3.1: AESTHETICS

Introduction

This section describes the existing visual character of the landscape and the applicable regulations pertaining to visual resources in the project area. This section also discusses potential impacts to visual resources associated with the proposed project. Measures to mitigate any potentially significant impacts are presented.

Environmental Setting

REGIONAL SETTING

The project area, located in the upper Sacramento River Valley in Butte and Colusa Counties, is relatively homogeneous in aesthetic characteristics. The terrain is relatively flat and allows for expansive views of the rural setting. Agricultural lands, predominately rice fields and orchards characterize the western portion of the project area. The landscape in the western portion of the project area is dominated or largely influenced by human development, but provides extensive scenic views of the foothills and mountains toward the east from the valley.

The eastern half of the project area is characterized by foothills and mountains and has a predominantly natural setting with dispersed human activities and modification throughout the lower and middle elevations and logging activities in portions of the middle and higher elevations. The road network throughout the area influences the visual character of the area, with corridor types including the state highway routes, extensive county road systems, logging roads and numerous private residential access roads. Most roads have required some degree of topographic or vegetation alteration thereby influencing the visual quality of the area (*Butte County General Plan* 1979 and *Colusa County General Plan* 1989).

LOCAL SETTING

The proposed project is located in an area characterized by riparian, wetland, and agricultural lands. Views in the project study area are expansive, with agricultural uses dominating the foreground and middle ground. Air quality, namely smog, affects the views from the project area. Depending on visibility, the Sierra Nevada or Coastal Mountain Ranges to the east and west, respectively provide background views from the project area within Butte County. Aside from the Sutter Buttes rising almost 1,700 feet above the valley floor several miles southeast of the existing project facilities, there are no distinctive aspects to the existing landscape. In Colusa County distant background views are of the Coastal Range to the west, and the Sierra Nevada Range to the east.

Since natural gas production has been occurring for many years in the area, natural gas wells, pipelines, and valve facilities are relatively commonplace. In most instances, a chain link fence for security encloses these facilities and visual screening is rarely provided.

Well Pad Site

The existing visual setting is characterized by natural-appearing managed wetlands on the north, west, and south, with the wooded riparian vegetation enclosing Butte Creek approximately one mile to the west (Figure 3.1-1). The riparian corridor of the Cherokee Canal forms the east edge of the Well Pad Site, and a maintenance garage is located just across the drainage channel to the north of the site. The Sutter Buttes dominate the visual background toward the southeast. The site is not directly visible from any residences or public roads. Because this area is surrounded by private duck clubs, the only viewers are club members and management staff. The existing meter/control building straddles the perimeter berm and is the tallest and most visible element on the site (approximately 20 feet tall). The piping and wells are all less than three feet in height and are concealed by the perimeter berm.

Figure 3.1-1: Well Pad Site Visual Setting

SOURCE: WGSI 2000

Trees, shrubs, and ground cover were installed with an irrigation system during initial project development. These plants have experienced vigorous growth and are expected to provide screening of the site.

Storage Loop Pipeline

The Storage Loop Pipeline route would cross wetlands, riparian corridors, and farmed lands. Running east out of the Well Pad Site and under the Cherokee Canal, the route turns north and northeast, crossing managed wetlands before crossing the 833 Canal and levee (see Figure 3.1-2). The residence for the Tule Goose Gun Club is located at the junction of the Cherokee and 833 Canal, approximately 50 yards from the route. On the north side of the levee, the route continues east along the edge of managed wetlands and then enters rice fields. The route re-crosses the 833 Canal parallel to an existing electric distribution pole line through fallow agricultural land until intersecting the southern edge of the 833 Canal. From here the route follows the north edge of rice fields to the end of West Liberty Road and the Gray Eagle Hunting Club. It then crosses the end of the county road to the south edge of the rice fields, and maintains this position for the remainder of the route to the Remote Facility Site.

Figure 3.1-2: Storage Loop Pipeline Visual Setting

SOURCE: WGSI 2000

Remote Facility Site

The visual landscape surrounding the Remote Facility Site is similar to that of the Well Pad Site and Storage Loop Pipeline route. The visual components of the area proposed for the expansion are consistent with the existing facility to the west and open rice fields to the north and east (see Figure 3.1-3). The Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area to the south has extensive stands of riparian woodland and is more natural in appearance than the facility. As is typical in this agricultural region, views are expansive, broken by the occasional farmhouses, outbuildings, and riparian corridors. For drivers on Gridley Road, the primary travel corridor in this part of the project study area, the Sutter Buttes form a visual background to the south. The existing facilities are in the middle ground and present a relatively dense and massive industrial appearance in contrast to the surroundings.

Figure 3.1-3: Remote Facility Site Visual Setting with Adjacent Rice Fields

SOURCE: WGSI 2000

The site is visible from two residences – a farmhouse about 5,500 feet to the northwest near Gridley Road and a farmhouse on Pennington Road about 4,300 feet to the east. These residences are clustered with barns and other farm buildings and include some perimeter trees and shrubs. Outside storage of farm equipment, implements, and irrigation pipe is common.

