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Resource Areas and Farmlands Considerations

In developing the RTP/SCS land use forecast and transportation system, BCAG considered the region's latest information regarding resource areas and farmland, as required by Senate Bill 375. The following sections provide a description of the datasets considered and the estimated impacts to farmlands, recreation and open space, habitat and natural resources, and flood control lands.

Farmlands

Prime, Unique, and Farmlands of Statewide Importance

Farmlands provide an important contribution to the economy of Butte County as well as provide environmental benefits such as flood control and habitat. In 2018, the total value of agricultural production in Butte County was valued at $632 million with rice, almonds, walnuts, prunes, and nursery stock as the leading commodities, according to the Butte County Agricultural Crop Report 2018.

The California Department of Conservation maps farmland throughout California under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). A map of farmlands in the RTP/SCS planning area is included as Figure 1. In 2016, farmlands designated as either prime, unique, of statewide or local importance totaled 237,438 acres. Build-out of the RTP/SCS forecasted land use and transportation system could impact up to approximately 3,709 acres (1.6%) of the "important" farmlands defined by the state (i.e., prime, unique, of statewide or local importance). Table 1 provides a breakdown of impacts to these important farmlands by category of impact.

Table 1

RTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) Identified Farmland

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	3,631
Transportation Projects **	78
Region Total	**3,709**

* Impact to those lands designated as prime or unique or farmland of statewide importance.

** Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

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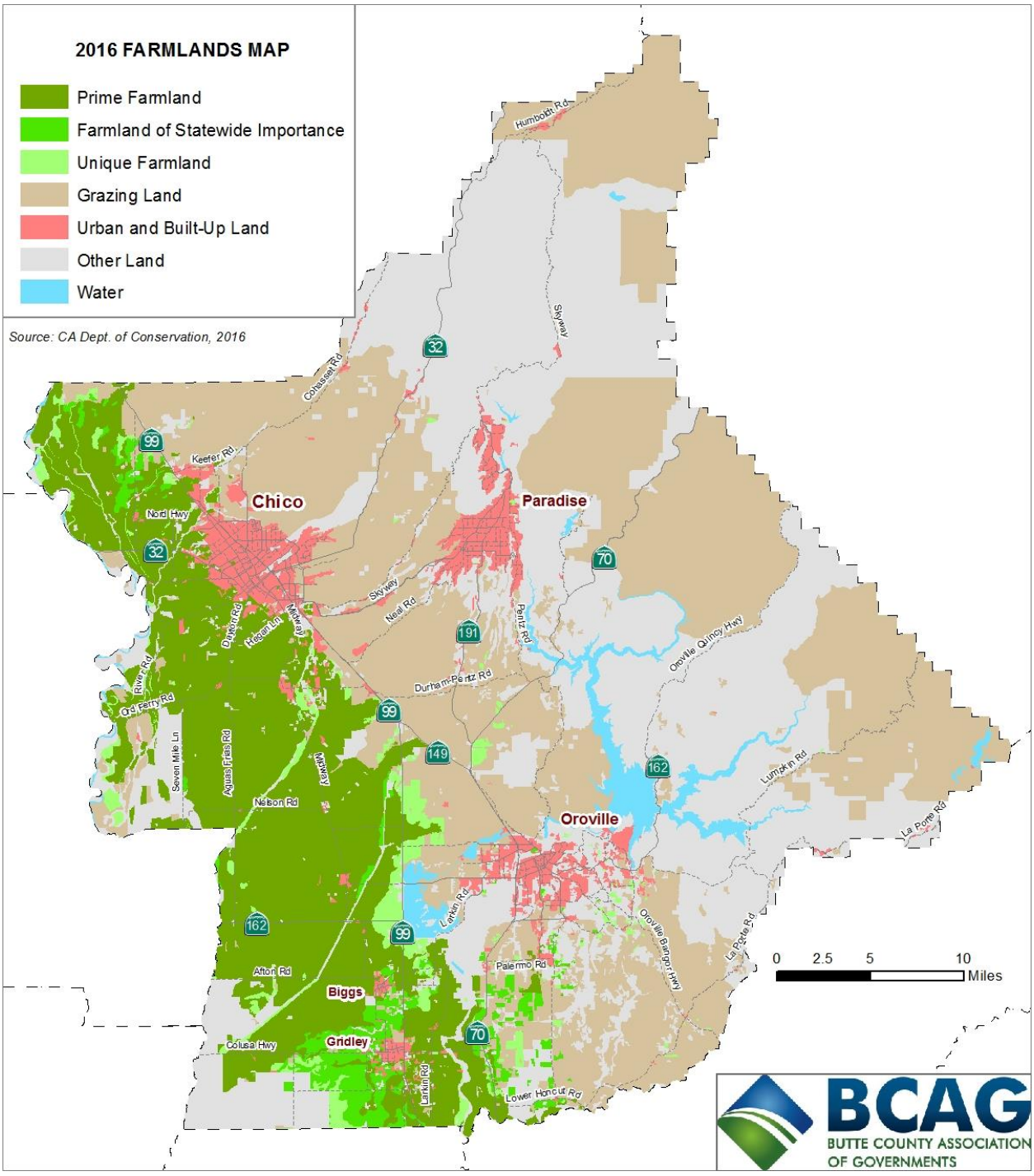
Figure 1



