

This section focuses on visual components of aesthetic resources that may be affected by elements of the Feather River Levee Repair Project (FRLRP).

### **5.7.1 CRITERIA USED IN VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

The aesthetic quality of an area is determined through the variety and contrasts of the area's visual features, the character of those features, and the scope and scale of the scene. The aesthetic quality of an area depends on the relationships between its features and their importance in the overall view. Visual images dominate observers' impressions of the aesthetic qualities of an area. Therefore, evaluating scenic resources requires a method that objectively characterizes visual features, assesses their quality in relation to the visual character of the surrounding area, and identifies their importance to the individuals viewing them. This process is derived from established federal procedures for visual assessment and is commonly used for a variety of project types.

Both natural and created features in a landscape contribute to its perceived visual quality. Landscape characteristics influencing visual quality include geologic, hydrologic, botanical, wildlife, recreation, and urban features. Several sets of criteria have been developed for defining and evaluating visual quality. A commonly used set of criteria includes the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity. None of these is itself equivalent to visual quality; all three must be high to indicate high quality. These terms are defined as follows (Federal Highway Administration 1983):

- ▶ “Vividness” is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.
- ▶ “Intactness” is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.
- ▶ “Unity” is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method for characterizing and evaluating the visual resources of the areas that could be affected by the project. The quality of views of areas that could be affected by the FRLRP is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity apparent in views and also on viewer sensitivity. Viewer sensitivity is a function of several factors, including the following:

- ▶ visibility of the landscape,
- ▶ proximity of viewers to the visual resources,
- ▶ frequency and duration of views,
- ▶ number of viewers,
- ▶ types of individuals and groups of viewers, and
- ▶ viewers' expectations.

The sensitivity of a view of the landscape is also determined by the extent of the public's concern for a particular view. Areas of high visual sensitivity are typically highly visible to the general public. Scenic highways, tourist routes, and recreation areas are considered more visually sensitive than more urbanized locations. A determination finding that a potential visual impact has significance would be based on a change in visual character as determined by the obstruction of a public view, creation of an aesthetically offensive public view, or adverse changes to objects having aesthetic significance. A viewer's distance from landscape elements plays an important role in the determination of an area's visual quality. Landscape elements are considered higher or lower in visual importance based on their position relative to the viewer. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant, and therefore visually important, it is to the viewer.

## **5.7.2 REGULATORY SETTING**

### **FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS**

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to aesthetic resources are applicable to the proposed project.

### **STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS**

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the California Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated "scenic" depending on how much of the natural landscape travelers can see, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on travelers' enjoyment of the view. There are no designated state scenic highways in the project area (California Department of Transportation 2003).

### **LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS**

The project area is located in Yuba County. There are no regulations that pertain specifically to visual resources in the project area. The general goal of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the *Yuba County General Plan* (Yuba County 1994) is "To maintain and enhance the natural resources, open space land uses and scenic beauty of Yuba County in order to protect the quality of the environment, the County's economy, and the health and well-being of present and future residents." Supporting this goal is a policy to "encourage the preservation and enhancement of the natural features of the County, including rivers and streams and their banks, mountain peaks, bluffs, areas of scenic beauty, and native vegetation."

## **5.7.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Information for this section was obtained from Volume I of the *Yuba County General Plan* (Yuba County 1994), the *Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority Phase IV Erosion Investigation* (Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority 2006), discussions with individuals with knowledge of the area, and field observations during site visits in June 2004 and May 2006.

## PROJECT SEGMENT 1

As described in Section 4.1, “Introduction,” in Chapter 4, “Description of the Proposed Project,” the Feather River levee in the project area is divided into three segments. The southernmost segment, project Segment 1, extends from Project Levee Mile (PLM) 13.3 to PLM 17.1, between Reclamation District (RD) 784 Pump Station No. 2 and Star Bend. At its northern end, Segment 1 is adjacent to the west side of Feather River Boulevard for nearly a mile, until Feather River Boulevard turns east toward SR 70. SR 70 is about 2 miles east of the project area. Figure 5.11-1, “Roads in the Vicinity of the Proposed Feather River Levee Repair Project Area,” shows local roads and highways in relation to the three project segments.

