

## 3.7 SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

### 3.7.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MADERA COUNTY

#### POPULATION

##### *Regional Population*

As shown in **Table 3.7-1**, the 2005 population of Madera County is estimated to be 141,007. The majority of the regional population resides in unincorporated Madera County.

**TABLE 3.7-1**  
REGIONAL POPULATION

Location	Population		
	1990	2000	2005*
<b>Madera County (total)</b>	<b>86,400</b>	<b>123,109</b>	<b>141,007</b>
Chowchilla	5,875	14,416	16,065
Madera	28,800	43,205	50,842
Unincorporated County	51,700	65,488	74,100
<b>State of California (total)</b>	<b>29,758,213</b>	<b>33,871,648</b>	<b>36,810,358</b>

NOTES: \* Estimate.

SOURCE: California Department of Finance, 2005.

The Cities of Madera and Chowchilla are the only incorporated communities in the County. Madera, the County seat, is home to more than three times the population as in the City of Chowchilla. Both the Madera site and the North Fork site are located in unincorporated Madera County. The Madera site is located adjacent to the City of Madera and near the City of Chowchilla. The North Fork site is located near the unincorporated community of North Fork and is relatively distant from the Cities of Madera and Chowchilla.

##### *Population Trends*

The population of Madera County grew rapidly from 86,400 people in 1990 to 123,109 people in 2000, an increase of 42.5 percent. Between 2000 and January 2005, the County's population is estimated to have grown to 141,007, a slightly more moderate increase of approximately 14.5 percent.

The populations of Chowchilla and Madera also increased rapidly from 1990 to 2000. The population of Chowchilla more than doubled and the population of Madera increased by 50 percent. As of January 2005, the population growth of Chowchilla has slowed, while the population growth of Madera has continued at about the same rate since 1990.

The population growth rate in Madera County is greater than that of the State. The County is experiencing growth due to the number of San Francisco Bay Area residents moving into the area seeking less expensive housing options. There is nothing to suggest that the growth trend in Madera will not continue (Innovation Group, 2005).

### ***HOUSING***

As shown in **Table 3.7-2**, there are currently about 44,986 housing units in Madera County. Of these, 4,678 were estimated to be vacant in 2005. Regional vacancy rates ranged from 4.34 to 14.07 and averaged 10.40. As shown in **Table 3.7-3**, 2005 vacancy rates are generally high, when compared with historical rates since 1990. The Cities of Madera and Chowchilla generally have lower vacancy rates than the unincorporated portions of the County.

**TABLE 3.7-2**  
2005 REGIONAL HOUSING ESTIMATES

Location	Total Housing Units*	Percent Vacant*	Vacant Units*
<b>Madera County (total)</b>	<b>44,986</b>	<b>10.40</b>	<b>4,678</b>
Chowchilla	3,021	5.49	165
Madera	14,314	4.34	621
Unincorporated County	27,651	14.07	3,890

NOTES: \* Estimates. These figures do not include seasonal, recreational, or occasional use residences.  
SOURCE: California Department of Finance, 2005.

**TABLE 3.7-3**  
HISTORICAL VACANCY RATES

Location	Housing Vacancy Rate															
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Madera County</b>	<b>7.98</b>	<b>7.98</b>	<b>7.99</b>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>8.00</b>	<b>7.99</b>	<b>7.99</b>	<b>7.99</b>	<b>10.48</b>	<b>10.47</b>	<b>10.46</b>	<b>10.43</b>	<b>10.43</b>	<b>10.40</b>
Chowchilla	4.01	3.99	4.01	4.02	3.99	4.00	4.02	4.02	4.01	4.02	5.50	5.50	5.51	5.50	5.50	5.49
Madera	3.89	3.89	3.89	3.90	3.89	3.89	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	4.34	4.34	4.34	4.33	4.34	4.34
Unincorp. County	10.51	10.50	10.50	10.50	10.51	10.51	10.51	10.51	10.51	10.51	14.07	14.07	14.07	14.07	14.07	14.07

NOTES: All rates are based on California Department of Finance estimates except for 1990 and 2000, which are based on U.S. Census counts. These figures do not include seasonal, recreational, or occasional use residences. Historically low rates during the shown time period are italicized.

SOURCE: California Department of Finance, 2005.