Williamson Act Lands

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with land owners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or open space use. In return, landowners receive a lower property tax rate based on agricultural production value rather than full market value. Williamson Act contracts may be non-renewed by landowners at any time, initiating a 9-year waiting period before the contract expires. Landowner's may alternatively initiate an Immediate Cancellation, which does not require the 9-year waiting period but requires meeting strict findings and the payment of penalties as set forth under the Williamson Act. As of 2013, Butte County has approximately 218,169 acres of land under a Williamson Act contract with 6,593 acres (3%) in non-renewal, according to the California Department of Conservation's 2014 California Land Conservation Act Status Report. Of the 218,169 acres under Williamson Act contract, 286 acres (0.001%) have the potential to be impacted by build-out of the RTP/SCS. Table 2 provides a breakdown of impacts to the 2013 Williamson Act Lands by category of impact.

Table 2

RTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to 2013 Williamson Act Lands

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	278
Transportation Projects **	8
Region Total	**286**

* Impact to those lands designated as prime and non-prime.

** Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

Recreation and Open Space

Open Space, Parks, and Forest Lands

The Butte County region's open space, parks, and forest lands provide for the preservation of natural resources, create opportunities for outdoor recreation, contribute to public health and safety, are used for the managed production of resources, and contribute to the protection of Native American sacred sites. As part of the development of the Butte Regional Conservation Plan, BCAG worked with federal, state, and local agencies to inventory locations throughout the region that are set aside as open space for conservation, recreation, and resource management. A map of BCAG's inventoried open space, parks and forest lands is included as Figure 2. In preparing the RTP/SCS forecasted land use pattern, BCAG avoided allocating future development in these locations, no development density or intensity was attributed to these lands as they are protected by a variety of mechanisms from future development. Table 3 categorizes the acres of open space, parks, and forest lands currently inventoried by BCAG.

