

## CHAPTER 13

### VISUAL RESOURCES

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Both natural and artificial landscape features contribute to perceived visual images and the aesthetic value of a view. The value is determined by contrasts, forms and textures exhibited by geology, hydrology, vegetation, wildlife, and man-made features. Individuals respond differently to changes in the physical environment, depending on prior experiences and expectations and proximity and duration of views. Therefore, visual effects analyses tend to be highly subjective in nature. The following sections describe the existing visual resource conditions and evaluate the areas that could be visually affected by actions associated with the alternatives evaluated in this EIR/EIS.

Reservoirs in the area of analysis have higher levels of scenic attractiveness at their maximum operating levels. Reservoirs are generally Class A or B visual resources when their water surface elevations are near to or at their maximum levels. As reservoir drawdown occurs, typically during the summer and fall, an area of shoreline mostly devoid of vegetation and commonly referred to as a “bathtub ring” is exposed within the fluctuation zone between maximum reservoir storage level and the lowered water surface. The exposed rock and soil of this drawdown zone contrasts with the vegetated areas above the high water level and with the reservoir surface. As a consequence of reservoir operations, scenic attractiveness tends to decline in late summer with increasing reservoir drawdown.

Seasonal variations in flow levels of the rivers within this region provide for a wide range of aesthetic opportunities. Most of the rivers in this region have minimum flow requirements in place. Flow requirements for the various rivers and streams are specified in SWRCB water right permits and licenses, FERC hydropower licenses, and interagency agreements. Because there are minimum flow requirements and the flows are managed, riparian vegetation along the rivers reflects the results of current management practices. These practices include construction and maintenance of levees for flood control, managed floodplains and overflow bypasses, and controlled releases from reservoirs, and result in a narrow riparian vegetation corridor. Nevertheless, riparian vegetation remains an important visual aspect to all streams and river corridors. Water, shade, and dense cover distinguish the riparian areas from the surrounding land. In addition, riparian areas are popular wildlife habitats because they offer food, water, and protection from both the sun and from large-scale human disturbances.

#### 13.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The areas where visual resources potentially could be affected include the Yuba Region, the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region, the Delta Region and the Export Service Area.

Scenic attractiveness classifications are a key component of the Scenery Management System (SMS) developed by the USFS. The SMS is used to classify visual features into the following categories (USDA 1995).

- ❑ **Class A - “Distinctive”:** Areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide unusual, unique, or outstanding scenic quality. These landscapes have strong positive attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance.
- ❑ **Class B - “Typical”:** Areas where landform, vegetation pattern, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide ordinary or common scenic quality. These

landscapes generally have positive, yet common, attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance.

- **Class C - "Indistinctive":** Areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural land use have low scenic quality. Often water and rock form of any consequence are missing in Class C landscapes. These landscapes have weak to missing attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance.

### **13.1.1 YUBA REGION**

Visual resources in the Yuba Region include New Bullards Bar Reservoir, the North Yuba River between New Bullards Bar Reservoir and Englebright Reservoir, and the lower Yuba River downstream of Englebright Dam to the confluence with the Feather River. The Yuba Region also includes the viewsheds of groundwater wells located within Yuba County that may undergo short-term visual impacts associated with the conversion of diesel motors to electric motors. However, the short-term nature of these activities combined with the visual character assigned to agricultural lands (Class C) precludes them from further consideration.

#### **13.1.1.1 NEW BULLARDS BAR RESERVOIR**

New Bullards Bar Reservoir is located on the North Yuba River, approximately 21 miles north of Nevada City. Conifers and mixed hardwoods surround the reservoir. Cliffs of red, clay-like soil are found in areas around the reservoir. These variations offer visitors a variety of landscape views. A marina, trail, and campgrounds provide public access and viewing opportunities. Adjacent county roads also provide viewing opportunities of New Bullards Bar Dam and Reservoir. During the summer months, largely undeveloped areas of the New Bullards Bar Reservoir shoreline become visible as summer drawdown exposes the reservoir fluctuation zones. However, reservoir drawdown is a result of normal reservoir operations. The magnitude of seasonal drawdowns is generally a product of both local hydrologic conditions and reservoir management operations. The visible fluctuation zone or bathtub ring resulting from seasonal drawdowns represents a visual feature that affects the overall visual quality of the area. In general, however, the reservoir has both Class A and B visual resources.

#### **13.1.1.2 LOWER YUBA RIVER**

The North Yuba, Middle Yuba, and South Yuba rivers originate in the Sierra Nevada. The North Yuba and Middle Yuba rivers converge downstream of New Bullards Bar Reservoir, and the South Yuba River joins just upstream of Englebright Reservoir. The confluence of the Yuba and Feather rivers is located near Marysville. The vegetation along the North Yuba and South Yuba rivers consists of large areas of conifer trees intermixed with small pockets of hardwood and barren land (Class A or B visual resources). The Middle Yuba River has very similar vegetation features, but small pockets of annual grassland are intermixed within the terrain. Grassland, agricultural fields, as well as some areas of barren land (Class C visual resources) surround the lower Yuba River as it flows toward the Feather River near Marysville. A few rural residences and small communities also are located throughout this area.

### 13.1.2 CVP/SWP UPSTREAM OF THE DELTA REGION

Within the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region, the visual resources analysis is focused on those areas where actions associated with the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives could change or impair visual resources. The entire CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region is bordered on the east by the Sierra Nevada, on the northwest by the Coast Ranges, and on the south by the northern extent of the San Joaquin River watershed. Agriculture in the Central Valley, forests in the upper watersheds, and grasslands and woodlands in the foothills characterize the region visually. Much of the upper watershed on the east side of the Central Valley is forested, which limits views for motorists traveling through the area.

Historical changes from grasslands, floodplains, and extensive riparian areas to cropland, rice fields, and orchards have altered the visual variety in the Central Valley of California. The valley floor is primarily irrigated agriculture classified as Variety Class C – the least visually distinctive category (see Section 13.2.1 for a description of the variety classes).

The only upland elevations in the northern Central Valley upstream from the Delta are 32,000 acres in the Sutter Buttes. Rising from the valley floor, the Sutter Buttes, generally a Class A visual resource, provide visual drama from a wide viewing area.

Highways with high viewer sensitivity in the regional study area include Interstate 5, Highway 99, and SR 70 and SR 20. Agricultural areas along these highways and other roads in the Central Valley are generally Class C.

#### 13.1.2.1 FEATHER RIVER BASIN

The Feather River Basin originates in Plumas and Lassen counties. The upper, middle, and lower forks of the Feather River flow south/southwest into Oroville Reservoir. Surface water released from Oroville Dam flows into the lower Feather River and continues south to the river's confluence with the Sacramento River. Areas within the Feather River Basin that are addressed in this analysis include Oroville Reservoir and associated facilities and the lower Feather River downstream from the Oroville Facilities to the confluence with the Sacramento River.

#### OROVILLE RESERVOIR

Oroville Reservoir, Thermalito Diversion Pool, Thermalito Forebay, Thermalito Afterbay, and the Oroville Wildlife Area together comprise the Oroville Reservoir Complex, which provides water, electrical power, and recreation. These dams, reservoirs, and related facilities are among the most visually important elements within the area. Although the scenery in the foothill region around the facilities is attractive, it is generally of local and regional importance, not state or national importance. The SRA at Oroville Reservoir has Class A and B visual resources.

The Lake Oroville Visitor Center, on the crest of Kelly Ridge, includes a 47-foot high observation tower designed to provide panoramic views of the dam and reservoir. Many of the most immediate views of the reservoir are from marinas, boat launch areas, campgrounds, picnic areas, and other developed recreation areas surrounding the reservoir. During the summer months, largely undeveloped areas of the Oroville Reservoir shoreline become visible as summer drawdown exposes the reservoir fluctuation zones. As previously described, the visible fluctuation zone or bathtub ring represents a negative visual feature that affects the overall visual quality of the area. However, reservoir drawdown is a result of normal reservoir operations. The magnitude of seasonal drawdown is generally a product of both local

hydrologic conditions and reservoir management operations. However, the visible fluctuation zone or bathtub ring resulting from seasonal drawdown represents a visual feature that affects the overall visual quality of the area. In general, however, the reservoir has both Class A and B visual resources.

