

# NAPA COUNTY BASELINE DATA REPORT

## CHAPTER 12 VISUAL AND AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### CHRONOLOGY OF UPDATE

NOVEMBER 30, 2005—VERSION 1



MOUNTAIN VINEYARD, ST. HELENA

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the visual resources of the County in terms of the built environment (urban landscape), open space (including agricultural land and natural, undeveloped land), and scenic corridors (views from a recognized roadway or other linear feature having archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities).

**NAPA COUNTY BASELINE DATA REPORT:  
VISUAL AND AESTHETIC RESOURCES**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
FHWA	United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration
GIS	Geographic information system
LIDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
PUD	Planned Unit Development
SMS	Scenery Management System
SR	State Route
USFS	United States Forest Service
VRM	Visual Resource Management

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his chapter provides a discussion of the visual and aesthetic resources found in 13 geographic evaluation areas in Napa County. It also provides a general discussion of the state, and local policies and regulations that deal with visual analysis/assessment in Napa County and reviews recent case law decisions pertinent to visual analysis. This chapter describes the methods used to identify viewsheds, scenic corridors, locally significant visual resources and important ridgelines. This information is then presented, along with descriptions of the visual resources in each evaluation area.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the visual resources of the County in terms of the built environment (urban landscape), open space (including agricultural land and natural, undeveloped land), and scenic corridors (views from a recognized roadway or other linear feature having archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities).

## SPECIALIZED TERMS

- *Views.* In this chapter, views are defined as being short-range, medium-range or long-range. Short-range views are views in the immediate foreground (from 0' to approximately 300'). Medium-range views include everything within the viewer's general vicinity (from approximately 300' to about a ½ mile). Long-range views are anything beyond a ½-mile away from the viewer and provide background to most views.
- *Ridgelines.* This chapter uses the definitions for "ridgeline," "major ridgeline" and "minor ridgeline" from the Napa County Viewshed Ordinance, which defines each as follows:
  - "Ridgeline" shall mean a visually prominent, relatively narrow strip or crest of land, which includes the highest points of elevation within a watershed that separates one drainage basin from another.
  - "Major Ridgeline" shall mean a ridgeline, which is prominently visible from a substantial land area within the County. Major ridgelines are characterized by the lack of a topographical backdrop where the sky is visible beyond the ridge.
  - "Minor Ridgeline" shall mean a ridgeline that is not prominently visible to a large area of the County. Minor ridgelines are typically lower in height, when compared to the surrounding terrain and may be visible only to a limited area, or have a backdrop of a nearby higher topographical feature.

- *Landscapes.* As stated, among the purposes of this chapter is the description of the built environment, open space and scenic corridors. In the context of this chapter, open space includes agricultural uses and more natural, undeveloped lands. This chapter further differentiates between the "natural environment," and the "managed environment" as defined below:

- "Natural Environment" shall mean undeveloped land in its natural state.
- "Managed Environment" shall refer primarily to agriculture and any other use where vegetation provides the dominant visual character but the uniformity required by farming and the associated infrastructure keep the landscape from appearing completely natural.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

This section discusses the federal, state and local policies and regulations that apply to visual resources in Napa County.

### FEDERAL POLICIES

Federal policies and regulations, most notably the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, apply only to federal-aid highways (namely those that are part of the National Highway System or part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways). Napa County contains only one federal-aid highway – Interstate 80 – an approximate one-mile segment of which passes through the southeastern corner of the county. Because the presence of federal highways in Napa County is minimal, and because the scope of the federal Highway Beautification Act is limited to the protection of rural and scenic areas of the federal-aid highway system from "billboard blight," this chapter shall focus on state and County policies and regulations as they apply to scenic roadways and viewshed protection in Napa County.

### STATE POLICIES

#### STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

In 1963, the California legislature created the Scenic Highway Program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to state highways. The state regulations and guidance governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated scenic depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view.

Napa County contains no officially designated state scenic highways. However, segments of SR 29, SR 121 and SR 221 are eligible for scenic highway designation. The status of a scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor

protection program, applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a scenic highway (Caltrans 2005).

State Route segments within Napa County identified as eligible for official scenic highway designation are the following (see Figure 12-1):

- SR 29. From the intersection with SR 37 near Vallejo to the intersection with SR 221 near the City of Napa and from Trancas Street in the City of Napa to the Lake County border.
- SR 121. From the intersection with SR 221, near the Napa State Hospital, to near Trancas Street in the City of Napa.
- SR 221. From the intersection with Soscol Road to the intersection with SR 121 in the City of Napa (the entire duration of SR 221).

## COUNTY POLICIES

The following policies were excerpted from the Napa County General Plan and related implementing ordinances.

## SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

The Scenic Highways Element of the General Plan presents the logic for the establishment of a system of candidate scenic roadways in Napa County (see Figure 12-2):

In Napa County many highways traverse areas of natural scenic beauty and recreational interest. These State Highway Routes and County Roads pass through the vineyards in the Napa Valley, wind through several steep and forested hills and provide access to numerous wineries, historical landmarks, state parks and Lake Berryessa. These routes provide residents and visitors an enjoyable travel experience.

The various landscapes and scenic corridors are a great natural resource and must be protected for future generations. Preservation of these scenic highways offers unique opportunities to the increasing number of Californians who live and work in urban areas (Napa County 1983).

Resolution No. 03-207, passed by the Napa County Board of Supervisors on December 9, 2003, added to the list of designated public roads for projects subject to the Viewshed Protection Program all “candidate” roadways listed in the Scenic Highways Element.

All designated scenic roadways in Napa County are listed above. Roadways added to this list by Resolution No. 03-207 are indicated by an asterisk (\*).

- American Canyon Road
- Bale Lane \*
- Berryessa-Knoxville Road \*
- Butts Canyon Road \*
- Chiles Valley Road \*
- Deer Creek Road and Howell Mountain Road (from St. Helena to Pope Valley Road) \*
- Deer Park Road
- Dry Creek Road (to Oakville Grade) \*
- Dunaweal Lane
- Gordon Valley Road
- Howell Mountain Road
- Larkmead Lane
- Lodi Lane \*
- Lokoya Road
- Lower Chiles Valley Road
- Mount Veeder Road
- Oak Knoll Avenue \*
- Oakville Cross Road
- Oakville Grade
- Old Sonoma Road
- Partrick Road
- Petrified Forest Road \*
- Pope Canyon Road \*
- Pope Valley Road \*
- Redwood Road
- Sage Canyon Road
- Silverado Trail \*
- Spring Mountain Road
- State Route 12
- State Route 29 (from Napa to Lake County Line) \*
- State Route 121 (from Sonoma County to Napa; from Napa to State Route 128) \*
- State Route 128 (from Rutherford to Monticello Dam) \*
- Tubbs Lane
- Wall Road
- Wooden Valley Road \*
- Yountville Cross Road \*
- Zinfandel Lane \*

## CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan (amended through December 3, 1998) identifies goals and policies for outdoor recreation which address the use of national public domain lands, state parks, City and County recreation areas, hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, sightseeing, wildlife refuges and other recreation areas. “Areas of outstanding scenic, historical and cultural values” are included in outdoor recreation and the General Plan elaborates on what such areas include (p.8-1):

Land use of these purposes is concerned with preservation of attractive and appealing features in the natural and man-made landscape. These features might include the preservation of historical and architectural landmarks such as bridges and buildings made of local volcanic rock. These buildings give the county a distinctive architectural identity. It also is concerned with the potential adverse visual impact of solid waste disposal sites, auto wrecking, surface mines, signs, utility lines, etc. (Napa County 1983).

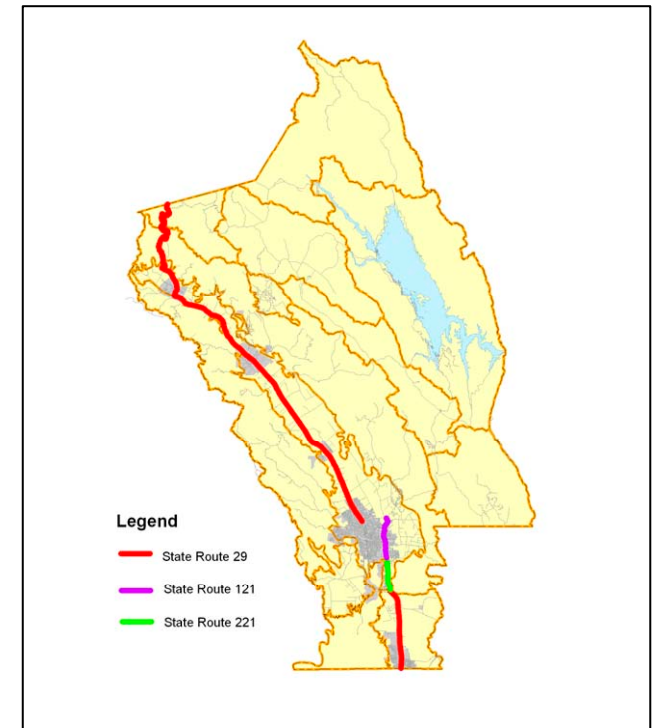


Figure 12-1: State-eligible Scenic Highways

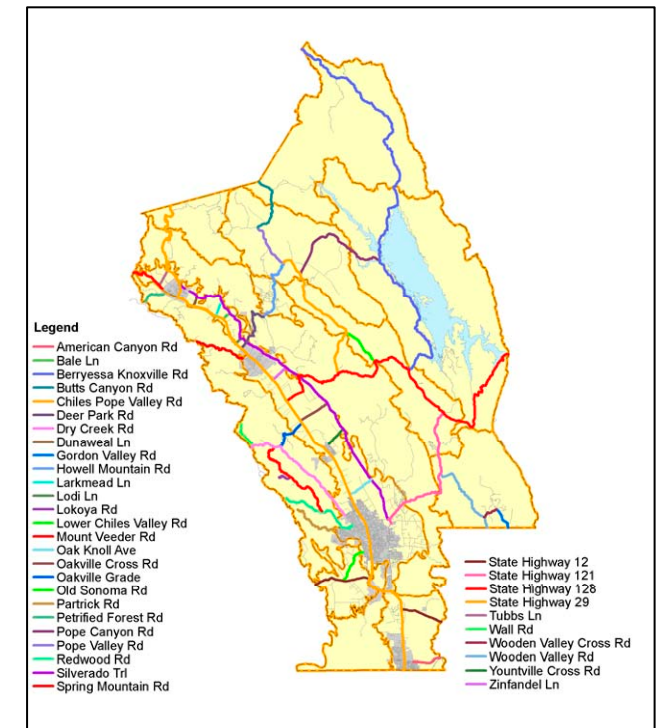


Figure 12-2: County-designated Scenic Highways

Areas of Scenic Value are further discussed in the Conservation and Open Space Element, with a focus on the County's unincorporated areas, where the skylines, ridgetops and hillsides are largely undeveloped. The role of the area's visual resources in encouraging tourism is discussed and hillside vineyard development, residential development and telecommunications facilities are identified as potential adverse visual impacts to the area's scenic resources. The Planning Goal as pertains to Areas of Scenic Value is to "Encourage preservation of and provide visual access to the natural beauty of Napa County, thereby enriching the lives of its citizens and enhancing and maintaining on of the County's primary industries, the tourist industry," and the following conservation policies follow (p. 8-28):

- a. Identify and preserve the area's architectural and historical landmarks.
- b. Discourage the installation of new overhead utility lines and develop programs for undergrounding existing overhead lines.
- c. Minimize the number of individual telecommunications facilities and sites present through the encouragement, where appropriate, of co-location and the development of multiple-user sites.
- d. Develop a program for highway beautification (see Scenic Highways Element).
- e. Develop comprehensive sign standards and regulations to fit the unique character and need of the area.
- f. Land use patterns should include visual consideration to prevent the destruction of visual quality. The landscape can easily become a hodge-podge of roof tops, shining mobile homes, power lines and poles. Therefore, the appropriate density and cluster subdivision design form should be carefully planned.
- g. Implement Conservation Policies (a), (b), (c), and (d) from 1B "Areas Required for Ecological and Other Scientific Study Purposes" as applicable to areas of outstanding scenic value as high priority.
- h. Develop co-operative programs with adjacent counties applicable to the siting of telecommunications facilities on the ridgelines forming their common borders with Napa County.
- i. Develop co-operative programs with the towns and cities within the County applicable to the siting of telecommunications facilities within each other's viewsheds.
- j. Develop co-operative programs with the state and federal land-holding agencies within the County applicable to the siting of telecommunications facilities on their lands (Napa County 1983).

### NAPA COUNTY VIEWSHED PROTECTION COMBINATION DISTRICT (COUNTY CODE 18.101)

The Viewshed Protection Combination District classification is intended to identify those properties along major County roads and highways that are visually prominent, are located in identified scenic corridors, or are located in areas of existing significant geologic, topographic and other natural features. Future development activities within the district should be designed and sited so as to preserve and,

where possible, enhance existing short, medium and long-range views of existing significant geologic, topographic and other natural features. The purpose of establishing this district is to ensure that future construction minimizes impacts on area roadways and adheres to recognized principles of design, site planning and is of a high quality design that will enhance the market attractiveness of the entire airport industrial specific plan area. (Ord. 1195 § 1 (part), 2002: Ord. 1161 § 1 (part), 1999) (Napa County 2005)

All uses allowed without a use permit in the underlying principal zoning district with which Viewshed Protection Combination District is combined shall be allowed in all Viewshed Protection Combination Districts without a use permit. (Ord. 1195 § 1 (part), 2002: Ord. 1161 § 1 (part), 1999). All uses allowed with a use permit in the principal underlying zoning district with which the Viewshed Protection Combination District is combined may be permitted in all Viewshed Protection Combination Districts upon grant of a use permit provided the commission or zoning administrator makes the findings required by section 18.124.070 and section 18.101.040. (Ord. 1195 § 1 (part), 2002: Ord. 1161 § 1 (part), 1999) (Napa County 2005).

### NAPA COUNTY VIEWSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM (COUNTY CODE 18.106)

The Viewshed Protection Ordinance was passed by the Board of Supervisors in December 2001 and amended in 2003. Its intent is to preserve the unique scenic quality of Napa County. More specifically, the regulations were adopted to "protect the public health, safety, and community welfare and to otherwise protect the scenic quality of the County both for visitors to the County as well as for its residents by ensuring that future improvements are compatible with existing land forms, particularly County ridgelines and that views of the County's many unique geologic features and the existing landscape fabric of the County's hillside areas are protected and preserved" (Napa County Conservation, Development and Planning 2001, as amended).

In short, the ordinance sets forth hillside development standards to minimize the impact of man-made structures and grading on views of existing landscapes and open spaces as seen from designated public roads within the County.

These regulations are consistent with the goals and policies of the Napa County General Plan, particularly as specified in the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation, Circulation and the Scenic Highways Elements. Furthermore, it is intended that these regulations accomplish the following:

- a. Provide hillside development guidelines to minimize the impact of man-made structures and grading on views of existing landforms, unique geologic features, existing landscape features and open space as seen from designated public roads within the County;
- b. Protect and preserve views of major and minor ridgelines from designated public roads: scenic highways as identified in Figures 75 and 76 of the scenic highways element of the Napa County general plan, and such other county roads as may be designated by resolution of the board of supervisors";

- c. Create a development review process that maximizes administrative, staff level approval of projects which meet administrative standards, while also providing a vehicle for review by the Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission of those projects that do not meet the administrative standards;
- d. Minimize cut and fill, earthmoving, grading operations and other such man-made effects on the natural terrain to ensure that finished slopes are compatible with existing land character; and
- e. Promote architecture and designs that are compatible with hillside terrain and minimize visual impacts (Ord. 1189 § 3 (part), 2001).

Basically, the Viewshed ordinance pertains to new and expanded structures or grading that require a permit by the County on hillsides with slope areas greater than 15% or that may be within 25 vertical feet of a major or minor ridgeline.

## RELEVANT CASE LAW DECISIONS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is the legal authority by which potential environmental impacts of proposed projects in California are identified and disclosed to the public. Case law decisions have refined the application of CEQA over time and they continue to be the primary means by which the law and its practice evolves.