### ***EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME***

#### ***Employment***

Madera County had approximately 62,200 people in its 2004 labor force, which is approximately 46 percent of the total population. Approximately 9 percent of the labor force was unemployed in 2004. The 2004 unemployment rate was substantially lower than the 2003 rate of 12.3 percent.

Between 2003 and 2004, the labor force also grew by more than 5,000 persons. The increased number in the workforce combined with a lower unemployment rate indicates that 2004 was a good year in terms of employment in Madera County.

Influenced by the main industry in the County, agriculture, the unemployment rate is extremely dynamic over the course of the year. For example, in September 2004, the unemployment rate was only 6.5 percent, but earlier in the year unemployment was as high as 11.8 percent.

### ***Income***

Census 2000 data represents the most current household income data available by census tract. Although this data is more than four years old, the use of older income data is expected to result in a conservative estimate of income when compared to 2004 poverty income levels, given that income levels tend to rise over the years due to inflation.

The average annual household income in Madera County, at \$52,131, is much lower than the averages of California and the United States. The City of Madera has an even lower average income than the County at \$43,942. There are two main reasons for a lower average income level in the region, a high unemployment rate and the seasonal nature of the agricultural industry. Median household income for census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera and North Fork sites is contained in **Tables 3.7-4** and **3.7-5**.

**TABLE 3.7-4**  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME DATA BY CENSUS TRACT – MADERA SITE AND VICINITY

	<b>Households: Median household income in 1999 (dollars)</b>	<b>Occupied housing units: Average household size; Total</b>	<b>2004 Poverty Level (dollars) *</b>
<b>Census Tract 2</b>	33,289	3.34	19,803
<b>Census Tract 5.03</b>	43,822	2.99	15,219
<b>Census Tract 5.06</b>	41,806	3.67	19,803

NOTES: \* Assumes average household size, conservatively rounded up to the nearest person and with a conservative assumption with regards to the number of children under 18 years.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2004; AES, 2005.

**TABLE 3.7-5**  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME DATA BY CENSUS TRACT – NORTH FORK SITE AND VICINITY

	<b>Households: Median household income in 1999 (dollars)</b>	<b>Occupied housing units: Average household size; Total</b>	<b>Poverty Level (dollars) *</b>
<b>Census Tract 1.02</b>	35,858	2.43	15,219

NOTES: \* Assumes average household size, conservatively rounded up to the nearest person and with a conservative assumption with regards to the number of children under 18 years.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2004; AES, 2005.

### 3.7.2 SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRIBE

The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians is comprised of 1,356 individuals. Of these 1,356 individuals, approximately 325 currently reside in Madera County, with 220 living in the Community of North Fork, 63 in the City of Madera, and the remainder in the City of Chowchilla and unincorporated areas. Approximately 412 members reside within Fresno County, 276 of which live in the City of Fresno. The remaining Tribal members live out of the area. The Tribe has grown rapidly over the past few years, primarily due to new enrollment.

In general, the economy of the Tribe lags behind the economy of the local community. According to a 2001 BIA Indian Population and Labor Force Report, the Tribal unemployment rate was approximately 13 percent, which is greater than the unemployment rate for Madera County. In addition, approximately 20 percent of employed Tribal members have incomes below the poverty level.

### 3.7.3 TRIBAL ATTITUDES, EXPECTATIONS, LIFESTYLE AND CULTURE

Both the Tribal government and individual Tribal members participate in area political and social activities. Tribal children attend local area schools and adult Tribal members are employed by local businesses. Altogether, Tribal attitudes and expectations favor increasing participation in, and benefit from, the regional economy, with continuation of the long tradition of comfortable coexistence and cooperation with their non-Indian neighbors.

### 3.7.4 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

#### ***POLICY/REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS***

*Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations*, as amended, directs Federal agencies to develop an Environmental Justice Strategy that identifies and addresses disproportionately high and adverse human health or

environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has oversight responsibility of the Federal Government's compliance with Executive Order 12898 and NEPA. The CEQ, in consultation with the USEPA and other agencies, has developed guidance to assist Federal agencies with their NEPA procedures so that environmental justice concerns are effectively identified and addressed.