### **LOWER FEATHER RIVER**

The lower Feather River extends from the Oroville Dam to its confluence with the Sacramento River. Agricultural lands (Class C) are predominant in the vicinity of the lower Feather River. The lower Feather River terrain is generally flat. Riparian vegetation lines the river, with grassland and croplands in the adjacent agricultural areas. Along the southern portion of the Feather River, near Marysville, large areas of rice fields, as well as other field crops are located.

#### ***13.1.2.2 SACRAMENTO RIVER BASIN***

The Sacramento River originates above Shasta Reservoir in the north and flows through the Central Valley into the Delta. Agriculture, a Class C visual resource, dominates the land use near the river along the valley floor, while the upper watershed has retained its oak woodland, grasslands, forests, and rural character. Rice is one of the dominant crops grown in the Central Valley and is visibly noticeable along the Interstate 5 corridor. The Central Valley also has many acres of other field crops and orchards.

Important visual resources on the valley floor include the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which contains the Sacramento NWR, Colusa NWR, Delevan NWR, Sacramento River NWR, Sutter NWR, Butte Sink NWR, and the Sutter Buttes.

Areas within the Sacramento River Basin that are addressed in this analysis include the Sacramento River downstream from the confluence of the Feather Reservoir to the Delta.

### **SACRAMENTO RIVER**

The lands bordering the Sacramento River in the Central Valley are primarily flat and the land use is largely agricultural with scattered areas of development ranging in intensity from scattered rural residential, to suburban, to urban. The visual environment of the Sacramento River area is dominated and largely influenced by human development activities and generally has a rural character. While agriculture, a Class C visual resource, dominates the land use near the Sacramento River along the valley floor, the upper watershed has retained its oak woodland, grasslands, forests, and largely rural character. Rice is one of the prominent crops grown in the Sacramento Valley, and is visibly noticeable along the Interstate 5 corridor; however the Sacramento Valley also has many acres of irrigated row crops and orchards in the flatter areas and grazing in the foothills.

#### **13.1.3 DELTA REGION**

The Delta Region includes waterways in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Because the reservoirs within the CVP/SWP system are operated in a coordinated manner to the various demands throughout California, changes in the timing and magnitude of exports from the Delta could indirectly result in changes to Delta flows.

### ***13.1.3.1 SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA***

A large portion of the Delta is devoted to farming. The region is interlaced with a network of waterways and levees designed to protect the Delta's islands and tracts. Major visual resources in the Delta Region include the state recreation areas of Franks Tract, Brannan Island, and Windy Cove; Stone Lakes NWR; the Cosumnes-Mokelumne River confluence wildlife preserve; and several private marinas, camping, and fishing sites. State Route 160 is a state-designated scenic highway from Antioch to Freeport. Representative Scenic Classes A and B resources viewed from the Delta include Mount Diablo in Contra Costa County and the Vaca Range in Napa and Solano counties.

The main roads from which travelers can view the Delta are State routes 160, 4, and 12. In many sections of these highways it is impossible to view the Delta waterways, although elevated features such as Mount Diablo can be viewed. Delta waterways, including rivers, creeks, and sloughs, are visible primarily from boats which use the Delta for commerce and recreation.

### **13.1.4 EXPORT SERVICE AREA**

Because the reservoirs within the CVP/SWP system are operated in a coordinated manner to the various demands throughout California, changes in the timing and magnitude of exports from the Delta could indirectly result in changes to water surface elevations in San Luis Reservoir.

#### ***13.1.4.1 SAN LUIS RESERVOIR***

San Luis Reservoir is located in the grassy hills of the western San Joaquin Valley near historic Pacheco Pass. The reservoir's 23,551-acre recreation area provides opportunities for boating, fishing, and picnicking. In the spring the golden-brown hills surrounding the reservoir offer views of ephemeral green grasses and wildflowers. The visitor center at the Romero Overlook offers information on the reservoir and provides telescopes for viewing the reservoir and surrounding landscape. The groundwater recharge basins nearby, such as the San Luis Rey Basin, provide opportunities for viewing wildlife and vegetation.

### **13.1.5 REGULATORY SETTING**

#### ***13.1.5.1 FEDERAL***

No federal regulations applicable to visual resources found within the evaluated regions have been identified.

#### ***13.1.5.2 STATE***

The California State Legislature created California's Scenic Highway Program in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on the traveler's enjoyment of the view. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. The status of state scenic highway changes from eligible to official designation when 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 (California Department of Transportation Website 2007). Although there are eligible state scenic highways in Yuba County, there are none officially designated at this time (California Department of Transportation Website 2007). State Highway 160 south and southwest of Interstate 5 in southwest Sacramento County in the Delta region is an officially designated Scenic Highway and the middle portion of this highway is officially designated as a County Scenic Highway (California Department of Transportation Website 2007).

### **13.1.5.3 LOCAL**

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the Yuba County General Plan (County of Yuba 1996) identifies a general goal to “...maintain and enhance the natural resources, open space land uses and scenic beauty of Yuba County in order to protect the quality of the environment, the County’s economy, and health and well-being of present and future residents.” Supporting this goal is a policy to “encourage the preservation and enhancement of the natural features of the County, including rivers and streams and their banks, mountain peaks, bluffs, areas of scenic beauty, and native vegetation.”

## **13.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

Modifications to water release patterns and CVP/SWP operations associated the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives could result in hydrologic changes (i.e., river flow patterns and fluctuations in reservoir water surface elevations) in the Yuba River and possibly other CVP/SWP river systems within the regions described above. Changes in the integrated operations of the Yuba River Basin could indirectly affect both reservoir water storage levels and river flows within the CVP/SWP system if surface water released from New Bullards Bar Reservoir were to be “backed-up” in Oroville Reservoir. The “backing-up” of surface water would occur if YCWA were not able to make a water transfer to the CVP/SWP system because conditions were not balanced in the Delta, or pumping capacity at the Jones and Banks pumping plants was limited. This type of integrated operation of the CVP/SWP system is governed by a series of operating rules which ensures that flood control storage targets in the reservoirs, and flow requirements downstream of the reservoirs are not violated (for a more detailed discussion of these operations, see Appendix D).

### **13.2.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

The assessment of the scenic value of a landscape is very subjective, therefore visual resources analysis are generally restricted to qualitative significance criteria. In this analysis, the assessment methods are guided by the SMS developed by the USFS (USDA 1995) and outlined in “*Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management, Agriculture Handbook Number 701*”. The SMS is an evolved and updated version of the Visual Management System. While the essence of the system remains unchanged, the SMS allows for improved integration of aesthetics with other biological, physical, and social/cultural resources in the planning process. This analysis methodology describes the effects of the surface water diversion related changes to instream flow regimens, and discusses project components associated with surface water reservoirs, instream flows, and groundwater substitution that could affect the quality of visual resources within the regions described above. Potential effects were evaluated based upon the significance criteria described in Section 13.2.2. The SMS was applied to the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives utilizing the following steps:

- ❑ **Identify visually sensitive areas.** Sensitivity is considered highest for views seen by people driving to or from recreational activities, or along routes designated as scenic corridors. Views from relatively moderate to high-use recreation areas are also considered sensitive.
- ❑ **Define the landscape character.** Landscape character gives an area its visual and cultural image, and consists of the combination of physical, biological, and cultural attributes that make each landscape identifiable or unique. Landscape character refers to the images of the landscape that can be defined with a list of scenic attributes. A description of landscape character is provided in Section 13.1 for each of the visually sensitive areas defined.
- ❑ **Classify scenic attractiveness.** Scenic attractiveness classifications are a key component of the SMS and are used to classify visual features into the Class A, B and C categories (USDA 1995) previously discussed in Section 13.1.