A particularly controversial topic in current CEQA case law is the issue of obstruction of public views, as opposed to the obstruction of private views. This subject was either a primary or corollary issue in each of the following four cases, all of which were heard in 2004.<sup>1</sup>

### BOWMAN V. CITY OF BERKELEY (2004) 122 CAL.APP.4TH 572

In this case – involving a group of neighbors who objected to the scale and structure of a proposed mixed-use residential infill building because they believed it would block views, shade adjacent buildings and exist at a scale that was incompatible with its neighbors – the Court held that obstruction of a few private views in a project’s immediate vicinity is not generally regarded as a significant impact. The project had been approved by the City of Berkeley by a “mitigated negative declaration,” by which a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is deemed to be unnecessary.

The Court concluded that it did not believe that the Legislature, in enacting CEQA, intended to require an EIR where the sole environmental impact is the aesthetic merit of a building. To rule otherwise would mean that an EIR would be required for every urban building project that is not exempt under CEQA if enough people could be marshaled to complain about how it will look.

Secondly, the Court noted that the project had undergone lengthy scrutiny by the Design Review Committee and Zoning Administration Board, concluding that aesthetic issues, like this one, are ordinarily the subject to local design review, not CEQA.

<sup>1</sup> All information was provided in personal communication with Gary Jakobs, EDAW, Inc., on 5/23/05.

### MIRA MAR MOBILE COMMUNITY V. CITY OF OCEANSIDE (2004) 119 CAL.APP. 4TH 477

The Fourth District Court of Appeal rejected an attack on the EIR for a condominium project, upholding among other things the EIR’s analysis of aesthetic impacts on a neighboring mobile home park. The petitioners, residents of a mobile home community just uphill from the proposed site of a two-building, 96-unit complex on 7.5 acres in the City of Oceanside, opposed the project because it would cut off their ocean views and block the sun and ocean breezes, having stated so during the public comment period for the EIR.

In response, the final document stated that the views from the mobile home park were private, rather than public and that under the EIR’s significance criteria, impacts on private views were not considered significant. The Court agreed, holding that the city did not abuse its discretion by adopting significance criteria that drew a distinction between public and private views. Rather, it said that neither state nor local law protects private views from private lands, and that the rights of one private landowner cannot prevail over the rights of another private landowner except in accordance with uniformly applied standards and policies as expressed in the City’s general plan, redevelopment plan, local coastal program and zoning ordinances. Because the City applied the policies contained in the local coastal program, the Court concluded that it did not abuse its discretion by concluding that the project would have no significant effects on aesthetics, including views.

### OCEAN VIEW ESTATES HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC. V. MONTECITO WATER DISTRICT (2004) 116 CAL. APP 4TH 396

In this case, The Second District Court of Appeal held that Montecito Water District should have prepared an EIR, rather than adopting a mitigated negative declaration, before the District approved a proposal to cover a small reservoir used to store potable water. Specifically, the project would have visually replaced the surface of clear water with an aluminum cover, which would be visible from two nearby homes, despite proposed landscaping. The District argued that impacts on private homes did not amount to a significant impact under CEQA, but the Court disagreed, stating that the District could consider the number of private views potentially affected by the cover in determining whether the impact was significant. The record also contained evidence that the cover would be visible from public trails, and the landscaping would not shield this view. This evidence included a letter from the County Planning Department expressing concerns about impacts on views from trails.

However, the Court was not simply considering a matter as objective as whether the project would obstruct views. It was concerned with the overall aesthetic impact of an aluminum cover. Consideration of the overall aesthetic impact of the cover by its very nature is subjective, and the Court held that opinions that the cover would not be aesthetically pleasing are not the special purview of experts. Rather, personal observations on these non-technical issues can constitute substantial evidence. The Court concluded that the evidence amounted to a fair argument that the project could have a significant aesthetic impact.

## THE POCKET PROTECTORS V. CITY OF SACRAMENTO (2004) 124 CAL. APP. 4TH 903

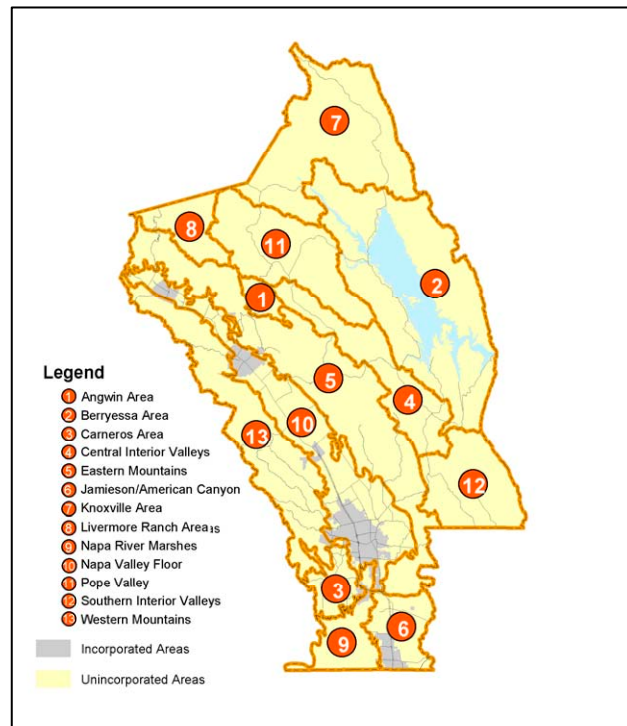


Figure 12-3: Evaluation Areas

The Third District Court of Appeal held that the City of Sacramento should have prepared an EIR, rather than adopting a negative declaration, prior to approving an infill residential project. The Court held the record contained a “fair argument” the project would have land-use impacts because it was arguably inconsistent with the City’s adopted development standards, and would have significant aesthetic impacts.

The property consisted of a narrow, 20-acre strip of land, the last remaining undeveloped parcel in the “pocket” area of the City. The City’s adopted Planned Unit Development (PUD) standards called for townhouses or similar development on the site. The proposed project consisted of detached single-family residences with reduced setbacks. Because of the dimensions of the site, the lots were relatively wide and shallow. The City adopted a mitigated negative declaration and approved the project.

The record contained testimony from neighbors, including architects and planners who lived near the site, that the project would result in a visual “tunneling” or “canyoning” effect down a narrow private street, a shortage in shade trees and other landscaping, and a general degradation of the existing visual character of the site from what was referred to as excessive massing of housing with insufficient front, rear, and side yard setbacks. According to the Court, those observations were sufficient to raise the potential of a significant aesthetic impact from the proposed project, and were not reduced to insignificance by project revisions, despite the developer’s efforts to redesign the project in response to these concerns. The lack of an objective standard to measure these aesthetic impacts did not mean the neighbors’ testimony was insubstantial.

Finally, this case was explicitly distinguished from the Bowman case by the court. Bowman involved a single four-story building located on a blighted parcel in an urbanized area, and the neighbor’s opposition boiled down to a claim the building should have been lowered to three stories. The Court dismissed as dictum (an authoritative statement) the Bowman Court’s statement that an EIR is not required where the sole environmental impact is the aesthetic merit of a building in a highly developed area.

In summary, two of the cases discussed above (Bowman and Mira Mar) ended with private views affirmed as being less protected than public views. However, in the Ocean View Estates Homeowners Association case, the court held that the District could consider the number of private views potentially affected by the cover in determining whether the impact was significant. And in the Pocket Protectors case, observations by private citizens regarding potential development on private streets were found to be sufficient to raise the potential of a significant aesthetic impact from the proposed project, and were subsequently not reduced to insignificance by project revisions. Clearly, the courts are still addressing the issue of public and private views; this is likely to be a focus of CEQA-related case law into the near future.

## METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

Due to the visual and aesthetic diversity within Napa County, photo-textual assessment of visual resources was conducted in 13 evaluation areas. These evaluation areas are: Napa River Marshes, Jamieson/American Canyon, Carneros Area, Napa Valley Floor, Western Mountains, Eastern Mountains, Angwin Area, Livermore Ranch Area, Southern Interior Valleys, Central Interior Valleys, Pope Valley, Berryessa Area and Knoxville Area (see Figure 12-3).

### ESTABLISHED FEDERAL METHODOLOGIES

There are a number of established visual impact procedures employed by federal agencies for inventory of visual character and quality, analysis of viewer response, and assessment of impacts and visual resource management. The following summary addresses three methodologies one used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), one by the United States Forest Service (USFS) and finally one by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The summary is provided to highlight the emphases of each approach and catalogue the methodologies.

### VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The objective of BLM’s Visual Resource Management (VRM) is to manage public lands in a manner which will protect the quality of the scenic and visual values of BLM managed lands. To those ends, the VRM system functions in two ways. First, for management purposes, BLM conducts an inventory that evaluates visual resources on all lands under its jurisdiction. Once inventoried and analyzed, lands are given relative visual ratings (Management Classifications or Classes). The development of Management Classes is not project-specific, but rather a general process to identify broad visual objectives for BLM public lands. Second, when the development is proposed, by BLM itself or by other agencies or the private sector, the degree of contrast between the proposed activity and the existing landscape is measured (Contrast Rating) (Bureau of Land Management 1980).

At a more specific level of detail, the Inventory/Evaluation phase in VRM consists of three steps: assessment of the visual quality of the landscape, the sensitivity of the people to change(s) in the landscape and the viewing distance. Management Classes describe the different degrees of modification allowed to the basic elements of the landscape. Class designations are derived from an overlay technique that combines the maps of Scenic Quality, Sensitivity Levels and Distance Zones. The overlays are used to identify areas with similar combinations of factors. These areas are assigned to one of five Management Classes according to predetermined criteria. The resulting map of contiguous areas sharing the same VRM class is an important document for all BLM land use planning decisions and it is also used to assess the visual impact of proposed development.



## SCENERY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Scenery Management System (SMS) superseded the Visual Management System in 1995 and focuses heavily on ecosystem management and public participation. The Handbook for Scenery Management (United States Forest Service 1995) presents the key aesthetic considerations to be integrated into the analysis, planning and implementation stages of ecosystem: landscape character, scenic integrity and constituent preferences.

Landscape character descriptions are framed in a SMS as combinations of the objective information contained within ecological unit descriptions and the cultural values that people assign to landscapes. Landscape character is defined as giving a geographic area its visual and cultural image, consisting of the combination of physical, biological and cultural attributes that make each landscape identifiable or unique. Scenic integrity is defined as a measure of the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be “complete.” The highest scenic integrity ratings are given to those landscapes which have little or no deviation from the character valued by constituents for its aesthetic appeal. Scenic Integrity is used to describe an existing situation, standard for management, or desired future condition. Essentially, scenic integrity indicates the degree of intactness and wholeness of the landscape character. Human alterations can sometimes raise or maintain integrity; more often it is lowered depending on the degree of deviation from the character valued for its aesthetic appeal. Constituents include the individual visitor (to the Forest), the people living in the local community, and the people who live a far distance from the Forest who may visit or who may have never visited the Forest but value the knowledge that it is being managed for scenic and aesthetic qualities as part of their National Forest System.

The above considerations inform the application of SMS so that the desired landscape character and scenic integrity is identified, achieved and sustained. The major steps in this process include ecosystem inventory and analysis (based on, among other things: constituent input, landscape character, scenic attractiveness, existing scenic integrity, areas of concern and distance zones), alternative development and evaluation (in which a desired landscape character is selected), and alternative selection, followed by further monitoring of the landscape character and scenic integrity.

## VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR HIGHWAY PROJECTS (FHWA)

Because project visual impacts are seen both in the view from the road and the view of the road, they must be adequately addressed and considered when a highway project is developed. A generalized visual impact assessment process is similar in broad outline to the VRM system employed by BLM. However, in a visual impact assessment, visual resources and viewers are weighted equally, with the visual character and visual quality of a landscape defining the existing or baseline conditions, along with viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. A resource change is compared with the baseline conditions and against a viewer response. Any visual impacts are identified by this comparison.

The document describing visual impact assessment for highway projects (Federal Highway Administration 1979) is both a manual and a workbook, and it provides guidance for further inventory

and evaluation with regard to the components mentioned above. Visual character refers to visual pattern elements in the landscape (form, line, color and texture) as well as visual pattern character (dominance, scale, diversity and continuity). Visual quality incorporates vividness, intactness and unity in the landscape and the degree to which each is of low, medium or high quality. Viewer exposure is dependent upon the viewers’ physical location (including distance zones, observer position and direction of view), number of viewers (differentiating between residents and visitors) and duration of view (including frequency of exposure, stationary views and moving views). Finally viewer sensitivity refers to the manner in which the preferences, values and opinions of different viewer groups can be documented in the following ways: viewer activity and awareness; local values; and cultural significance of the visual resource.

## TECHNICAL APPROACH

It is imperative that this chapter fulfill its purpose of describing the visual resources and identifying unique visual features while not precluding the eventual use of any of the previously described federal methodologies for scenic evaluation, should the County ever choose to employ any or some variation of those methodologies.

To that extent, this chapter emphasizes the identification of Napa County’s visual resources, including ridgelines and discusses the visual character of the region, as well as each of the 13 evaluation areas. The technical approach consisted of three facets: field research; photo-textual presentation of visual resources in Napa County; and the development of maps displaying viewshed analysis and scenic corridors, as well as identifying major and minor ridgelines.

## FIELD RESEARCH

A reconnaissance trip to Napa County was made in April 2005. Most of the county-designated scenic roadways were traveled and the scenic resources of the 13 evaluation areas were documented.

## PHOTO-TEXTUAL PRESENTATION OF VISUAL RESOURCES IN NAPA COUNTY

Descriptions of the 13 evaluation areas were written and are accompanied here by photographs that are either representative of the evaluation area in general or of a unique scenic view or element within that evaluation area.

## MAPS

In this chapter, the text and photographs are augmented by three maps generated using geographic information system (GIS) software and analyses tools. Map 12-1 is a countywide viewshed analysis, which essentially identifies what is theoretically visible from the County’s designated scenic roadways. Map 12-2 and Map 12-3 identify scenic corridors and important ridgelines (major and minor) respectively throughout the County. The viewshed analysis displayed in Map 12-1 provided the

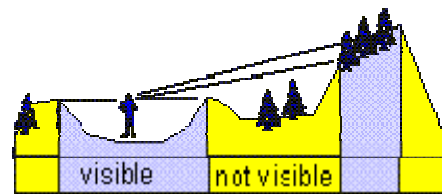


Figure 12-4: Visibility Diagram

Each cell = 1/4-acre and represents a distinct elevation

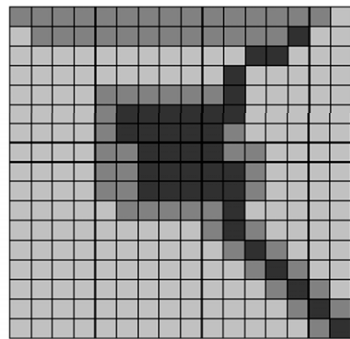


Figure 12-5: Raster Illustration

framework for the identification of scenic corridors, while ridgelines were primarily delineated based upon existing topography but further refined with the viewshed analysis results using GIS analytical tools. All maps are presented at the end of this chapter.

VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

A viewshed analysis is an automated, software-driven procedure that analyzes visible areas from specified viewpoints. The visible areas are theoretical and relative to the extent that they focus solely on topography and do not take existing structures or vegetation into account (see Figure 12-4).

The viewshed analysis was conducted using ARC/INFO GIS software (version 9.0, using the “viewshed” tool), analyzed from the designated scenic roadway system as determined by Napa County and the Napa County Viewshed Protection Program. This analysis required a number of steps. First, within a digital map of Napa County, elevation data were assigned with 1/4-acre resolution. This means that each square 1/4-acre in the entire county was assigned a single elevation point (“cell”). Each cell was then assigned the average elevation of the entire 1/4-acre square area. Figure 12-5 depicts an image of an elevation model, with each cell size being 1/4-acre and representing a distinct, equalized elevation.

Next, sampling points were assigned at each 1/4-mile interval along the county-designated scenic roads (see Figure 12-6). At 1/4-mile intervals, the designated scenic roads in Napa County contained a total of 1,114 sampling points.

Finally, the GIS software generated the visibility of cells located within a five-mile radius of all scenic road sampling points. Cell visibility as a percentage of only the maximum points of visibility was then calculated. This created a range (zero to 100%) of visibility relative to the maximum number of points from which any of the cells would be visible (see Figure 12-7). The results of this exercise are reported in the *Countywide Visual and Aesthetic Resources* section.

