



ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

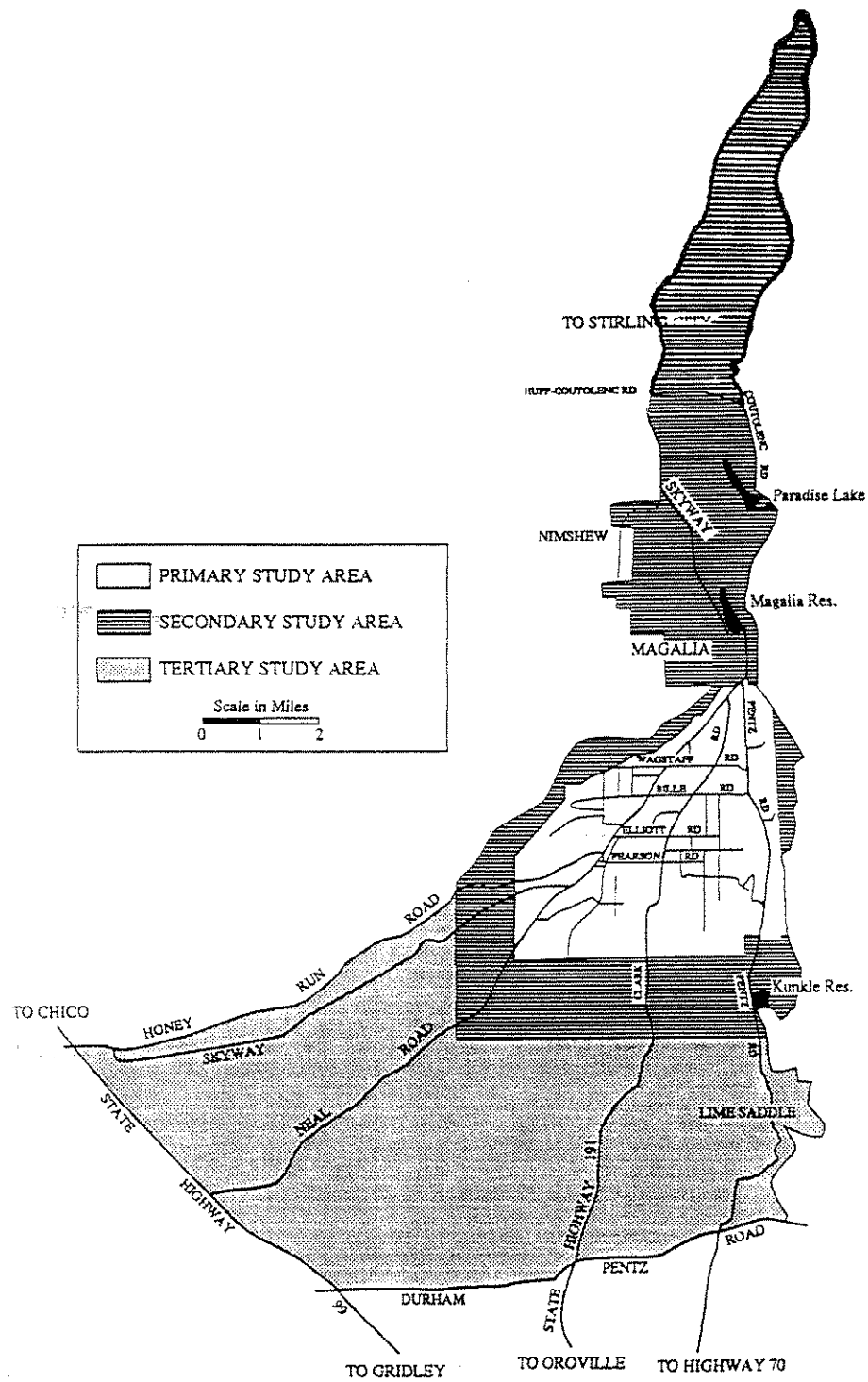
This document contains background information compiled for the Town of Paradise *General Plan*. The document addresses all the subject areas to be addressed in the plan and also serves as the "environmental setting" portion of the environmental impact report prepared for the *General Plan*. It also includes, as Appendix "A," a *Community Concerns Summary Report* which synthesizes comments collected early in the *General Plan* preparation process from the General Plan Revision Steering Committee, and responses to a citizens' opinion telephone survey of the community.