Class A and B resources typically include state or federal park, recreation, or wilderness areas. Rivers and reservoirs are typically considered Class A or B visual resources. Class C resources generally include areas that have low scenic quality and contain more common landscapes, such as agricultural lands.

Changes in SWP/ CVP and Yuba River system operations associated with the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives could result in changes to river flow patterns and reservoir water surface elevations within the project area. Significant reductions in river flows would result in a reduced river expanse, which could contribute to a thinning of the riparian corridor, loss of valuable border zone vegetation, and subsequently reduce wildlife habitat. Such a reduction in available wildlife habitat could lead to a reduction in wildlife viewing opportunities. Fluctuations in the water surface elevations of reservoirs are considered acceptable if they are within normal operating procedures. However, large decreases in water surface elevations could result in significant increases in the amount of shoreline exposed. Because drawdown zones are typically unvegetated, reductions in reservoir water surface elevations greater than 10 feet typically expose areas that lack terrestrial vegetation, and could be considered visually significant.

To evaluate diversion-related effects on regional waterbodies and known visual resources and landscapes within the Yuba, CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta, and Delta regions, visual impacts were analyzed based upon a comparison of reservoir water surface elevations and river flows under existing and future scenarios with and without the various alternatives. Hydrologic modeling results were reviewed to evaluate whether reductions in the monthly mean reservoir water surface elevations and river flows could result in significant alterations to the visual character of waterbodies within the regional project study areas. The simulation comparisons conducted for each alternative are described in Chapter 4, and model template output supporting the analyses is presented in Appendix F4.

### **13.2.2 IMPACT INDICATORS AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA FOR VISUAL RESOURCES**

Significance criteria were developed based on local general plan objectives and policies, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) resource management plan guidelines and the CEQA Guidelines Environmental Checklist (CELSOC 2005). Impact indicators were developed using visual component characteristics. The impact indicators and significance

criteria utilized to evaluate the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives are presented in **Table 13-1**.

**Table 13-1. Impact Indicators and Significance Criteria for Visual Resources**

Impact Indicator	Significance Criteria
Monthly mean water surface elevation of New Bullards Bar, Oroville, and San Luis reservoirs.	A change in the monthly mean water surface elevation of more than 10 feet, relative to the basis of comparison, contributing to reduction in shoreline vegetation or increase of bathtub ring of sufficient frequency to adversely affect the visual character for any given month of the year over the 72-year simulation period.
Monthly mean flows (cfs) of the lower Yuba, lower Feather, and Sacramento rivers and Delta	Changes in flow, relative to the basis of comparison, of sufficient frequency and magnitude to adversely affect the visual character for any given month of the year over the 72-year simulation period.
The visibility of scenic landscape from sensitive viewpoints within the study area.	Result in long-term (i.e., persisting for five years or more) adverse visual changes or contrast to the existing landscape as viewed from areas with high visual sensitivity within three miles, relative to the basis of comparison, to adversely affect the visual character for any given month of the year.
Landscape character and scenic attractiveness of Class A and B visual resources within the study area.	Affect landscape character and scenic attractiveness of Class A and B visual resources, relative to the basis of comparison, of sufficient frequency and magnitude to adversely affect the character of visual resources.

As discussed in Chapter 4, CEQA and NEPA have different legal and regulatory standards that require slightly different assumptions in the modeling runs used to compare the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives to the appropriate CEQA and NEPA bases of comparison in the impact assessments. Although only one project (the Yuba Accord Alternative) and one action alternative (the Modified Flow Alternative) are evaluated in this EIR/EIS, it is necessary to use separate NEPA and CEQA modeling scenarios for the Proposed Project/Action, alternatives and bases of comparisons to make the appropriate comparisons. As a result, the scenarios compared in the impact assessments below have either a “CEQA” or a “NEPA” prefix before the name of the alternative being evaluated. A detailed discussion of the different assumptions used for the CEQA and NEPA scenarios is included in Appendix D.

As also discussed in Chapter 4, while the CEQA and NEPA analyses in this EIR/EIS refer to “potentially significant,” “less than significant,” “no” and “beneficial” impacts, the first two comparisons (CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative and CEQA Modified Flow Alternative compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative) presented below instead refer to whether or not the proposed change would “unreasonably affect” the evaluated parameter. This is because these first two comparisons are made to determine whether the action alternative would satisfy the requirement of Water Code Section 1736 that the proposed change associated with the action alternative “would not unreasonably affect fish, wildlife, or other instream beneficial uses.”

The Proposed Project/Action and alternatives do not involve construction, introduction of new scenic features, or activities that would visually change the landscape for more than one season. Therefore, there would not be any visual effects over the long-term (i.e., persisting for five years or more), relative to the bases of comparison, to adversely affect the visual character for any given month of the year. However, the Proposed Project/Action and alternatives could result in temporary changes or seasonal changes in the landscape. Therefore, potential effects could occur relating to the changes in reservoir levels and river flows and associated scenic landscape. The analysis describes these potential effects to the scenic landscape.

### 13.2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CEQA YUBA ACCORD ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

#### *Impact 13.2.3-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape*

Implementation of the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern of reservoir releases, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within the range of historical operating parameters. Over the 72-year simulation period, decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations greater than 10 feet would occur in August (12 feet), September (13 feet), October (14 feet), and November (14 feet) under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative. The lowest long-term average monthly water surface elevation under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be 1,851 feet msl and would occur in November, compared to 1,865 feet msl under the CEQA No Project Alternative also occurring in November (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 50).

Visual impacts associated with decreases in reservoir water surface elevations would be most likely to occur as a result of additional reservoir drawdown that could contribute to the existing bathtub rings that are observed when a reservoir reaches its maximum seasonal drawdown levels from September through November. Depending on water year type, reservoir elevations during months of maximum reservoir drawdown (i.e., September, October, and November) under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be from 9 feet msl to 19 feet msl lower compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative. The lowest reservoir elevation under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative and the CEQA No Project Alternative would occur in September of critical years, and would be 10 feet msl lower under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative. As a result of this reduction, some areas of the shoreline may be exposed up to an additional 10 feet msl compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative. However, it is unlikely that this reduction would occur uniformly along the entire shoreline of the reservoir due to the irregular nature of its morphology. In addition, this 10 feet msl reduction in minimum reservoir elevation under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not occur with sufficient frequency and magnitude (i.e., only occurring in September of critical water years and not greater than 10 feet msl) to reduce the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

Decreases in month-to-month reservoir water surface elevations greater than 10 feet msl under both the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative and the CEQA No Project Alternative generally occur from June through September as a part of normal reservoir drawdown operations. During any given water year there would be only one additional occurrence under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative when reservoir water surface elevations would decrease by more than 10 feet msl from month-to-month. This decrease would potentially only result in an additional 5 feet msl of shoreline exposure, compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative. In addition, this reduction would occur in an above normal water year when reservoir elevations would be relatively high, therefore, it is unlikely that this reduction would contribute to a substantial reduction in shoreline vegetation or substantially expose the existing bathtub rings.

Based on this analysis, reservoir water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative generally would remain within normal (i.e., historical) reservoir operational levels, and any anticipated reductions would not occur with sufficient frequency and magnitude to cause a reduction in shoreline vegetation or increase bathtub ring exposure in New Bullards Bar

Reservoir. Therefore, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.3-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows in the lower Yuba River at both the Smartville and Marysville gages under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are up to approximately 9 percent to 1 percent lower some months during the winter and early spring and up to approximately 56 percent higher from July through October over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in monthly average flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, occur during months when river flows are generally at their seasonal peak, and also are within the range of flows occurring under the CEQA No Project Alternative.