SCENIC CORRIDORS

Scenic corridors were determined by creating a 1/2-mile buffer of all county-designated scenic roads. This analysis was graphically portrayed on a Countywide basis, which produced a holistic view of areas seen from county-designated scenic roads. The information can be used as an indicator of further needed studies when reviewing project-specific development proposals or alternatives. Similar to the viewshed analysis described above, this analysis does not take into account existing vegetation and/or built structures and how they impact the visibility from these roads.

RIDGELINES

This chapter identifies major and minor ridgelines in Napa County. The Napa County Viewshed Protection Ordinance defines “ridgeline,” “major ridgeline” and “minor ridgeline” as follows:

“Ridgeline” shall mean a visually prominent, relatively narrow strip or crest of land, which includes the highest points of elevation within a watershed that separates one drainage basin from another.

“Major Ridgeline” shall mean a ridgeline, which is prominently visible from a substantial land area within the county. Major ridgelines are characterized by the lack of a topographical backdrop where the sky is visible beyond the ridge.

“Minor Ridgeline” shall mean a ridgeline which is not prominently visible to a large area of the county. Minor ridgelines are typically lower in height, when compared to the surrounding terrain and may be visible only to a limited area, or have a backdrop of a nearby higher topographical feature.

Topographic ridgelines were identified utilizing newly delineated watershed basins built from LIDAR-based digital elevation models of Napa County. Identification of major and minor ridgelines in Napa County was a function of elevation and gradient (i.e., land slope), as well as relative visibility (as determined by the viewshed analysis) and observed relationships to proximate physical landscapes. Major ridgelines were initially identified as those which were prominent on a countywide level, generally above 2000’ in elevation. Minor ridgelines are those that are locally prominent and visible within local viewsheds.

Relative prominence factored into the graphic display of where both major and minor ridgelines are located and where they begin and end. Relative prominence was predominantly informed through the viewshed analysis conducted, which identified the relative visibility of ridgelines from proximate locations along designated roads. It should be noted that, even though the prominent elevation of some minor ridgelines is maintained beyond areas identified as being part of an important ridgeline, the only portion of such ridgelines identified in this chapter as important is that which is prominently visible within respective viewsheds.

Significant ridgelines are typically linear. However, the geography in Napa County is such that some major ridgelines include spurs that maintain the ridgeline’s prominence within local viewsheds. In these instances, major ridgelines were identified on maps as being forked.

REGIONAL AND COUNTYWIDE CONTEXT

Napa County is in the northern portion of the San Francisco Bay Area, set within the California Coastal Range, the mountains of which surround the area to the east, north and west and run through the County. Napa County’s southern boundary is San Pablo Bay, a segment of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary located west of the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose and the most urbanized areas of the Bay Area are to the southwest of Napa County. Sonoma County and its Pacific Ocean coastline lay further to the west, and beyond the Vaca Mountains and the Blue and Rocky Ridges to the east is the northern half of California’s Great Central Valley. To the north of Napa, in Lake County and beyond, northern California becomes progressively rural, the urbanized areas occur less frequently, and the natural areas and public lands more plentiful.



Figure 12-6: Sampling Points

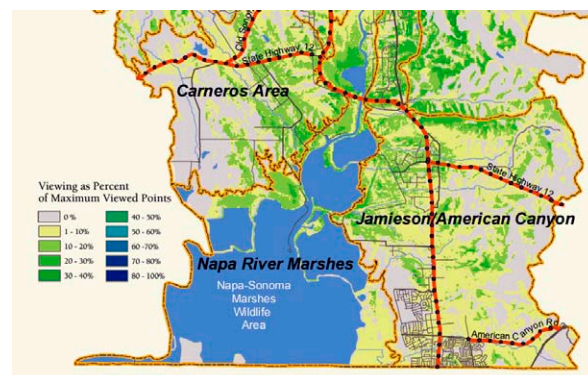


Figure 12-7: Visibility

In terms of distance, Napa County is approximately equidistant from Sacramento and San Francisco, as far away from the Golden Gate Bridge as from the Central Valley, and as close to the Giant Sequoia trees of Yosemite National Park as to the Avenue of the Giants in Humboldt Redwoods State Park.

The aesthetic diversity of the regional landscape within which Napa County is also mirrored within its boundaries.

Mountainous and sometimes rugged ridgelines frame the eastern and western boundaries of the county, also providing visually distinct valley regions within the area; some are as densely forested with evergreen trees as to look like north coast redwood groves, while others are almost stark in comparison, dominated only by mature oak trees set amid shrub and grasslands. Water is often a prominent feature in the landscape. The marsh lands in the southern part of the county are fed by the Napa River and tidal fluctuations of San Pablo Bay, which in turn drains a number of other rivers, streams and creeks originating in the area's high lands. Residences are scattered about the county, but urbanized areas tend to be concentrated in relatively few locations, surrounded by agricultural uses, mainly vineyards.

The following section presents the visual character of Napa County which has been separated into 13 evaluation areas. Each is visually unique in terms of topography, land use, and degree to which the environment is built or remains in a more natural state. Just as the features of each area make it unique when compared to another, the collective features of all of the areas contribute to Napa County's visual uniqueness within northern California.

## COUNTYWIDE VISUAL AND AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEWSHEDS

The Viewshed analysis identified areas that are most visible from Napa County's designated scenic roadways. As shown in Map 12-1, lands in and surrounding the Napa Valley Floor are the most visible in the County. While this is in part due to the concentration of county-designated scenic roadways in the valley, visibility is dependent upon relative elevation, as described in the *Methodology* section.

Within the Napa Valley, viewsheds of highest visibility are mostly concentrated in the foothills to the east and west of the valley floor, in the area between Zinfandel Road and Oakville Cross Road. This area encompasses Bald Mountain, Mount St. John (identified in the County Viewshed Ordinance as a "unique geologic feature"), the foothills of Sugarloaf Ridge, and the areas surrounding Bear Canyon and Sulphur Canyon on the western side of the valley. On the eastern side of the valley, the area includes the hills above Silverado Trail, south of its intersection with SR 128.

Other areas of relatively high visibility in and around the Napa Valley Floor include:

- The southern slope of Rattlesnake Ridge, generally above the eastern side of the valley floor, between Calistoga and St. Helena.
- The hills to the east of Yountville and the City of Napa, north of SR 121. These viewsheds are also above Silverado Trail and include Castle Peak and the areas around Soda Canyon Road.
- The areas surrounding Redwood Road and Dry Creek just west of the valley floor.
- The general area encompassing Cup and Saucer Hill, east of the City of Napa, in between SR 121 and Coombsville Road.

Very few areas east of the Eastern Mountains' evaluation area contain any viewsheds visible to more than 10 percent of the county-designated scenic roadways. Exceptions to this are the slopes along the eastern edge of Lake Berryessa and viewsheds in Pope Valley and Wooden Valley (see Map 12-1: Viewsheds).

### SCENIC CORRIDORS

Scenic corridors were determined by creating a ½ -mile buffer of all county-designated scenic roadways (see Map 12-2). This analysis was graphically portrayed on a Countywide basis, producing a holistic view of areas seen from county-designated scenic roadways. The information can be used as an indicator of further needed studies when reviewing project-specific development proposals or development alternatives. Similar to the viewshed analysis described above, this analysis does not take into account existing vegetation and/or built structures and how they impact the visibility from these roads.

There are approximately 280 miles of county-designated scenic roadways within Napa County. The majority of these scenic corridors are located in the Napa Valley, with the next largest group located on the western side of the County.

### RIDGELINES

Major ridgelines – those which were prominent on a countywide level, generally above 2000' in elevation – form the entirety of Napa County's eastern boundary (see Map 12-3). Blue Ridge and Rocky Ridge are the major ridgelines shaping eastern edge of the county. The majority of the western boundary, from near the northern tip of the Napa Valley floor to near SR 12/121 in Carneros, is also a major ridgeline. It includes Diamond Mountain, Bald Mountain and Mount Veeder.

Major ridgelines comprise a substantial portion of the eastern mountains. In the southern extent, the ridgeline extends north from the area surrounding Mount George, to a fork that includes both Atlas Peak and Red Mountain. In the northern extent the ridgeline extends from Howell Mountain, near Angwin, to the slopes of Mount St. Helena located within Napa County. Cedar Roughts also comprise a major ridgeline west of Lake Berryessa, providing form to the entire Lake Berryessa evaluation area, as well as Pope Valley and Central Interior Valleys to the west.

The remaining major ridgelines identified within Napa County exist in the Livermore Ranch Area (including The Calistoga Palisades, Sugarloaf Mountain and Table Mountain) and Knoxville Area (including most of Adams Ridge). Here, the ridgelines form more of a high elevation area because, as opposed to there being a singular, linear ridgeline in the area, there is a complex of ridgelines, only the foremost of which are visible in viewsheds. Identifying these land forms as high elevation areas acknowledges the prominence of the ridges while reducing emphasis on a singular prominent ridge. Due to their setting within rocky, inaccessible terrain, some of the interior major ridgelines in these complexes are not prominently visible from within any existing viewshed.

## NAPA RIVER MARSHES

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Napa River Marshes evaluation area is located in the southwestern corner of Napa County. The visual character of the area is defined by the Napa River and other waterways that flow into and from San Pablo Bay, creating a system of islands, sloughs, salt ponds and marshlands that give the southern area the distinctive physical appearance of a tidal delta region. The area is relatively flat, with the river, sloughs, marsh, salt ponds and other open space at the lowest elevations to the west of the Napa River. In areas east of the river, vineyards and spots of open space occupy much of the land that gently slopes up from the waterways.

The majority of the area consists of salt marsh and open water, including the Napa-Sonoma Salt ponds, which extend west from the Napa River to the border with Sonoma County. Salt ponds are also present to the east of the Napa River near Green Island Road and south of Steamboat Slough. Dirt levees break up the water's surface in these areas. Reedy marshes comprise the majority of the land cover near the water, while grasslands are prevalent in other areas. These features combine to create a predominantly soft, natural landscape, with wispy vegetation appearing to serve as a buffer between the open water bodies and developed areas, which in turn are mostly surrounded on all other sides by grasslands.

The primarily rural and open setting lends to the viewer's perception that the environment in the Napa River Marshes area is more natural than built. With the exception of scattered clusters of residences and development at Cuttings Wharf, views within the evaluation area west of the Napa River contain very few constructed features. However, Southern Napa County is the most industrial part of the County, and from many locations within the Napa River Marshes warehouses, shops, and other industrially oriented infrastructure can be seen in medium range views to the east, between the grassy

foothills in the Jamieson/American Canyon area in long-range views and undeveloped grasslands and vineyards in short-range views.

SR 29 is the only county-designated scenic roadway within the Napa River Marshes. The segment of SR 29 located within the evaluation area is primarily the George Butler Bridge, on which the highway crosses the Napa River.

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEW FROM GREEN ISLAND ROAD

Views available from a single vantage point near the end of Green Island Road provide an example of the visual spectrum present within the Napa Marshes area. Vineyards and open space are visible in short-range views in all directions. To the north, the expanse of the Napa Valley floor is apparent in long-range views, beyond Steamboat Slough and the northern portion of the Napa River Marshes area. To the northwest, the metal scaffolding of a large container loading crane on the river rises from the horizon in medium range views. To the west, across the Napa River floodplain and its surrounding salt ponds and marsh, distant ridgelines in Sonoma and Marin Counties are plainly visible in long-range views (Image 12-1). A clear view of Mount Tamalpais, in Marin County, is available to the southwest (Image 12-2). In medium-range views, residences on the western side of the river are visible and present the only cluster of development in the line of sight. Views to the south provide a horizon that recedes into San Pablo Bay, with a widened Napa River, bound by salt ponds and marsh, in medium-range views. To the southeast, the foothills that help to form American Canyon form the backdrop in long-range views. Beyond the immediate vineyards are large, sprawling warehouses (Image 12-3).

From this single vantage point, the viewer could obtain a strong sense of Napa County's regional identity: to the west and south, the area's water-based connection to the greater Bay Area; to the east the center of local industrial uses; and to the north, the southern tip of the valley floor, for which the area is known throughout the world.

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area are likely to be those seeking recreation; while the general area presents an environment conducive to fishing and duck hunting, it also serves as a backdrop to bird-watchers, bicyclists and people hiking the Bay Trail.

### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

There has been minimal development in the Napa River Marshes area over the past 10 years, and therefore few changes in terms of the built environment. Further, the sale of the Cargill Salt Ponds to the Department of Fish and Game in 1994 has resulted in the gradual and ongoing conversion of salt ponds to restored tidal wetlands and tidal marsh. This has restored a more natural landscape, reducing the look of managed land in the marshland area.



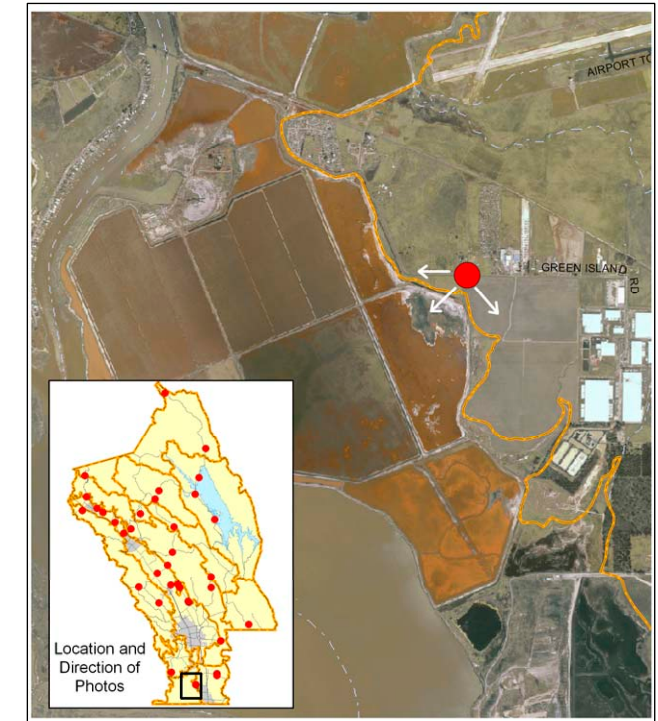
**Image 12-1.** View west from Green Island Road



**Image 12-2.** View looking southwest from Green Island Road



**Image 12-3.** View looking southeast from Green Island Road



**Figure 12-8:** Photo Points and Directions of Images 12-1, 12-2, 12-3

## JAMIESON/AMERICAN CANYON

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Jamieson/American Canyon area is located in the southeastern corner of Napa County and extends from the lowlands between the Napa River and the SR 29 corridor to the County's eastern border with Solano County. The Newell Wilderness Preserve and the foothills of Sulphur Springs Mountain form the rugged eastern portion of the area, which is a series of ridgelines broken up by Jamieson Canyon and American Canyon. A number of waterways – including American Canyon Creek, Fagan Creek and Suscol Creek – make their way through the evaluation area and eventually feed into the Napa River. Patches of oak woodland are also present along the slopes and hilly areas, which generally are rounded in appearance, creating the appearance of a smooth elevation gain in the eastern portion of the area.

The visual contrast between industrial, residential and agricultural uses is particularly pronounced in the Jamieson/American Canyon area. Urbanization and industrialization define the western part of the area, which includes the City of American Canyon, as well as the Napa County Airport. However, the scenery becomes abruptly more natural east of the SR 29 corridor, as the foothills that form Jamieson and American Canyons cause a rise in elevation and land uses become more agricultural in appearance, with vineyards, grazing land and other agricultural uses present.

County-designated scenic roadways SR 29 and SR 12 pass through the Jamieson/American Canyon evaluation area. American Canyon Road is also a county-designated scenic roadway, from approximately a ½-mile east of SR 29 until it reaches the Solano County border.