Landscaping and an irrigation system were installed on the perimeter berm during initial project development. The plant materials include native and indigenous species and were intended to provide visual screening and wildlife habitat when mature, while not shading the adjacent rice fields. However, due to poor maintenance, the original plantings failed and had to be replanted in the fall of 2000. The new plantings are showing early success.

Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and Delevan Interconnect Facility

The Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline would begin at the Remote Facility Site in Butte County and span across Colusa County, crossing the Sacramento River, and ending at the proposed Delevan Interconnect Facility. The proposed Pipeline would cross riparian corridors, wetlands, and farmed lands.

The Delevan Interconnect Facility site is located west of agricultural fields in grazing/grassland. The foothills of the Coastal Range form the immediate backdrop to the west. PG&E's Delevan Compressor Station has an industrial appearance with no visual screening. Two PG&E overhead 230 kV electric transmission lines with lattice-style towers run along the east side of the Delevan Compressor Station. The nearest residence is over one mile away to the southeast. Interstate 5, the nearest moderately traveled public road, is over three miles to the east.

Scenic Highways

Butte County has identified two scenic areas in the *Scenic Highways Element* of the *General Plan*: State Route 70 along the Feather River and State Route 32 to Butte Meadows. Both of these areas are in the mountains to the northeast of the project study area and do not pass through the project area.

Colusa County has identified two state highways – State Route 16 and State Route 20 from the Lake County line – as "eligible" scenic highways within the California Scenic Highway System. However, these routes have not been officially designated. The following highways have been proposed to be designated by Colusa County as local scenic highways (Figure 3.1-4):

- State Route 20, between State Route 16 and Williams
- The Maxwell-Stonyford Road
- Bear Valley Road/Leesville-Lodoga Road
- State Route 45, from Yolo County to Glenn County
- River Road/Gridley Road

Two of these proposed local scenic highways pass through the project area. Both highways intersect the proposed Pipeline route in Colusa County. The portion of State Route 45 proposed to be a designated scenic highway crosses the proposed Pipeline route approximately 4 miles to the west of the intersection of River Road with the Pipeline route, less than 0.5 mile to the east of Keller Ranch.

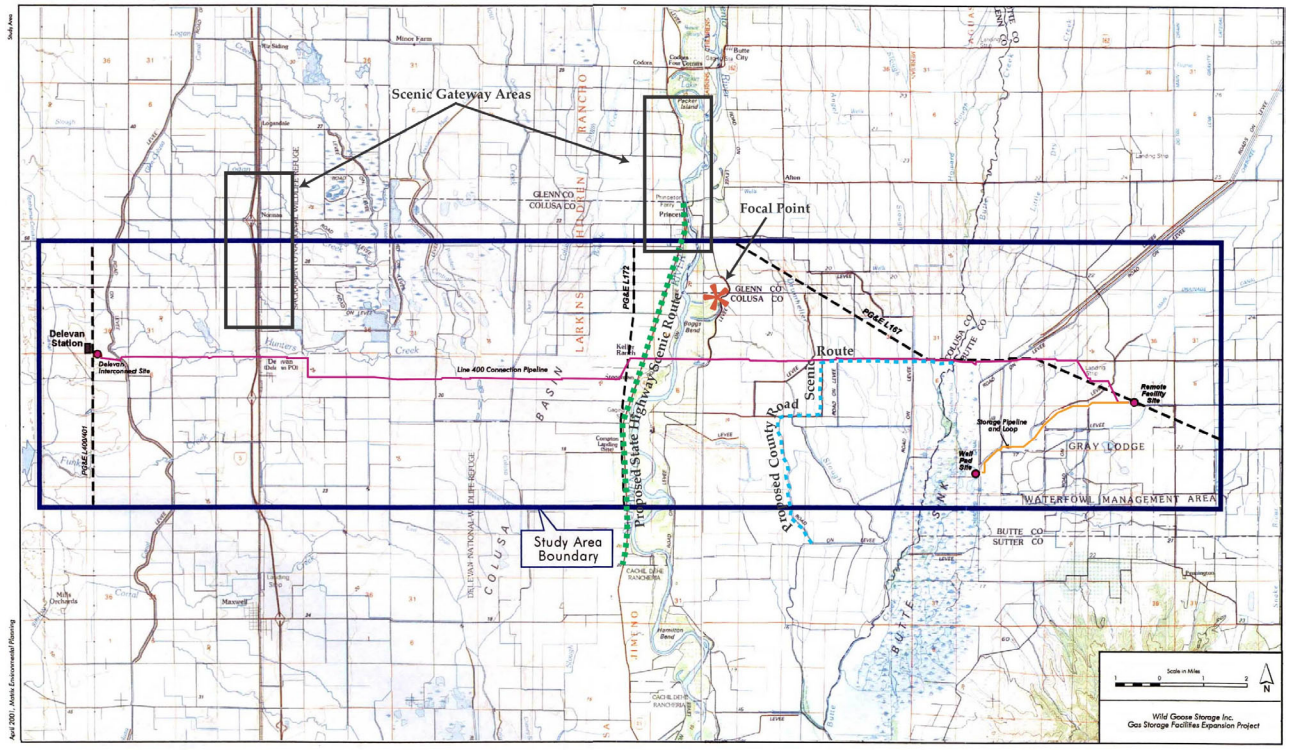
In the eastern portion of the project area, River Road intersects the proposed Pipeline route approximately 7.5 miles west of the Remote Facility Site. The proposed scenic