Three study areas have been established for the town and surrounding areas for the purpose of the *General Plan*:

- **Primary Study Area** - reflects the existing town limits
- **Secondary Study Area** - encompasses the existing Sphere of Influence adopted for the town by the Butte County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), and the Paradise/Magalia Reservoir watershed area to the north.
- **Tertiary Study Area** - extends to the south and west to Highway 99 and Durham-Pentz Road.

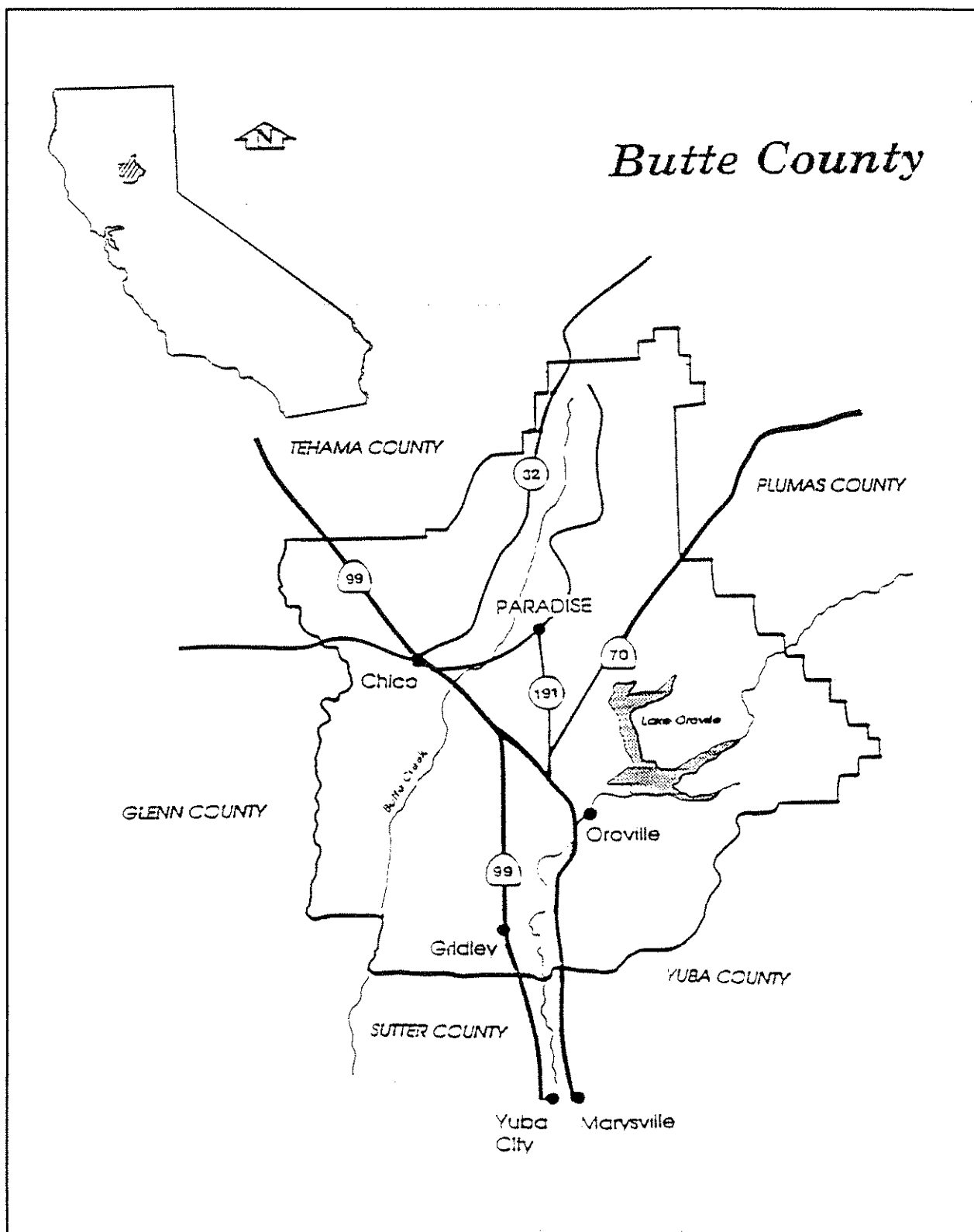
These study areas are shown on Figure 1-1. For purposes of this document, the term "study area" refers collectively to the primary, secondary and tertiary study areas.