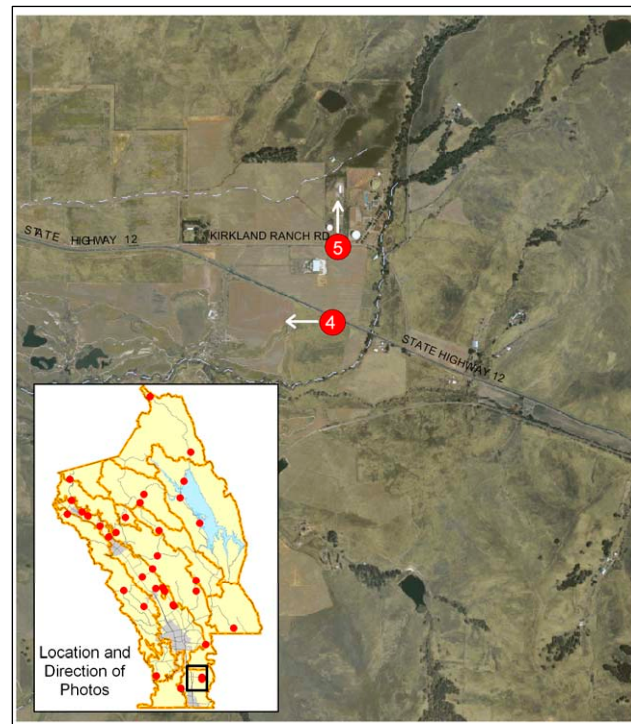
## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEW FROM JAMIESON CANYON ROAD

A viewer entering Napa County from the east, traveling westbound on Jamieson Canyon Road (SR 12) and gradually descending into the valley floor, would be presented with short-, medium- and long-range views that, taken as a whole, would present visual features characteristic of southern Napa County. This is one of the few locations from which the natural environment, urbanized center and managed agricultural lands of the southern part of the county are visible in single, expansive views (Image 12-4). Visible in short- and medium-range views are the surrounding hillsides of a minor ridgeline, alternately gentle and steep, spotted with clusters of mature trees, and occasionally scarred by drainages. Vineyards cover parts of the hillside and flat lands, as do lands maintained for grazing (Image 12-5). Southern Pacific railroad tracks cut along the base of a hillside, eventually running parallel to SR 12 as both move into Jamieson Canyon. In long-range views, the developed valley floor is visible as are the Napa River and San Pablo Bay beyond.

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

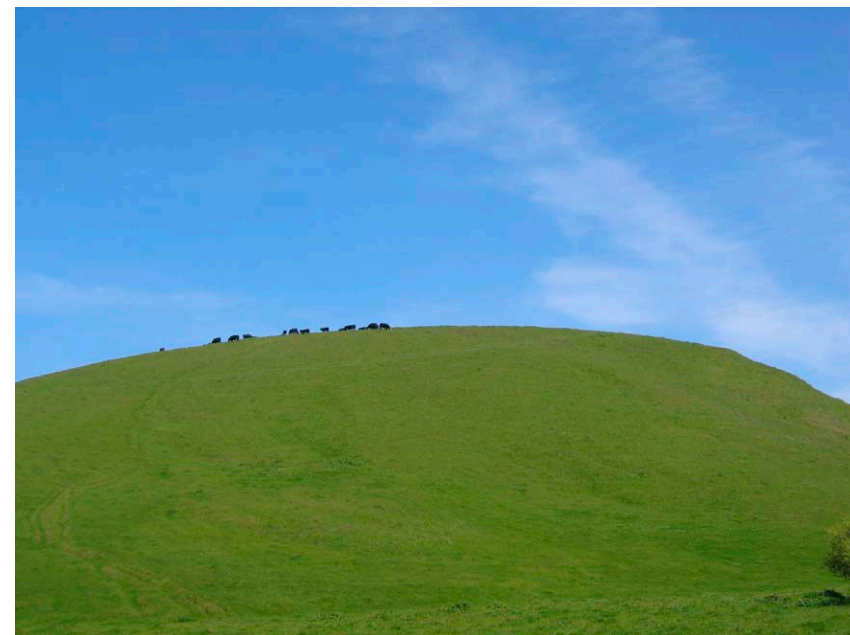
Aside from the residents of American Canyon and other developments, most of the viewers in the Jamieson/American Canyon area are likely to be either workers (and commuters), or people driving through the area en route to the central Napa Valley or to the central Bay Area.



**Figure 12-9:** Photo Points and Directions of Images 12-4, 12-5



**Image 12-4.** View west from Jamieson Canyon Road



**Image 12-5.** Grazing land in Jamieson Canyon

#### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

The majority of changes in the Jamieson/American Canyon area have been within the City of American Canyon and the industrial areas near Green Island Road and the Napa County Airport. The City of American Canyon is Napa County's newest city, having incorporated in 1992. It is also the fastest growing city in the county, having experienced the most significant land consumption over the past decade and the most growth in terms of residents added in 2004. Residential uses and urbanized areas have expanded and supplanted both industrial and agricultural uses, particularly along the city's edges. Newer residential developments are consistent with regard to design styles and building materials, resulting in a built environment which looks increasingly more uniform in appearance than it did at the time of incorporation.

### CARNEROS AREA

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Carneros Area is located between the southern end of the Napa Valley Floor and Napa County's western border with Sonoma County, extending from the marsh and open space at the southern end of the county to the southwestern border of the City of Napa. Topographically, the area consists almost entirely of low-lying, rolling hills, most of which are covered with vineyards and slope down towards the marsh lands in the south.

Though there are grasslands and a few spots of oak woodlands, vineyards provide the dominant vegetative feature in the evaluation area. Carneros Creek essentially bisects the area from northwest to southeast, flowing southward through the marsh lands and eventually into the Napa River. The dominance of agriculture and the area's connection to the Napa River Marshes contribute to a landscape that is visually softened by the presence of water.

There is little development in the area, aside from a swath of mostly rural residential uses cutting north and south through the area, and some commercial and light industrial spots, including the area near the Napa County Boat Launch, located at the end of Cuttings Wharf Road. Viewers therefore do not get much of a sense of an overtly built environment. However, because the vast majority of the land uses in the Carneros Area are agricultural – namely vineyards – there is a sense of a managed environment, in that the expansive vineyards and agricultural lands are not in their natural state.

SR 12/121, which bisects the evaluation area as it travels east/west, is a county-designated scenic roadway. Old Sonoma Road is the only other county-designated scenic roadway in the Carneros Area.

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEW LOOKING SOUTH FROM DUHIG ROAD

Views from the southern tip of Duhig Road provide the viewer with a sense of the degree to which the area appears to almost exclusively contain vineyards and other agricultural uses (Image 12-6). Vast vineyards spread before the viewer in the short-range, and they slope downward toward the Napa Valley Marshes, which are visible in medium- and long-range views.



Image12-6. View looking south from Duhig Road

## DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Along with those who work and/or live in the area's businesses and fields, many of the viewers in the Carneros area are those traveling along the scenic SR 12/121, either to or from Sonoma County. Some of these drivers are tourists visiting the wineries in the area. Given the presence of the Napa County Boat Launch within the area, many viewers are also boaters or other recreation-seekers traveling to or from this point of water access.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

There has been minimal development in this area since 1992, none of which have occurred in areas that are not within or adjacent to existing residences and farmlands. Views within the Carneros area remain mostly as they were over a decade ago.

## NAPA VALLEY FLOOR

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Napa Valley Floor is a relatively narrow stretch of land extending along the SR 29 corridor from the southern border of the City of Napa to near the county's northwestern border with Sonoma County. The Western Mountains and Eastern Mountains, located on either side of the valley, geologically define the valley, the boundaries of which include very few of the foothills from either mountain range. The soils in the valley include volcanic substrate, which allows for vernal pools to form throughout the landscape. These pools, along with hot springs in and near Calistoga and the Napa River and its tributaries, are the primary water forms in the Napa Valley Floor. Riparian woodlands are therefore a prevalent biological resource in the area, but the landscape also includes substantial amounts of Oregon white oak woodland, oak woodland and grassland.

The dominant land cover in the area, however, is agriculture. Vineyards and other agricultural uses occupy more than half of the land on the valley floor. Combined with the naturally occurring vegetation, this gives the entire valley a natural, but managed appearance. Visually, the valley floor is mostly a series of smooth transitions between land uses, especially in the less industrialized northern areas. Urbanization is concentrated in four nodes, but the edges are softened by the rural residences, which exist all around the area, resulting in very few abrupt delineations between city and farmland. As a consequence of this, the built environment appears to be prevalent throughout the valley floor, yielding only to vineyards and other large agricultural lands and woven into the visual fabric elsewhere. The natural environment – stands of mature valley oak, streams and their riparian surroundings – serve as buffers between residences and agricultural uses in many locations further softening edges in the area.

There are numerous county-designated scenic roadways in the Napa Valley Floor. SR 29 and Silverado Trail run generally north/south, on the western and eastern edges of the valley floor, respectively. All of SR 29 within Napa County is a county-designated scenic roadway. SR 29 and Silverado Trail are connected up and down the valley by roadways which are county-designated as scenic as well. These roadways are: Oak Knoll Avenue, Yountville Cross Road (designated scenic from Silverado Trail to just east of the Town of Yountville), Oakville Cross Road, SR 128, Zinfandel Lane, Deer Park Road, Lodi Lane, Bale Lane, Larkmead Lane and Dunaweal Lane. In the southern portion of the valley floor, segments of Dry Creek Road, Redwood Road and SR 121, all county-designated scenic roadways, enter the evaluation area from other evaluation areas. In the northern portion of the valley floor, SR 29 and SR 128 split. SR 128 is a county-designated scenic roadway from near its intersection with Tubbs Lane to the Sonoma County border. Tubbs Lane is also a county-designated scenic roadway.

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

Many of the scenic views from the Napa Valley Floor include distinctive buildings. Among these are the Victorian style homes particularly concentrated in urban areas and wineries and other facilities, such as the Culinary Institute of America, that prominently feature stone masonry and historical design styles

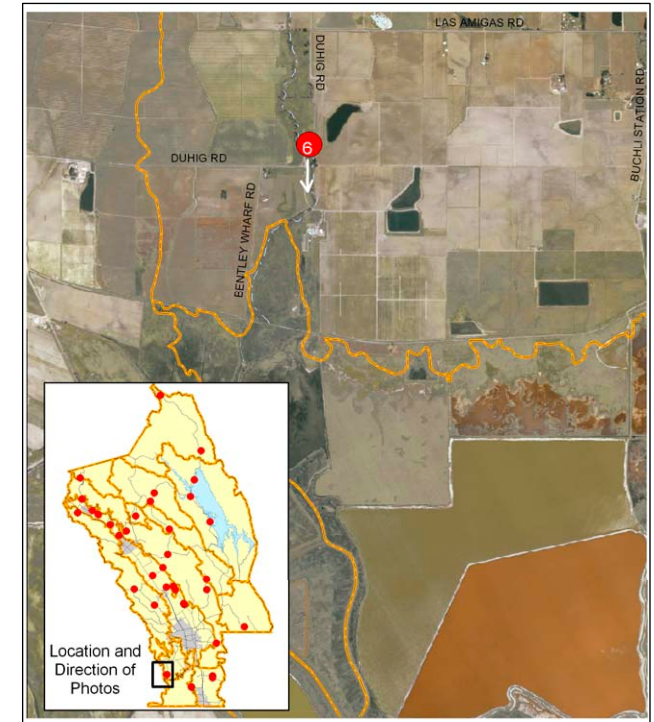
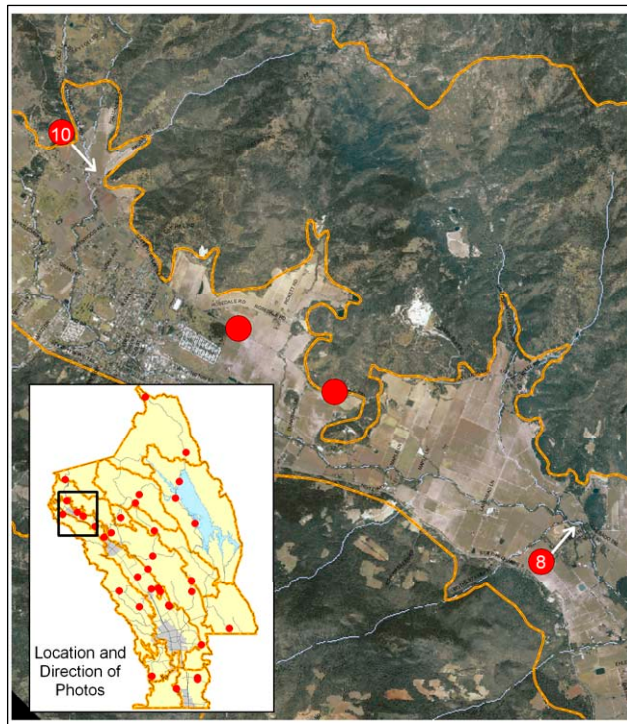


Figure 12-10: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-6



**Figure 12-11:** Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-8 and 12-10

(see Image 12-7). Such architectural features communicate to viewers a sense of history and preservation. Authentic, preserved buildings that communicate a historical context can be indicative of a region's past and its values of history, as well as what aspects of the community, society and economy are of particular current importance.

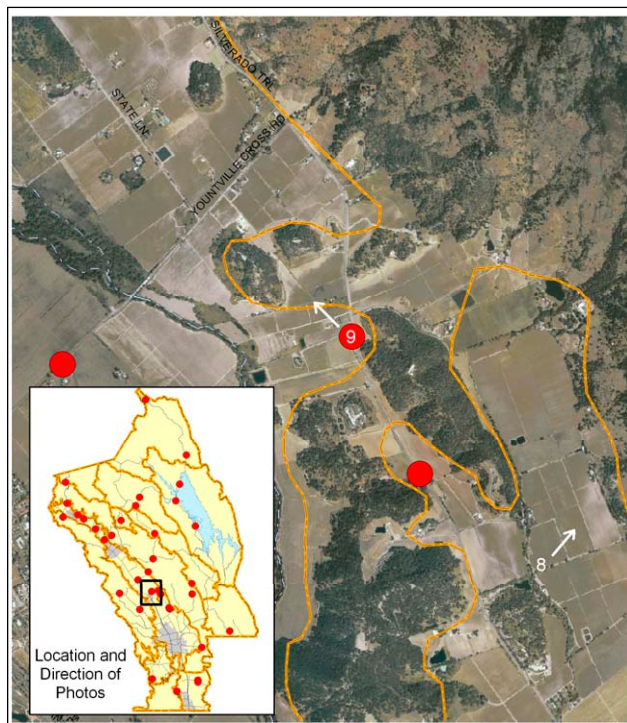


**Image 12-7.** Historic Grist Mill

A mature vineyard or field of crops in season can have aesthetic properties similar to a meadow, or another natural landscape with unified form and consistency of texture (as in Image 12-9). The Napa Valley can be considered a series of such landscapes, as is evident in a view from SR 29, above the valley floor (Image 12-10).

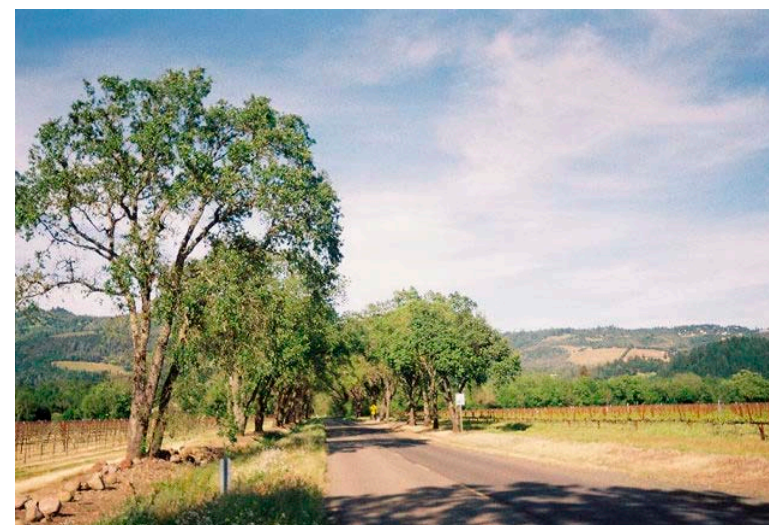


**Image 12-9.** Silverado Trail



**Figure 12-12:** Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-9

The built environment of the Napa Valley Floor exists within a wider, managed landscape dedicated mostly to agriculture. This collective landscape, in turn, exists within an even broader natural landscape that, while no longer part of the visual foreground in most valley views, provides a dramatic and ever-present background. Riparian features and mature valley oak (Image 12-8) are present throughout the valley as settings for built features, such as roads and levees.



**Image 12-8.** Valley oak trees alongside Bale Lane



**Image 12-10.** Napa Valley Floor from SR 29

Farms and vineyards often include built features that contribute to the visual environment, such as homes, processing facilities/wineries, tasting rooms, and landscaped grounds (Image 12-11) and other functional features, such as stone fences, that have aesthetic value as well (Image 12-12).