The area between Feather River Boulevard and the existing Feather River levee in project Segment 1 is rural, with few residences (Figure 5.7-1, “Views in and near Project Segment 1”). Views west toward the levee and east, from the levee, are typical of local rural areas, consisting mainly of orchards of various ages dominated by crops of walnuts, peaches, prunes, pears, and apples; scattered agricultural outbuildings and residences along Feather River Boulevard and connecting roads; disturbed areas of ruderal vegetation bordering roadways; utility poles and overhead utility lines; and the existing levee (Figure 5.7-1, Photo A). The area has little topographic variation. From Feather River Boulevard, the existing levee is visible in the middle distance where the road parallels the levee alignment and is a less evident feature of the viewshed farther south where the road runs east-west. SR 70 extends approximately parallel to the existing levee, which is located about 2 miles west of the roadway; where SR 70 approaches the Bear River, there are long-distance views across open agricultural land to the existing levee. A wide riparian corridor extends the length of project Segment 1 on the water side of the levee, and vegetation from this area is visible above the top of the levee to observers on the land side of the levee (Figure 5.7-1, Photo B). Because fewer nonagricultural elements, such as utility lines, encroach on the undeveloped rural character of views from the east below Star Bend than above Star Bend, views in Segment 1 have a higher degree of intactness and unity than those described for Segment 2 below. However, Segment 1 is visible to fewer individuals because of the sparse population within approximately 0.5 to 1 mile of this project segment and because of the orientation of Feather River Boulevard in relation to the existing levee. Therefore, these views are of low to moderate aesthetic value.

The right (west) bank Feather River levee obstructs most views of project Segment 1 from rural Sutter County to the west. Therefore, most individuals viewing Segment 1 from the west are boaters and other recreationists along the Feather River, including the Lake of the Woods unit of the Feather River State Wildlife Area (shown in Figure 5.1-1, “Conservation Areas in the Project Vicinity,” in Section 5.1, “Land Use”). From the Feather River channel, views to the east are dominated by the river channel; the corridor of mixed riparian woodland and scrub of varying width that extends the length of the levee in the project area; and the existing left (east) bank Feather River levee, which blocks ground-level views of the agricultural land on the land side of the levee. The riparian corridor is dominated by Fremont cottonwood, valley oak, ash, box elder, and sycamore trees with a shrub layer dominated by willow, buttonbush, elderberry, and coyote bush. Many trees rise above the top of the levee, and views of the levee are screened by the natural vegetation in many locations.



A. Orchards adjacent to the Feather River levee with housing development visible on the horizon. View east from the existing levee.



B. Riparian vegetation along the Feather River levee in the project area. View northwest from the existing levee.

**Views In and Near Project Segment 1**

**Figure 5.7-1**

Views of the river corridor are distinctive and moderately vivid, with the meandering river channel and riparian areas forming striking and harmonious visual elements. The channel is free from urban encroachment in project Segment 1. However, the levees on both sides of the Feather River floodway, including areas of recent repairs, abruptly limit the lateral extent of the riparian growth and detract from the natural appearance of the corridor, reminding viewers of the presence of nearby urban and agricultural areas. The views have a moderate degree of both intactness and unity. Recreationists are generally considered a sensitive viewer group, but because the number of recreationists in this area is only moderate, the sensitivity of views is moderate. Overall, the views along the existing Feather River floodway in Segment 1 are of moderate aesthetic value.

## **PROJECT SEGMENT 2**

Project Segment 2 extends approximately 6.2 miles from PLM 17.1 to PLM 23.6, from Star Bend to immediately south of Shanghai Bend (west of the Yuba County Airport). This project segment is about  $\frac{2}{3}$  mile west of Feather River Boulevard and 2.5 miles west of State Route (SR) 70 (Figure 5.11-1). Travelers on Feather River Boulevard and residents of the area between Feather River Boulevard and the existing levee would be the main viewers of the project area.

The aesthetic resources in this area are similar to those in Segment 1, except that several east-west lateral roadways connect to Feather River Boulevard in this project segment, there are more residences and other structures between Feather River Boulevard and the existing levee, and there are more utility lines. As in Segment 1, the landscape is dominated by orchards (Figure 5.7-2, "Views in and near Project Segment 2," Photo A). A few agricultural processing facilities are located in the area. Drainage canals and ponds can be found in the southern half of Segment 2. The existing levee, which is approximately 25 feet high on average, blocks views of the Feather River from the east. The tops of trees in the riparian area west of the levee are visible from some areas east of the levee (Figure 5.7-2, Photo B).

