

# 1 THE MARIPOSA COUNTY SETTING

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This chapter of the General Plan lays out the County’s setting and projections for the future.

## 1.1 WHERE WE ARE

**T**he County of Mariposa is located in central California, adjacent to the San Joaquin Valley within the central Sierra Nevada. Mariposa County is surrounded by Tuolumne County on the north and east, Madera County on the south, and Merced and Stanislaus counties on the west (Figure 1-1). Mariposa County boundaries are approximately 25 minutes from Merced and one hour from the cities of Modesto, Madera, Sonora, and Fresno. The Town of Mariposa is a little less than two hours from Fresno-Yosemite International Airport, three and one half hours from Oakland International Airport, four hours from Sacramento International Airport, and over four hours from San Francisco International Airport. Merced’s Amtrak train station is an inter-modal transfer point with the Yosemite Area Regional Transit System.



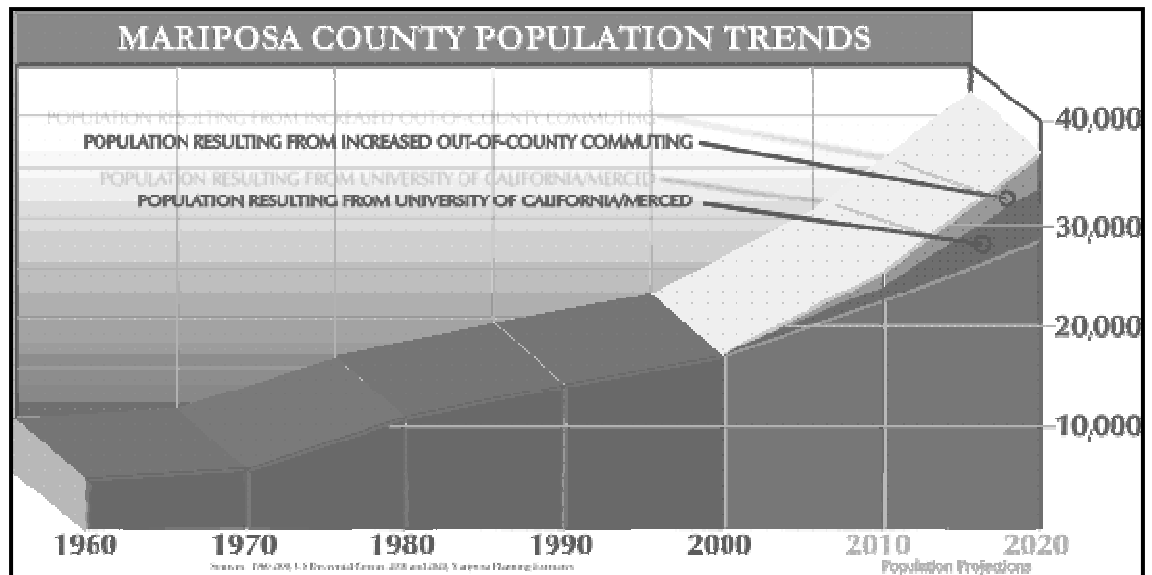
Figure 1-1: Regional Map

## 1.2 WHO WE ARE

In January 2006 the California Department of Finance estimates that Mariposa County was home to 18,216 residents, up nearly six percent from the 2000 census, which was an increase of almost twenty percent from the 1990 census. At the build-out of the General Plan, the County analyzes a population potential of 28,000, which theoretically could be reached within the planning horizon of 2020 (Figure 1-2).

The demographics of Mariposa County have not changed much between the 1990 census and 2000 census. Mariposans tend to be older than the statewide median age with a third of the County's population in the 35 to 54 year old cohort, while a quarter of the population is under 19, and nearly half the families in the County have children at home.

**Figure 1-2: Population Trends and Projections**



## 1.3 WHERE WE LIVE

Approximately half of the County's population lives in rural settings with the balance residing in and around various towns and communities. The Town of Mariposa, with approximately 2,500 people, is the County seat and largest town in the County. The next largest community is Yosemite Village, headquarters for Yosemite National Park with over 1,300 full time residents, while the Lake Don Pedro subdivision is the third largest with just under 1,300 residents.

With the recorded data available, determining the population for the unincorporated communities was challenging. 2000 Census Block population counts were calculated through matching up the Block boundaries as closely as possible with the Planning Areas. These two boundaries do not always coincide, and as a result, the Planning Area populations are generalized estimates and not an exact population count.

## 1.4 WHY WE LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY HERE

One of the main attractions of Mariposa County is its scenery. The scenic views of the area are why so many have moved to the County in recent years. Living in Mariposa offers a quiet atmosphere created by the rural character and the relaxed pace of life.

Residents and visitors speak about the quality of the “rural lifestyle.” The rural lifestyle in Mariposa County is beloved and virtually every person involved with the General Plan process has stated the rural character of the County must be preserved. No matter where people stand on the issue of property rights or growth management, the majority of people want to preserve the rural lifestyle.

The term “rural lifestyle” means different things to different people. At the outset, the General Plan process intended to create one single definition. However, it became apparent from participant’s comments that no single definition is feasible. The General Plan respects the diversity of ideas throughout the County.

Mariposa County does not support the “suburban foothill economy” found in portions of the rural counties of El Dorado, Nevada, and Placer. Mariposa does provide a landscape of rural homes with reasonable commutes to Fresno, Merced, and Modesto. The variety of terrain, climate, and access to recreation throughout the entire year combine to make Mariposa County’s character a treasure that residents and visitors desire to protect. Mariposa County residents have witnessed the impact of rural sprawl in surrounding counties, and as a result, have clearly stated a desire to avoid this type of development pattern. This General Plan intends to ensure that rural sprawl is not repeated in Mariposa County.

## 1.5 OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD: AN INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION

The County of Mariposa is an international destination because of Yosemite National Park. Each year, thousands of visitors from the nation and the world come to Yosemite to experience its natural wonders. Yosemite National Park is considered a crown jewel of the National Park system. It is internationally recognized as one of the natural wonders of the world. Most visitors arrive by automobile, while others arrive as part of a bus tour. For these visitors, there are four access routes to or from Yosemite through Mariposa County --- Highways 140, 41, 120, and 132.

Highway 140 through Mariposa County provides direct, all-weather access to Yosemite Valley. As such, Highway 140 facilitates the Town Planning Areas of Mariposa and El Portal and the Community Planning Area of Midpines to serve as hosts to thousands of international visitors.

Visitors from southern California enter via Highway 41, a more challenging bus route, but heavily traveled. This creates international gateway opportunities for Fish Camp and Wawona. The Buck Meadows area is located on the Highway 120 route from the Bay Area.

Highway 132 brings visitors to Yosemite National Park through Coulterville and Greeley Hill via J132 to Highway 120. From the Central Valley, Highway 132 offers the most direct route into the Park.