According to guidance from the CEQ (1997b) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA, 1998), agencies should consider the composition of the affected area, to determine whether minority populations, low-income populations, or Indian tribes are present in the area affected by the proposed action, and if so whether there may be disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects. Communities may be considered "minority" under the executive order if one of the following characteristics apply:

- The cumulative percentage of minorities within a census tract is greater than 50 percent (primary method of analysis); or
- The cumulative percentage of minorities within a census tract is less than 50 percent, but the percentage of minorities is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis (secondary method of analysis).

According to the USEPA, either the county or the state can be used when considering the scope of the "general population." A definition of "meaningfully greater" is not given by the CEQ or USEPA, although the USEPA has noted that any affected area that has a percentage of minorities that is above the state's percentage is a potential minority community and any affected area with a minority percentage double that of the state's is a definite minority community under Executive Order 12898.

Communities may be considered "low-income" under the executive order if one of the following characteristics applies:

- The median household income for a census tract is below the poverty line (primary method of analysis); or
- Other indications are present that indicate a low-income community is present within the census tract (secondary method of analysis).

In most cases, the primary method of analysis will suffice to determine whether a low-income community exists in the affected environment. However, when a census tract income may be just over the poverty line or where a low-income pocket within the tract appears likely, the secondary method of analysis may be warranted. Other indications of a low-income community under the

secondary method of analysis include limited access to health care, overburdened or aged infrastructure, and dependence on subsistence living.

For the Madera site, the following census tracts were analyzed for characteristics relevant to an environmental justice analysis:

- The census tract that includes the Madera site (tract 5.03), and
- Tracts adjacent to tract 5.03 (except to the west and south, where tract 5.03 extends over five miles from the Madera site).

**Figure 3.7-1** displays the census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera site.

For the North Fork site, the census tract that includes the North Fork site (tract 1.02) was analyzed for characteristics relevant to an environmental justice analysis. No other census tracts were analyzed given the expansive nature of tract 1.02, which extends at least four miles from the North Fork site in all directions, to the Fresno County border to the east and south, and includes most of the nearby community of North Fork. **Figure 3.7-2** displays the census tracts in the vicinity of the North Fork site.

#### ***RACE***

According to the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), the Madera County region has a predominately Caucasian ethnic composition. However a significant Latino population also exists in the region, with correspondingly smaller numbers of Blacks, Native Americans, Asians, and Pacific islanders. The following races are considered minorities under the executive order:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native,
- Asian or Pacific Islander,
- Black, not of Hispanic origin, and
- Hispanic.

Populations of two or more races were also considered to be a minority race for the purpose of environmental justice analysis.

Insert Figure 3.7-1, Census Tract Map – Madera Site

Insert Figure 3.7-2, Census Tract Map – North Fork Site and Vicinity

Census 2000 data represent the most current racial data available by census tract. Although this data is more than four years old, the racial composition of census tracts is not expected to have changed substantially. Conservative assumptions will apply to any borderline situations where a minor change in racial composition could affect the minority status of a census tract. **Tables 3.7-6** and **3.7-7** display the population of each minority race according to census tract for the vicinity of the Madera site and North Fork sites.

As shown in **Table 3.7-6**, all census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera site are either above or just below the 50 percent minority threshold. The tract with the lowest percentage, at 49 percent, is census tract 5.03, which includes the Madera site. Given that the demographic statistics are over four years old and could have changed, resulting in an increased percentage of minorities, this tract will be considered a minority community for the purposes of environmental justice analysis. Thus, the three census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera site are all considered minority communities.

**TABLE 3.7-6**  
MINORITY POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT – MADERA SITE AND VICINITY

	Total population:	Total population: Hispanic or Latino	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of one race; Black or African American alone	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of one race; American Indian and Alaska Native alone	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of one race; Asian alone	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of one race; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of one race; some other race alone, other than white	Total population: not Hispanic or Latino; population of two or more races	Total population: minority	Percent minority*
Census Tract 2	11,334	3,819	2,236	214	174	34	19	501	6,997	62
Census Tract 5.03	5,215	2,022	160	24	206	2	4	123	2,541	49
Census Tract 5.06	5,485	2,959	146	52	76	2	15	112	3,362	61

NOTES: \* Rounded to the nearest one percent.  
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; AES, 2005.

As shown in **Table 3.7-7**, the census tract that contains the North Fork site and includes areas in the vicinity of the North Fork site is well below the 50 percent minority threshold. Thus, there are no minority communities present in the vicinity of the North Fork site.