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Figure 2

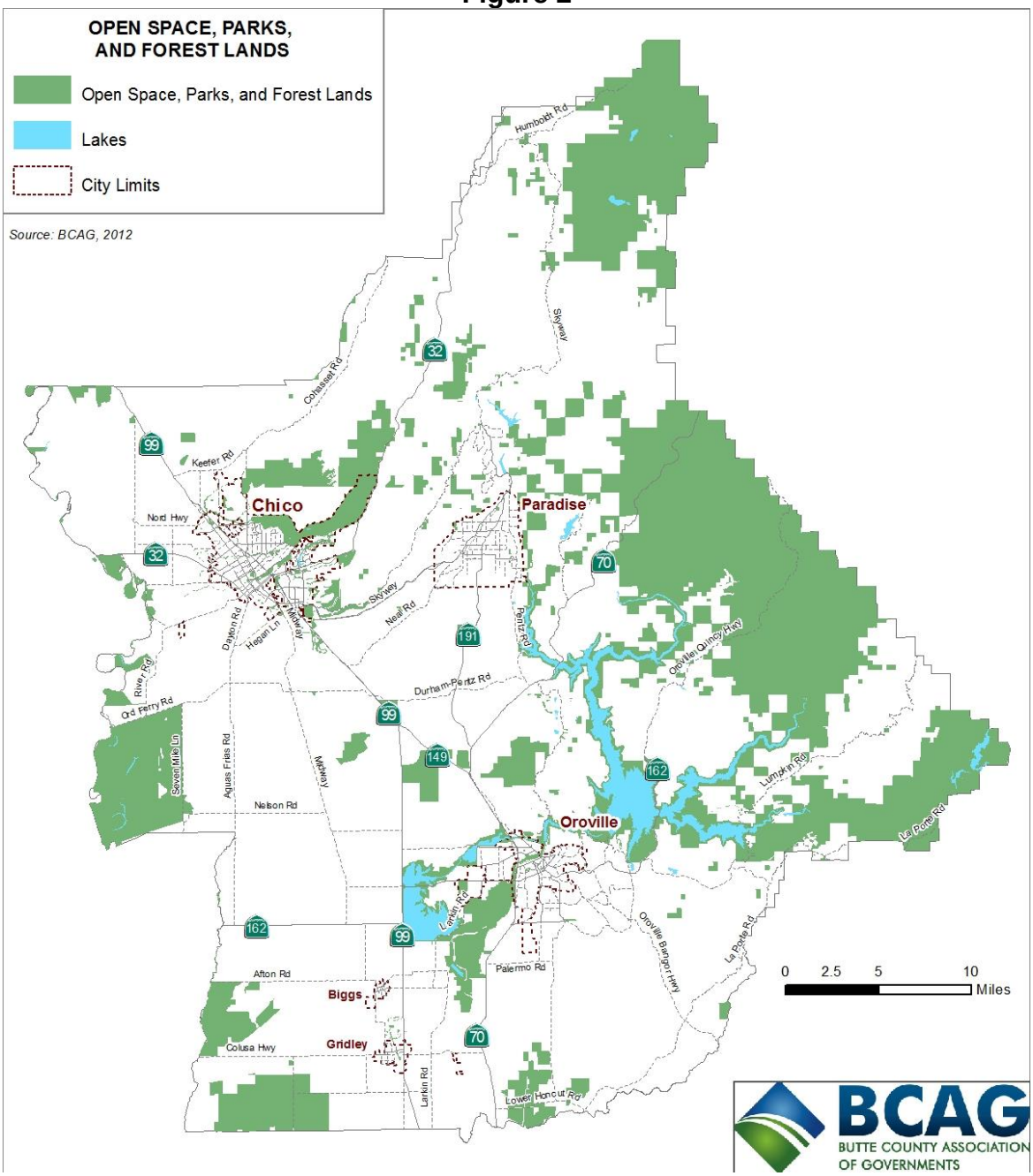

Table 3

RTP/SCS Open Space, Parks, and Forest Lands

Location of Lands	Acres
Within City Limits	7,139
Outside City Limits	285,595
Region Total	**292,734**

Source: BCAG 2012

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Habitat and Natural Resources

Butte Regional Conservation Plan

Protection of the BCAG region's natural resources (habitat and species) is provided under State and Federal laws. In accordance with these state and federal laws, transportation projects and land development activities must avoid or mitigate for any significant impacts to these resources. In 2007 BCAG began preparing the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP). The BRCP will be a federal Habitat Conservation Plan and a state Natural Community Conservation Plan encompassing the western portion of Butte County. The 564,205 acre BRCP planning area, encompassing 53% of the county, provides a focus on the areas of greatest conflict between growth and development and federal and state protected species.

The BRCP's conservation strategy will provide a regional approach for the conservation of natural resources while allowing for development under county and city general plans and the RTP/SCS. Urban Permit Areas (UPAs) developed under the BRCP, will define the locations where impacts of future urban development are expected to be incurred based on the region's local general plans and the RTP/SCS. A map of the proposed UPA's has been included as Figure 3. The BRCP proposes to support clearly defined development activities occurring within the UPAs and provide avoidance and minimization measures and compensatory mitigation for all adverse effects of these activities on covered species and covered natural communities.