Over the Sierra Nevada in the summer, Highway 120 brings traffic into Yosemite Valley from both US 395 in Mono County and from the Bay Area through Crane Flat near Buck Meadows. Many international visitors on bus trips travel to the County from Las Vegas and exit via Highway 140.

## **1.6 OUR HUMAN AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Mariposa County's human environment is defined by its relative isolation from large urban centers and its rural settlements with concentrations of homes in distinct small towns and communities. Many of the County's residents enjoy lifestyles offering direct access to and interaction with open spaces and the natural environment. Yosemite National Park and other features of the County attract millions of visitors and thousands of part-time residents.

Human settlement in Mariposa County reflects the natural environment and topography of the County. The western edge of the County, characterized by gentle terrain and rolling hills blending into the San Joaquin Valley, is sparsely populated grazing land. Most of the County's population lives within the low elevation foothills and valleys of the Sierra Nevada's west slope. Several small communities, with a mix of permanent and seasonal residents, are located in mid-elevation areas west and south of Yosemite National Park. The eastern portion of the County, part of the famed High Sierra region, has several small High Sierra camps in Yosemite National Park that are used during the summer.

## **1.7 THE CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND WRITTEN AND ORAL HISTORY OF MARIPOSA COUNTY**

The indigenous ancestors of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (The "Tribe") have occupied their traditional territory for 10,000 years. The Tribe's traditional territory encompasses much of what are now Yosemite National Park, Northern Valley Foothills and the San Joaquin Valley (Mariposa, Merced and Madera Counties). The Tribe continues to maintain strong ties and relationship to their traditional territories. The indigenous people were the first stewards of the land, water, air, and natural resources. The indigenous people lived off the ecosystems, which is valued as the life force of all living things. Traditional gathering and best agricultural practices of the native people were very complex and were based on needs and usage in each family use district. Trade among the indigenous people included Pinon Pine nuts, obsidian, Black Oak acorns, Indian hemp, Soap root, seashells, salmon and medicinal materials. Traditional basketry by the indigenous people employed methods of weaving with willow, redbud, bracken fern root, bunch grass and other native plants.

The Tribe has sustained its language, tribal organization, traditional cultural and spiritual connection to the land for thousands of years. The Tribe is actively maintaining a government-to-government relationship with Federal, State and local government of cities and towns in three major counties. The indigenous people have endured many hardships and cultural disruption since the influx of the Spanish before the 1800's.

The Spanish domination of California and Mexico ended in 1804 with the Mexican Revolution. With the withdrawal of the Spanish Military and the Mission Fathers, the land that had belonged to both the crown and the church were secularized. This meant that those who had worked the mission lands, both Indian and Mexican, were left to attempt to continue the work done by the Padres.

California became divided into many large land grants issued to families for purposes of ranching. Without the protection of the Spanish, California became vulnerable to unofficial exploration by Americans moving west from the Rocky Mountains. While elements of the Mexican Army would patrol occasionally, they were poorly trained and equipped. On one short foray in 1806 into the interior of California with which they were unfamiliar, Mexican Army patrols came upon a side stream of the San Joaquin River. It was here that a Padre with the group, Fr. Pedro Munoz, noted in his diary that this area would be known as “Las Mariposas,” or the Butterflies. This site of many Butterflies earned the title that was to name the stream, a Mexican Land Grant, and the County and Town of Mariposa.

The Mexican troops subsequently returned to the coast probably by way of San Juan Bautista and little was heard of the interior of this region of California until a request was made for a grazing land grant to be given to the retiring Mexican Governor of California, Juan Bautista Alvarado. Alvarado was given such a grant with the stipulation that he perfect the title by its use. It is not clear that he ever complied with the requirement but when Thomas Larkin, American Council General of California, stationed in Monterey, was asked by Col. John C. Fremont to seek land for him, he purchased the land grant from Alvarado on behalf of Fremont. This grant consisted of ten square leagues of land but did not have fixed boundaries. Being essentially an unperfected grazing grant, Fremont could only rely on a crude map that Alvarado prepared. This map placed the grant somewhere between the Chowchilla and Merced Rivers, in the foothills, and little else. Fremont attempted to perfect the grant title but the natives drove off the men that he sent to settle the land. Soon this land would become part of the United States.

During the period before the discovery of gold at John Sutter’s sawmill, east of Sacramento, Fremont was involved in an insurrection in California, which would ultimately lead to U.S. ownership. The war with Mexico, primarily over Texas, was finally settled by treaty in 1848, giving much of the west, including California, to the United States. On January 24, 1848, even before the treaty was signed, Sutter’s men, directed by James Marshall found gold in a millrace from a sawmill that was being constructed. Word of the discovery spread slowly, and it was not until the next year, 1849 that the world became aware of the seemingly easy wealth and began descending on California from all over the world. A worldwide depression sent many to California hoping to regain their fortunes. They were poorly prepared for the wilderness they were to find.

Because of disagreements with superiors during the war with Mexico, Fremont was sent to Washington D.C. to be court-martialed. He was convicted, but President James Polk remitted the judgment and Fremont resigned from the Army to return home to California in 1849. In route to California, Fremont encountered a group of miners from the state of Sonora, Mexico, who were on their way to the California Gold Rush. With some knowledge, perhaps of gold on his property purchased by Larkin, Fremont struck a deal with the miners to proceed to the Las Mariposas and begin development. Alex Goday, a trusted lieutenant of Fremont’s, accompanied the Mexican miners to oversee the work and return Fremont’s share to him. The Mexican miners first worked on Agua Fria Creek, just west of the present town of Mariposa, and then moved eastward to discover a rich vein and surface gold bearing rock on the east side of the Mariposa River (Creek). They gathered the surface quartz (called float) and constructed two arastas along the creek to crush the ore. They then washed the sand in Mariposa Creek to separate the gold. This work occurred approximately in the area below the location of St. Joseph’s Church in Mariposa today.

The Mexicans gathered their findings and divided them according to the agreement with Fremont. They then delivered his share to him and his wife, Jessie, in Monterey. Around 1850, the desire for statehood for California gained momentum. Development of the mining areas north of Mariposa occurred more rapidly because of a relative abundance of water and few disagreements over ownership of the land. Others moved south into Mariposa County to begin placer mining. It became important for Fremont to stake his claim showing his land and mining properties. He then proceeded to attempt to obtain clear title to his Mexican Land Grant.

While the legislature met early in 1850, agreement over various items, including slavery, delayed final adoption of statehood until September. During the legislative process that created the state, districts were formed for purposes of drawing representation for a constitutional convention. The largest district, or department, was that of the San Joaquin. Because Mariposa area was the southern end of the gold activity, areas south to Los Angeles were either vacant or still held by Indians and large Mexican Ranchos. For the most part, the land south of Mariposa was considered of little interest. It is not clear why Mariposa County was so large but it is suggested that because most of this area south to Fort Tejon and beyond was of little interest, it could be left for later development. This large County, which covered one fifth of the state, was to be the source of all or part of eleven counties carved out of the original Mariposa County over the next 73 years. Even today, portions of the boundary between Mariposa County and its northern neighbor, Tuolumne County, are unclear.