highway designation then extends east approximately 3 miles along Gridley Road. This portion of the proposed scenic highway parallels the proposed Pipeline route along the 3-mile segment of Gridley Road. The proposed designation ends at the boundary separating Colusa County and Butte County.

Scenic Gateways and Focal Points

The *Colusa County General Plan* identifies two Scenic Gateways and one Scenic Focal Point located in the vicinity of the proposed project (see Figure 3.1-4). A portion of Interstate 5 near the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge is identified in the *Colusa General Plan* as a Scenic Gateway. Another Scenic Gateway is located at the northern most boundary of the project area along the Sacramento River. In addition, a point along the Sacramento River north of Gridley Road is designated as Scenic Focal Point.

Figure 3.1-4: Colusa County Local Scenic Highways



SOURCE: WGSI 2001, *Colusa County General Plan*, and MHA 2002

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Light and Glare

Light and glare is minimal in the project study area due to its rural character. Except for occasional passing vehicles and local residences, few man-made light sources are present at night in the area where permanent aboveground structures would be expanded or added.

Sensitive Viewers

Sensitive viewers in the project area include occupants of rural residences in the project area, recreational users of the Wild Goose Club and neighboring hunting clubs, and travelers on highways (including County designated scenic highways).

Regulatory Setting

State, regional, and local plans and policies seek to preserve the visual quality of the project area.

FEDERAL SETTING

There are no federal regulations apply to potential impacts on aesthetic resources in the project area.

STATE/REGIONAL SETTING

California Department of Transportation Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program was established in 1963 to preserve corridors of outstanding scenic quality. Selection of scenic routes throughout the state has been based on the concept that such routes should:

- Traverse areas of high visual quality or significant landscape features;
- Be interconnected and part of a "network";
- Be coordinated with bicycle routes;
- Be predominantly used for recreation; and
- Connect major recreational, historical, or cultural features.

LOCAL SETTING

Butte County

The *Scenic Highways Element* of the *Butte County General Plan* includes the following policies that are relevant to the proposed project to preserve or protect visual resources:

- **Policy 1:** Protect valuable scenic areas for enjoyment by residents and visitors.
- **Policy 2:** Delineate scenic corridors with careful consideration of all factors

- **Policy 3:** Consider scenic values in the design and improvement of scenic highway rights-of way.
- **Policy 4:** Control access to scenic highways to maintain safety.
- **Policy 5**: Locate and design utility structures to minimize visual impact, where economically feasible.
- **Policy 6:** Encourage compatible land use patterns in scenic corridors.
- **Policy 7:** Promote the County's scenic highways program.
- **Policy 8:** Consider economic impacts on property affected by a scenic highway designation.

Colusa County

In Colusa County, only State Highway 16 and Highway 20 from the Lake County line are "eligible" scenic highways. The *Colusa County General Plan* contains the following policies relevant to the proposed project and project alternatives to preserve or protect visual resources:

- **LU 7:** The proposed development pattern should protect the scenic values of Colusa County. More restrictive design standards should be developed within the communities to encourage visually attractive development and lessen the visual impact of existing non-conforming uses.
- **CIRC 41:** The natural scenery which exists along locally recognized scenic highways should be protected from activities, which would permanently diminish their aesthetic beauty. Urban development should be discouraged in locally-recognized scenic highway corridors.
- **CIRC 42:** New structures in scenic highway corridors should be set back as far as possible from the designated roadway and should be in low visibility areas. Structures should be built with natural materials that help them blend into the landscape.
- **CIRC 43:** A greater number of areas should be provided along scenic highways for vistas, rest stops, or picnicking.
- **CIRC 44:** Trees along scenic roadways should be preserved, unless their removal is part of a program to enhance vistas. Where tree removal is required for road widening, a roadside re-vegetation program should also be required.
- **CIRC 45:** Non-agricultural roadside commercial and industrial activities should be discouraged in scenic highway corridors.
- **CIRC 46:** Off-site advertising and billboards should not be permitted on portions of scenic highways lying outside of Community Planning Areas.
- **CIRC 47:** Where financially feasible, utilities in scenic highway corridors should be placed underground. Where this is impossible, utilities should be sited in a way that minimizes their intrusiveness.
- **CIRC 48:** New roads in hillside areas should be constructed along the lines of the landscape and in a manner which minimizes visual impact from surrounding areas.