The Town of Paradise, California is located in eastern Butte County, as shown on Figure 1-2, in the western foothills of the Cascade-Sierra Nevada Mountains. Located north of Paradise are the smaller unincorporated communities of Magalia, Paradise Pines, Nimshew and DeSabra; to the south of the Town is the Lime Saddle area. These areas are known as the Upper and Lower (Eden) Ridge, respectively. To the southeast is the City of Oroville (the county seat), and to the west is the City of Chico.



STUDY AREAS (GENERALIZED)

FIGURE 1-1



REGIONAL LOCATION

FIGURE 1-2



2.0 HISTORY

The first Europeans to enter the Sacramento Valley may have been the Spanish expedition led by explorer Gabriel Moraga in 1808, which explored the lower reaches of the Feather River, perhaps as far north as Sutter Buttes. In 1820, Captain Luis Arguello led an expedition into the foothills east of Oroville, and gave the Feather River its name (Fariss and Smith 1882:144-145). By 1828, and throughout the next two decades, Hudson's Bay Company and American Fur Company trappers were active throughout the region (Wells and Chambers 1973:128).

In 1844, Mexican Governor Manuel Micheltorena issued several land grants within northern California. Peter Lassen was awarded a grant on Deer Creek, part of which extended into northern Butte County. That same year, Edward A. Farwell and Thomas Fallon settled on the Farwell grant, the eastern boundary of which cuts through present-day Chico (Wells and Chambers 1973:128-129). In 1847, John Bidwell acquired his famous Rancho Chico estate from Farwell and built a house. Bidwell's estate became a mail, stage, and voting station, and farms sprang up around it. This settlement evolved into the City of Chico (Bancroft 1888:491).

In 1844, Samuel Neal settled along lower Butte Creek with partner David Dutton about seven miles south of Chico. Neal received the Esquon Grant, a 22,193 acre tract encompassing present-day Durham and Nelson. Neal established a successful cattle ranch, which he operated with Indian labor. His breeding stock was obtained from John Sutter. Along with meat, Neal sold hides and tallow. Later, he was successful in breeding horses and sheep. In the summer, he drove his livestock into the foothills along a route that has become today's Neal Road, one of three major early routes between the Paradise Ridge and the Central Valley. In 1848, Neal struck a rich gold deposit on the Feather River, and later he established one of the county's first lumber mills near present-day Magalia (McGie 1982[I]:35-37; Talbitzer 1987:21, 24, 38).

Butte County was incorporated on February 18, 1850, by an act of the newly commissioned state legislature. The original Butte County embraced all of present-day Butte and Plumas Counties along with portions of Lassen, Tehama, Sutter, and Colusa Counties (Wells and Chambers 1973:131). By 1853, when farms and settlements began to appear in some of the county's more remote regions, it became evident that the area was too large for the Butte County government to meet growing demands for roads, schools, law and order. Thus, beginning with Plumas County on March 18, 1854, areas within the original Butte County began to incorporate as separate counties (Fariss and Smith 1882:156-157).