Based on this analysis, changes in the magnitude, timing, and duration of lower Yuba River flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not substantially change the visual character of the landscape along the lower Yuba River and, thus, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.3-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative are essentially equivalent relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.3-4: Changes in Feather River flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Differences in long-term average monthly flows in the Feather River below the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet to the mouth of the Sacramento River do not exceed approximately 8 percent over the entire 72-year simulation period under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative. Decreases in average monthly flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent except during May and June of dry and critical water years during which flows are up to approximately 10 percent to 17 percent lower, respectively (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 603). However, these slight differences in Feather River flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flow changes expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.3-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative are essentially equivalent relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative over the 72-year simulation period. Flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative below the Feather River confluence are up to approximately 1 percent lower and up to approximately 3 percent higher during some months (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 882). However, in consideration of both the magnitude and duration of these slight differences in flow, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not result in changes to the visual character of the Sacramento River. Therefore, based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.3-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are essentially equivalent or up to approximately 3 percent higher over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in average monthly Delta inflows during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 1103). These slight differences in Delta inflows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.3-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would not alter the hydrologic pattern of San Luis Reservoir relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative. Water surface elevations in San Luis Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. During all months, long-term average monthly water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 2, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would remain within recent historic drawdown levels. Therefore the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.3-8: Change in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative; however, these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian

vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and decreases in flows would cause little affect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because these potential changes in flow are minimal and temporary in nature, they would not change the character of the landscape or detract from the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River. Therefore, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A or B resources.

### **13.2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CEQA MODIFIED FLOW ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE**

#### ***Impact 13.2.4-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative. Long-term average monthly water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent to the CEQA No Project Alternative. Decreases in average monthly water surface elevations during wet, above normal, and below normal water years under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative greater than 10 feet, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, occur during August and September over the 72-year simulation period. The lowest monthly mean water surface elevations under the Yuba Accord Alternative and CEQA No Project Alternative occur during September of critical water years and are 1,829 feet msl and 1,808 feet msl, respectively (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 50).

Because the lowest water surface elevation under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative (1,829 feet msl) would not decline below the lowest water surface elevation under the CEQA No Project Alternative (1,808 feet msl), there would be no substantial visible effects due to the existing bathtub ring under the CEQA No Project Alternative. Reduction of water surface elevations also would have minimal effect on the visual features of riparian vegetation along the reservoir shoreline.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

#### ***Impact 13.2.4-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the lower Yuba River at both the Smartville and Marysville gages under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are up to approximately 10 percent lower during the fall and winter months, and up to approximately 45 percent higher from July through September over the 72-year

simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in average monthly flows under the Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, occur during months when river flows are at their seasonal peak, and are within the range of flows occurring under the CEQA No Project Alternative and, therefore, would not result in substantial impacts to visual resources along the lower Yuba River.

Based on this analysis, reductions in lower Yuba River flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would not substantially change the visual character of the lower Yuba River, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, due to their magnitude, timing, and duration, and therefore, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.4-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent to the CEQA No Project Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.4-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Differences in long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative do not exceed approximately 5 percent over the entire 72-year simulation period. Decreases in monthly average flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative during all water year types do not exceed approximately 6 percent except during May and June of dry and critical water years, during which flows are approximately 7 percent to approximately 17 percent lower, respectively (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 603). However, these slight decreases in Feather River flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are not expected to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River due to their timing, magnitude, and duration.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flow changes expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA No Project Alternative, the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.4-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent or higher during most months, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 882). Therefore, potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would be relatively minor, and would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.4-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, are essentially equivalent, or up to approximately 2 percent higher over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in average monthly Delta inflows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 1103). These slight differences in Delta inflows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.4-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Changes in long-term average water surface elevations at San Luis Reservoir under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would remain within normal operational parameters. During all months, long-term average water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative and the CEQA No Project Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 2, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would remain within historic drawdown levels, therefore the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not unreasonably affect the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.4-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from their scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little effect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because these potential changes in flow are minimal and temporary in nature under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA No Project Alternative, they would not change the character of the landscape or detract from the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River, and would not unreasonably affect the landscape character and the scenic attractiveness of Class A or B resources.

### **13.2.5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CEQA YUBA ACCORD ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA EXISTING CONDITION**

#### ***Impact 13.2.5-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the CEQA Existing Condition; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. Decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative greater than 10 feet, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, occur only during critical water years and range from 11 feet msl to 30 feet msl lower from December through September (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 50). However, since critical water years have an approximately 1 percent probability of occurrence, it is unlikely that these water surface elevations would occur with sufficient frequency to substantially impact the long-term visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir relative to the CEQA Existing Condition. In addition, these reductions in water surface elevations are within the range of recent historical drawdown levels occurring in New Bullards Bar Reservoir under the CEQA Existing Condition.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

#### ***Impact 13.2.5-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are up to approximately 20 percent to 2 percent lower some months during the summer and early spring, and either essentially equivalent or higher during all other months (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in monthly average flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are within the range of flows occurring under the CEQA Existing Condition, and, therefore, would not result in substantial impacts to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

Based on this analysis, reductions in lower Yuba River flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would not substantially change the visual character of the lower Yuba River, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, due to their magnitude, timing, and duration, and therefore, would result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

#### ***Impact 13.2.5-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative are essentially equivalent to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative compared to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.5-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Differences in long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not exceed approximately 3 percent over the entire 72-year simulation period. Decreases in average monthly flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent except during May and June of dry and critical water years, during which flows are up to approximately 10 percent lower (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 603). However, these slight differences in Feather River flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are not expected to result in substantial changes to the visual character of the Feather River due to their timing, magnitude, and duration.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA Existing Condition, the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.5-5: Changes in monthly mean Sacramento River flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative are essentially equivalent, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period. Average monthly flows by water year type under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not differ by more than 5 percent (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 882). These slight differences in the magnitude and duration of Sacramento River flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Sacramento River.

Based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be relatively minor, and would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.5-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition are essentially equivalent over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in average Delta inflows during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 1103). These slight differences in Delta flows under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.5-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 3 vs. 1, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would remain within historic drawdown levels. Therefore the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.3-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little effect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because potential flow changes would be minimal and temporary in nature under the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, they would result in a less than significant impact to the character of the landscape and the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River.

### **13.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CEQA MODIFIED FLOW ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA EXISTING CONDITION**

***Impact 13.2.6-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the CEQA Existing Condition; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. Decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative greater than 10 feet, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not occur over the 72-year simulation period. Long-term average monthly water surface elevations and average monthly water surface elevations by water year type are essentially equivalent under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg. 50)

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.6-2: Changes in monthly mean lower Yuba River flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are up to approximately 15 percent to approximately 3 percent lower some months, and either essentially equivalent or higher during all other months over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in monthly average flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are within the range of flows occurring under the CEQA Existing Condition, and, therefore, would not result in substantial impacts to visual resources along the lower Yuba River.

Based on this analysis, reductions in lower Yuba River flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would not substantially change the visual character of the lower Yuba River and, thus, would result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.6-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the Yuba Accord Alternative compared to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.6-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Differences in long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not exceed approximately 3 percent over the entire 72-year simulation period. Decreases in average monthly flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg. 603). The slight differences in the magnitude and duration of Feather River flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are not expected to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA Existing Condition, the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.6-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent relative to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period. Average monthly flows by water year type under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not differ by more than 2 percent (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg.882). These slight differences in Sacramento River flows under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are not expected to result in changes to the visual character of the Sacramento River.

Based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be relatively minor, and would result in less than significant impacts on the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.6-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows are essentially equivalent under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg. 1103).

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Delta inflows expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA Existing Condition, the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative is expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.6-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

During all months, long-term average monthly water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative and the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 4 vs. 1, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, therefore the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.6-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little affect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations relative to the CEQA Existing Condition would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because these potential changes in flow are minimal and temporary in nature under the CEQA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, they would result in a less than significant impact to the character of the landscape and the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River.

### **13.2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CEQA NO PROJECT/NEPA NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA EXISTING CONDITION/NEPA AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the key elements and activities (e.g., implementation of the RD-1644 Long-term instream flow requirements) for the CEQA No Project Alternative would be the same for the NEPA No Action Alternative. The primary differences between the CEQA No Project and NEPA No Action alternatives are various hydrologic and other modeling assumptions (see Section 4.5 and Appendix D). Because of these differences between the No Project and No Action alternatives, these alternatives are distinguished as separate alternatives for CEQA and NEPA evaluation purposes.

