2 Impact Analysis

This section describes the methods used to determine the impacts of the proposed project on public services, lists the thresholds used to conclude whether an impact would be significant, and identifies measures to mitigate (i.e., avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for) significant impacts.

Methodology

The analysis of potential impacts on public services is based on a review of the General Plan guidelines, goals, and policies. Impacts were evaluated on the basis of their likeliness to increase demand and interfere with or exceed the capacity of existing public service systems; the impacts associated with the possible construction of additional public facilities were not addressed in this analysis.

Thresholds of Significance

The proposed project would have a significant impact on public services if it would result in any of the conditions listed below.

- An increased demand for police and fire services exceeding existing or planned staffing levels.
- Response times to calls for fire and police services beyond established levels.
- Increased potential risk of urban fire hazards.
- Increased risk of wildland fire hazards.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact PS-1: Increased demand for law enforcement (less than significant)

As described in Impact HAZ-5 in Section 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, public access to the wind turbines would be restricted to avoid potential safety hazards. All turbine towers would be locked, and the substation and switching station would be fenced and locked to prevent unauthorized entry. While response times are estimated at 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on officer location at the time of dispatch, these precautionary measures would minimize the need for police surveillance and response. Additionally, the Burney sheriff station anticipates that it would have adequate means to access the project site because it has eight 4-wheel drive vehicles, and two deputies who are part of the local search and rescue unit are equipped with snowcats and ATVs that could access the ridge in bad weather (Turner pers. comm.). This impact is considered less than significant.

Impact PS-2: Increased demand for fire and emergency medical services (less than significant)

The project area is a dry, windy, and vegetated environment susceptible to fire. The project area is classified as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (Shasta County 2004) and was the site of a wildland fire in 1992. During the construction phase, heavy equipment and passenger vehicles driving on vegetated areas before clearing and grading could increase the danger of fire. In addition, as discussed in the Section 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, during operation the operational phase of the project, lightning strikes on wind turbines could create power surges and start a fire. To minimize the potential for fires and additional fire service needs, Mitigation Measures HAZ-5 through HAZ-7 (identified in Section 3.7) would require the project applicant to comply with the legal requirements of fire prevention during project construction, create and maintain adequate firebreaks, practice fire prevention on an operational basis, and prepare an emergency response plan. Additionally, the project applicant/owner would be required to comply with PRC 4290, which requires firebreaks and other fire prevention measures.

During construction, the influx of construction workers may temporarily increase the need for emergency medical services. However, allowing access only of properly trained personnel would reduce the likelihood of accidents and hence the need for emergency medical care. During operation, the small number of fulltime staff would result in little change to the existing baseline demand. Although some accidents may occur during the 6- to 12-month construction period and the subsequent operational period, the small number of additional accidents would not place undue pressure on the existing system; moreover, implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-10 requires the applicant to prepare and implement a Health and Safety Plan for construction and operation of the project.

Emergency access would be available from the southern end of the project area on Bunchgrass Lookout Road, which is accessed from SR 299. A new road is proposed through the length of the project area to access the 6.5-mile line of wind turbines (Figure 2-2). The Montgomery Creek Volunteer Fire Company anticipates that the project would adequately meet the access needs of the local fire departments provided that the access road is plowed in winter (Carroll pers. comm.). The access road will be kept open in winter to provide access to the project for the 6–10 HRW personnel who will work there during the operational phase. Compliance with PRC 4290 would also reduce impacts related to fire services. Additionally, a Cal Fire medical helicopter (based in Redding) could be used in the event of a medical emergency (Young pers. comm.).

Because the project would have adequate emergency access and because implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-5, HAZ-6, HAZ-7, and HAZ-10 would reduce impacts related to fire and emergency medical services in the project area, this impact is considered less than significant.