The major objective of these policies is to avoid visually obtrusive development in and commercialization of scenic highway corridors (Colusa County, 1989). This can be accomplished through implementation of the following measures:

- Establishing setback, landscape, and building material guidelines;
- Requiring certain construction practices during road resurfacing and widening;
- Restricting off-site advertising;
- Locating utilities underground where feasible; and
- Restricting land use to non-urban categories.

Impact Analysis

AREAS OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Under CEQA, project actions would result in potentially significant impacts if they:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vista.
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The project would have a significant adverse effect if project effects meet the thresholds defined below.

- **Substantial Adverse Effect on Scenic Vista.** A potentially significant impact on scenic vistas would occur if the proposed project significantly degraded the scenic landscape, particularly as viewed from nearby residences or major travel corridors. In particular, a significant impact would result from the degradation of the visual landscape as viewed from a Scenic Gateway or Focal Point, as designated in the *Colusa County General Plan*. In addition, if the line-of-sight views of the Sutter Buttes were adversely affected along highly used travel corridors, this would be considered a potentially significant impact. The potential impact on a scenic vista would vary with viewing distance and the visual landscape of the surrounding area.
- **Degradation of Visual Character or Quality of the Site.** Project related actions would be considered to have a significant impact on the visual character of the site if they altered the area in a way that significantly altered, detracted from, or degraded the visual quality of the site for sensitive viewers in the area. Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact the project may have on the visual quality of the site. Visual contrast is a measure of the degree of perceptible change in the form, line, color, and texture of the landscape resulting from project construction and operation (Jones and Stokes Associates, Inc. et al, for the CPUC 1999). If the proposed project resulted in a significant change in the composition of the landscape, for example, this

would constitute a significant impact on the visual character of the site. If a "strong contrast" occurred where project activities attract attention and dominate the landscape setting, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of the site.

- **Damage Scenic Resources Within View From Scenic Highways.** If any structures are located adjacent to or within the foreground of views of any designated scenic highways, the circulation policies of the *Colusa County General Plan* require that it be set back as far as possible from the designated roadway and in a low-visibility area, if possible. The policies further stipulate that structures should be built with natural materials that help them blend into the landscape.
- **New Sources of Substantial Light and Glare.** Creation of new sources of substantial light and glare would be considered a significant impact if they adversely affected nighttime views in the project area. For example, if the proposed project violated lighting regulations contained within the *Butte* or *Colusa County General Plans*, this would constitute a significant impact on visual resources within the project area.

IMPACT DISCUSSION

Impact 3.1-1: Potential for a substantial adverse effect on scenic vista.

Well Pad Site. The Well Pad Site would be extended approximately 195 feet to the west. The Pad area would be elevated with fill and an existing perimeter berm would be extended to encircle the entire Pad. Additional wells and piping would all be less than three feet in height and generally concealed by the perimeter berm.

*Construction***.** Construction activities represent the dominant impact to the landscape at the Well Pad Site. This impact would be temporary and minimal, due to the small number of viewers in the area. Construction at the Well Pad Site would occur in two stages. The Pad expansion area would first be filled, followed by drilling activities. The drill tower may stand at a maximum height of 135 feet above ground. The drill rig would include a maximum height of 120 feet for the rig and an additional 15 feet for the platform. It is anticipated that the drill rig would be visible from approximately 5 miles away from the Well Pad Site.

The Well Pad Site is located in an isolated area with few sensitive viewers in the proximity of the site. Construction and drilling at the Well Pad Site would be visible to individuals traveling along Sutter County's North Butte Road and the private road to and through the Wild Goose Club area. With the exception of individuals using the hunting clubs, very few people would have the potential to view the Well Pad Site because of its remote location. Visibility of the drill rig at the Well Pad Site during drilling would be temporary and considered to be less than significant.

*Operations***.** During operations, the expanded Well Pad Site would be screened by surrounding vegetation and would not be visible to many viewers. As with the existing wells, additional wells would not be highly visible to the few viewers who see the site once construction is complete. Potential impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Storage Loop Pipeline. Potential impacts to scenic vistas along the Storage Loop Pipeline would primarily be a result of construction activities.

Construction. The construction staging area for the Storage Loop Pipeline may include a portion of a large parking area at the entrance to the Gray Lodge. Construction activities in this area would therefore be visible to visitors of the Lodge. Individuals utilizing the residence for the Tule Goose Gun Club, located approximately 50 yards from the route, would be able to view construction activities along the Storage Loop Pipeline. Visual impacts due to construction activities along the Storage Loop Pipeline route would be temporary and viewed by only a few individuals. The impacts are therefore considered to be less than significant.