Based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services, the CEQA No Project Alternative in this EIR/EIS is based on current environmental conditions (e.g., project operations, water demands, and level of land development) plus potential future operational and environmental conditions (e.g., implementation of the RD-1644 Long-term instream flow requirements in the lower Yuba River) that probably would occur in the foreseeable future in the absence of the Proposed Project/Action or another action alternative. The NEPA No Action Alternative also is based on conditions without the proposed project, but uses a longer-term future timeframe that is not restricted by existing infrastructure or physical and regulatory environmental conditions. The differences between these modeling characterizations and assumptions for the CEQA No Project and the NEPA No Action alternatives, including the rationale for developing these two different scenarios for this EIR/EIS, are explained in Chapter 4<sup>1</sup>.

Although implementation of the RD-1644 Long-term instream flow requirements would occur under both the CEQA No Project and the NEPA No Action alternatives, the resultant model outputs for both scenarios are different because of variations in the way near-term and long-term future operations are characterized for other parameters in the CEQA and NEPA assumptions. As discussed in Chapter 4, the principal difference between the CEQA No Project Alternative and the NEPA No Action Alternative is that the NEPA No Action Alternative includes several potential future water projects in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys (e.g., CVP/SWP Intertie, FRWP, SDIP and a long-term EWA Program or a program equivalent to the EWA), while the CEQA No Project Alternative does not. Because many of the other assumed conditions for these two scenarios are similar, the longer-term analysis of the NEPA No Action

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<sup>1</sup> For modeling purposes related to CEQA analytical requirements, OCAP Study 3 (2001 level of development) is used as the foundational study upon which the modeling scenarios for the CEQA No Project Alternative and the CEQA Existing Condition were developed. For modeling purposes related to NEPA analytical requirements, OCAP Study 5 (2020 level of development) is used as the foundational study upon which the modeling scenarios for the NEPA No Action Alternative was developed.

Alternative compared to the NEPA Affected Environment builds upon the nearer-term analysis of the CEQA No Project Alternative compared to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Because the same foundational modeling base (OCAP Study 3) was used to characterize near-term conditions (2001 level of development) both the CEQA No Project Alternative and the CEQA Existing Condition, it was possible to conduct a detailed analysis to quantitatively evaluate the hydrologic changes in the Yuba Region and the CVP/SWP system that would be expected to occur under these conditions. Based on this CEQA analysis, the analysis of the NEPA No Action Alternative compared to the NEPA Affected Environment consists of two components: (1) an analysis of near-term future without project conditions quantified through the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition; and (2) a qualitative analysis of longer-term future without project conditions (the NEPA No Action Alternative)<sup>2</sup>.

### ***13.2.7.1 CEQA NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE CEQA EXISTING CONDITION***

#### ***Impact 13.2.7.1-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA No Project Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the CEQA Existing Condition; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. Decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA No Project Alternative greater than 10 feet msl relative to the CEQA Existing Condition occur only during critical water years and range from 15 feet msl to 20 feet msl lower from June through September over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 50). However, since critical water years have an approximately 1 percent probability of occurrence it is unlikely that the CEQA No Project Alternative would substantially impact the long-term visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir relative to the CEQA Existing Condition. In addition, these reductions in water surface elevations are within the range of recent historical drawdown levels occurring in New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels. Therefore, the CEQA No Project Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

#### ***Impact 13.2.7.1-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition are up to approximately 40 percent to approximately 5 percent lower during the summer months over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in average monthly flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are within the range of flows occurring under the CEQA Existing

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<sup>2</sup> The second analytical component cannot be evaluated quantitatively due to the differences in the underlying baseline assumptions for OCAP Study 3 and OCAP Study 5.

Condition and therefore would not result in substantial impacts to visual resources along the lower Yuba River.

Based on this analysis, changes in lower Yuba River flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would not substantially alter the visual character of the lower Yuba River and, thus, would result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the CEQA No Project Alternative are essentially equivalent to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the CEQA No Project Alternative compared to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Differences in long-term average monthly flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition do not exceed approximately 8 percent over the entire 72-year simulation period. Decreases in average monthly flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative during all water year types do not exceed approximately 14 percent except during May and June of dry and critical water years during which flows are up to approximately 20 percent higher under the CEQA No Project Alternative (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 603). However, these slight differences in Feather River flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River relative to the CEQA Existing Condition due to their magnitude, and duration. In addition, these flows are within the normal range of flows occurring in the lower Feather River.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flow changes expected to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the CEQA Existing Condition, the CEQA No Project Alternative is expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows in the Sacramento River under the CEQA No Project Alternative are essentially equivalent during most months relative to the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period. Average monthly flows by water year type under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, do not differ by more than approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 882). These slight differences in Sacramento River flows under the CEQA No Project Alternative are not expected to result in substantial changes to the visual character of the Sacramento River relative to the CEQA Existing Condition due their magnitude, and duration.

Based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be relatively minor, and would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition are essentially equivalent during most months over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in average Delta inflows during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 1103). These slight differences in Delta inflows under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the CEQA No Project Alternative would not alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the CEQA Existing Condition. Water surface elevations at San Luis Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. During all months, long-term average water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the CEQA No Project Alternative and the CEQA Existing Condition over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, therefore the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.7.1-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the CEQA No Project Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little affect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations relative to the CEQA Existing Condition would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. As shown by the model output, slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the Sacramento River. Therefore, because these potential changes in flow are minimal and temporary in nature under the CEQA No Project Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, they would result in a less than significant impact to the character of the landscape and the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River.

### ***13.2.7.2 NEPA NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE NEPA AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT***

In the Yuba Region, the primary differences between the NEPA No Action Alternative and the NEPA Affected Environment would be the changes in lower Yuba River flows associated with the implementation of the RD-1644 Long-term instream flow requirements, to replace the RD-1644 Interim instream flow requirements, and the increased local surface water demands for the Wheatland Water District. These also are the only differences that would occur in the Yuba Region between the CEQA No Project Alternative and the CEQA Existing Condition. The potential effects to visual resources that were evaluated in the quantitative analyses that is presented in Section 13.2.7.1 above for the CEQA No Project Alternative relative to the CEQA Existing Condition (see also Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1) therefore also are used for comparison of the NEPA No Action Alternative relative to the NEPA Affected Environment, and are not repeated here.

As discussed above, the analysis of the NEPA No Action Alternative includes several additional proposed projects in the project study area that are not included in the CEQA analysis. However, these other proposed projects would not significantly affect hydrologic conditions or visual resources in the Yuba Region and, thus, are only discussed in the context of CVP/SWP operations upstream of and within the Delta.

Under the NEPA No Action Alternative, future levels of demand for water in California would be addressed through the implementation of numerous projects, including water storage and conveyance projects (e.g., SDIP<sup>3</sup>), water transfers and acquisition programs (e.g., a long-term EWA Program or a program equivalent to the EWA), and other projects related to CVP/SWP system operations (e.g., CVP/SWP Intertie and FRWP).

Other proposed projects under the NEPA No Action Alternative could reduce the aesthetic quality of visual resources by affecting water surface elevations in CVP/SWP reservoirs, river flows in the Feather and Sacramento rivers and Delta inflows. To meet increased future demands, several other projects would increase water diversions from the Sacramento and Feather rivers under the NEPA No Action Alternative, relative to the NEPA Affected Environment. Changes in CVP/SWP reservoir levels in response to the increased future demands of downstream water users also may reduce scenic attractiveness (e.g., increase of exposed rock and soil) and reduce visual opportunities. Water transfer and acquisition programs (e.g., a long-term EWA Program or a program equivalent to the EWA) under the NEPA No Action Alternative could purchase water from the same agency or reservoir, and, thus, could collectively draw down reservoirs further than under the NEPA Affected Environment. The additional water sold for other programs could reduce water surface elevations in CVP/SWP reservoirs, which could magnify the effects of multiple projects. Depending on the timing and operations of other projects, water transfers from other agencies could increase river flows during transfer periods, which could be a positive effect on the scenic value of these waterbodies. Conversely, increased diversions could reduce river flows during the summer (particularly in drier years), which could alter the visual quality from water level and land-based viewpoints along the Feather and Sacramento rivers. However, due to the volume of water flowing through the lower reaches of the Feather and Sacramento rivers, it is not anticipated that these changes (i.e., increases or decreases) in river flows under either of

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<sup>3</sup> The SDIP includes a maximum pumping rate of 8,500 cfs at the Banks Pumping Plant.

these scenarios would affect the rivers to such an extent to cause a significant effect on the visual character of the landscape.