In developing the RTP/SCS forecasted growth pattern, BCAG worked with the local jurisdictions to direct future development within the BRCP's proposed UPAs in order to remain consistent with the BRCP and to minimize future impacts to covered species and natural communities. Table 4 approximates the percentage of forecasted development occurring within the BRCP UPAs.

Table 4

RTP/SCS Forecasted Development within BRCP UPAs

Forecasted Development	Percent Within BRCP UPAs
Land Use - Residential	90%
Land Use - Non-Residential	94%
Transportation Projects *	76%

* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening.

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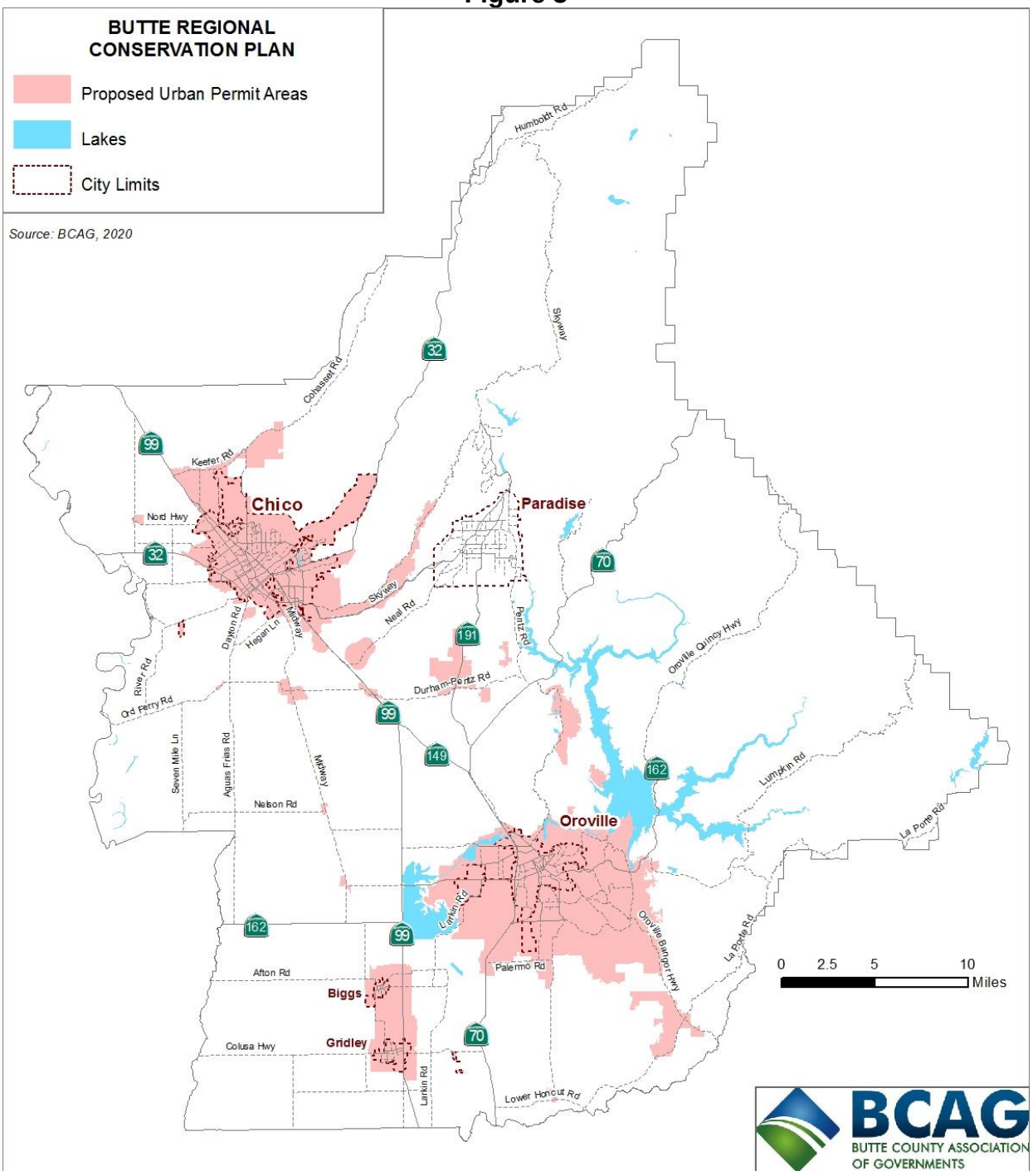
Figure 3