Operations. Scenic vistas would not be affected by operations along the Storage Loop Pipeline. Once construction is complete, the Pipeline would be located underground and would be hidden from sight. Surface re-establishment, described in greater detail below for the proposed Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline, would ensure minimal impact to scenic resources along the Storage Loop Pipeline. Re-vegetation of cleared land following construction would minimize potential impacts to scenic vista. Potential impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Remote Facility Site. The Remote Facility Site would be expanded approximately 650 feet to accommodate equipment associated with expanded operations. This would result in an approximate doubling of the existing physical space occupied by the Facility. The Site is visible from two residences – a farmhouse about 5,500 feet to the northwest near Gridley Road and a farmhouse on Pennington Road about 4,300 feet to the east. These residences are clustered with barns and other farm buildings and include some perimeter trees and shrubs. Outside storage of farm equipment, implements, and irrigation pipe is common.

Construction. Construction activities at the Remote Facility would be visible from the two residences described above. Because construction activities would be temporary and would affect a small number of sensitive viewers, potential impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Operations. Permanent above ground structures included in the expansion would also be visible to the two residences and nearby roadways. The following descriptions summarize above ground components that would be visible following construction:

- The tallest individual components of the expanded Remote Facility Site would be the addition of a second 30-foot-high compressor building
- Night lighting would be provided for security and maintenance staff.
- The structure, mass, height, and density of the structures would be similar to those of the existing operation.

A 35-foot wide landscaped buffer strip would surround the expansion area. The presence of the Remote Facility Site does appear in the middle ground looking south from Gridley Road or west from Pendleton Road and represents a dense and massive industrial appearance that contrasts with the surroundings. Viewer sensitivity to this type of facility is considered to be low. Residents are accustomed to seeing the existing facility within their line-of-site vista. The proposed Expansion Project would not represent an introduction of a new type of facility or structure to the landscape and therefore viewer sensitivity to the facility may be considered to be low. The additional above ground structures would be similar in appearance to the industrial and agricultural buildings in the area.

The view of Sutter Buttes from Gridley Road would not be obstructed or diminished with the proposed Expansion Project. Travelers' views of Sutter Buttes would be to the south of the Remote Facility Site. WGSI would implement the following measure to minimize impacts associated with expansion of the Remote Facility Site:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-1.** Visual screening would accompany the proposed expansion of the Remote Facility Site. Annual surveys of the landscaping would be performed for five years in the fall of each year. During these surveys, an evaluation of the survivorship of each species and the effectiveness of the visual screening would be completed. Success of the screening would be based on how much of the physical site could be seen from West Liberty Road.

The visual impact of the Remote Facility Site would be considered less than significant because the facility would be similar to existing features at the site, the limited number of viewers, and the screening landscaping that would be installed at the site.

Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and Delevan Interconnect Facility. Installation of the proposed Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline would result in a strip of bare land along the Pipeline route during construction. As described in Section 3.4 Biology, if riparian scrub vegetation is impacted due to open cutting or access is required for construction or maintenance at any water crossing, that vegetation will be replanted as described in the project's *Restoration and Monitoring Plan*. Pipeline construction, involving vegetation removal and excavation of soil would result in the temporary elimination of approximately 1.8 acres of freshwater marsh, 7 acres of wet meadow, 17 acres of grassland, 216 acres of rice field, and 80 acres of other agricultural lands (Table 3.4-3). The temporary impact would persist for approximately one growing season until the affected construction sites are restored and naturally revegetated.

*Construction***.** Construction activities along the proposed pipeline corridor would be visible from several roadways in the area including portions of State Route 45 and Interstate 5 that cross the proposed route. Clearing of vegetation and grading would be necessary prior to installing the Pipeline. The resulting bare land would be particularly visible in non-agricultural areas although the impacts would vary depending on the type of vegetation in the surrounding area. The applicant would implement mitigation to minimize impacts associated with construction of the proposed Pipeline:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-2.** In wetlands and riparian areas, relatively rapid re-growth of riparian vegetation would ensure that visual evidence of pipeline construction would occur during only one or two growing seasons. The rapid re-vegetation in these areas may be attributed to replacement of topsoil (containing the seed base) following construction, the ample water in the wetlands, and the vigorous growth typical of wetland and riparian vegetation. On farmed lands, row crops may be planted following land clearing as soon as ROW is restored.

While construction activities would be visible, they are not expected to significantly diminish the visual resources in the project area. Potential impacts to visual resources due to construction would be temporary and considered to be less than significant.

Operations. The Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline would be buried beneath the ground and would not be visible after the surface is restored following construction. Permanent pipeline markers would consist of white rectangular signs with bold red letters warning about the presence of the Pipeline and providing a phone number to call for information (Figure 3.1-5). Following construction, the ROW vegetation in wetland and riparian areas would be mowed and only the trench strip would have bare soil. The applicant would implement the following mitigation measure to minimize impacts associated with the proposed Pipeline:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-3.** The markers would be installed at angle points in the alignment, near road crossings, and at inter-visible locations, to provide notice of the approximate location of the line. Although these markers must be visible to be effective as safety devices, they would be sufficiently spaced along the line so as not to result in a significant visual impact to the scenic vista.