Overall, changes in hydrologic conditions associated with water conveyance projects, water transfer and acquisition programs and other projects related to CVP/SWP operations under the NEPA No Action Alternative could result in potential effects to the visual character of the landscape in the CVP/SWP system. However, potential effects to visual resources could be either positive or negative, depending on the overall timing and operation of other projects that would occur under the NEPA No Action Alternative, relative to the NEPA Affected Environment.

### **13.2.8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEPA YUBA ACCORD ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE NEPA NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

#### ***Impact 13.2.8-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. Over the 72-year simulation period, decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations and average water surface elevations by water year type under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative greater than 10 feet relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative occur in August (11 feet msl), September (13 feet msl), October (15 feet msl), November (up to 15 feet msl) and December (11 feet msl). The lowest monthly mean water surface elevation under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would be 1,798 feet msl occurring in September of critical water years, compared to 1,808 feet msl also occurring in September of critical water years under the NEPA No Action Alternative (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, pg. 50). However, given that the frequency of critical water years is approximately 1 percent, and the magnitude of this decrease is not substantially below the lowest water surface elevation under the NEPA No Action Alternative, there is not likely to be any substantial visible effects due to the existing bathtub ring, under the NEPA No Action Alternative. Reduction of water surface elevations also would have minimal effect on the visual features of riparian vegetation along the banks (See Impact 13.2.3-1 for a full discussion).

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

#### ***Impact 13.2.8-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the lower Yuba River at the Smartville and Marysville gages under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are up to approximately 9 percent lower during the winter and early spring and up to approximately 60 percent higher from July through October over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, pgs 100 and 272). Decreases in monthly average flows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, occur during months

when river flows are generally at their seasonal peak, and also are within the range of flows occurring under the NEPA No Action Alternative.

Based on this analysis, changes in lower Yuba River flows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would not substantially change the visual character of the lower Yuba River and, thus, would result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.8-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative are essentially equivalent relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 2 vs. 1, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative compared to the NEPA No Action Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.8-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the Feather River under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are up to approximately 3 percent lower during the winter and spring months, and approximately 7 percent higher during the summer and fall months over the 72-year simulation period. Decreases in average monthly flows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative during all water year types are greatest during the early spring, however they do not exceed approximately 10 percent relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, pg. 603). These slight differences in Feather River flows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative due to their frequency, magnitude, and duration.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flow changes expected to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would be relatively minor compared to the NEPA No Action Alternative, the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative is expected to result in a less-than-significant impact on the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.8-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the Sacramento River under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative are generally essentially equivalent or higher relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in average monthly flows by water year type generally under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative and do not exceed approximately 5 percent, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, pg. 882). These differences in Sacramento River flows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the

Sacramento River relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative due to their magnitude, and duration.

Based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be relatively minor, and would result in a less than significant impact on the visual resources of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.8-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are essentially equivalent during most months, and up to approximately 5 percent higher during August over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in Delta inflows during all water year types do not exceed approximately 3 percent (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, 1103). These slight differences in Delta inflows under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, are not expected to change the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.8-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would not substantially alter the hydrologic pattern of San Luis Reservoir relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative. During all months, long-term average monthly water surface elevations would be essentially equivalent under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 6 vs. 5, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative would remain within historic drawdown levels, therefore the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.8-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little affect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows that would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because these potential changes in

flow are minimal and temporary in nature under the NEPA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, they would not change the character of the landscape or detract from the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River.

### **13.2.9 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEPA MODIFIED FLOW ALTERNATIVE COMPARED TO THE NEPA NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

#### ***Impact 13.2.9-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would alter the hydrologic pattern relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative; however, water surface elevations at New Bullards Bar Reservoir would remain within normal operational parameters. Decreases in long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative greater than 10 feet, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative do not occur over the 72-year simulation period. However, average monthly water surface elevations by water year type are up to 17 feet msl lower during all water year types under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, with the exception of critical water years in which water surface elevations are up to approximately 20 feet- msl higher relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative. The lowest monthly mean water surface elevation under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would be 1,830 feet msl occurring in September of critical water years, compared to 1,808 feet msl under the NEPA No Action Alternative, also occurring in September of critical water years (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 50). Because the lowest water surface elevation occurring under the NEPA No Action Alternative is approximately 22 feet msl lower relative to the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, it is not likely that any substantial visible effects would occur due to the existing bathtub ring, under the NEPA No Action Alternative. Reduction of water surface elevations also would have minimal effect on the visual features of riparian vegetation along the banks.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in average monthly water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would result in a less-than-significant impact on the visual character of New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

#### ***Impact 13.2.9-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average flows in the lower Yuba River at both the Smartville and Marysville gages under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are up to approximately 7 percent lower during the winter and early spring and up to approximately 20 percent higher from July through October over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pgs. 100 and 272). Decreases in monthly average flows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, occur during months when river flows are generally at their seasonal peak, and also are within the range of flows occurring under the No Project Alternative.

Based on this analysis changes in lower Yuba River flows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would not substantially change the visual character of the lower Yuba River and, thus, would result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the lower Yuba River.

***Impact 13.2.9-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly water surface elevations under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative are essentially equivalent relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 455). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring from the implementation of the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative compared to the NEPA No Action Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be expected to result a less than significant impact on the visual character of Oroville Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.9-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are up to approximately 2 percent lower during some winter months and up to approximately 6 percent higher during the summer months over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 603). Decreases in average monthly flows by water year type under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative are greatest during the late-spring when flows are generally at their seasonal peak. However these decreases in flow do not exceed approximately 12 percent relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative. These differences in Feather River flows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Feather River relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative due to their frequency, magnitude, and duration.

Therefore, because the analysis presented above indicates that the range of potential variation in Feather River flow changes expected to occur under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be relatively minor, the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Feather River.

***Impact 13.2.9-5: Changes in Sacramento River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly flows in the Sacramento River under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative are generally essentially equivalent or higher relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period. Average monthly flows by water year type are generally higher under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative and differences do not exceed approximately 5 percent, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 882). These slight differences in Sacramento River flows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are not likely to result in changes to the visual character of the Sacramento River relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative due to their frequency, magnitude, and duration.

Based on the analysis presented, the range of potential changes in Sacramento River flows expected to occur under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be relatively minor, and would result in a less than significant impact on the visual character of the Sacramento River.

***Impact 13.2.9-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Long-term average monthly Delta inflows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative are essentially equivalent during most months, and up to approximately 2 percent higher during August over the 72-year simulation period. Differences in Delta inflows during all water year types do not exceed approximately 5 percent (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 1103). These slight differences in Delta inflows under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, are not sufficient in magnitude to result in changes to the visual character of the Delta.

***Impact 13.2.9-7: Change in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape***

Implementation of the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would not substantially alter the hydrologic pattern of San Luis Reservoir relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative. During all months, long-term average monthly water surface elevations are essentially equivalent under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative over the 72-year simulation period (Appendix F4, 7 vs. 5, pg. 1413). Therefore, there would be no change in the existing bathtub ring, under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented above, the range of potential variation in water surface elevations expected to occur under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative would remain within recent historic drawdown levels, therefore the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would be expected to result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of San Luis Reservoir.