**Image 12-11.** Vineyard with home on Lodi Lane



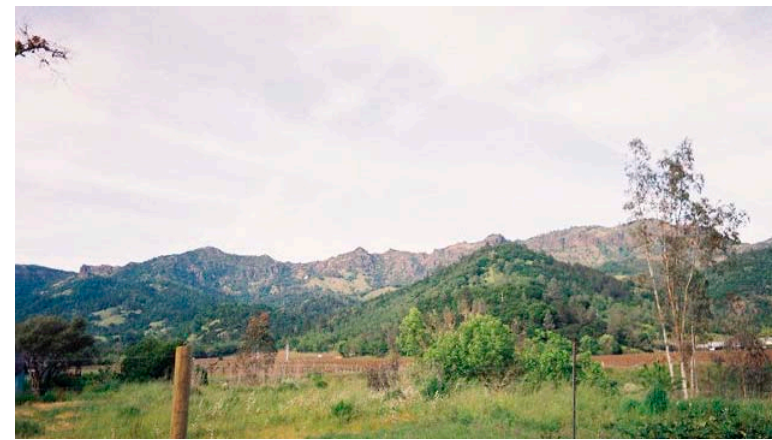
**Image 12-13.** Silverado Trail, north of Oak Knoll Avenue



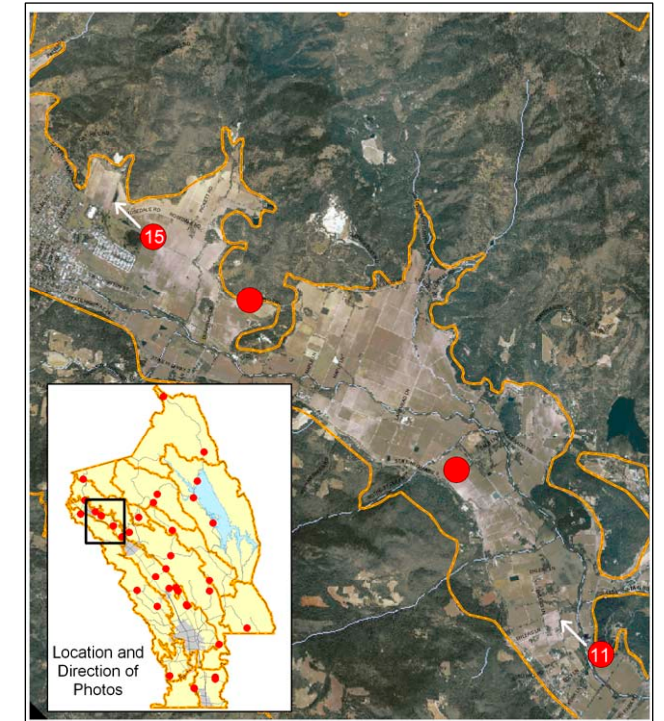
**Image 12-12.** Stone fence along Silverado Trail



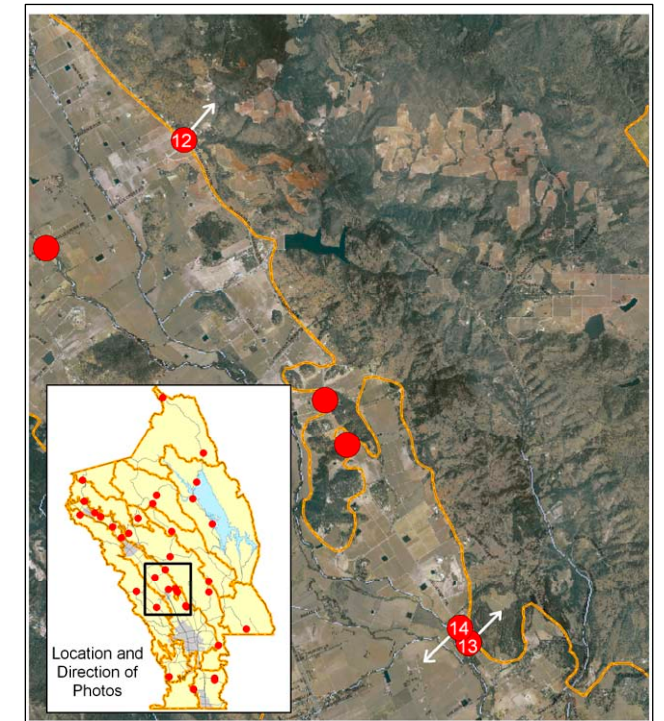
**Image 12-14.** Silverado Trail



**Image 12-15.** View of the Calistoga Palisades from Silverado Trail



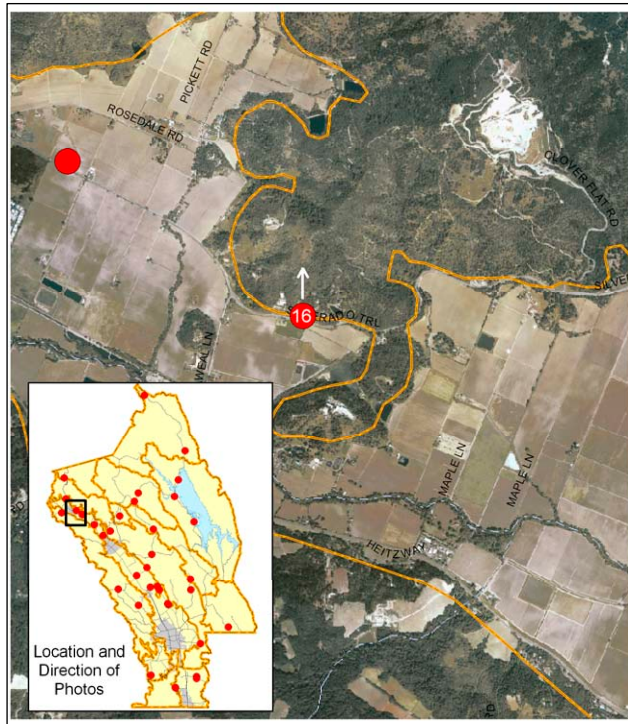
**Figure 12-13:** Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-11 and 12-15



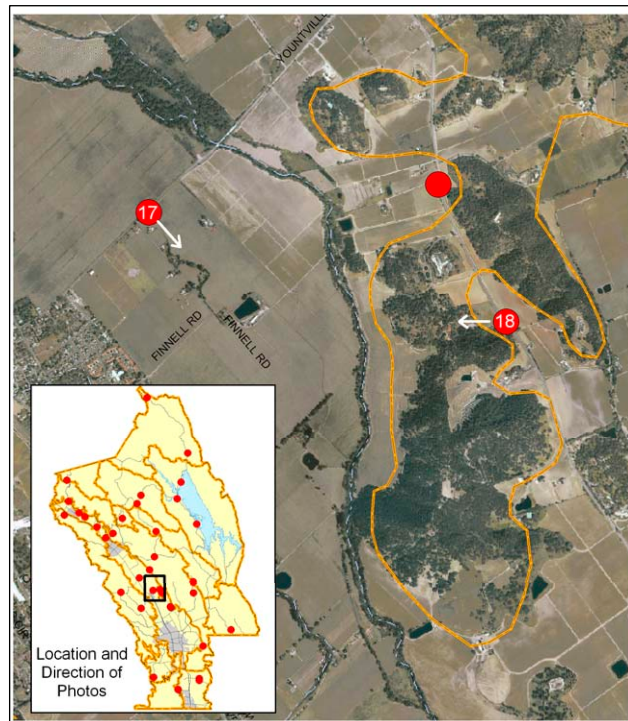
**Figure 12-14:** Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-12, 12-13 and 12-14

In many views throughout the valley floor where agricultural uses are in the foreground, there appears to be greater interplay between the managed and natural landscapes. This can include views in which the ridgelines in medium-range views appear to slope gently and nearly seamlessly into a vineyard (Image 12-13) or when the natural vegetation is dispersed so as to make difficult distinguishing between natural and managed environments as views move from short- to medium-range (Image 12-14).

The Napa Valley Floor also provides views of the ridgelines surrounding it. Some views are of distinguishing features, such as the Calistoga Palisades and other rock formations in the Eastern Mountains (Images 12-15 and 12-16). Many ridgelines, however, serve as backdrops to a more prominent foreground (Images 12-17 and 12-18). The near constant presence of prominent ridgelines as background is a unique feature of the Napa Valley Floor.



**Figure 12-15:** Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-16



**Figure 12-16:** Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-17 and 12-18



**Image 12-16.** View east from Silverado Trail



**Image 12-17.** Southeast view from Yountville Cross Road



**Image 12-18.** View to the west from Silverado Trail

## DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

The Napa Valley Floor is the most populous of the evaluation areas. It is also the business center for the county and a global tourist destination. Residents, office and farm workers, those traveling between the Valley's urban nodes and tourists are the primary viewers in the area.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

The majority of growth in the Napa Valley Floor over the past decade has occurred within incorporated areas, particularly in the City of Napa. Yountville, St. Helena and Calistoga have experienced some growth, mostly in the form of residential developments. City of Napa has incurred non-residential growth as well, most of it in its more industrial southern portion. Unincorporated lands have also experienced some residential growth. Current views present more intense development within the already urban areas on the valley floor, most notably the City of Napa. In addition, in areas where subdivisions have not previously been as prominent, larger residential developments have added to the urban viewscape segments of greater uniformity with regard to design.

## WESTERN MOUNTAINS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Western Mountains extend from the northwestern tip of Napa County (just south of SR 128) along the Sonoma County border to the Carneros Area. This area, part of the Mayacamas Mountain Range, forms the western ridge of the Napa Valley Floor which contains rocky crags at some locations and relatively high elevation meadows at others. The area is characterized by its generally rugged terrain, which encloses a number of smaller valleys formed by the watersheds that feed into the Napa River. The creeks that have formed the watersheds – the major ones being Ritchie Creek, Mill Creek, Sulphur Creek, Bear Canyon Creek, and Dry Creek – provide habitat for Douglas fir and limited stands Coast Redwood, which are the visually dominant local vegetative features, despite not being as prevalent as oak woodlands in the surrounding areas. The Western Mountains also contain substantial portions of the county's Oregon White Oak, bay and Riparian woodlands. The prominence of evergreen foliage provides a natural environment in this evaluation area that is richer in tone and more heavily shaded than neighboring areas, with the terrain at times appearing to be more reminiscent of the northern coastal environments California than the inland area that it is. (Napa County is often considered a "transition zone" and many "remnant" stands of north-south species are seen together and often in competition.)

The valleys, particularly the one formed by Dry Creek, present an entirely dissimilar visual landscape than that found in the main valley floor, which lies in a similar north/south orientation less than five miles to the east. Unlike the main valley floor, the environment in this area is overwhelmingly more natural than built, though much land is dedicated to vineyards and other agricultural uses.

The scenery within the numerous watersheds in the Western Mountains provides reason for a number of roadways within the area to have been designated as scenic through the County's Viewshed Protection Program. Those county-designated roadways are: Partrick Road, Redwood Road, Dry Creek Road, Mount Veeder Road, Lokoya Road, Oakville Grade, Wall Road, Spring Mountain Road and Petrified Forest Road.

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEWS OF MOUNT ST. HELENA

Views of Mount St. Helena, which is identified in the County Viewshed Ordinance as a "unique geologic feature, are unobstructed at various points along Petrified Forest Road. With an elevation of over 4,000 feet, its broad base and the appearance of having two peaks, the mountain obscures any views that might exist beyond, so it is at once the dominant and the long-range feature in all views to the north from these vantage points (Image 12-19).



Image 12-19. View of Mount St. Helena from Petrified Forest Road

### VIEWS OF WATERSHED CANYONS WITHIN THE AREA

In the Western Mountains, many views are limited to the length allowed by a stretch of narrow canyon, with densely wooded canyon walls connected at their bases by a creek bed. Throughout the area, canyons occasionally open into wider valleys that allow for vineyards and agricultural production. As a result, to a person traveling through the area, views would range from limited to somewhat more expansive: spots of near enclosure by foliage (Image 12-20) give way to areas large enough for vineyards, enclosed not by canyon walls but by minor ridgelines in medium-range views. These ridgelines occasionally display rocky crags or rounded peaks. The ridges are also developed in some areas, with buildings ranging from small homes to large estates occupying hillsides, particularly towards the southern part of the area, where there are fewer vineyards but more general agricultural uses.

Vantage points in the northern part of the area are available from slightly higher elevations, and watershed valleys there are viewed from above, rather than within (Image 12-21).



Image 12-20. Dry Creek Road, south of Oakville Grade

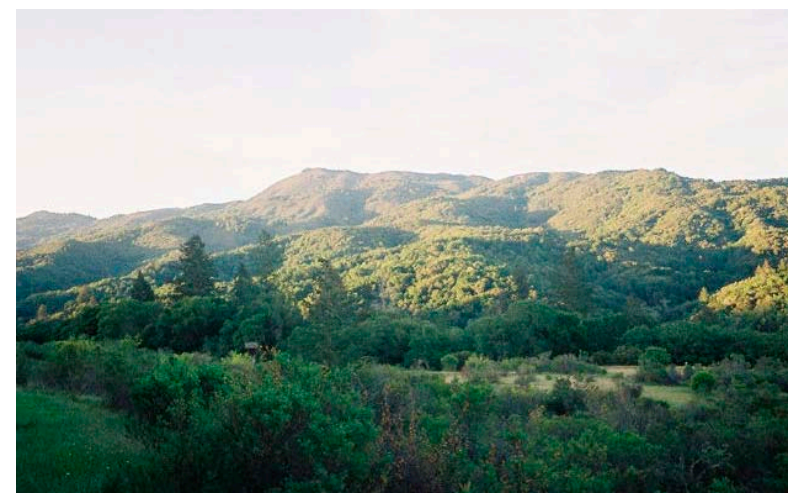


Image 12-21. Dry Creek Road, north of Oakville Grade

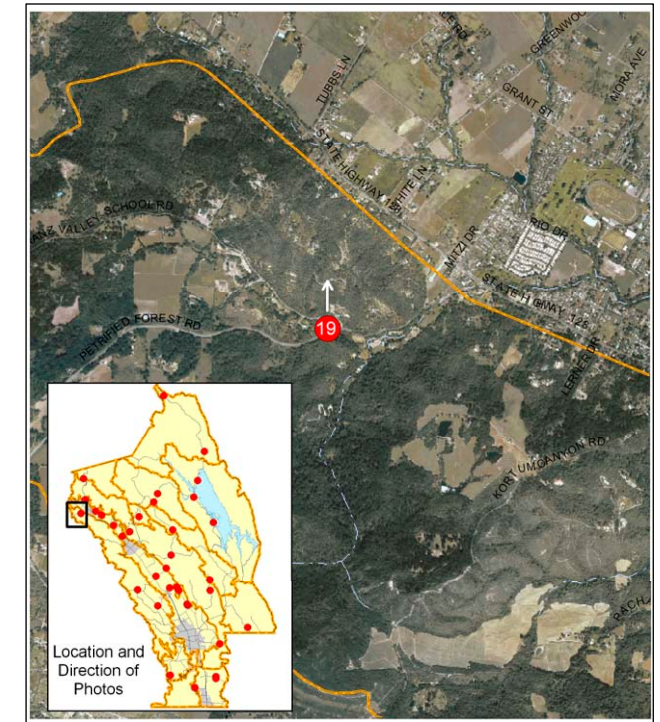


Figure 12-17: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-19

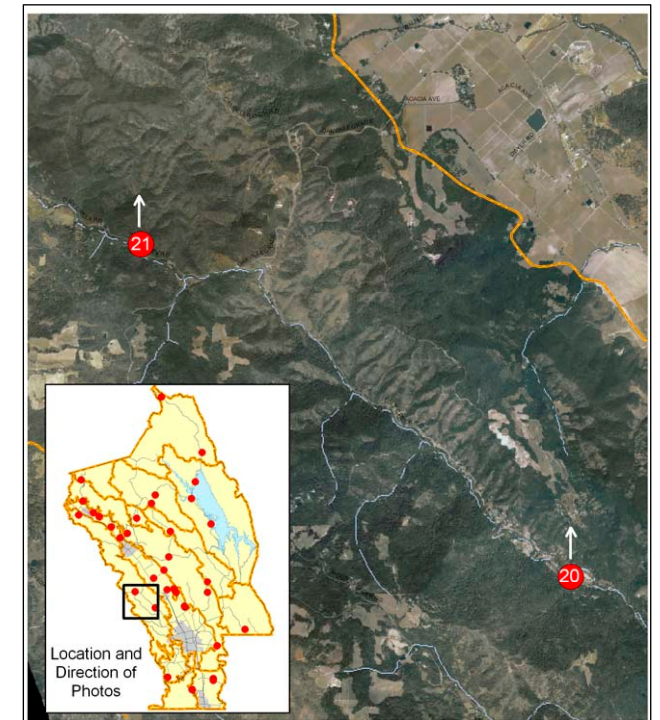


Figure 12-18: Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-20 and 12-21

## DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in this area are most likely either residents or workers or are traveling between Napa County and Sonoma County by a minor route, such as Petrified Forest Road, Spring Mountain Road or Oakville Grade/Dry Creek Road.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

Changes in the Western Mountain area have been minimal, with the only apparent growth coming as a result of the slight expansion of urbanized areas, although quite a few forested areas have been converted to other forms of agriculture (i.e., vineyards), creating a patchwork of managed and natural local landscapes in some areas. To the north, the development around Calistoga has moved into the foothills to the west. Trees have been cleared in a few locations to make way for residences just within the Western Mountains area, in areas adjacent to existing development along the edge of the Napa Valley floor, particularly near St. Helena. Changes to views within the area are negligible.