Views toward the levee from Feather River Boulevard and lands west of this roadway are neither striking nor distinctive. Because the elements of the landscape are a mixture of agricultural, agricultural industrial, residential, and utility features, the intactness and unity of the views are low to moderate. Views from the east, therefore, are generally of low to moderate aesthetic value. The existing levee is a familiar, integral part of the visual setting to the majority of regular viewers, consisting of occupants of residences in the area and commuters and other travelers on Feather River Boulevard. Views from some parts of Feather River Boulevard and the surrounding area include the levee as a background element, although in other areas, the dense growth of orchards obscures views toward the levee.

Parts of the existing levee are visible in long-distance views across open agricultural land from some areas east of Feather River Boulevard, including part of SR 70; the Yuba County Airport west of Olivehurst; rural roadways and scattered residences; and the Marysville Municipal Golf Course, approximately 1 mile east of the levee on Country Club Avenue. In many nonelevated locations east of Feather River Boulevard, long-distance views toward the levee are limited by earth berms where railroad tracks cross the area. A majority of the homes and businesses in the area are located east of the railroad tracks and have only partial views of the project area. Long-



A. Orchards and a view along Country Club Avenue near the project area. View to the east from the existing Feather River levee.



B. Riparian area and utility lines in the project area. View to the west, toward the Feather River, from the existing Feather River levee.

**Views In and Near Project Segment 2**

**Figure 5.7-2**

distance views from parts of SR 70 are also blocked by the Algodon Canal levee in addition to railroad berms.

As described for project Segment 1, the right bank Feather River levee obstructs most views of Segment 2 from rural Sutter County to the west. Most individuals viewing Segment 2 from the west would be boaters and other recreationists along the Feather River channel, including several units of the Feather River State Wildlife Area (see Figure 5.1-1). Views east from the river channel are as described above for Segment 1 and have moderate aesthetic value.

### **PROJECT SEGMENT 3**

Project Segment 3 extends approximately 2.5 miles from Feather River PLM 23.6 to PLM 26.1, between Shanghai Bend and the confluence with the Yuba River, and also includes the Yuba River left (east) bank levee from PLM 0.0 to PLM 0.3 (west of the Yuba County Airport to the railroad crossing at the SR 70 bridge). This segment is about  $\frac{1}{3}$  mile west of Feather River Boulevard and is adjacent to a railroad bridge and SR 70 at its northern terminus (Figure 5.11-1).

Travelers on Feather River Boulevard and residents of the area between Feather River Boulevard and the existing Feather River levee would be the main viewers of Segment 3.

The aesthetic resources in this project segment are somewhat similar to those in Segments 1 and 2, although the area is generally more developed. There are substantially more residences in Segment 3 (Figure 5.7-3, "Views in and near Project Segment 3," Photo A) and other structures between Feather River Boulevard and the existing levee (mostly north of the Yuba County Airport). Many of the homes and structures are adjacent to the existing levee. In addition, SR 70 and the railroad tracks cross at the northern terminus of Segment 3. Additionally, roughly  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of agricultural land lies to the west of the existing levee in the river floodway. The Yuba County Airport is east of Feather River Boulevard in the southern portion of Segment 3. As in Segment 1, undeveloped areas are dominated by orchards. RD 784 Pump Station No. 9 is located approximately in the middle of Segment 3. The existing Feather River levee, which is approximately 25 feet high on average, blocks views of the river from the east. The tops of trees in the riparian area west of the levee are visible from some areas east of the levee.

Views of project Segment 3 from Feather River Boulevard and residences east of the levee are neither vivid nor distinctive, especially at the northern end of the segment where SR 70 and the railroad tracks cross the area (Figure 5.7-3, Photo B). The elements of the landscape are a mixture of agricultural, agricultural industrial, residential, and utility features; therefore, the intactness and unity of the views and aesthetic value are low to moderate. The existing levee is a familiar, integral part of the visual setting to the majority of regular viewers, consisting of occupants of residences in the area and the commuters and other travelers on SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard. Views from some parts of Feather River Boulevard and the surrounding area include the levee as a background element, although in other areas, the dense growth of orchards obscures views of the levee and the surrounding area.