During the same timeframe, Fremont's claim to land, based on a Mexican Land Grant, had not been recognized under American law. In 1852, the State of California sent its surveyor, Von Schmidt, to Mariposa to survey Fremont's version of the grant. That original map survives at the California State Mining and Mineral Museum. It shows a grant boundary that follows the Mariposa River (Creek) from the area around Mariposa and Mt. Bullion, forming a head or pan shaped section of land, along the river to the west almost to the San Joaquin River. The map was given the name "Pan Handle Grant Map" because of its shape. However, when the Supreme Court considered Fremont's request, under the title of California Land Case #1, they directed the state court to restructure the 44,000-acre plus grant, to give Fremont land that he did not claim. This included land north of Mt. Bullion, including Mt. Ophir, Bear Valley and to Ridley's Ferry on the Merced River. Because others had already started development of mining properties that were given to Fremont, a series of court cases were heard, many in the new 1854 Court House in Mariposa. The most significant case was titled "Biddle Boggs vs. The Merced Mining Company." The decisions from this case formed the basis for most of the mining law written in various states of the west during their subsequent development. In 1856, Fremont finally received clear title to his property. By this time his capital was depleted and his property in poor condition.

As early as 1850, Fremont began development of property that he believed to be his. He leased the area along the Mariposa River (Creek) to the San Francisco banking firm of Palmer Cook and Co. Although many were searching for gold in the placers on property Fremont claimed, he seemed to be more interested in the larger scale development of the underground veins. He was correct about turning his attention to this method of development because of the lack of water on a consistent basis to wash the ore. Palmer Cook and Co. came to Mariposa with skilled tradesmen and miners. They laid out the town of Mariposa and began the development of the Mariposa Mine. Fremont's lease to Palmer Cook and Co. had little legal basis except his reputation and the lure of quick wealth. Within eighteen months, Palmer Cook and Co. returned the property to Fremont and left Mariposa, leaving behind a

new town. Fremont proceeded to lease ground to any who would use it, promising them ownership whenever he gained clear title.

Fremont built an adobe building at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Charles Streets, primarily to house his attorneys Green B Abel and Rufus Lockwood. After a major fire in 1866, the building was given a brick veneer on the front and side, but the adobe sections still remain, especially the three-story section at the rear. The town that Fremont received from Palmer Cook and Co., was laid out on a proper grid, unlike many Gold Rush era communities up and down the Mother Lode. Although Agua Fria was the first county seat of Mariposa County, a series of events, including fire, flood, and declining placer mining activity, caused the moving of the counties business to the new Town of Mariposa. From late 1851 until early 1854, County business was conducted in various locations within the town. In 1853, the governing body of the County, then a three judge Courts of Sessions, determined that a proper Court House be constructed. By early 1854, the structure was located on a “high eminence” at the north edge of town. The opening of the seat of government and justice was accompanied by the publishing of a new newspaper that would become the Mariposa Gazette. The clock tower was added to the Court House in 1863.

By 1856, Fremont’s Mexican Land grant was given recognition by American courts. The cost of attaining clear title and mismanagement of his properties left Fremont in debt, seeking a way out of his dilemma lead to the sale of the grant properties. The arrival of Treanor Park of Vermont began the process of disposing of the grant; and by 1861, new owners took over.

In 1850, there were a number of incidents between the miners in the placers and the native population. For centuries, the native people had lived in balance with what the land could provide. Being hunters and gatherers meant that they had to move with the seasons to survive. The miners arrived with little skill living off the land and in such numbers that they soon depleted the food reserves as well as occupied the seasonal routes that the Indians were accustomed to using. Incidents related to the killing of miners, especially those employed by Col. James Savage, and the destructions of his stores, caused the raising of a vigilante group. Fearing the slaughter of the Indians, the Sheriff of Mariposa County appealed to the Governor of the State for a militia to be formed to bring in the Indian population. Such a group was formed and given the name of the Mariposa Battalion. Under the leadership of Col. Savage, the Battalion divided into three companies and began the process of gathering the Indians and moving them to an area on the Fresno River. One group, the Yosemite led by Chief Tenaya, refused to be gathered. The search for the Yosemite led the Battalion to the brink of Yosemite Valley. It was this discovery by the Americans that changed the course of history of Mariposa County.

Mining soon became a seasonable activity in Mariposa County, with farming and grazing becoming a staple of life. Yosemite Valley was divided, for a time, into farms until the Federal Government granted the valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, in 1863, to the State of California for the purposes of creation of a Park. Most homesteaders would graze their livestock in the high country of the Sierra during the summer, causing conflicts with those who felt that uncontrolled use of the fragile landscape was destroying it. John Muir arrived in Yosemite in 1869, and began to develop the concepts of preservation that resulted in the formation of Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park in 1890. Yosemite Valley remained a State Park until 1913 when both the valley and the Mariposa Grove were retroceded to the Park. By 1914, the Department of Interior was formed and a civilian ranger corps took charge of protecting the Park. Some of the last years of the Army control involved

the patrol of “Buffalo Soldiers,” black cavalry from San Francisco, pressed into service due to the Spanish American War.

By 1856, Galen Clark had moved to Wawona, then called Palachum, because of a seemingly fatal case of Consumption. Within a short time he, and Milton Mann, a Mariposa trail and road builder, discovered the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees. People arriving as visitors interrupted Clark’s solitude, and soon he was operating a small wayside cabin, which he enlarged into Clark’s Ranch providing lodging and meals. But this was not his main interest, and by 1876 he sold his property to Albert Henry Washburn, who built the Wawona Hotel. Washburn also built a road from Wawona to Yosemite Valley, which opened just a short time after the completion of two roads from the north. One, the Coulterville Road, financed by Dr. McLean, and another from Chinese Camp called the Big Oak Flat Road, all rushed to be the first to deliver carriages to the new hotels in Yosemite Valley. By the late 1880s, tourism had become a major seasonable industry. By 1900, hotels and Camp Curry were entertaining thousands each summer. Access was still by horse drawn stage. By 1906, the Yosemite Valley Railroad was completed from Merced to El Portal, bringing many from around the world to view Yosemite Valley. Yosemite did not have a first class hotel and the Del Portal Hotel in El Portal offered the only up-to-date facility in the area. Once the Federal Government took over Yosemite Valley, there was a great desire to improve accommodations in the Valley. By 1913, motorized vehicles were allowed in Yosemite and the trip from El Portal was reduced from four hours and fifteen minutes by carriage to one hour and fifteen minutes by bus.