***Impact 13.2.9-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources***

Changes in local study area reservoir water surface elevations and river flows are anticipated to occur with the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative; these changes would not be of sufficient frequency and magnitude to change the character of the landscape and would not detract from the scenic attractiveness. The visual impact would cause minimal effects to Class A or B scenic features of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. The visual character of riparian vegetation along the lower Yuba River corridor would not be affected, and a decrease in flows would cause little affect to Class A or B visual resources.

Within the regional study area, changes in water surface elevations under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, would not change the character of the landscape or scenic attractiveness (Class A or B) of Oroville or San Luis reservoirs. The Sacramento River is generally considered a Class B visual resource. Slight differences in flows would not be sufficient to reduce the character of the riparian corridor along the river. Therefore, because these potential changes in flow are minimal and temporary in nature under the NEPA Modified Flow Alternative, relative to the NEPA No Action Alternative, they would not change the character of the landscape or detract from the overall scenic attractiveness of the Sacramento River.

### 13.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Hydrologic modeling was used to evaluate the cumulative effects of the Yuba Accord Alternative and other likely changes in CVP/SWP operations on hydrology and water supply. The proposed projects that have been adequately defined (e.g., in recent project-level environmental documents or CALSIM II modeling) and that have the potential to contribute to cumulative impacts are included in the quantitative assessment of the Yuba Accord's impacts. For analytical purposes of this EIR/EIS, the projects that are considered well defined and "reasonably foreseeable" are described in Chapter 21, Cumulative Impacts. Additionally, the assumptions used to categorize future hydrologic cumulative conditions that are quantitatively simulated using CALSIM II and the post-processing tools are presented in Appendix D. To the extent feasible, potential cumulative impacts on resources dependent on hydrology or water supply (e.g., reservoir surface elevation) are analyzed quantitatively. Because several projects cannot be accurately characterized for hydrologic modeling purposes at this time, either due to the nature of the particular project or because specific operations details are only in the preliminary phases of development, these projects are evaluated qualitatively.

Only those projects that could affect visual resources are included in the qualitative evaluation that is presented in subsequent sections of this chapter. Although most of the proposed projects described in Chapter 21 could have project-specific impacts that will be addressed in future project-specific environmental documentation, future implementation of these projects is not expected to result in cumulative impacts to regional water supply operations, or water-related and water dependent resources that also could be affected by the Proposed Project/ Action or an action alternative (see Chapter 21). For this reason, only the limited numbers of projects with the potential to cumulatively impact visual resources in the project study area are specifically considered qualitatively in the cumulative impacts analysis for visual resources. These projects are:

- ❑ Water Storage and Conveyance Projects
  - Shasta Lake Water Resources Investigation (Shasta Reservoir Enlargement)
  - Upstream of Delta Off-Stream Storage (Sites Reservoir)
  - In-Delta Storage Program (Delta Wetlands Project)
  - Upper San Joaquin River Basin Storage Investigation
  - Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project
  - Folsom Dam Raise Project
- ❑ Projects Related to Changes in CVP/SWP System Operations
  - Long-Term CVP and SWP Operations Criteria and Plan
  - Delta-Mendota Canal/California Aqueduct Intertie
  - Clifton Court Forebay Intertie
  - Isolated Delta Facility
  - Central Valley Project Long-Term Contract Renewals
  - Sacramento River Water Reliability Study
  - City of Stockton Delta Water Supply Project
- ❑ Water Transfer and Acquisition Programs
  - Dry Year Water Purchase Program
  - Sacramento Valley Water Management Program
  - Delta Improvements Package

- ❑ Flood Control, Ecosystem Restoration and Fisheries Improvement Projects
  - North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Project
  - CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program
  - San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act (Friant Settlement Legislation)
- ❑ Local Projects in the Yuba Region
  - Yuba River Development Project FERC Relicensing

These projects are described in Chapter 21 and qualitatively addressed below.

### **13.3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE YUBA ACCORD ALTERNATIVE CUMULATIVE CONDITION COMPARED TO THE EXISTING CONDITION**

For CEQA, the purpose of the cumulative analysis is to determine whether the incremental effects of the Proposed Project (Yuba Accord Alternative) would be expected to be “cumulatively considerable” when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects (PRC Section 21083, subdivision (b)(2)).<sup>4</sup>

For NEPA, the scope of an EIS must include “Cumulative actions, which when viewed with other proposed actions have cumulatively significant impacts and should therefore be discussed in the same impact statement (40 CFR Section 1508.25(a)(2)).

Because the CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA and the CEQA guidelines contain very similar requirements for analyzing, and definitions of, cumulative impacts, the discussions of cumulative impacts of the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition relative to the Existing Condition will be the basis for evaluation of cumulative impacts for both CEQA and NEPA. In addition, an analysis of the Modified Flow Alternative Cumulative Condition relative to the Existing Condition is provided to fulfill NEPA requirements.

The following sections describe this analysis for the projects discussed in Section 13.3 above.

#### **13.3.1.1 WATER STORAGE AND CONVEYANCE PROJECTS**

Construction of new water storage and conveyance facilities may have short-term and/or long-term impacts on visual resources depending on their location and duration of facilities construction. Expansion of existing dam and reservoir facilities would raise water surface elevations at reservoirs and have short-term impacts on visual resources during construction, and would ultimately alter the visual character of the reservoir via the inundation of previously exposed shoreline areas surrounding existing reservoirs. Construction of new pipelines and canals for water conveyance could potentially alter the visual character of the landscape. However, the Yuba Accord Alternative would not contribute to cumulative effects (e.g., new facilities construction) on visual resources because no additional water storage or conveyance projects would be implemented as a part of the project.

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<sup>4</sup> The “Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act” (Remy et al. 1999) states that “...although a project may cause an “individually limited” or “individually minor” incremental impact that, by itself, is not significant, the increment may be “cumulatively considerable”, and thus significant, when viewed against the backdrop of past, present, and probable future projects.” (CEQA Guidelines, § 15064, subd. (i)(1), 15065, subd. (c), 15355, subd. (b)).

### ***13.3.1.2 PROJECTS RELATED TO CVP/SWP SYSTEM OPERATIONS***

Other projects related to CVP/SWP system operations that could contribute to cumulative visual resources impacts in the project study area generally would do so by affecting water surface elevation levels in CVP/SWP reservoirs, river flows in the Feather and Sacramento rivers and Delta inflows. The Yuba Accord Alternative would not contribute to cumulative effects (e.g., greater reductions in reservoir elevation) on the visual character of CVP/SWP reservoirs because water available for transfer would be released from New Bullards Bar Reservoir, which is not a reservoir operated by the CVP or the SWP. To meet increased future demands, several other projects would increase water diversions from the Sacramento River. Depending on the timing and operations of these future projects, reductions in river flow associated with these diversions could be offset by the increases in Yuba River flows that would occur under the Yuba Accord Alternative. However, due to the volume of water flowing through the lower reaches of the Feather and Sacramento rivers, it is not anticipated that the river flow would change to such a level as to cause a cumulatively significant effect on visual resources.

### ***13.3.1.3 WATER TRANSFER AND ACQUISITION PROGRAMS***

Other water transfer and acquisition programs (e.g., a long-term EWA Program or a program equivalent to the EWA) could purchase water from the same agency or reservoir, and, thus, could collectively draw down reservoirs further than under the Existing Condition. The additional water sold for other programs could reduce water surface elevations in CVP/SWP reservoirs, which could result in significant cumulative impacts if visual resource impacts were magnified by the effects of multiple projects. The Yuba Accord Alternative would not contribute to a cumulative effect on reservoir-related visual resources because water available for transfer would be released from New Bullards Bar Reservoir, which is not a reservoir operated by the CVP or the SWP. Because other water transfer and acquisition programs would not affect New Bullards Bar Reservoir, there is little potential for visual impacts to compound as a result of the Yuba Accord Alternative.