The Delevan Interconnect Facility would be located along the existing access road to the Delevan Station. This site would consist of a fenced and graveled lot approximately 100 by 160 feet. At the Delevan Interconnect Facility, the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline would transition from buried pipe to aboveground pipe. A small pre-engineered metal control building (approximately 15 feet in height) may also be included at the Site. The pre-engineered control building and fenced lot would both be comparable with PG&E's Delevan Compressor Station, which has an industrial appearance and lacks visual screening. The nearest residence is over one mile away to the southeast. Interstate 5, the nearest moderately traveled public road, is over three miles to the east. It is not expected that construction and operation of the proposed Delevan Interconnect Facility would adversely affect the visual resources in the area.

Figure 3.1-5: Permanent Pipeline Markers

SOURCE: WGSI 2000

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. The majority of project construction activities would occur in rural areas with few potential viewers. Impacts during construction and drilling activities at the Well Pad Site would be temporary and seen only by a limited number of viewers. These impacts are considered to be less than significant without mitigation.

Because above-ground structures associated with the Well Pad Site, Remote Facility Site, and Delevan Station would be similar in appearance to structures already present in the area, viewer sensitivity may be considered to be low. The following measure would be implemented by the applicant to minimize impacts associated with construction and operation:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-4.** All above ground features would be painted to blend in with the natural surroundings. Visual impacts due to clearing of vegetation and grading are considered to be less than significant with implementation of replanting measures included as part of the project.

Overall impacts to the existing visual character of the project site are considered to be less than significant without mitigation.

Impact 3.1-2: Potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Well Pad Site. The expansion of the Well Pad Site would introduce additional wells to the existing Well Pad Site. It does not represent introduction of a new type of visual intrusion into the project area. The proposed project would result in an expansion of the existing visual character of the site. The expansion is consistent with the current visual character and is not expected to substantially degrade the visual quality of the site.

As discussed above, construction activities at the Well Pad Site would be visible only to a few viewers using the hunting clubs and traveling on local roads and would represent a temporary visual intrusion into the site. The Well Pad Site is located in an isolated area with few sensitive viewers in the proximity of the site. With the exception of individuals using the hunting clubs, very few people would have the potential to view the Well Pad Site because of its remote location. Visibility of the drill rig at the Well Pad Site during drilling would be temporary and considered to be less than significant.

Operations. As with the existing wells, additional wells would not be highly visible to the few viewers who see the site. The following characteristics of the proposed project would be implemented to minimize impacts associated with expansion of the Pad:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-5.** The lease with the Wild Goose Club stipulates that screening be provided around the Well Pad. In compliance with this stipulation, the existing landscape berm would be extended around the entire expanded Well Pad Site and landscaped similar to the existing vegetation.
>
> **WGSI Measure 3.1-6.** All buildings and aboveground features would be painted the same neutral color as the existing buildings.
>
> **WGSI Measure 3.1-7.** Site lighting would be hooded and directed toward the interior of the facility.

Storage Loop Pipeline. Construction along the Storage Loop Pipeline would be temporary and is therefore considered to be a less than significant impact. Once construction is complete, the Pipeline would be located underground and would not be visible.

Remote Facility Site. Construction and operation impacts associated with the remote facility site expansion and the effects on the visual quality or character of the site are described in the following paragraph.

*Construction and Operations***.** The potential impact associated with expansion of the Remote Facility Site is related to how the Facility blends with other structures and the visual character of the area. The expansion of the Remote Facility and associated above-ground structures would be consistent with the existing Facility components. The additional above-ground structures associated with expansion would be painted a neutral color to blend in with existing structures and the surrounding landscape. The expansion of the Remote Facility would alter the visual character of the site. The project proponent has agreed to implement the following measures, in addition to those listed above, to reduce potential impacts to the visual character of the project area near the Remote Facility:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-8.** Building design of the expanded Remote Facility Site would emulate the existing facility

The expanded Facility would incrementally add to the built environment of the area. While the area exhibits scattered built structures that support the lands' agricultural activities, the expanded Facility would expand an existing industrial design theme to a bulk and mass not consistent with the area's built environment. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-1 would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. This impact would be significant without mitigation.

> **Mitigation Measures 3.1-1.** Install landscape screening at the Remote Facility Site. WGSI shall install a dense hedge around the perimeter of the Remote Facility Site to fully screen the perimeter fence. The hedge shall reach and maintain a height of 6 feet above grade. WGSI shall also install trees around the Site's perimeter that reach and maintain a height equal to the tallest structure or equipment at the Remote Facility Site

Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce the impact to less than significant.

Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and Delevan Interconnect Facility. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and the effects on the visual quality or character of the site are described in the following paragraphs.

*Construction***.** Construction activities along the Pipeline corridor would represent a temporary impact to the visual character of the immediate vicinity. Construction vehicles and equipment would be visible along the Pipeline corridor.

Operations. Following construction, the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline would be located underground and would not be visible during operations. Valve stations would be the only above-ground structure associated with operations of the Line 400/401

Connection Pipeline route. These improvements represent a potential impact to the visual character of the area.