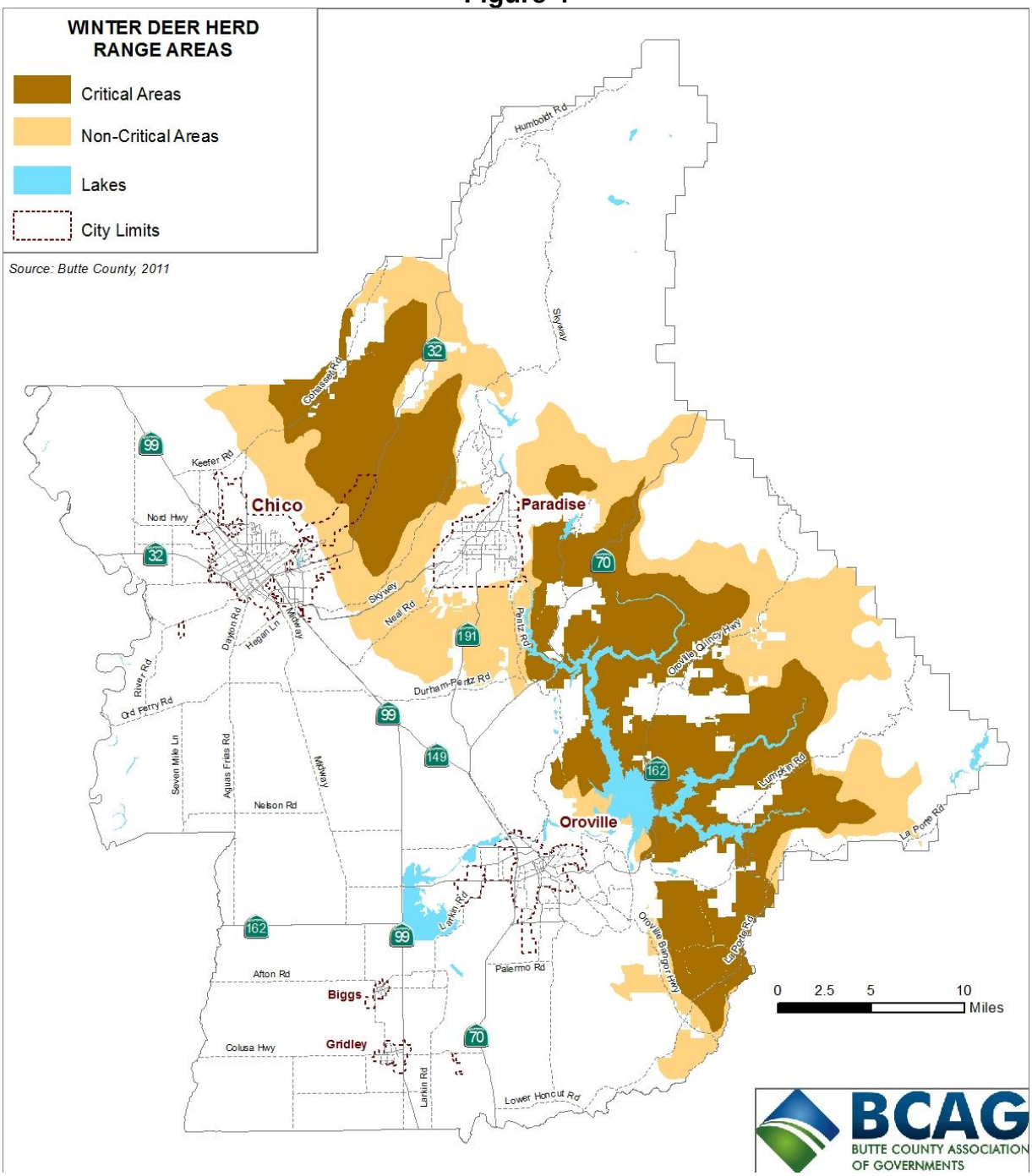


Migratory Deer Herds

Protection of the region's migratory deer herds has long been an issue of concern for Butte County. Migratory deer herds move from higher elevations in Plumas and Lassen Counties to lower elevation winter range areas in Butte County. Winter ranges in the county include both critical and non-critical areas as shown in Figure 4. Non-critical areas