Groundwater substitution and water transfers from other acquisition programs in the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region would affect river hydrology (e.g., changing the timing and quantity of water released from reservoirs, and thus altering river flows) in the same rivers (e.g., lower Feather and lower Sacramento) as those that would be affected by the Yuba Accord Alternative. Depending on the timing and operations of other projects, water transfers from other agencies, in combination with the Yuba Accord Alternative, occurring along the Feather and Sacramento rivers could cause a cumulative effect by increasing river flows during transfer periods. However, the cumulative effect is not anticipated to cause a significant impact on visual resources because the river channel can accommodate a large range of flows, and the additional transfer flows would not be so great as to exceed channel capacity. It is not anticipated that the river flow would change to such a level as to cause a cumulatively significant effect on visual resources.

### ***13.3.1.4 FLOOD CONTROL, ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS***

Flood control, ecosystem restoration and fisheries improvement projects would be targeted to improve aquatic habitat conditions within the project study area. Implementation of other projects, in addition to the Yuba Accord Alternative, could improve instream flow and water

temperature conditions, physical habitat availability and ecosystem functions. Improvement of levee systems, channel capacities, and fish and wildlife habitat would not be expected to adversely affect visual resources.

### ***13.3.1.5 LOCAL PROJECTS IN THE YUBA REGION***

Proposed license terms and conditions, and PM&Es will be considered during development of the environmental documentation associated with the FERC relicensing process. As part of the process, it is anticipated that FERC would study the existing level of contrast and compatibility of Yuba Project facilities on aesthetic features of the landscape. In addition to developing terms and conditions that would govern Yuba Project operations affecting New Bullards Bar Reservoir and the lower Yuba River, FERC also could make recommendations regarding potential enhancements to preserve or improve visual resources within the Yuba River Basin. It is not anticipated that regulatory requirements resulting from the FERC relicensing process would contribute to potentially significant cumulative adverse impacts on visual resources.

### ***13.3.1.6 OTHER CUMULATIVE VISUAL RESOURCES IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS***

The quantitative operations-related impact considerations for the CEQA Yuba Accord Alternative, relative to the CEQA Existing Condition, are discussed in Section 13.2.5. Potential impacts identified in Section 13.2.5 are summarized below and provide an indication of the potential incremental contributions of the Yuba Accord Alternative to cumulative impacts. These potential impacts are summarized here:

- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-1: Changes in New Bullards Bar Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-2: Changes in lower Yuba River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-3: Changes in Oroville Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-4: Changes in Feather River monthly mean flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-5: Changes in monthly mean Sacramento River flows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-6: Changes in monthly mean Delta inflows that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.5-7: Changes in San Luis Reservoir monthly mean water surface elevations that could result in adverse impacts to the visual character of the landscape - Less than Significant
- ❑ Impact 13.2.3-8: Changes in surface water conditions that could result in adverse impacts to the landscape character and the attractiveness of Class A and B resources - Less than Significant

Although these impacts would be less than significant, the potential exists for cumulative impacts nevertheless. Cumulative impact determinations are presented below, and are based

upon consideration of the quantified Yuba Accord Alternative impacts relative to the Existing Condition, in combination with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable projects. These cumulative impact determinations are summarized by region.

### ***13.3.1.7 POTENTIAL FOR CUMULATIVE VISUAL RESOURCES IMPACTS WITHIN THE PROJECT STUDY AREA***

Results from the quantitative analysis generally indicate that direct project-related visual resources impacts would be less than significant. Nevertheless, the Yuba Accord Alternative still could incrementally contribute to cumulative visual resources impacts within the project study area. The frequency and magnitude of the quantitative hydrologic changes associated with the Yuba Accord Alternative and the other qualitative analytical considerations discussed above both were considered during the development of the overall cumulative impact conclusions discussed below for the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition, relative to the Existing Condition.

#### ***Impact 13.3.1.7-1: Potential for significant cumulative visual resources impacts within the Yuba Region***

Of the projects discussed above, the Yuba Project FERC Relicensing has the potential to affect visual resources in the Yuba Region. While, as part of the relicensing, FERC may impose new regulatory constraints on the Yuba Project, which could affect New Bullards Bar Reservoir operations and YCWA's ability to manage releases into the lower Yuba River, it is not anticipated that FERC's new conditions would significantly affect visual resources. The overall effects on recreation in the Yuba Region, therefore, would be minor, or possibly beneficial, and the impacts of the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition, compared to the Existing Condition, on visual resources in the Yuba Region would be less than significant.

#### ***Impact 13.3.1.7-2: Potential for significant cumulative visual resources impacts within the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region***

For the reasons discussed above, it is anticipated that the water storage and conveyance facilities, CVP/SWP operations projects, new water transfer and acquisition programs and the new flood control, ecosystem restoration and fisheries improvement projects discussed above would not adversely impact visual resources and, therefore, would not have any cumulative impacts to the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region. Projects affecting CVP/SWP operations, in addition to the Yuba Accord Alternative, would create changes in the timing and quantity of water released from reservoirs, thus altering river flows. However, the overall effects on visual resources in the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region would be minor, and the potential cumulative impacts of the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition, compared to the Existing Condition, would be less than significant.

#### ***Impact 13.3.1.7-3: Potential for significant cumulative visual resources impacts within the Delta Region***

For the reasons discussed above, it is anticipated that the water storage and conveyance facilities, CVP/SWP operations projects, new water transfer and acquisition programs and the new flood control, ecosystem restoration and fisheries improvement projects discussed above would not adversely impact visual resources, and therefore would not have any cumulative impacts to the Delta Region. Other projects that would occur in addition to the Yuba Accord Alternative would contribute to changes in the timing and quantity of Delta inflows. However,

the overall effects on visual resources in the Delta Region would be minor, and the potential cumulative impacts of the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition, compared to the Existing Condition, would be less than significant.

*Impact 13.3.1.7-4 Potential for significant cumulative visual resources impacts within the Export Service Area*

For the reasons discussed above, it is anticipated that the water storage and conveyance facilities, CVP/SWP operations projects, new water transfer and acquisition programs and the new flood control, ecosystem restoration and fisheries improvement projects discussed above would not adversely impact visual resources, and therefore would not have any cumulative impacts in the Export Service Area (i.e., San Luis Reservoir). Future San Luis Reservoir operations would be expected to cause fluctuations (increases and decreases) in water surface elevations that would be within the range of historical variation currently observed and, thus, these changes would remain within the range of seasonal drawdown levels observed under the Existing Condition. Therefore, the overall effects on the visual character of San Luis Reservoir would be minor, and the potential cumulative impacts of the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition, compared to the Existing Condition, would be less than significant.

### **13.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE MODIFIED FLOW ALTERNATIVE CUMULATIVE CONDITION COMPARED TO THE EXISTING CONDITION**

It is anticipated that the Modified Flow Alternative Cumulative Condition would have the same potential for cumulative impacts as the Yuba Accord Alternative Cumulative Condition. Therefore, the description of the potential impacts in Section 13.3.1 also serves as the description of cumulative impacts associated with the Modified Flow Alternative. Thus, the Modified Flow Alternative Cumulative Condition would result in the following potential cumulative impacts:

- ❑ Yuba Region - Potential cumulative impacts on visual resources in the Yuba Region would be less than significant.
- ❑ CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region - Potential cumulative impacts on visual resources in the CVP/SWP Upstream of the Delta Region would be less than significant.
- ❑ Delta Region - Potential cumulative impacts on visual resources in the Delta Region would be less than significant.
- ❑ Export Service Area - Potential cumulative impacts on visual resources in the Export Service Area (San Luis Reservoir) would be less than significant.

### **13.4 POTENTIAL CONDITIONS TO SUPPORT APPROVAL OF YCWA'S WATER RIGHTS PETITION**

No unreasonable effects to visual resources would occur under the Proposed Project/Action or an action alternative and, thus, no impact avoidance measures or other protective conditions are identified for SWRCB consideration in determining whether or not to approve YCWA's petitions to implement the Yuba Accord.

### **13.5 MITIGATION MEASURES/ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS**

No adverse effects would occur to visual resources under the Proposed Project/Action or an action alternative and, thus, no mitigation measures are required.

### **13.6 POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

There are no potentially significant unavoidable impacts to visual resources associated with the implementation of the Proposed Project/Action or an action alternative.