By 1918, a state highway from Merced was started and slated to pass through the town of Mariposa, which for most of its history had been bypassed by the tourist routes. The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors had ordered a competition between designers of routes to Yosemite using the Merced River Canyon during the 1880s. Although a route was adopted, no road was built. The town of Mariposa continued to be the county seat and was one of the two major commercial centers serving the ranches, mines, and lumber mills on the south side of Mariposa County. By 1924, the new highway, now called Highway 140, reached Mariposa and began the push to Yosemite Valley via Midpines and the Merced River Canyon. Its completion in 1926, along with the opening of the Ahwahnee Hotel, gave a low-level all year route to Yosemite Valley, and first class accommodations, long desired by the Park Service and the Department of Interior. The opening of the road began the decline of the Yosemite Valley Railroad. Had it not been for the logging operations both north and south of the river by long incline railroads, plus the mining and mineral development in the canyon, the railroad would have failed much earlier than its final demise following the flood of 1937.

From the early 1880s until about 1914, industrial mining was important in all parts of Mariposa County. With its center in Coulterville, the north county prospered. As well, Coulterville provided one of the three main routes to Yosemite Valley, a convenience not offered by Mariposa. The Potosi Mine group, including the Mary Harrison, was very active, and Coulterville easily rivaled Mariposa as a commerce center. On the south side of the County, the Mariposa and Commercial Mining Company operated mines in Mariposa and Mt. Bullion with capital acquired from English investors. The burning of the mills at the two mines in about 1914 closed those operations, never again to be significant providers of jobs. Around Hornitos, a number of mines, primarily the Jenny Lind/Washington group and the Mt. Gains, provided employment almost until the Second World War. These mining operations, as well as others on the north side of the County such as the Bondurant, Dudley, North Fork and others, did not have to deal with the problems of distant ownership and huge



holdings with great debt. The Diltz and the Clearing House Mines also operated from time to time until the war and provided employment to many.

Many residents of Mariposa County survived by a combination of seasonal work in Yosemite in the sawmills and woods, and by mining. Many engaged in subsistence agriculture, which meant that they would raise much of their own food. There was no electricity in rural Mariposa County for the most part until 1948, and telephone service was mostly in towns or by farmer-installed single wire lines. Roads were maintained by members of the Board of Supervisors acting as Road Commissioners for each of their districts. They were mostly dirt and maintained by labor hired locally on a seasonal basis. Only the main highways maintained by the state were paved.

The Second World War stopped travel to Yosemite National Park. Many of the families left Mariposa to either enter the service or work in shipyards or factories in the San Francisco Bay Area. The mines were closed by Presidential order and stripped of their machinery, except for those that produced essential minerals. Following the war, Yosemite gradually began to regain visitation. Many of the small resorts built when Highway 140 and Highway 41 on the east side of the County opened, once again began serving visitors. A number of small sawmills began operation and agriculture began developing with many poultry farms and hog ranches. Raising cattle had always been important in the County and continued. Electricity began reaching rural areas, and telephone service was extended. The lack of basic services no longer was good enough for those who had spent the war years in the service or in cities working in war industries. The town of Mariposa created a utility district delivering water, sewer, and fire services, and John C. Fremont Hospital was opened to serve a younger and growing population. Mariposa was changing. By 1950, a gymnasium was built at the High School and the elementary school districts had unified. A new car in town was a big event and if it was a Buick or Cadillac, it could cause grudging envy. New homes were being built and the Mueller Tract near the hospital developed with new homes. By 1960, major subdivisions were springing up around the County with Don Pedro being the largest, followed by Lushmeadows Mountain Estates, Ponderosa Basin, Mariposa Pines, and Yosemite West. Yosemite Alpine subdivision in Fish Camp was formed with a community service district that provided water, roads, and snow removal. A small electronic based plant was created which continues to employ approximately fifty people. Visitation to Yosemite increased past three million, causing a change in the thinking about the use of the Sierra.

The history of Mariposa County can be best characterized by its periods of moderate growth, interspersed by periods of quiet economic activity. However, it can also be characterized by the sense of community that has always prevailed. The ability to know most of the citizens gives one a feeling of responsibility for our neighbors. It drives people to volunteer for just about everything. For the most part, when there was no ambulance, people found a way to create the service. When there was no fire protection, volunteer departments were formed. More than two-thirds of the roads in Mariposa are privately maintained today. Many volunteer to assist in schools, become 4-H leaders, help at the County fair, lead an Arts Council, participate in the Chamber of Commerce, serve on many boards and committees, and clean the roadsides. There is no end to the volume of volunteerism that makes Mariposa County whole.

## 1.8 POPULATION GROWTH

Projecting population growth for the next two decades is a combination of art and science. Historic trends are part of the process, but events surrounding Mariposa County make it obvious the County may face significant population growth. Although the 1981 General Plan allocated land for a holding capacity of more than 85,000 persons, the population increased from around 12,000 in 1981 to just over 17,000 in 2000.

### 1.8.01 GROWTH INFLUENCES FOR MARIPOSA COUNTY

Foothill growth has always been “fed” by growth surges in valley communities west of the Mother Lode. 1970s and 1980s growth in the Sacramento region fueled surges in Nevada, Placer, and El Dorado counties. 1980s and 1990s growth in Lodi, Stockton, and Modesto impacted Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne counties. Current growth in Fresno-Clovis is driving suburbanization of eastern Fresno, Madera, and southern portions of Mariposa County.

Recent changes in the Central Valley have potential to apply population growth pressures on Mariposa County not experienced during the last twenty years.

To the north of Mariposa County, natural growth and pressure from the San Francisco Bay Area into the Modesto region caused Modesto’s population to increase from 165,000 in 1990 to over 189,000 in 2000, and increased housing costs for local residents. Modesto’s commute zone now moves beyond Oakdale and Waterford, bringing Tuolumne County’s Jamestown and Sonora, Stanislaus County’s LaGrange, and the Lake Don Pedro area of Mariposa and Tuolumne into its commute shed. Continued pressure from the San Francisco Bay Area commuters living in Modesto drive up the cost of living in that region. This has far-reaching effects that impact Mariposa County as well.

Informal polls in the Lake Don Pedro area find some commuters traveling as far as Tracy, Pleasanton, and Livermore for regular employment. The 20-year projection for Merced County shows population increases of more than 70 percent of its 2000 population, while Madera County will nearly reach 50 percent of its 2000 population (Table 1-1).

**Table 1-1: Neighboring County Population Trends and Projections**

<b>County</b>	<b>1990<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2000<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>2006<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>2000 – 2006 Percent Change</b>	<b>2020 Projection<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>2000 – 2020 Percent Change</b>
Mariposa	14,302	17,130	18,216	6%	20,607	20%
Fresno	667,490	799,407	894,514	13%	1,114,654	39%
Madera	88,090	123,109	144,396	17%	183,966	49%
Merced	178,403	210,554	246,751	17%	360,831	71%
Stanislaus	370,522	446,997	514,370	15%	653,841	46%
Tuolumne	48,456	54,501	58,231	7%	65,452	20%

In addition to the Mariposa area, the Lake Don Pedro-Coulterville area is one of the few geographic areas of the County with public water and public sewage disposal systems. While there are capacity issues at present, the “Lakes” area of the County has the potential of accommodating significant new populations. There are more than 2,200 undeveloped lots with sewer and without sewer connection in the Lake Don Pedro area on which single-family residences can be constructed.