It is thought that the first Euro-Americans to extensively explore Paradise Ridge (also known locally as Apple Ridge or simply "the Ridge") in the spring of 1850 were Abraham Decker, Sam McClellan, Sr., and Sam McClellan, Jr., who arrived in the vicinity of Dogtown (i.e., Magalia) about two miles north of the Town of Paradise. In the fall of that year, a man named Bassett built a cabin, and other settlers soon



followed. Tom Neal was possibly the first to find gold in the area in 1851, and by the next year, about 500 miners were active in this locality. Abe Folk opened the first store in fall, 1851, and one of the area's first settlers, E. B. Kinson, built a sawmill in 1852. Magalia was initially called Mountain View, but it became Dogtown in honor of Mrs. Bassett, who operated a thriving business selling dogs to the miners. The first post office was opened in 1857 under the name Butte Mills. In 1861, the name was changed to Magalia (Wells and Chambers 1973:252).

In 1853, R. P. Powell founded the community of Powellton, a few miles north of Magalia. There were rich diggings around Powellton, which attracted a number of miners (Mansfield 1918:73). A large sawmill was erected there by Charles Clark (Wells and Chambers 1973:259). Powell is credited with blazing the trail to Susanville in 1861, which eventually connected Oroville to Susanville by stagecoach on what became known as the Oroville-Susanville Humbug Road. The 160 mile-long stage road passed through the Ridge communities of Dogtown, Lovelock, Powellton, and Inskip (Wells and Chambers 1973:204-205, 259). Powell had blazed this route as early as 1853, and it served as a pack-mule freight trail for several years before it was improved for wagons and stagecoaches in 1861.

Lovelock, located north of Magalia, was founded in 1855 by George Lovelock. Excellent dry diggings attracted many miners, and some quartz (i.e. "hard rock") mining occurred there, too. A quartz mill was built there that was out of operation by 1882 (Mansfield 1918:73; Wells and Chambers 1973:260). Further yet up the ridge, about 17 miles north of the Study Area, the community of Inskip was settled by a man named Kelly. The mines in this locality were exceptionally rich, and five hotels, stores, and saloons were supported by hundreds of miners (Mansfield 1918:73).

On August 14, 1859, Chauncey Wright found a 54 pound gold nugget in a hydraulic mine about two miles east of Magalia (which was then still referred to as Dogtown by most residents). When melted down in San Francisco, the famous Dogtown nugget yielded \$10,690 in gold (Mansfield 1918:74) at 1859 gold prices.

Paradise had its beginnings around 1860, when William Leonard established a sawmill there. In 1865, Leonard established the route now known as Clark Road to connect his sawmill to towns in the Sacramento Valley. This route bypassed the exceedingly steep grade on the Pentz-Magalia Road above Pence's Ranch, which made it the favored route from Oroville to Paradise from that time onward (Estep 1970:26). A hotel on Clark Road served as a stage stop between Oroville and the mining towns on the upper ridge and beyond to Susanville. In the 1870s, churches were built in Paradise, and Paradise Post Office was established in 1877 in John Strong's general store on Clark Road. A second post office, known as Orloff, was established near the Southern Pacific Railroad Company depot at Pearson and Olive in 1905. When the two post offices were consolidated in 1911, the name of Paradise prevailed (McGie 1982[2]:234, 235; Talbitzer 1987:63).

The town experienced little growth until the early decades of the current century when the expansion of the lumber industry, construction of a railroad, and the formation of Paradise Irrigation District brought many new people into the area. Paradise became a center of commerce for many of the newcomers (Talbitzer 1987:78, 80).



The Ridge area received its first economic boost of the new century in 1900, when the Centerville Powerhouse and a power transmission line were completed within Butte Creek Canyon. De Sabla Powerhouse, located about seven miles upstream of the Centerville Powerhouse in Butte Creek Canyon, was completed by 1903. Water was diverted from the Feather River to increase the capacities of both powerhouses (Farber 1988; Mansfield 1918:352-353).