## EASTERN MOUNTAINS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Eastern Mountains area is a relatively narrow strip of Napa County that forms the eastern ridge of the Napa Valley Floor and extends from the northwestern border with Sonoma County to the southeastern border with Solano County. The area is mostly undeveloped and mountainous creating a craggy effect in the general landscape, and causing prominent geologic formations, such as the Calistoga Palisades, Atlas Peak, Haystack, Stags Leap and Mount George (Stags Leap and Mount George are identified in the County Viewshed Ordinance as a “unique geologic feature”). The majority of the area is covered by oak woodland and chaparral, as well as some coniferous forest, such as pine trees. Despite the presence of Lake Hennessey and a number of waterways that traverse the area – such as Suscol Creek, Miliken Creek, Soda Creek, Chiles Creek, Moore Creek and Bitter Creek, the geology and vegetation contribute to a landscape that appears drier than that in other evaluation areas.

The Eastern Mountains are almost entirely undeveloped, with no urban or suburban areas. The built environment is primarily limited to the rural residences that are scattered throughout the area, which occupy large lots, and the Meadowood Resort, located on the western edge of the area, near St. Helena. Ranches with homes are set within mountain valleys and vineyards in upper plateaus, and along Silverado Trail, which runs along the western edge of the area.

The Eastern Mountains area includes the following county-designated scenic roadways: SR 121 (as Monticello Road as it traverses the area), SR 128 (as SR 128 and as Sage Canyon Road), Chiles Pope Valley Road, Deer Park Road, and SR 29. Segments of Silverado Trail are within the area as well.

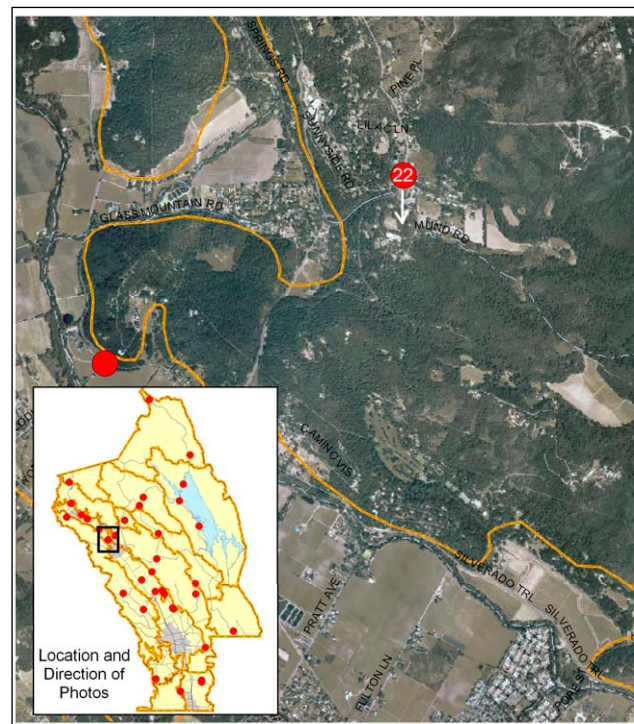


Figure 12-19: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-22

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### THE CALISTOGA PALISADES

One of the most prominent natural features are the rock-crag outcroppings known as The Calistoga Palisades, which are located near the northern tip of the area, jutting forth from between Table Rock and Sugarloaf Mountain. The formation is visible east of SR 29 in medium- to long-range views as the highway leaves the valley floor and begins its ascent up the eastern slope of Mount St. Helena toward Robert Louis Stevenson State Park and Lake County. The Calistoga Palisades are identified in the County Viewshed Ordinance as a “unique geologic feature.”

### VIEWS FROM COUNTY-DESIGNATED SCENIC ROADWAYS IN THE AREA

The evaluation area contains passes from the Napa Valley Floor to the valleys on the eastern side of the ridge, a number of which are county-designated scenic roadways. Within the area, SR 29 winds its way above the valley floor and rather quickly provides views of Mount St. Helena and the Calistoga Palisades, as well as vistas of the northern tip of the Napa Valley and its agricultural fields delineated by stretches of mature trees. Deer Park Road provides a similar perspective on the valley floor, though the heavily wooded Glass Mountain dominates most views as it juts into the valley.

Deer Park Road, while providing some expansive views of the Eastern Mountains (Image 12-22) is much more developed than SR 29, however, as hillside scrub and chaparral soon give way to clearings containing homes. A portion of Chiles and Pope Valley Road passes by the eastern edge of the Lake Hennessey Recreation Area, where it merges with Sage Canyon Road (SR 128). Monticello Road (SR 121) traverses the area from just north of the City of Napa to near the intersection with Wooden Valley Road, passing by Silverado Country Club and homes built at a low density near the base of Mount George.

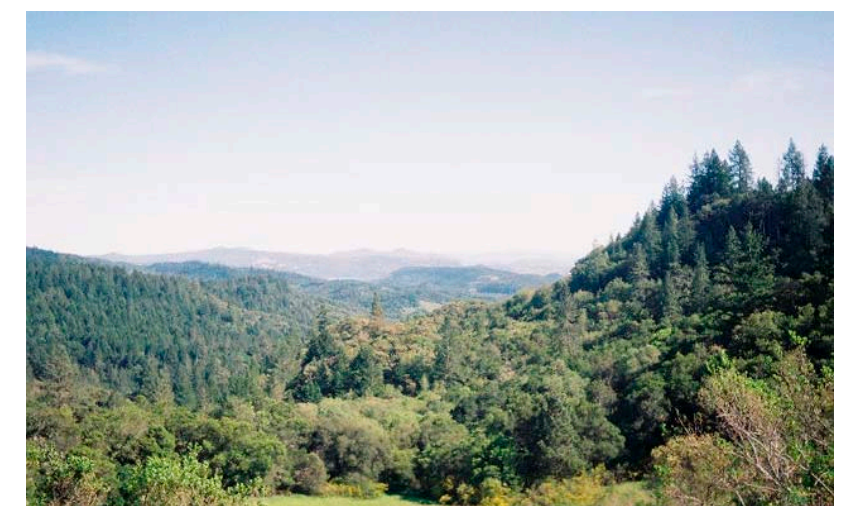


Image 12-22. Looking south from Deer Park Road

The southern part of the evaluation area essentially wraps around the eastern side of the City of Napa and is therefore more built up than other portions of the area. However, the somewhat developed visual setting associated with commercial buildings, denser housing and managed agriculture yields to a more pastoral setting as one travels further east of the City of Napa and further above the valley floor, where residences are more widely dispersed. Here the landscape reverts to a more natural state in areas like Wild Horse Valley and Skyline Park.

VIEWS ALONG ATLAS ROAD

Atlas Road begins near Silverado Trail, but quickly winds its way into the Eastern Mountains, toward Atlas Peak, which rises to an elevation of over 2,600 feet. Along the way, the road traverses a high valley, in which a number of ranches are set among valley oak and conifer forest and, at the time of observation, meadows of wildflowers (Image 12-23). A number of stone fences have been constructed in the area, emphasizing a rustic landscape (Image 12-24).

VIEW FROM THE INTERSECTION OF CHILES & POPE VALLEY ROAD AND SR 128

Chiles & Pope Valley Road and SR 128 intersect near the eastern edge of Lake Hennessey, a reservoir in the center of the evaluation area which appears to wrap around the steep, southern base of Howell Mountain. To the north is an increasingly steep canyon formed by Chiles Creek, which feeds into Lake Hennessey. To the west, the vista opens up allowing a shoreline view of the main body of Lake Hennessey in medium-range views to the northwest (Image 12-25). Despite the lakeside roadway and slight development of a boat launch at the southeast corner of the lake's main body, there remains a relatively natural landscape from this vantage point.

VIEW OF VALLEY FLOOR FROM WILD HORSE VALLEY ROAD

The view of the valley floor from Wild Horse Valley Road reveals a widely dispersed settlement pattern in the short- and medium-range views, with the Western Mountains area visible in the long-range views (Image 12-26). This vista is emblematic of unincorporated Napa Valley, with a clear representation of the development layout and vegetative cover (both of which are spread throughout the area), as well as the topography, with knolls and hills present throughout the valley floor before the sharper elevation gains evident at the bottom on the range on the opposite side of the valley.

DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in this area consist of farm workers, tourists traveling Silverado Trail, recreation-seekers traveling to Lake Hennessey, and residents who live throughout the area.

HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

Agricultural lands have increased by nearly 2,000 acres in this area since 1992, which has likely altered views by introducing a greater percentage of managed landscapes to the area. Beyond that, the area is almost entirely undeveloped in terms of urbanization, and it has remained that way over the past decade.



Image 12-23. View from Atlas Road



Image 12-24. Stone fence along Atlas Road



Image 12-25. View from southeast corner of Lake Hennessey

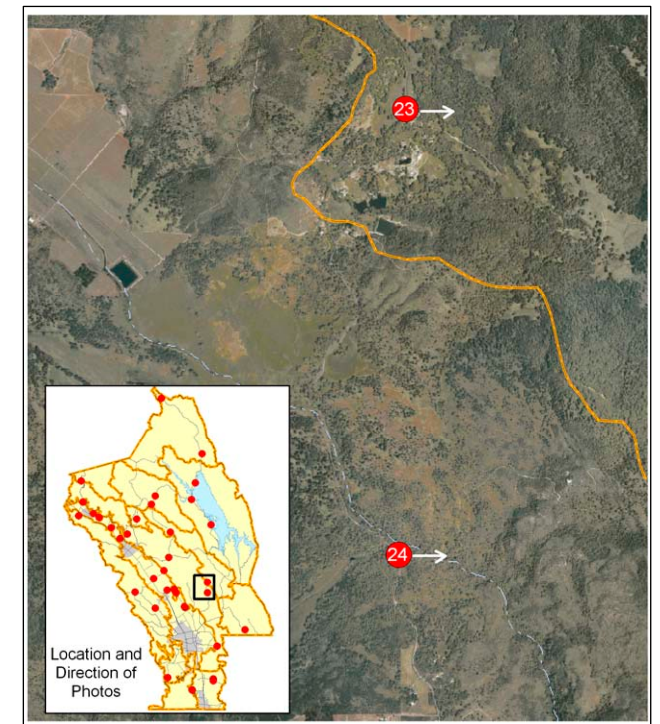


Figure 12-20: Photo Point and Direction of Images 12-23 and 12-24

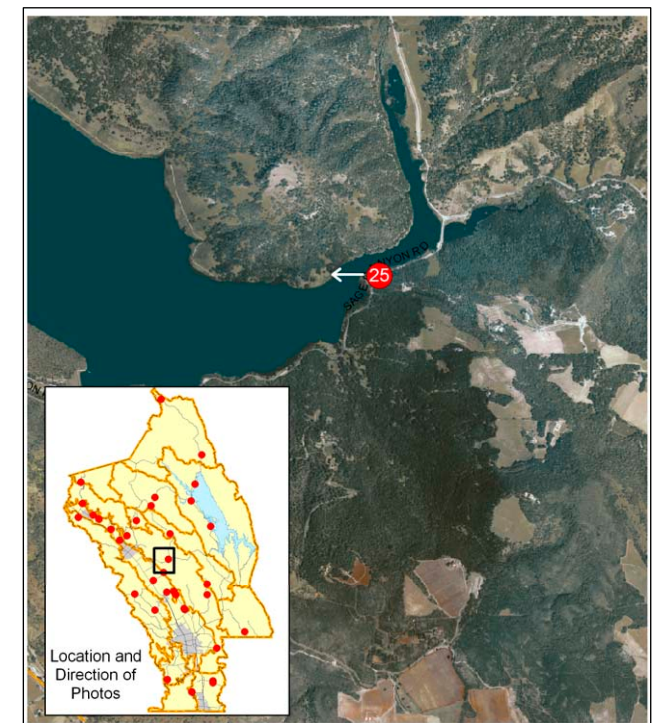


Figure 12-21: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-25

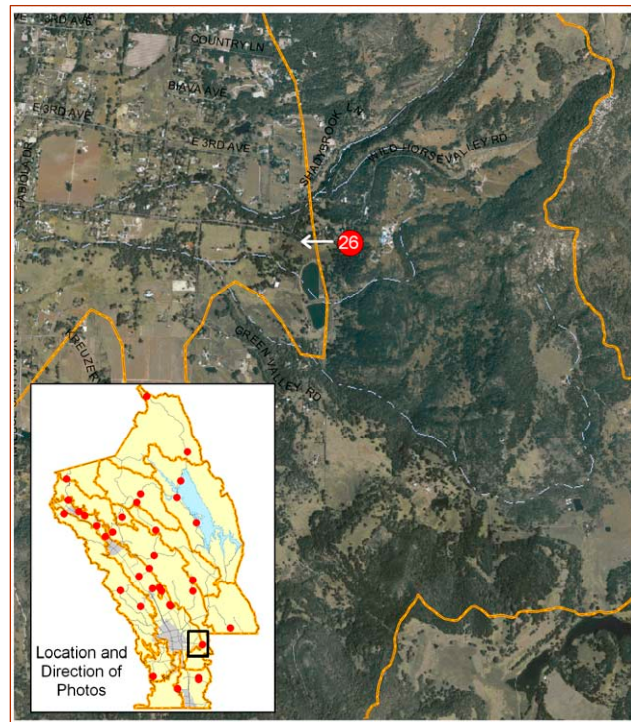


Figure 12-22: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-26



Image 12-26. View from Wild Horse Valley Road

## ANGWIN AREA

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Angwin Area is located in the northern portion of the county, between Pope Valley and the Eastern Mountains. The smallest of the evaluation areas, the Angwin Area is a small valley bordered by Howell Mountain to the east and Rattlesnake Ridge to the west.

The area essentially consists of an oak woodland and Douglas-fir-Ponderosa Pine forest surrounding an urbanized area, the Town of Angwin, which includes Pacific Union College, the Angwin Airport and otherwise mostly residential uses. Agricultural land also makes up a substantial percentage of the area and it is interwoven with natural vegetation and urbanized areas in the visual landscape. Conn Creek flows through Angwin from the north and provides both habitat and contributes to a reservoir system created for the provision of drinking water. Other prominent water bodies in the area include Deer Lake and Lake Henne, which combine to form a series of ponds and lakes to the northwest of Angwin, and Lake Ellen, located to the southeast of Angwin. The urbanized area is fairly concentrated within Angwin, including the airport. Suburban and rural residences, along with vineyards and other agricultural uses are evenly dispersed throughout the evaluation area. The presence of water and lack of any distinct area where urbanization appears to have completely displaced natural vegetation results in a visual landscape that consistently includes a built and natural environment, where the size and color of the evergreen trees present contributes to a tall, shaded backdrop in most views.

Howell Mountain Road, the main route through Angwin, is a county-designated scenic roadway.



Figure 12-23: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-27

## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEW OF ANGWIN

Views from within the Town of Angwin stand in contrast to views in other parts of the evaluation area, mainly because of the dramatic change in the size of trees within the valley in which the town sits (Image 12-27). Denser chaparral and trees obscure long-range views, creating a slightly insulated visual landscape from within the town. Medium-range views include the generally heavily wooded hillsides, which occasionally contain vineyards, and short- to medium-range views include the urbanized areas of the valley floor interspersed with grassland.