Western Mariposa County is facing urbanites fleeing urban growth and its associated cost of living. Among reasons for this boom is the new University of California campus at Merced. UC Merced will reach its peak enrollment of over 20,000 full time equivalent students during the life of the General Plan. With 6,000 staff and faculty members, the campus has a potential growth impact on western Mariposa County. However, significant issues limit that impact and can divert the growth north to Don Pedro or east, deeper into the County.

The lack of available services in the Catheys Valley region makes it difficult to develop suburban style tract housing. Large expanses of lands under twenty year Williamson Act Land Conservation contracts preclude significant subdivision activity. With a primary inventory in the vicinity of Catheys Valley of five-acre parcels for residential development, population growth potential in the area could spike over the next ten to twenty years, but build-out may be quickly reached.

From the south, Mariposa County faces significant growth pressure from the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area. A projected extension of Highway 41 freeway from Children’s Hospital, just north of the San Joaquin River, to Highway 145 in Madera County, reduces Mariposa town to north Fresno commute times to under two hours. This places the Ponderosa Basin, Bootjack, Triangle Park, Indian Peak, Woodland, Usona, Darrah, Jerseydale, Fish Camp, and Wawona areas all within the Fresno commuter shed. Fresno is projected to increase its population 39 percent by 2020, and Madera County by 49 percent.

There is a mutual water company in Ponderosa Basin, a small water supply and wastewater treatment district in Mariposa Pines near Jerseydale, and no other provisions for public water or wastewater systems in this area of the County. The Bootjack-Usona-Triangle Area/Ponderosa Basin area is currently the most populous area of the County.

<sup>2</sup>2000 U.S. Census.

<sup>3</sup>2000 U.S. Census.

<sup>4</sup>California Department of Finance (DOF) Demographic Research Unit, May, 2006.

Eastern Mariposa County growth potential is limited by elevation, topography, climate, and lack of available private land; however, planned movement of employees and services out of Yosemite National Park will cause some growth to relocate to eastern and central Mariposa County.

## 1.8.02 BUILD-OUT PROJECTIONS

When creating its General Plan, Mariposa County developed a population build-out projection for the Plan based on a methodology and set of assumptions.

The General Plan uses two population forecast methods to identify short-term and long-term issues and actions, a growth projection and a build-out projection. The growth projection is utilized to identify programs that need to occur in a short period of time, generally within a 15-year time frame. The build-out projection is utilized to anticipate programs and actions that will occur beyond a 15-year time frame but that need to be considered in any actions in the short-term period.

The growth projection is based on historic and project growth rates to forecast the pace of growth within the County. The most recent growth forecast was issued by the State of California for a period through 2050. This forecast projects a population of approximately 25,500 in Mariposa County in the next 40+ years.

The population projection reflects the implementation of the policies in this General Plan assuming the continuation of existing trends in development investment. Build-out of this General Plan would result in a population of 28,000 persons.

The projections were derived in several steps. The County first evaluated vacant land under two categories: 1) lands within the designated planning areas, and 2) lands outside of the designated planning areas. Mariposa County has approximately 50,100 acres of vacant residential land; of which, approximately 37,000 acres are within the County but outside of the planning areas and 13,100 acres are within designated planning areas (Table 1-2).

**Table 1-2: Residential Land Evaluation**

Source: Mariposa County, 2006.

	<b>Residential Land Use Designation (acres, rounded)</b>	<b>Vacant Land in the Residential Land Use Designation (acres, rounded)</b>
<b>Countywide, Outside Planning Areas</b>	86,700	37,000
<b>Within Designated Planning Areas</b>	-25,000	13,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>111,700</b>	<b>50,100</b>

In addition to the vacant residential land within the County, there are 1,173 vacant private parcels outside the Plan Areas within the Natural Resource and Agriculture/Working Landscape designations and 6,800 acres of vacant land within the Plan Areas designated

Natural Resource, Agricultural/Working Landscape, Interim Community Center and Town Plan Area.

To determine the potential residential build-out one residential unit was allocated to each vacant parcel of private land outside the Plan Areas designated Natural Resource and Agricultural/Working Landscape. For vacant residential land outside of the planning areas, the County implemented a building density methodology that considers both slope and density in determining feasible developable acreage. Due to the varied sloping topography in Mariposa County, which creates constraints for development, it is unrealistic for the County to calculate residential build-out densities at 100 percent of a parcel's development potential. Further, there are undeveloped areas of the County without infrastructure improvements, suitable soils, and/or access to a County maintained road or an improved road within 2,500 feet of the parcel. Table 1-3 presents feasible building density percentages based on slope for countywide land outside of the designated planning areas – Class A, B1, and B2.

Within designated planning areas, building densities were determined based on methodology within the adopted General Plan Housing Element, which evaluates development potential as a reasonable buildable percentage per land use designation. Table 1-3 presents the feasible building density percentages based on slope for countywide land outside of the designated planning areas, classified as Class A, B1, and B2, and the uniform percentages used for each land use. Within planning areas, the following land use designations were analyzed that allow for residential development: Residential, Agricultural/Working Landscape, and Natural Resources. Residential uses are also allowed within the Rural Economic/Commercial subclassification at one dwelling unit supporting each retail or commercial use; the Rural Economic designation was not analyzed because it is not a primary residential zone, and as such, the unit density per acre is not defined.

**Table 1-3: Feasible Building Density Percentages**

	Slope	Vacant Land Feasible Onsite Building Density
<b>Countywide, Outside Planning Areas</b>		
<b>Class A</b>	0-15%	30%
	15-30%	10%
	30+%	3%
<b>Class B1</b>	n/a	35%
<b>Class B2</b>	0-15%	30%
	15-30%	5%
	30+%	2%
<b>Within Designated Planning Areas</b>		
<b>Residential</b>	n/a	30%
<b>Agricultural/Working Landscape</b>		20%
<b>Natural Resources</b>		25%
<b>Interim Community Center</b>	n/a	40%

Source: Mariposa County, 2006.