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-9.** If a main line block valve lot must be located on the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline adjacent to or within the foreground of views of either of the two county-designated scenic highways, the circulation policies of the *Colusa County General Plan* require that it be set back as far as possible from the designated roadway and in a low-visibility area, if possible. WGSI would create a feasible set back in accordance with this policy.

Implementation of this measure would partially mitigate the visual impact of the valve stations along county-designated scenic highways only. This measure may not apply if the valve lots are not located along county-designated scenic highways; therefore, the visual impact may not be reduced to a less than significant level since the valve lots would be situated in otherwise undeveloped areas. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-2 would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. This impact would be significant without mitigation.

> **Mitigation Measures 3.1-2.** Install landscape screening at the valve lots. WGSI shall install a dense hedge around the perimeter of all valve lot sites to fully screen the perimeter fence. The hedge shall reach and maintain a height of 6 feet above grade. WGSI shall also install trees around the perimeters of all valve lots that reach and maintain a height equal to the tallest structure or equipment at each lot.

Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce the impact to less than significant.

The pre-engineered control building and fenced lot associated with the Delevan Interconnect Facility would be consistent with the industrial appearance of PG&E's Delevan Compressor Station, but like the Remote Facility Expansion, would add to the industrial appearance of the area, which could incrementally add to the degradation of the overall all rural setting. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. This impact would be significant without mitigation.

> **Mitigation Measures 3.14-3.** Install landscape screening at the Delevan Interconnect Facility. WGSI shall install a dense hedge around the perimeter of the Delevan Interconnect Facility to fully screen the perimeter fence. The hedge shall reach and maintain a height of 6 feet above grade. WGSI shall also install trees around the perimeters of the Delevan Interconnect Facility that reach and maintain a height equal to the tallest structure or equipment at the Facility.

Level of Significance With Mitigation. With implementation of the WGSI and CPUC mitigation measures the potential impacts to the visual quality of the project area are considered to be less than significant.

Impact 3.1-3: Potential to substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Although no designated scenic highways are located in the project area, this analysis will describe potential impacts to views from the two proposed scenic highways running through the project area.

Well Pad Site. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Well Pad Site expansion and the effects on the scenic resources within a state scenic highway are described in the following paragraph.

Construction and Operations. Construction and operations at the Well Pad Site would not be visible from either of the two proposed scenic highways in the project area. Further, there are no trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings at the Pad area. There will be permanent removal of 1.4 acres of wetlands, as described in Section 3.4 Biology, but this habitat is not visible from either of the two proposed scenic highways. The impact would be less than significant.

Storage Loop Pipeline. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Storage Loop Pipeline and the effects on the scenic resources within a state scenic highway are described in the following paragraph.

Construction and Operations. Construction and operation activities along the Storage Loop Pipeline would not be visible from either of the two proposed scenic highways in the project area. There are no trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings along the Storage Loop Pipeline; the impact would be less than significant.

Remote Facility Site. Construction and operation impacts associated with the remote facility expansion and the effects on the scenic resources within a state scenic highway are described in the following paragraphs.

*Construction***.** Construction activities at the Remote Facility Site may be visible from the portion of River Road/Gridley road designated as a proposed scenic highway in Colusa County. Drivers on the road may be able to see the shapes of some of the taller above ground components and construction activities. Potential impacts associated with construction activities would be temporary and are considered to be less than significant.

Operations. The above ground components of the Remote Facility may be visible from the portion of River Road/Gridley road designated as a proposed scenic highway in Colusa County. Drivers on the road may be able to see the shapes of some of the taller above ground components but it is not likely that they would be able to distinguish them from each other. Development at the Remote Facility represents an expansion of an already existing industrial facility site. Viewer sensitivity to the facility is considered low. The additional structures would be consistent with existing views in the area. In particular, the views of Sutter Buttes from the portion of River Road/Gridley road proposed for

designation would not be adversely affected by the expansion of the facility. This impact would be less than significant because the expansion would not represent a significant change in the view and would not be inconsistent with applicable policies in Butte County.

Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and the effects on the scenic resources within a state scenic highway are described in the following paragraphs.

Construction. Pipeline construction activities would be visible from both of the scenic highways running through the project area. The proposed Pipeline route extends approximately 3 miles along the portion of River Road/Gridley Road proposed for designation. As described in Section 3.4, Biology, all trees within the pipeline ROW will be avoided, if feasible, by routing the pipeline alignment and construction areas around such trees. If complete avoidance is not possible, then partial avoidance and protection measures described in Section 3.4 will be implemented. Following construction, vegetation along the ROW would be restored as detailed in WGSI's *Vegetation Management Plan* (to be prepared as required by mitigation measure 3.4-9*)*. Construction activities would be temporary and the resulting Pipeline would be below ground and not visible from the proposed route once construction is complete. Installation of the proposed Pipeline within the Right-of-Way along this proposed route would be consistent with circulation policies of the *Colusa County General Plan*.