Diamond Match Company began to acquire about 55,000 acres on or near the Ridge in 1902. A huge sawmill, then one of the world's largest, was built in Stirling City in 1904. That same year, Butte County Railroad was built along Magalia Ridge to connect the sawmill at Stirling City to the match plant, planing and finishing mills in Chico. This railroad passed through Paradise, contributing to the growth of that community (McGie 1982[1]:184; Talbitzer 1987:80). In 1907, Southern Pacific took over operation of the railroad (Mansfield 1918:341, 359). The railroad gave renewed vitality to some of the old mining communities of the upper Ridge.

In 1914, about 400 people, mostly farmers, occupied Paradise. There was very little electricity, one telephone, no improved roads, two automobiles, no banks, and all of the water was supplied by wells. Paradise Irrigation District was organized with an initial bond issue of \$325,000 for the purpose of irrigating orchards and farms. Domestic drinking water was not initially provided. Nonetheless, the formation of PID led to rapid growth, and new orchards were planted (Mansfield 1918:367). The Magalia Reservoir was acquired from PG&E, and a new dam and distribution system were completed on February 16, 1918. The reservoir lies one-quarter mile from the Southern Pacific Railroad depot in Magalia (Mansfield 1918:348), which today serves as a restaurant.

In January 1921, a new Paradise Elementary School was occupied. One week later, it burned down. The next year, a new town hall was built near the site of the old one. In 1924, Paradise temporarily won a bitter battle with the Chico High School Board of Trustees, who then administered Paradise High School, to keep the school open. In the 1930s, however, Paradise, Magalia, and Stirling City high school students were bused daily to Chico. By 1927, Paradise Irrigation District served 11,250 acres producing pears, apples, walnuts, olives, and grapes. The same year, the Paradise Veterans Building was dedicated (McGie 1982[2]:9, 21, 23, 32, 36, 57).

One of the main events of the 1930s was the announcement of plans for a new road to Chico, later named the Skyway, to replace the narrow, winding Neal Road. In 1939, Paradise Elementary School again burned down (McGie 1982[2]:57).

In 1945, the Butte County Board of Supervisors voted to proceed with construction of the Skyway instead of upgrading and realigning Neal Road. The long awaited road was finally built. In 1948, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for Feather River Hospital, and in 1953, the Supervisors approved the widening of the Skyway to four lanes through Paradise (McGie 1982[2]:102, 103, 120).

Paradise Unified School District was formed in 1950, serving Paradise, DeSabra, Stirling City, and other outlying areas. By the middle of that decade, Paradise population reached around 8,000 people. A new Paradise Junior-Senior High School was built in 1954. To keep up with the town's steady growth, Paradise Irrigation District constructed a new dam to create the Paradise Reservoir above the Magalia Reservoir.



(By 1979, the water district would serve over 30,000 people.) As the 1950s proceeded, Paradise began to establish its identity as a retirement community. Between 1954 and 1959, the number of businesses in the town grew by 47.4 percent (McGie 1982[2]:123, 132, 133, 134, 175).

Paradise continued to grow during the 1960s, with new public works projects such as water mains and the widening of roads. A shopping center was built on the Skyway. Total school enrollment exceeded 2,600, and a second elementary school was constructed on Pentz Road (McGie 1982[2]:190, 196).

The Skyway was again widened through Paradise in the 1970s, and the town received a new library. A mid-decade drought was hard on the town, as the water supply severely waned. The crowning event of the decade was incorporation of the Town of Paradise in 1979 with over 20,000 residents in the new town limits. For two years, Paradise was the most populous town in the county, until it was overtaken by Chico (Talbitzer 1987:87). The widening of the Skyway to four lanes from Chico to Neal Road at the lower end of Paradise ushered in the 1980s (McGie 1982[2]:216, 224, 236, 266), during which time Paradise became a bustling, somewhat urban community with new shopping centers and other businesses along a widened Clark Road.