- **Class A** (parcels over 10 acres and over \$15,000 in existing improvements). The following building densities are used for the established methodology: 30 percent for parcels with an average slope of under 15 percent, 10 percent for parcels with an average slope of 15-30 percent, and 3 percent for parcels with an average slope of 30+ percent. Because these parcels have some development, including residential development based upon the assessed value of improvements, it is assumed that basic requirements such as road access and suitable soils are present. However, as slope increases, road access and septic capabilities are adversely impacted; therefore, building densities that reflect the effects of slope are appropriate. There are 3,900 acres of residential buildable vacant land in Class A.
- **Class B1** (parcels under 10 acres with under \$15,000 in existing improvements). A building density of 35 percent of the total acres in this class is used for the established methodology regardless of slope. This figure is appropriate because development is a right; no discretionary permit is required for full residential development of parcels of this size. However, a building density of 100 percent is not likely because of the decisions of some property owners to withhold certain parcels from development. There are 1,800 acres of residential buildable vacant land in Class B1.
- **Class B2** (parcels over 10 acres with under \$15,000 in existing improvements). The following building densities are used for the established methodology: 30 percent for parcels with average slope of under 15 percent, 5 percent of parcels with average slope of

15 to 30 percent, 2 percent for parcels with average slope of 30+ percent. A more conservative building density figure was implemented for this class compared to Class A because there is no residential development likely to exist on the parcels in this class based upon assessed value of improvements. Therefore, basic requirements for development such as roadway access and suitable soils are not guaranteed. It is likely that the majority of these parcels are not within 2,500 feet of a County maintained road or improved road. The maximum building densities were based on slope and the previously stated predictable existing site conditions. There are 3,800 acres of residential buildable vacant land in Class B2.

- **Planning Areas.** The following flat rate percentage building densities were used to determine buildable vacant land acreage in the planning areas. The methodology is based on development potential per land use designations within the adopted General Plan Housing Element: Residential, 30 percent; Agriculture/Working Landscape, 20 percent; and Natural Resources, 25 percent. It is assumed that 40 percent of the acreage designated in the Residential land use will be developed, based on topography, ability to construct an approved onsite sewage disposal system, and ability to find an adequate supply of potable water. Because of the extremely low density of the Agriculture/Working Landscape and Natural Resources designations, it is assumed that 35 percent of the acreage designated in this land use will be developed. Slope was not used as a factor in the methodology for determining building density for land within designated planning areas because the planning areas are generally the historic communities within the county, which were built out of necessity in areas of fewer slope constraints than found in the rural parts of the county. There are 10,800 acres of buildable vacant land for residential dwelling units within designated planning areas.

With the total buildable vacant land/parcels for residential dwelling units calculated (Table 1-4), the County then determined the allowable dwelling units per acre in following three ways.

1. By the appropriate land use designation density within the planning areas.
2. By the County’s General Plan rural density policy of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres for lands countywide outside of designated planning areas.
3. By allocating one dwelling unit to each private parcel outside the Plan Area within the Natural Resource and Agriculture/Working Landscape designations.

<b>Table 1-4: Buildable Vacant Land/Parcels</b>			
	<b>Acres/Parcels</b>		
<b>Countywide, Outside Planning Areas</b>	9,500/1,200		
<b>Within Designated Planning Areas</b>	10,800		

Source: Mariposa County, 2006.

After the densities were determined, the total dwelling unit count was calculated. Within the designated planning areas, 1,200 dwelling units are projected, while outside of planning areas countywide, 3,100 dwelling units are projected. This equates to a net increase of 4,300 dwelling units. The County then applied the dwelling unit net increase to the Mariposa

County 2000 U.S. Census average persons per household size (2.37) and then added that number to the existing population total to calculate population at build-out .

Table 1-5 summarizes the build-out projection for this General Plan resulting in a population of 28,000 persons.

<b>Table 1-5: Summary of Build-Out – Mariposa County General Plan</b>		
<b>General Plan</b>	<b>Dwelling Units</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Existing Total</b>	8,991 <sup>5</sup>	17,803 <sup>6</sup>
<b>Net Increase</b>	4,300	10,200
<b>Build-out Total</b>	13,300	28,000
<b>Persons Per Household</b>	2.37 <sup>7</sup>	

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 and Mariposa County, 2006.

The California Department of Finance (DOF) Demographic Research Unit prepares population projections for the State and is designated as the single official source of demographic data for the State of California planning and budgeting. The most recent population projections released by DOF (May 2000) for California and its counties, from years 2010 through 2050, estimates the following populations for Mariposa County.

<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2050</b>
18,608	20,607	22,435	23,979	25,456

These DOF estimates project a growth rate for Mariposa County at or below 10 percent per decade. This estimate of growth mirrors the conditions that have occurred between 2000 and 2006 where on an annual basis Mariposa County averaged a less than 1 percent growth rate, which is less than other rural counties such as Calaveras (1.8 percent), El Dorado (1.7 percent), and Tuolumne (2.9 percent) or surrounding counties such as Fresno (2.0 percent), Madera (3.0 percent), and Merced (2.6 percent). Since the 2000 Census was released, the DOF reports that Mariposa’s population has increased by 1,086 persons, estimating a January 1, 2006 population of 18,216. On a statewide comparison, Mariposa County is projected to have a slower growth scenario than California, which has a projected annual growth rate of 1.5 percent.

<sup>5</sup>2002 U.S. Census Updated.

<sup>6</sup>2003 U.S. Census Estimate.

<sup>7</sup>2000 U.S. Census.



## 1.9 THE GOVERNANCE OF MARIPOSA

### 1.9.01 MARIPOSA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The County of Mariposa is a general law county. The County is administered by an elected, five member Board of Supervisors. Except for departments run by constitutional officers, the Board appoints all department heads. The County has decentralized management with each department head reporting directly to the Board of Supervisors. Elected department heads include the Auditor, Assessor/Recorder, Treasurer/Tax Collector/County Clerk, District Attorney, Sheriff/Coroner, and California Superior Court Judges.

Appointed department heads are Agriculture Commissioner/Sealer, Building Director, Child Support Services Director, Clerk of the Board, County Administrative Officer, County Counsel, Farm Advisor, Fire Chief/Emergency Planning Coordinator, County Health Officer, Human Services Director, Planning Director, Chief Probation Officer, Public Works Director, Librarian, and Community Services Director. The Superior Court Judges appoint the Chief Probation Officer.

The Board of Supervisors appoints commissions and committees to consider and provide advice on designated matters and Board members serve as the directors for a number of dependent special districts in the County.

### 1.9.02 PLANNING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MARIPOSA COUNTY

#### A. Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors is responsible for all planning policy in Mariposa County. Due to the diversity of requirements, the amount of work, and the need for expertise, the Board delegates some tasks to the Planning Commission or Staff. Some of the delegation includes decision-making authority. Other issues are delegated for purposes of obtaining advice and recommendations. The Board of Supervisors cannot delegate its legislative responsibilities for the General Plan and its implementing ordinances.

#### B. Planning Agency

The Mariposa County Planning Agency (established in Chapter 2.50 of the Mariposa County Code) comprises the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Planning Advisory Committees, and the Planning Director. The Agency's legislation empowers the Board to direct the Planning Department. It also empowers the Planning Commission, Planning Advisory Committees, and the Planning Director to accomplish tasks and assignments on behalf of the Board of Supervisors.