Image 12-27. View from center of Angwin

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Many of the people viewing this area are affiliated with Pacific Union College, as students, faculty or staff. A substantial number of viewers are also people who live and/or work in the area. Viewers passing through the area may be traveling to the airport or via Howell Mountain Road to either Lake County or Lake Berryessa.

### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

Changes in the visual landscape over the past decade have occurred mainly outside of the urbanized areas, with the only new developments consisting of rural residential uses in the western portion of the area. Changes at this level have the potential to affect short-range views from within the local area, but no changes in recent years appear to be substantial enough to have changed medium- or long-range views.

## LIVERMORE RANCH AREA

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Livermore Ranch Area is located at the northwest corner of Napa County, bordering Lake County. This is a predominantly mountainous area, and it includes a number of peaks (including Sugarloaf Mountain, Twin Peaks and Table Rock) that provide the elevated backdrop to Calistoga, Angwin and Pope Valley. The area also includes the eastern slope of Mount Saint Helena, which, at an elevation of about 4,300 feet, is the highest elevation in Napa County and is present in many long-range views from other evaluation areas. This is especially apparent in the rock formations adjacent to the Calistoga Palisades, a jagged rock outcropping near Table Rock, located within the Eastern Mountains evaluation area, but visible in many views from the northern Napa Valley Floor and the Livermore Ranch Area. Though lacking a feature as prominent as the Calistoga Palisades the terrain in the Livermore Ranch Area contains cliffs and ridgelines which appear rocky and craggy.

The Livermore Ranch Area is heavily forested, with nearly two-thirds of the area covered with Douglas-fir-Ponderosa Pine, Douglas-fir Alliance, Knobcone pine forest and mixed manzanita. White alder riparian woodland and Brewer Willow riparian scrub are also present in the area, located along some reaches of Saint Helena, Troutdale and James Creeks. There are no major bodies of water in the area aside from these and other creeks, which flow downhill from mountain springs. The above ground presence of water in this area is at least in part dependent upon the season. The result is a dense, wooded, predominantly evergreen landscape with underbrush that is dry during some times of the year and wet during others.

The land in the area is widely undeveloped, with all but approximately 15% of it either vacant or public land. All development in the area is comprised of scattered rural residences, with some agricultural uses included.

The only county-designated scenic roadway within the Livermore Ranch Area is SR 29, as it passes through the narrow western portion of the area.

### UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

#### VIEW WITHIN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MEMORIAL STATE PARK

The dense, primarily evergreen, foliage within Robert Louis Stevenson Park limits most views to the short range. Sunlight is diffused by the trees' canopy throughout the area, creating a heavily shaded environment, even with midday light (Image 12-28). Many views include rock formations jutting from the forest floor. Views in which there are little or no rock formations create a softer environment, typical of forests found within the coastal range.



**Image 12-28.** Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial State Park

Expansive, long-range views of the northern Napa Valley floor are available from locations on the southern edge of the Park along SR 29. Though occasionally obstructed by trees or scrub, views of vineyards, maintained farmland, Calistoga and the wooded Western Mountains area on the opposite side of the valley are available at various points along the road (see Image 12-10).

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

With so few residences in the area, the majority of the people observing views in the Livermore Ranch Area are likely to be either those traveling to or from Lake County on SR 29 or those who have come to the area for recreation/hiking, either on Sugarloaf Mountain or within Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial State Park.

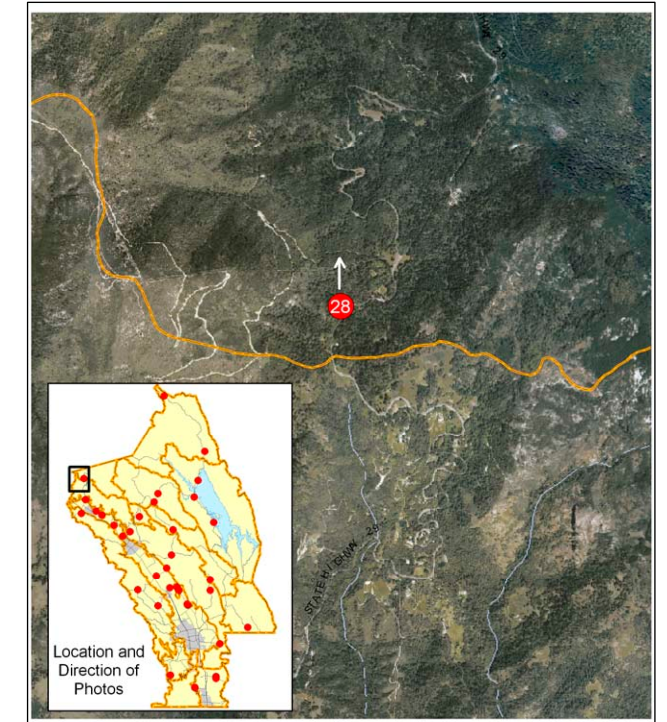
### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

There has been no obvious visual change in this area. Over the past decade the amount of urban land has declined.

## SOUTHERN INTERIOR VALLEYS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Southern Interior Valleys are in the southeastern section of Napa County, bordered to the east and south by Solano County and to the west by the Eastern Mountains evaluation area. The topography of the area's eastern border is shaped by the Vaca Mountains, which include Blue Ridge; the foothills and minor ridgelines located to the west of Blue Ridge, and the valleys located between them, comprise the majority of the evaluation area.



**Figure 12-24:** Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-28

The most common vegetation in the area is oak woodland, which comprises about two-thirds of the area's ground cover. In addition, valley oak woodland, white alder woodland, and mixed willow riparian forest/scrub are found in the area's riparian habitat, located along Gordon Valley Creek, Wooden Valley Creek and part of Suisun Creek. Along with Lake Curry, these creeks are the most prominent bodies of water within the evaluation area, particularly within the valleys that they helped form. Freshwater marsh and wet meadows are distinctive visual features also found along the banks of these creeks and provide the area a lush landscape not found in most other evaluation areas, even those with denser vegetation.

There is no urbanized land within the Southern Interior Valleys. Rural residences are concentrated on Monticello Road, Wooden Valley Road and Gordon Valley Road and are mostly surrounded agricultural lands and vineyards within the valley floors and vacant, open spaces in the surrounding foothills.

County-designated scenic roadways in the Southern Interior Valleys include SR 121 as it passes through the northwest corner of the area, Wooden Valley Road, Wooden Valley Cross Road and Gordon Valley Road, from the intersection with Wooden Valley Cross Road until the Solano County border.

### UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

#### VIEW FROM WOODEN VALLEY ROAD

Views from Wooden Valley Road near the intersection with scenic SR 121 present the agricultural uses in the Wooden Valley floor in short- to medium-range views and the surrounding hillsides in medium- to long-range views. As the viewer travels further down Wooden Valley Road, closer to the Solano County border, the roadway becomes narrow, with steep hillsides on either side, with the sense of enclosure made more definite by the presence of riparian valley oak in immediate views. However, upon reaching the Gordon Valley, the vistas widen, particularly to the west. A new vineyard is visible in short-range views, with the occasional home and foothills visible in medium-range views. In long-range views are the eastern slopes of the Eastern Mountains evaluation area, with peaks and stone ridgelines apparent (Image 12-29). The area appears as a fertile valley tucked between two prominent ridgelines.

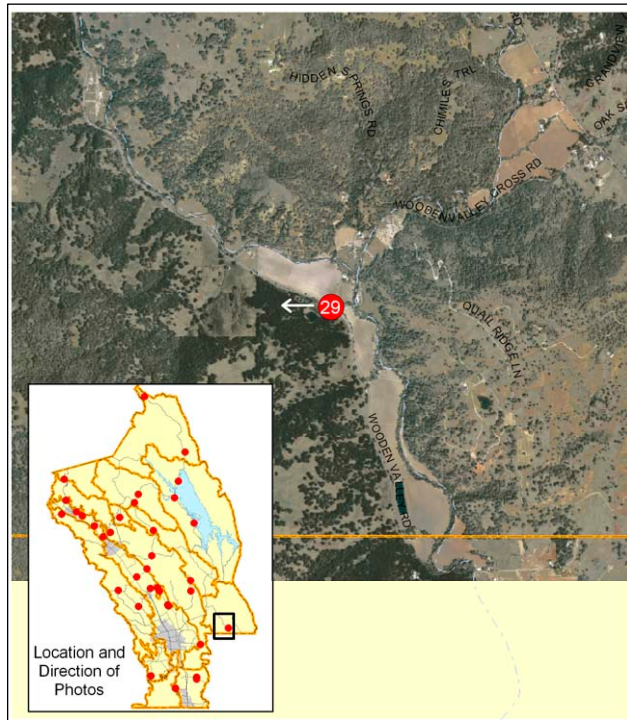


Figure 12-25: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-29



Image 12-29. View from Wooden Valley Road

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in this area are predominantly residents and those traveling through the area, either along SR 121 in the northwest corner of the area, or along Wooden Valley Road as an alternate route to Solano County.

### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

The Southern Interior Valleys do not contain any urban lands and have not undergone any major developments in the past decade, though there has been limited conversion from rangeland to vineyard.

### CENTRAL INTERIOR VALLEYS

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Central Interior Valleys evaluation area is a relatively narrow portion of Napa County oriented to the northwest and southeast, between the Eastern Mountains and Berryessa evaluation areas. The area is predominantly mountainous, with the interior valleys – Cappell, Chiles, Soda and Elder Valleys – found at the bases of Baldy, Red and Greeg Mountains and accessed primarily by the area's major roadways.

Approximately half of the entire evaluation area is covered with oak woodland, and about another quarter of the area contains chaparral (mostly serpentine). The area also includes tanbark oak forest. Grassland, where uses are not residential or agricultural, makes up much of the floor in the valleys. Maxwell Creek, Sage Creek and Cappell Creek run through the area. While the waterways are not dominant visual features, the riparian setting does provide for slight variation in elevations within the verdant riparian areas. This adds a layer of texture to the landscape in views from the roadside.

Development remains minimal in the area, with little urbanization outside of the SR 128 corridor, which includes the roadside businesses at the intersection with SR 121 in Moskowitz Corners and the PUD subdivision of Circle Oaks, as well as other non-residential uses scattered along the roadway. Most of the built environment in the area, however, is rural residential, with homes set in landscapes amid vineyards, grazing lands, and other agricultural uses.

SR 121, SR 128, Pope Canyon Road, Lower Chiles Valley Road, and Chiles Pope Valley Road are the county-designated scenic roadways located within the Central Interior Valleys.



## UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

### VIEW FROM CHILES AND POPE VALLEY ROAD

Chiles Pope Valley Road traverses Chiles Valley, connecting Pope Valley to SR 128 and the Lake Hennessey Recreation Area. Views from this area present pastoral vistas in the short-range – grazing fields and pastures sit beside the roadway, which is occasionally lined with tall, mature oak trees with branches that sprawl into an overhead canopy (Image 12-30). In medium-range views are foothills and low-lying spurs off of the mountains in the long-range views, the ridgelines of which frame the valley on either side. The only evidence of a built environment in this part of Napa County, besides residential uses, is indicators of agricultural production, such as fences, retention ponds, and farm-related infrastructure. The area appears to be otherwise undeveloped.



**Image 12-30.** Chiles and Pope Valley Road

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

The vast majority of viewers in this area are residents and people traveling through the area, either on SR 128, SR 121, or Pope Canyon Road, en route to Lake Berryessa commuting from Berryessa subdivisions to work in the Napa Valley.

### HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

There have been very few changes in land use within the evaluation area since 1992. Aside from conversion of grazing and low-lying rangeland to vineyards, most of the changes have occurred within or adjacent to areas that already contain residential development. A truck parking lot on SR 128 near Capell Cross Road appears to have been substantially expanded, which likely contributes to an increasingly commercial look in the immediate area.

## POPE VALLEY

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Pope Valley area is located along the northern edge of Napa County, between the Knoxville and Livermore Ranch Areas. Framed in part by Sugarloaf Mountain to the west, Baldy Mountain to the south, and Cedar Roughs to the southeast, the Pope Valley has a basin appearance.

The natural landscape in this sparsely developed area is exceptionally diverse. While oak woodland and serpentine chaparral make up over half of the vegetative cover, grassland, serpentine grassland, Brewer willow scrub, Douglas-fir-Ponderosa pine forest and tanbark oak are also present throughout the area. In addition, nearly half of the county's freshwater marsh acreage is located within the Pope Valley area and vernal pools and other wetlands are present throughout the valley floor and surrounding hillsides. Other prominent bodies of water include Pope Creek, James Creek, Burton Creek, Maxwell Creek and Hardin Creek, which drain the area.

The visual landscape appears in layers as one passes through this area, neither terrain nor color remains constant. Views of mature valley oak trees in a meadow of wildflowers exist only in the short-range, quickly leading into medium-range views of local ridgelines, which in turn serve as foreground to additional ridgelines in the distance. Vineyards are tucked between foothills and pastures, creating a patchwork visual landscape.

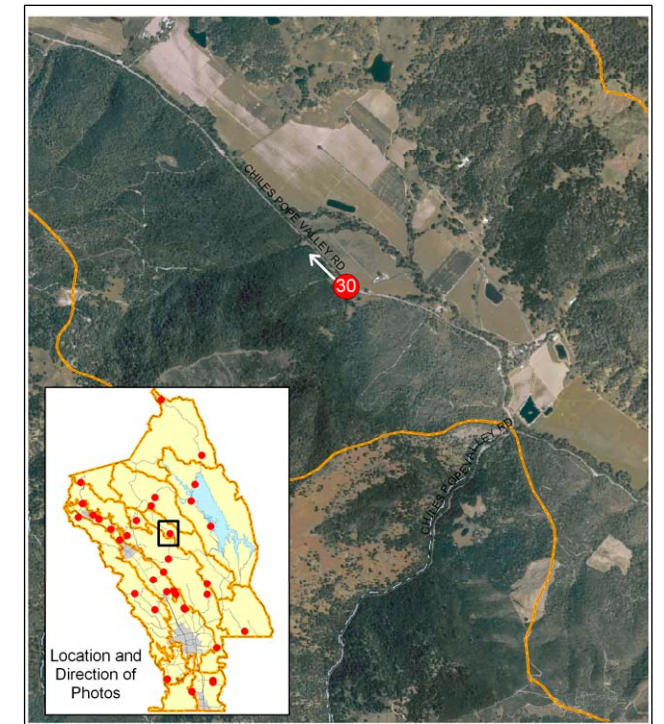
Aside from pockets of rural residential development and the cluster of services (market, service/repair shop and post office) at the intersection of Howell Mountain Road and Pope Valley Road, the built environment is mostly limited to structures supporting vineyards and other agricultural uses which combined, account for nearly half of the land in the Pope Valley and are concentrated on the valley floor and foothills. Most of the remaining land in the area is either vacant or public lands, meaning that the surrounding hillsides and ridgelines provide a largely undeveloped visual backdrop to the valley.

The Pope Valley area includes the following county-designated scenic roadways: Pope Canyon Road, Pope Valley Road, Howell Mountain Road and Butts Canyon Road.

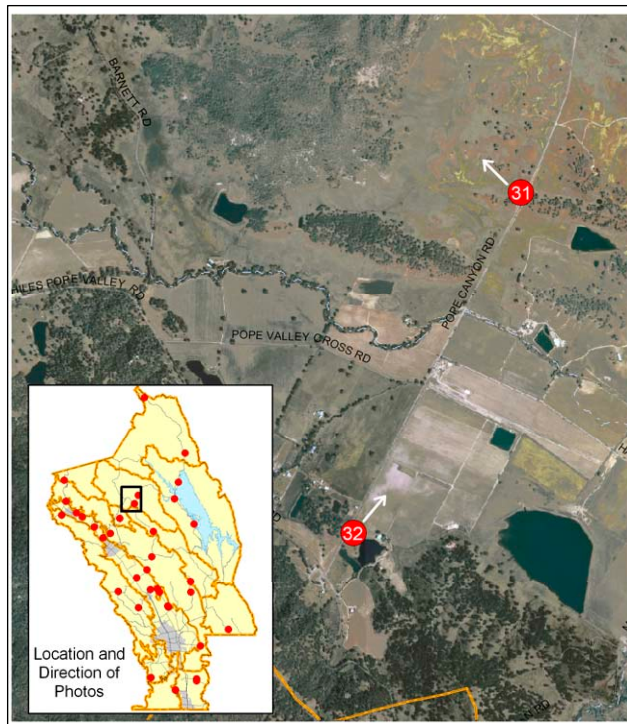
### UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

#### VIEW FROM POPE CANYON ROAD

Views from Pope Canyon Road near Pope Valley Cross Road provide expansive vistas of the valley floor. Snell Mountain is visible in long-range views to the north and views in all directions are framed within nearby wooded ridgelines in medium-range views. Vegetation here is widespread, but scattered. Single, mature oaks surrounded by grassland and wildflowers dominate certain short-range views (Image 12-31), while relatively small vineyards monopolize others (Image 12-32).