Operations. Following construction, the only project components that may potentially be permanently visible from scenic highways are the valve lots. Main line block valve lot(s) would be required along the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline. The number and location of these valve lot(s) along the pipeline alignment would be determined in cooperation with the property owners, consistent with federal requirements, and would preferably be sited near an existing access road to avoid potential interference with agricultural operations. The fenced lot(s) would be approximately 50 by 50 feet and contain above-ground valves and a blow down pipe vent. Site lighting would be provided for security.

If a main line block valve lot needs to be located on the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline adjacent to or within the foreground of views of either of the two county-designated scenic highways, the circulation policies of the *Colusa County General Plan* require that it be set back as far as possible from the designated roadway and in a low-visibility area, if possible. The policies further stipulate that structures should be built with natural materials that help them blend into the landscape. The project proponent has agreed to implement the following measures to minimize potential impacts to scenic vistas along a scenic highway:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-10.** Valve lots would be placed as far back from the scenic highway as possible.
>
> **WGSI Measure 3.1-11.** Wooden slats would be installed in the valve lot chain link fence for screening on the sides facing the road.
>
> **WGSI Measure 3.1-12.** Site lighting would be low-profile and shrouded to direct light down and inside the valve lot.

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. Impacts to views from proposed scenic highways during pipeline construction would be temporary and are considered to be less

than significant. Through implementation of measures included as part of the project, impacts associated with placement of the valve stations in locations visible from scenic highways are considered to be less than significant without mitigation.

Mitigation Measures. The above measures are proposed by WGSI as conditions of the project. With incorporation of these measures, no further mitigation is required.

Impact 3.1-4: Potential to create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Well Pad Site. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Well Pad Site expansion and the potential to create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area are described in the following paragraphs.

*Construction***.** Drilling activities during Well Pad Site construction would occur 24 hours per day 7 days a week. Lighting would be necessary at the Well Pad during construction and drilling. As discussed in the previous section, Well Pad Site construction activities would only be visible to a small number of people and would be temporary.

Operations. Following construction, site lighting would not be necessary and would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Storage Loop Pipeline. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Storage Loop Pipeline and the potential to create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area are described in the following paragraphs.

Construction. If construction activities require night lighting, shrouded lighting would be used to minimize impacts to nighttime views in the area. The impact would be less than significant.

Operations. No lighting would be required along the Storage Loop Pipeline during project operations. There would be no impact to visual resources from operation of the Storage Loop Pipeline.

Remote Facility Site. Construction and operation impacts associated with the remote facility site expansion and the potential to create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area are described in the following paragraphs.

Construction and Operations. Lights would be used during construction and operations at the Remote Facility Site. The following measures would be implemented as part of the proposed project to minimize potential impacts on nighttime views in the project area:

> **WGSI Measure 3.1-13.** Light glare from night construction at the Remote Facility Site would be mitigated by using smaller grinding wheels which produce smaller spark showers,
>
> **WGSI Measure 3.1-14.** Directing all lighting down toward the work area,

WGSI Measure 3.1-15. Installing shielding on the sides of the light fixtures to direct the light to the work area and limit off-site illumination,

WGSI Measure 3.1-16. Using light blocking material on the ends of the welding tents, and keeping lighting as near to the ground as practicable.

These measures would ensure that the impact due to lighting at the Remote Facility Site would be less than significant.

Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline. Project construction and operations lighting would utilize the most energy efficient lamps capable of providing the illumination necessary for the particular application. Construction and operation impacts associated with the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline and the potential to create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area are described in the following paragraph.

Construction and Operations. The valve stations would require additional lighting during both construction and operations. Site lighting at the valve stations would be low-profile and shrouded to direct light down and inside the valve lots. Article 8 Development Standards of the Colusa County Zoning Ordinance requires that all sources of light must be equipped with "lenses or other devices which concentrate the illumination upon such buildings, landscaping, signs, and parking and loading areas". The Development Standards mandate that unshielded lights shall not be directed towards, or be visible from adjacent properties or streets. The applicant has agreed to implement the following additional measures during both construction and operation to minimize potential impacts to nighttime views in the project area:

WGSI Measure 3.1-17. Installation of shielding on all light fixtures to direct light downward

WGSI Measure 3.1-18. Use of low profile, shrouded light at the valve stations

These measures would ensure that the impact due to lighting along the Pipeline would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Without Mitigation. Project construction and operations lighting would utilize the most energy efficient lamps capable of providing the illumination necessary for the particular application. Through implementation of the measures included as part of the proposed project, nighttime views should not be adversely affected by lighting in the project area. The project would be consistent with plans and policies because the applicant will conform to all lighting standards contained in the Development Standards of the Colusa County Zoning Ordinance. Impacts during construction would be temporary and are considered to be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. The above measures are proposed by WGSI as conditions of the project. With incorporation of these measures, the project impacts would be less than significant and no further mitigation is required.