#### C. Planning Commission

The Planning Commission consists of five citizen volunteers appointed by the Board of Supervisors. There is one commissioner from each Supervisorial District. Commissioner terms are concurrent with the elected Board member. The Planning Commission has the

authority to approve quasi-judicial actions such as use permits, variances, and subdivisions. The Commission provides recommendations to the Board on legislative actions such as general plan and zoning amendments.

#### **D. Planning Advisory Committees**

Planning Advisory Committees of local citizens are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and used to provide recommendations, suggestions, and assistance on various matters of importance to local communities. The Committees are charged with the responsibility of preparing the preliminary version of area plans.

#### **E. Historic Sites and Records Preservation Committee**

Formed on April 4, 1972 by the Board of Supervisors in response to community desire, the Historic Sites and Records Preservation Committee is charged with reviewing and compiling an inventory of historic sites and buildings in Mariposa County. It has the responsibility to review County records prior to destruction to ensure important records of County history are preserved. Additionally, the Committee has the responsibility to review proposed road names, public projects, and private projects that may affect the County's cultural and historic resources.

#### **F. Agricultural Advisory Committee**

The Mariposa County Agricultural Advisory Committee is formed to review and recommend on the inclusion or removal of any land in the Agriculture Exclusive Zone, and other matters associated with the agricultural economy of Mariposa County. The Committee reviews applications; makes recommendations regarding the inclusion of land in an Agricultural Preserve; and makes recommendations on Land Conservation (Williamson) Act contracts. Advisory Committee members are representatives of the agricultural community. Appointments to the Committee are determined by the Board of Supervisors.

#### **G. The Planning Department**

Mariposa Planning is responsible for the administration, operations, and management of all planning activities. The Department is not compartmentalized, but activities fall under Permit Activities, Policy Planning, and Enforcement. Mariposa Planning carries out police powers enabled by the General Plan and zoning regulations.

The Permit Activities Division processes applications for public and private parties interested in obtaining various types of permits and development entitlements from the County. The Division's activities range from providing information and disclosure for due diligence analysis to shepherding Environmental Impact Reports through the administrative process. These activities involve decisions from the Staff level through the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The Policy Planning Division comprises the research and support arm of the Department. The Division provides background materials, reports, and research for Planning Advisory Committees, other boards, other committees and commissions, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors. The Division may prepare preliminary versions of reports, plans, and documents for public review and comments.

The Enforcement Division carries out the police powers of Mariposa Planning in terms of investigating and preparing required actions related to violations of the General Plan, development permits, and zoning code provisions.

## **H. Development Services**

Virtually all proposals to undertake any activities on private land in Mariposa County are regulated by the Development Services departments. These three departments—Building, Health, and Planning—are each independently managed but integrated by process. The Development Services departments work cooperatively to expedite project review and permit issuance as authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

## **I. Inter-Related Agencies**

Obtaining permits in Mariposa County also involves cooperation and interaction with a series of County departments such as the Fire Department; Public Works Department, and its divisions; state agencies such as the Air Quality Control Board, California Department of Forestry, Central Valley Region/Water Quality Control Board, Mariposa Office of Education, Mariposa County Water Agency, California Department of Transportation, and California Department of Fish and Game; and for certain services in Foresta, El Portal, and Wawona, the services of Yosemite National Park. Involvement of the Mariposa County LAFCO, the Local Agency Formation Commission, may also be necessary, should a project necessitate the formation of a new special district, or a boundary change for an existing special district.

# **1.10 SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

A special district is a limited purpose governmental entity. There are two types of special districts: independent and dependent. Dependent districts are separate governmental entities that are managed by the Board of Supervisors sitting as the district's board of directors. An independent special district is a separate governmental entity managed by an independently elected board of directors.

## **1.10.01 INDEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

### **A. John C. Fremont Hospital District**

The John C. Fremont Hospital District is a countywide independent district. Its five-member elected Board of Directors is independent of the County. The hospital operates a clinic, an extended care facility, inpatient beds, twenty-four-hour emergency trauma services, and a heliport for emergency air transportation.

### **B. Lake Don Pedro Community Services District**

The Lake Don Pedro Community Services District is an independent entity that provides potable water for the Lake Don Pedro subdivision and environs and serves over 1,300 residents in northwest Mariposa County and southwest Tuolumne County. The district is chartered in Mariposa County and is governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors.

### C. Mariposa Public Utilities District

Mariposa Public Utility District is an independent special district providing water, sewer, and fire protection services within portions of the Mariposa Town Area. The independent district has a five-member elected Board of Directors. The District serves approximately 2,500 hookups in the Mariposa Town Area, although water and sewer services are provided to a smaller population of approximately 1,800 hookups.

### D. Yosemite-Alpine Community Services District

The Yosemite Alpine Community Services District currently provides snow removal and water service to the 46 properties within the District, which includes a portion of the Fish Camp Town Planning Area. Road maintenance is provided to roads that fall within the District that are not County maintained. The District is governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors and has latent powers to provide sewage disposal, garbage collection, recreational facilities, street lighting, library facilities, street improvements and underground utilities, and other governmental services.

### E. Mariposa County Resource Conservation District

The Mariposa County Resource Conservation District develops and administers programs of soil, water, and other natural resource conservation. The District provides advice and guidance to land owners on matters of grading, erosion control, and soil conservation. The District provides coordination of special programs for the benefit of all County residents, timber and agrarian interests, and environmental enhancement. The District is governed by an independent 7-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors.

## 1.10.02 DEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Dependent special districts are special districts that are managed by the Board of Supervisors as the Board of Directors. A dependent special district has its own funding sources and does not receive general fund monies from the County. The Board of Supervisors is actually serving as a separate board and not the Board of Supervisors when undertaking business for a dependent special district.

The County has the following dependent special districts.

- Coulterville Lighting District
- County Service Area 1-M
  - Don Pedro Sewer Zone
  - Coulterville Sewer and Water Zone
  - Mariposa Pines Sewer Zone
- Countywide Community Service Area No. 1
  - Road Maintenance Zones of Benefit
  - Midpines Fire Equipment Zone
- Hornitos Lighting District
- Mariposa Lighting District

- Vehicle Parking District No. 1
  - Mariposa
- County Service Area 2W
  - Wawona
- Yosemite West Maintenance District
- Mariposa County Water Agency

## A. Zones of Benefit

Zones of benefit are sub-districts within a special district in which a special service is delivered to a small group of property owners or residents. Typically in Mariposa County, zones of benefit have been used for road maintenance and improvements. In recent land division approvals, however, mandatory road maintenance associations have been preferred over the formation of zones of benefit.

## B. Special Improvement Districts

Special improvement districts are similar to zones of benefit, but are created as defined district boundaries for limited purposes. Parking, sidewalks, and street lighting are examples of special improvement districts.