**TABLE 3.7-7**  
**MINORITY POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT – NORTH FORK SITE AND VICINITY**

Census Tract	Total population:	Total population: Hispanic or Latino	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of one race; Black or African American alone	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of one race; American Indian and Alaska Native alone	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of one race; Asian alone	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of one race; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of one race; some other race alone	Total population: Not Hispanic or Latino; Population of two or more races	Total population: minority	Percent minority*
Census Tract 1.02	4,278	358	13	284	21	15	34	274	999	23

NOTES: \* Rounded to the nearest one percent.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; AES, 2005.

***Tribal Gaming***

A number of local tribes have been able to improve the socioeconomic conditions of their members through gaming. Specifically, the current primary gaming market in the area around Madera is comprised of three large casinos: Table Mountain, the closest facility to Fresno, the Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino in Coarsegold, a resort that opened June 25, 2003, and The Palace, located south of Fresno in Lemoore. In addition to this primary gaming market, a number of other tribal casinos compete to varying degrees with the Madera area casinos. For most of the casinos in the primary market, proximity and ease of access from Fresno are major determinants of the casino popularity and revenue potential. Most of the mature, larger properties in the market either have, or will soon have, ample attractive non-gaming amenities to attract gamers from longer distances as well. The existing and proposed tribal casinos that make up the competitive gaming market in the Madera area are described in more detail below.

**Table Mountain Casino**

Table Mountain Casino is located just east of Millerton Lake, approximately 12 miles east of Route 41 in the town of Friant. The facility is easily visible from the road with parking available in a lot in front of the casino and a parking structure in the rear.

**Chukchansi Gold**

Located in Coarsegold, Chukchansi Gold opened June 25, 2003. The new facility’s design offers a large, open gaming floor that is well laid out with easy access to restaurants and the hotel. The property is situated in the foothills adjacent to Yosemite National Park and offers beautiful views.

**Palace Casino**

Forty-five minutes to the south of Fresno, near the town of Lemoore, is the Palace Gaming Center Casino. Once a truck stop, the facility now has 2,000 slot machines, 30 gaming tables, a large bingo hall, and a variety of food and beverage outlets including a steak house and large buffet.

**Mono Wind Casino**

The Big Sandy Rancheria tribe currently operates the Mono Wind Casino in Auberry. Although geographically close to Table Mountain (approximately 10 miles to the east), Mono Wind Casino is located in a mountainous area that is difficult to reach.

**Eagle Mountain Casino**

Southeast of Lemoore, approximately 100 miles from the Madera site, is the Eagle Mountain gaming facility, run by the Tule River Tribe.

**Black Oak Casino**

In Tuolumne, approximately 75 miles north of Madera, the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians offers the Black Oak Casino. There are 600 slot machines and 10 gaming tables at this casino, as well as a cafe and bar.

**Chicken Ranch and Bingo Casino**

The Chicken Ranch Bingo is a non-compacted casino in Jamestown which offers a 900-seat bingo hall and a comparatively limited offering of slot games, totaling approximately 250.

**Jackson Rancheria**

North of the immediate region, and located approximately 100 miles north of Madera, Jackson Rancheria caters to gamers 18 and over and does not serve alcohol. An arcade is available for minors. The primary market for the property is the Stockton-Sacramento corridor

**Proposed Casinos**

In addition to the existing competition in the market, there is one other proposed casino in the Fresno-Madera-Yosemite area market that will compete for gamers in the region, as well as several large-scale casinos, existing and proposed, well outside of the region near major metropolitan areas in Northern California. The most proximate proposed casino to Madera is to be located approximately one mile from Table Mountain. The Big Sandy Band of Western Mono Indians in conjunction with Harrah's/Caesars Entertainment is planning a \$200 million casino and hotel on more than 215 acres near the intersection of Millerton Road and Auberry Road. Three other casinos have been assumed in the outlying markets: Shingle Springs, Lytton San Pablo, and Graton Rancheria in Rohnert Park.

**INCOME**

**Section 3.7.1** discusses the median household income in census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera and North Fork sites. As shown in **Tables 3.7-4** and **3.7-5**, median household income in

census tracts in the vicinity of the Madera and North Fork sites is, in all cases, well above the poverty level. Thus, no low-income communities are present in the vicinity of either site.