A. Residences north of the Yuba County Airport adjacent to the project area. View to the east from the existing Feather River levee.



B. SR 70 and railroad bridge adjacent to the project area. View to the north from the existing Feather River levee at the northern end of Segment 3.

**Views in and Near Project Segment 3**

**Figure 5.7-3**

Because of its proximity to south Yuba City, the section of Sutter County across the Feather River from project Segment 3 contains more residences than the sections of the county opposite Segments 1 and 2; however, as with the other segments, the right bank Feather River levee obstructs most views of Segment 3 from Sutter County. Most individuals viewing Segment 3 from the west are boaters and other recreationists along the Feather River, and from the Feather River channel, views toward this project segment to the east are dominated by the river channel and riparian woodland. Views of the river corridor are distinctive and moderately vivid, with the meandering river channel and riparian areas forming striking and harmonious visual elements. The channel is generally free from urban encroachment along Segment 3, except for the northern portion near SR 70 and the railroad tracks. The views have a moderate degree of both intactness and unity. Recreationists are generally considered a sensitive viewer group, but because the number of recreationists in this area is only moderate, the sensitivity of views is moderate. (Refer to Section 5.6, “Recreation,” for a discussion of the level of recreational uses within the project area.) Overall, the views along the existing Feather River floodway are of moderate aesthetic value.

#### 5.7.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

##### THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thresholds for determining the significance of impacts related to aesthetic resources were based on the environmental checklist form in Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (State CEQA Guidelines). A project alternative would have a significant impact on aesthetic resources if it would:

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

There are no designated state scenic highways in the project area (California Department of Transportation 2003); therefore, the second significance threshold does not apply to the FRLRP.

##### IMPACT ANALYSIS

#### Alternative 1 – The Levee Strengthening Alternative

Impact  
LS-5.7-a

**Temporary Changes in Visual Resources Associated with Levee Repairs.** Levee repair and strengthening activities would temporarily reduce the aesthetic qualities of views by introducing earthmoving equipment and other construction equipment, materials, and work crews into the viewshed of recreationists, motorists on SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard, workers in nearby farming areas, and residents of the area. However, the construction areas would typically be distant from and/or screened from most viewers. Where

residents would be near the construction area (e.g., in project Segment 3), construction would pass by these areas relatively quickly and changes in aesthetic conditions would be short term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

Primary construction activities under FRLRP Alternative 1 would be repairing the existing levee in place to improve seepage and stability issues, constructing a detention basin in the detention basin/soil borrow area east of Star Bend, transporting borrow material from this area to the levee repair areas, and relocating Pump Station No. 3. These activities would require the use of various types of equipment and a crew generally of 50–60 persons, with as many as 100 at the peak of construction. A total volume of about 1.6 million cubic yards of borrow would be moved to the levee repair areas in about 80,000 haul unit trips (fewer if loads larger than about 20 cubic yards are possible). This transport of material would take place over two 6- to 9-month levee construction seasons (approximately April through November). The relocation of Pump Station No. 3 in project Segment 2 would entail the use of similar equipment over a relatively short period.

The presence and movement of heavy construction equipment and construction-related generation of dust would have the potential to temporarily degrade the existing visual character and/or quality of the area. Most viewers of the construction corridor, particularly in project Segments 1 and 2, would be recreationists on the west side of the existing Feather River levee, travelers along SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard, workers in nearby farming areas, and occupants of scattered residences between Feather River Boulevard and the existing levee. In Segment 3 many of those viewing the construction area would be residents in nearby homes. Of these groups, recreationists and residents are considered the most sensitive to aesthetic qualities. Recreationists' views of the construction corridor from the western end of the Feather River floodway would be screened or partially screened by the riparian corridor in all three project segments. Recreational use areas also extend along the Feather River to the north and south of this area, so recreationists could move away from areas close to visual disturbance to areas where construction activities would not encroach on the viewshed.

Many views from the land side of the construction corridor, including those from residences, would be largely screened by orchard trees, other vegetation, and structures. However, in project Segment 3 there are several locations where residences are adjacent to the eastern (landside) toe of the levee, and construction activities would be clearly visible from these vantage points. The total duration of construction activity in Segments 1 and 3 would be approximately 6–7 months. Construction activity in Segment 2 would also last approximately 8–9 months, but would take place in the year following the completion of activities in Segments 1 and 3. Levee repair work would typically move linearly down levee segments, with construction activities in any one location lasting from several days to no more than several weeks. Therefore, where construction activities would be clearly visible from nearby residences, the activity would be short term and temporary.