# 1.11 MARIPOSA COUNTY'S GOVERNMENT NEIGHBORS

## 1.11.01 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Yosemite National Park, managed by the Department of Interior/National Park Service (NPS), has over 400,000 acres within Mariposa County containing five major activity centers: El Portal, Glacier Point, Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, Yosemite Village, and Wawona. Two other major activity centers—Crane Flat and Tuolumne Meadows—are within Tuolumne County. Other facilities, including the internationally renowned Ahwahnee and Wawona hotels, Curry Village, and Yosemite Lodge are within Mariposa County, as are its best known natural features—El Capitan, Half Dome, Yosemite Falls, Bridal Veil Fall, Vernal Fall, Nevada Fall, and Chilnualna Fall. Mariposa County shares jurisdictional authority and services with the National Park Service in El Portal, Foresta, and Wawona.

## 1.11.02 UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

The United States Department of Agriculture/United States Forest Service (USFS) manages approximately 100,000 acres of two national forests in Mariposa County: Stanislaus National Forest and Sierra National Forest, which are divided by the Merced River. The County is within the Groveland Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest and the Mariposa-Minaret District of the Sierra National Forest.

### **1.11.03 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

The United States Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages several thousand acres of scattered holdings in the County. The lands are primarily along the Merced River and some of its tributaries, which include some mid-elevation grazing lands.

### **1.11.04 MADERA COUNTY**

Madera County (2006 population 144,396) adjoins Mariposa County along its entire south boundary. The unincorporated community of Oakhurst in eastern Madera County is a major regional shopping and employment area for southern Mariposans and is accessed by Highway 49, the Golden Chain Highway that terminates in Oakhurst. Paved access to Fish Camp and Wawona from the town of Mariposa passes through Madera County in Oakhurst and at Sugar Pine. Mariposa County’s principal connection to Fresno is through Madera County on Highway 41.

### **1.11.05 MERCED COUNTY**

Merced County (2006 population 246,751) adjoins most of the western boundary of Mariposa County. Residents of central and western Mariposa County tend to travel to Merced County for shopping and medical services. The University of California/Merced campus, located at Yosemite Lakes, is close in proximity to Mariposa County—six miles via the La Paloma Road right-of-way in Merced and Mariposa counties and approximately 25 minutes via Planada on Highway 140. Merced County is part of the joint powers authority for the Yosemite Area Regional Transit System.

### **1.11.06 MONO COUNTY**

Mono County (2006 population 13,597) does not physically adjoin Mariposa County. However, Mariposa and Mono counties share a number of cultural, geographic, political, economic, and transportation features. For example, Mono County is a member of the Yosemite Area Regional Transit District, and Mono and Mariposa County are both “frontier counties” with economic dependency on tourism.

### **1.11.07 STANISLAUS COUNTY**

A small portion of Stanislaus County (2006 population 514,370) adjoins Mariposa County to the northwest. Highway 132 connects northern Mariposa County into Stanislaus County to major shopping and medical facilities in Modesto. Mail service for the Lake Don Pedro Town Planning Area is from La Grange in Stanislaus County.

### **1.11.08 TUOLUMNE COUNTY**

Tuolumne County (2006 population 58,231) adjoins Mariposa along its northern and eastern boundaries. Mariposa and Tuolumne share Highway 120 access to the northern portions of Yosemite via Big Oak Flat. The Mariposa County community of Buck Meadows, and to some degree the community of Foresta, derive access from Tuolumne County. State Highway 132—which terminates in Coulterville—connects to Highway 120 via Junction 132 from Coulterville through Greeley Hill and into Tuolumne County.

## 1.12.09 MERCED IRRIGATION DISTRICT

The Merced Irrigation District, based in Merced, owns many of the surface water rights in Mariposa County's segment of the Merced River and the County and District have contractual arrangements covering Merced River Water. The district operates the dams on Lakes McClure and McSwain, both in Mariposa County, and owns and leases out recreational facilities on Lake McClure.

## 1.12 EDUCATION IN MARIPOSA COUNTY

### 1.12.01 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

#### A. Mariposa Unified School District

The Mariposa County Unified School District provides K-12 educational services for children in Mariposa County. The following elementary and middle schools are under the jurisdiction of the school district: Catheys Valley Elementary, Jessie B. Fremont School (Hornitos), Coulterville-Greeley Elementary, El Portal Elementary, Lake Don Pedro Elementary, Mariposa Elementary, Mariposa Middle School, Woodland Elementary, and Yosemite Valley School. The four district high schools are Coulterville High School, Mariposa County High School, Spring Hill School (Mariposa), and Yosemite Park High School (El Portal). Service needs are determined through monitoring housing development and home statistics.

Enrollment projections are made in February and facilities and staffing are adjusted accordingly at that time. District enrollment was 2,447 students at the beginning of the 2004–2005 academic year. Of the total enrollment, 1,593 students were enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight, and 854 students were enrolled in grades nine through 12. These enrollment figures do not include 44 students enrolled in alternative schools or programs through the Mariposa County Office of Education. The District has experienced a steady decrease in enrollment for the past 10 years.

#### B. Bass Lake Union School District

The Bass Lake Union School District is located in eastern Madera County. The District has elementary and intermediate schools. Mariposa County students of elementary school age from the Fish Camp and Wawona areas attend the Wawona Elementary School, a kindergarten through sixth grade school in the Bass Lake School District. Over the past decade, enrollment at Wawona Elementary School has varied from 15 to 21 students. Enrollment in 2004 was 16. The District estimates fewer than 10 other Mariposa County residents attend other schools in Madera County.

#### C. Private Schools

Several private schools and one charter school are situated within the County, but total enrollments are a very small percentage of the number of County students.

## **D. Home Schooling**

Several dozen children throughout the County are schooled at home under California regulations supporting home schooling. There is a home schooling organization in the County.

### **1.12.02 POST SECONDARY EDUCATION**

The County of Mariposa is not included in a community college district. Columbia Community College is located near Columbia State Park, approximately 45 minutes from Coulterville, Merced Community College is located approximately 45 minutes west of Catheys Valley, and Central California College is located in Fresno, approximately an hour south of the County. Merced College offers classes in Mariposa, and Central California College offers classes in Oakhurst.

California State University at Fresno is located in Fresno, approximately an hour south of Mariposa County. California State University at Stanislaus is located approximately 90 minutes north and west of the County. The University of California at Merced campus broke ground in 2002 and is now operating.

## **1.13 VOLUNTEERISM IN MARIPOSA COUNTY**

Many Mariposa County residents act as volunteers—and this commitment is a major component of County governance. The County has an amazing range of service clubs, nonprofit organizations, and church groups. Local businesses and industries give generously with donations, products, time, and participation for local groups' fundraising. Mariposa County residents look out for each other and this "small-town" American character permeates the communities.