provide habitat for migratory deer herds, while critical areas provide the highest quality habitat for migratory deer herds, and supply the majority of the herd's winter survival needs (November – May). Butte County imposes a 20-acre minimum parcel size on non-critical migratory deer herd range and a 40-acre minimum parcel size on critical range.

Figure 4



As part of Butte County's efforts in preparing its comprehensive general plan update, winter deer herd range maps were updated and used in preparing the land use plan. The

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Butte County 2030 General Plan established goals and policies regarding migratory deer herds, including minimum lot sizes in these areas in order to facilitate the survival of deer herds. In preparing the RTP/SCS forecasted land use pattern, BCAG considered the designations of these areas. The forecasted land use and transportation system in the RTP/SCS could impact up to approximately 2,285 acres (0.72%) of the migratory deer herd winter range lands (i.e., Critical and Non-Critical Winter Deer Herd Range). Table 5 provides a breakdown of impacts to the migratory winter deer herd ranges by category of impact.

Table 5

RTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to Migratory Winter Deer Herd Range Areas

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	2,285
Transportation Projects **	0
Region Total	**2,285**

* Impact to those areas designated critical and non-critical winter deer herd ranges.

** Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

Mineral Resources

Conflicts between mining and urban uses throughout California led to passage of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA). SMARA establishes policies for conservation and development of mineral lands and contains specific provisions for the classification of mineral lands by the State Geologist.

SMARA requires all cities and counties to incorporate in their General Plans mapped designations approved by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB). These designations include lands categorized as Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs), the most significant of which is a designation of mineral resources that are of regional or statewide significance. A general plan must recognize these areas and establish policies and programs for their conservation and development.

The State Geologist has not yet mapped the mineral resources in Butte County. However, based on petitioned requests, three sites have been classified by the SMGB as mineral resources of regional or statewide significance. Those sites include the 320-acre Table Mountain Quarry, located approximately 4 miles north of Oroville near SR-70 on North Table Mountain; the 627-acre M&T Chico Ranch Reserve, located adjacent to Little Chico Creek 5 miles southwest of Chico; and the 460-acre Power House Aggregate site, located south of Oroville along SR-70 and the Feather River. The forecasted land use in the RTP/SCS does not allocate any development within the immediate vicinity of these quarries. In addition, no transportation projects are included in the plan which could be expected to impact the quarries.

Flood Control

Flooding in the valley portion of the Butte County region is a concern, and other areas within the County have been subject to flooding from various rivers and creeks. The valley region of the County, which is the most flood prone, supports a significant portion of the County's existing population, and is forecasted to accommodate a majority of the region's future growth.

Nationally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides guidance on floodplain management and works with State and local agencies to adopt floodplain management policies and flood mitigation measures. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) identify flood zones (Zone A, AE, AO and AH) within the Butte County area, as shown in Figure 5. Local land use plans and the RTP/SCS forecasted development pattern have been prepared in a manner which minimizes the amount of future development within these areas. However, in order to achieve an efficient transportation system, reduce passenger vehicle GHG emissions, and improve regional air quality, a portion of the region's forecasted growth could occur within FEMA-identified flood zones. Table 6, provides a summary of potential future growth that could occur within FEMA-identified flood zones.

Table 6

RTP/SCS Land Use Development and Transportation Projects within FEMA Flood Zones

Forecasted Development	Percent Within Flood Zones*
Land Use - Residential	8%
Land Use - Non-Residential	7%
Transportation Projects **	8%

* FEMA Flood Zones designated as A, AE, AO and AH.

** Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening.

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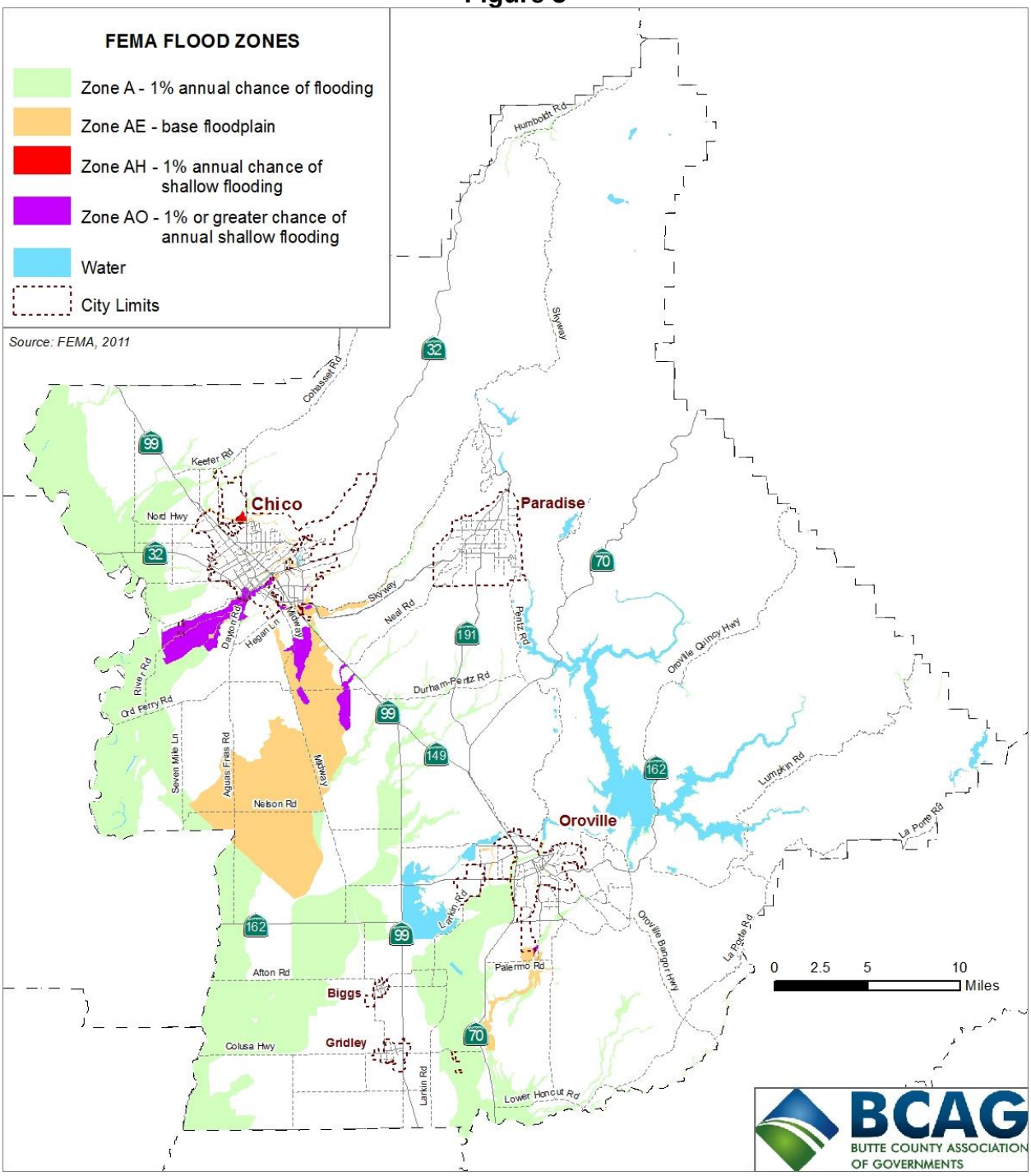
Figure 5



In accordance with state regulations, any future development within a flood zone must be permitted by the government after certain findings have been made. Specifically, local jurisdictions must find that the flood management facilities protect the urban properties.