**Figure 12-26:** Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-30



**Figure 12-27:** Photo Points and Directions of Images 12-31 and 12-32



**Image 12-31.** Pope Canyon Road



**Image 12-32.** Pope Canyon Road

## DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in the area are likely to be those who live and work within the Pope Valley. Other viewers include those who are playing golf at Aetna Springs and people traveling by alternate routes to either Lake County or Lake Berryessa.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

Since 1992, very few changes have occurred in the Pope Valley area, and those that have were on or near rural residences and agricultural areas. The area retains the predominantly natural look now that it did a decade ago.

## BERRYESSA AREA

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Berryessa Area is located in the eastern portion of Napa County, bordering Solano County and Yolo County. Lake Berryessa is the primary feature here, covering about one-fifth of the entire evaluation area. The reservoir is contained by the topography of the area, which is otherwise almost exclusively rugged and mountainous. The eastern edge of the evaluation area is dominated by Blue Ridge and Rocky Ridge, while the western edge is formed by Trout Creek Ridge and the Cedar Roughs area. Soils in the area are generally loamy, which gives the land underlying the vegetation a reddish appearance and a texture that is at times clayey and other times sandy. Oak woodland (mostly blue oak, serpentine chaparral and non-serpentine chaparral) are the most common land cover types in the area, along with manzanita scrub and grasslands, often found at the lake's edge.

Putah Creek is the major source of water for Lake Berryessa, as well as its primary outlet; the damming of which formed the lake. Putah Creek feeds into the lake's northwest side through a steep river canyon that gets progressively wider as it approaches the lake. The Montecito Dam is located at the southeast edge of the evaluation area, at the Solano County border. The Putah Creek/Lake Berryessa water system traverses the entire evaluation area from northwest to southeast, visually clarifying the geologic rift between two major ridgelines.

The landscape of the Berryessa Area is characterized by the juxtaposition of the smoothness of the lake basin and the rough terrain that surrounds it. Wooded ridges appear to plunge into the lake at some points, while grassy slopes meet the water's edge more gently at other locations. Rocky outcroppings can be viewed intermittently along the shoreline. The reddish tint of the soil contrasts the blue water and the vegetation, which – at the time of the site visit in spring – was a verdant green.

Rural residences are present at various locations around and near the southern portion of the lake, in areas such as the Berryessa Highlands, and in a small number of communities on the western shore, at Berryessa Pines, Spanish Flat, Cappell Valley and Moskowite Corners. Lakeside resorts exist within the area, and homes are present near the southern shore but are not prominently visible from roadways.

County-designated scenic roadways in the area are SR 128, Berryessa-Knoxville Road and Pope Canyon Road.

### UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

#### VIEW FROM THE WESTERN SHORE OF LAKE BERRYESSA

Viewers looking at Lake Berryessa from the lake's western side are provided distinct views in the short, medium and long ranges. Short-range views include the vegetation and development on the western side of the lake (Image 12-33). Long-range views are predominantly of the ridge line on the eastern side of the lake, which contains rolling foothills and spurs spotted with occasional buildings among trees

and chaparral and a slope that becomes increasing gradual as it approaches the water's edge. Occasional views are available of the much more prominent Blue Ridge/Rocky Ridge, beyond the ridge in the long-range foreground (Image 12-34). This is a major ridgeline, with peaks that are rounded and sparsely vegetated in some areas, while flat and butte-like in others.



**Image 12-33.** View from northern shore of Lake Berryessa



**Image 12-34.** View of Blue Ridge and Rocky Ridge from the western shore of Lake Berryessa

Lake Berryessa dominates nearly all medium-range views and is the preeminent visual feature within the evaluation area. It is among the largest lakes in the Bay Area, regionally unique in that its size allows for water skiing. The rock outcroppings described above are present just beyond the lake's

western shore, and the red tone of the loamy soils of which they are formed is further accentuated when surrounded entirely by water (Image 12-35). While many of these formations contain trees and/or other vegetative scrub, only a few are gradually sloped in the form of typical islands. Most appear to be rocks jutting from the surface of the water, as if they were the tip of a submerged crag, reinforcing the contrast between the coarse landscape and smooth appearance of the lake's surface.



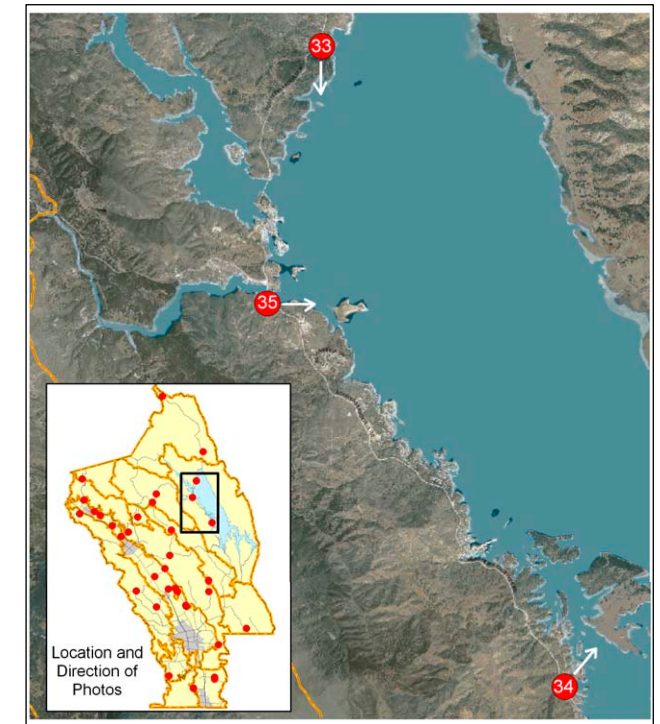
**Image 12-35.** Rock outcroppings in Lake Berryessa

## DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

Viewers in the area are primarily those who are water skiing, boating, fishing and hiking on or around Lake Berryessa. The setting serves as a backdrop for recreation activities. Other viewers will be residents and those traveling through the area to the Knoxville Recreation Area to the north or along the southern edge of the lake to Yolo County via SR 128.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

All recent development in the area has occurred on the western and southwestern banks of Lake Berryessa and appears to have been limited to areas within previously developed locations or PUDs. Most prominent among the recent development are the alteration of the docks at the Lake Berryessa Marina and the increase in residences in the general area. While neither change necessarily obstructs views of the lake from Knoxville Berryessa Road or Pope Canyon Road (the only county-designated scenic roads in the area), general views in the area likely include greater evidence of human activity – in the form of people living and recreating in the area – than they would have fifteen years ago.



**Figure 12-28:** Photo Points and Directions of Images 12-33, 12-34 and 12-35.

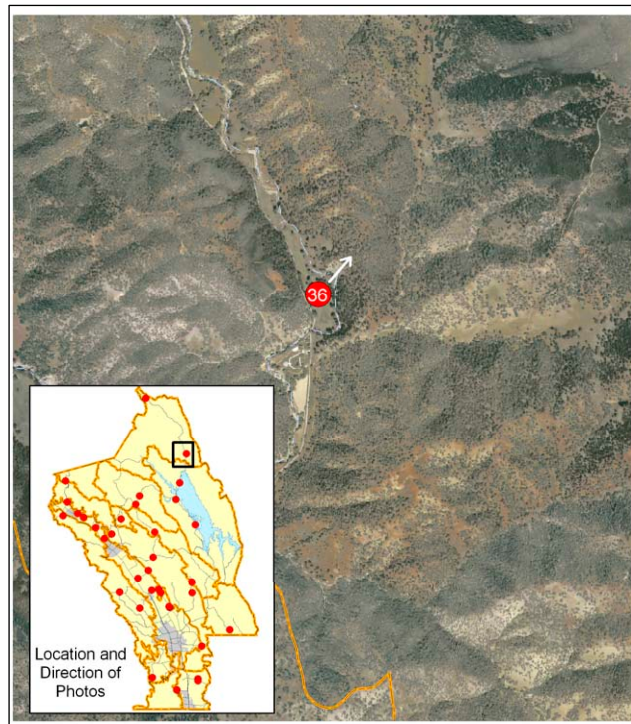


Figure 12-29: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-36

## KNOXVILLE AREA

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The Knoxville Area occupies the northernmost portion of Napa County, bordering Lake County on its northwest side and Yolo County on its northeast side. Among the largest of the evaluation areas, Knoxville is also the least developed. Approximately 90% of the land in this area – which runs from small valleys among rolling, wooded foothills to rugged, mountainous stretches – is either vacant or public, resulting in many views of vast, natural landscape.

The majority of the soils in the area, serpentine substrates, are low in nutrients and therefore best able to support heartier vegetation such as chaparral, which covers the majority of the upper elevations in the area. Here the landscape appears slightly blue from the hue of the soils, and the scrub vegetation gives the appearance of a dry, scratchy texture. In contrast, the lower lands in the area support oak woodland and grassland along rolling foothills and in valleys containing mud flats and wet meadows. The watersheds of Putah Creek and Eticuera Creek, the major sources of water for Lake Berryessa, are in the southeastern, lower lying portion of the evaluation area. This area appears softer, greener, and more hydrated than the upper elevations in the area.

Notable features of the built environment include the relatively few residences in the area and the mostly primitive developments constructed to support a variety of recreational uses within the public lands. Near the northernmost tip of the area are the remains of the Homestake Mining operations, an open pit gold mine that was the only industrial use in the area. The site is now undergoing reclamation.

### UNIQUE VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

#### VIEWS FROM BERRYESSA KNOXVILLE ROAD

A viewer traveling northbound through the area, along Berryessa Knoxville Road, would see the landscape form quickly transition from smoother lakeside valleys and meadows to a rougher and more varied setting. The valley cut by the meandering Eticuera Creek would remain in short-range views for much of the way, though the elevation of the viewer above the creek would become more erratic, matching the terrain. Nearby ridgelines provide terminal views in the mid-range, with the roadway vantage points not allowing anything beyond the rocky ridges above the creek to be seen.

However, the landscape soon opens up, with grassy flat lands split by creeks and drainages and spotted with mature oak trees visible in short-range views (Image 12-36). Ridgelines in mid-range views increasingly stretch into longer range views, as the elevation of the viewer's vantage point increases. Eventually, near the Homestake Mine, views become vast, with ridgelines in the distance reduces to bluish forms and the short- and mid-range views containing a canvas of chaparral and sparse but consistently distributed pine trees. Visually, this high elevation area is the most desolate and remote location in Napa County (Image 12-37).

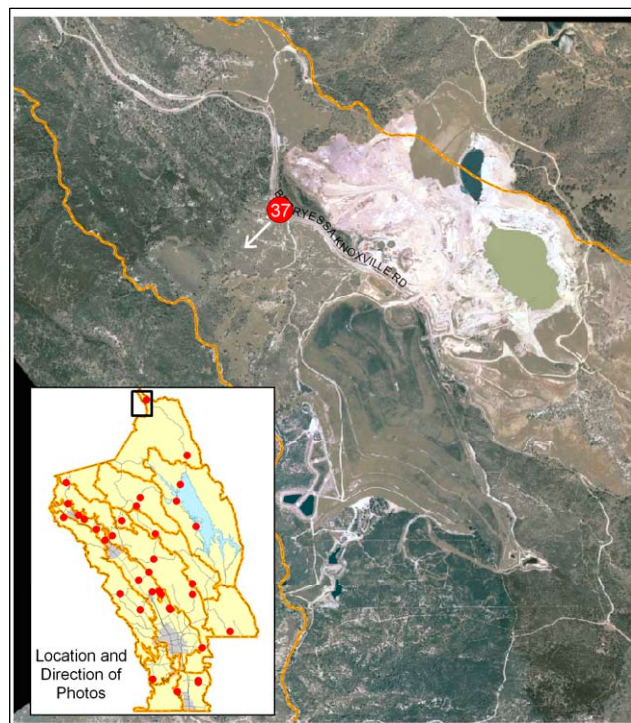


Figure 12-30: Photo Point and Direction of Image 12-37



Image 12-36. Berryessa-Knoxville Road



Image 12-37. High elevation area from Berryessa-Knoxville Road

Berryessa-Knoxville Road, a county-designated scenic roadway, traverses the entire length of the area's eastern portion. On the western edge of the area, Butts Canyon Road briefly passes through the area.

### DESCRIPTION OF VIEWERS IN AREA

While some of the viewers in the Knoxville Area are inclusive of the sparsely dispersed residents and others are those passing through the windy, mountain roads, most are those seeking recreation in the area. The Bureau of Land Management and California Department of Fish and Game manages the portion of the public land within the area, and activities in which viewers participate include camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, recreational shooting and the use of off-road vehicles.

## HISTORICAL VISUAL TRENDS

There is little if any noticeable development in this area over the past 10 years.

## CONCLUSIONS AND REPORT UPDATE RECOMMENDATIONS

### VIEWSHED

This GIS-based viewshed analysis performed in this chapter provides a Countywide representation of visibility. It offers an overall depiction of areas visible from county-designated scenic roads based solely upon topography. It does not take into account existing vegetation or structures that may impede or enhance a view. Additionally, the viewpoints are staggered at every ¼-mile interval, therefore there may be potential gaps in 'visibility' for those areas between the viewpoints.

In order to perform a site-specific or project-level viewshed analysis, it may be required to perform another, more detailed, viewshed analysis (depending upon where the project is to be located). For example, if a housing development is proposed on a hillside, the applicant may be required to perform a site-specific viewshed analysis with a pre-determined number of key observation points. The proposed structure may need to be photo-simulated into the existing landscape in order to fully understand the potential visual impacts. These services are most likely best performed by a trained specialist.

### SCENIC CORRIDORS

Scenic corridors were determined by creating a ½-mile buffer of all county-designated scenic roads. If these corridors are to be used to assist in determining appropriate policy or regulations, additional analysis may be required. First, it may be necessary to combine the scenic corridor coverage with the viewshed analysis in order to determine actual visibility from the road systems. Second, existing vegetation and/or built structures and how they impact visibility need to be taken into account.

If these scenic corridors are to be used in applying for California Scenic Highway designation through the State of California, the following steps must be taken:

#### 1. VISUAL ASSESSMENT

The following three visual concepts are to be addressed in the visual assessment:

*Vividness.* The extent to which the landscape is memorable. This is associated with the distinctiveness, diversity and contrast of visual elements.

*Intactness.* The integrity of visual order in the landscape and the extent to which the natural landscape is free from visual intrusions.

*Unity.* The extent to which intrusions are sensitive to and in visual harmony with the natural landscape.

#### 2. CONSULTATION WITH CALTRANS

The local jurisdiction is to discuss and field review the visual assessment with the Caltrans District Scenic Highway Coordinator before proceeding to Step 3.

#### 3. SCENIC HIGHWAY RESOLUTION PACKAGE

The local jurisdiction for the lands adjacent to the proposed scenic highway must prepare a scenic highway resolution package, consisting of the following:

*Resolution of Intent.* This should cite the reason for seeking official scenic designation.

*Topographic and Map Overlay.* A topographic map should show the suggested scenic corridor boundaries and proposed scenic highway limits. The map should show natural features in the landscape (land forms, water, vegetative cover) that make it scenic and include any visual intrusions within the scenic corridor. The map overlay should be colored where minor, moderate, and major intrusions are shown on the underlying topography map.

*Zoning Map.* A zoning map delineating the scenic corridor and showing allowable land use.

*Narrative.* A narrative description of the elements that make the route scenic.

*Video.* A modest video cassette tape showing both sides of the corridor, or a representative sample (as attested to by the department) of the characteristics along the corridor, as viewed by a motorist.

The county can view the entire application process document online at <http://www.dot.ca.gov>.

### REPORT UPDATE RECOMMENDATIONS

The photos presented in this chapter are only a small representative sample of the County's visual and aesthetic qualities. Therefore, it is recommended that County staff continue to update this database to include a more comprehensive sampling of the County. Additionally, it is recommended that the same photo locations be reshot every two to three years, or when an activity or event occurs that alters the visual landscape of an area (such as a development project, or a fire).

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