For the reasons listed above, project construction would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This impact would be less than significant.

**Impact  
LS-5.7-b**

**Changes in Light and Glare.** There would be no substantial long-term sources of light or glare associated with levee repairs. However, equipment staging areas may be temporarily lit at night during construction, and portions of the construction areas may also need to be lit at night. Although such nighttime lighting may be visible from various residences, particularly in project Segment 3, in most locations views of the construction areas would be largely shielded by orchards, other vegetation, and structures. Where lit construction areas are visible, lighting would be short term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

There would be no substantial long-term sources of light or glare associated with levee repairs. However, equipment staging areas may be temporarily lit for security reasons during construction, and portions of the levee repair areas may need to be lit if levee construction needs to take place at night. In most of the project area, particularly in Segments 1 and 2, construction-related lighting would not be visible from any residences or other potentially sensitive vantage points. There are no residences in some parts of the project area, and where residences do exist, construction areas would be screened by orchards, other vegetation, or structures. However, in Segment 3 there are several locations where residences are adjacent to the eastern (landside) toe of the levee; if construction were to take place at night, construction lighting would be clearly visible from these vantage points. The total duration of construction activity in Segment 3 would be approximately 6–7 months. Levee repair work would typically move linearly down the levee segment, with construction activities in any one location lasting from several days to no more than several weeks. Therefore, where nighttime construction lighting (if needed) would be clearly visible from nearby residences, the activity would be short term and temporary.

For the reasons listed above, nighttime lighting related to project construction would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. This impact would be less than significant.

**Impact  
LS-5.7-c**

**Long-Term Modifications of Views from Levee Repairs.** Levee repair and strengthening activities would not dramatically change the appearance of the project area, which is of low to moderate aesthetic value. There would be no substantial adverse effect on any scenic vista, and these repairs would not substantially alter the general character of views of the area. This impact would be **less than significant**.

Levee repair and strengthening activities would not substantially alter the visual character of the project area and its surroundings. The area would remain rural, and the project components—levees, wells, and drainage features—are common elements of views of the area. Existing views of the project area from the east (i.e., Feather River Boulevard and residences) generally lack vividness, given the flatness of the terrain and lack of distinctive features. Overall views have moderate unity and intactness, given their consistently rural agricultural character and the occasional presence of overhead utility lines and scattered industrial facilities mixed with crops and rural residences in the viewshed. The riparian growth along the floodway adds to the quality of these views. Repairing the levee would not alter the composition or character of elements in this viewshed, nor would it substantially alter the general landscape, which itself is not of high aesthetic value. Levee repairs could include use of stabilization elements such as soil cement, cobbles, and buried riprap and would include the construction of seepage/stability berms. These repairs would add new elements to the existing levee; however, the aesthetic impact of the repairs would be minimal because the construction specifications of the existing levee would remain similar and because the overall structure represents a homogenous visual landscape. The

levee would still be a background element in views from most vantage points and would still be screened from many views by orchard and riparian growth.

The soil borrow site/detention basin could occupy as much as approximately 150 acres of land east of Feather River Boulevard that is currently in agricultural use. The exact size and location would be determined in final design. Because of the flat terrain in the project area, the basin would not be highly visible from the roadway, although a long edge parallel to the roadway could present a noticeable discontinuity in the otherwise agricultural appearance of the area. The sides and bottom of the basin would be vegetated with grasses, lessening any adverse effect on the viewshed.

The proposed levee repair and strengthening and related activities associated with Alternative 1 would not adversely affect a scenic vista and would not have a substantial adverse effect on the character or quality of views of the area. This impact would be less than significant.

### Alternative 2 – The Levee Strengthening and ASB Setback Levee Alternative

Impact  
ASB-5.7-a

**Temporary Changes in Visual Resources Associated with Levee Repairs and Setback Levee Construction.** Levee repair and strengthening activities and construction of the ASB setback levee would temporarily reduce the aesthetic qualities of views by introducing earthmoving equipment and other construction equipment, materials, and work crews into the viewshed of recreationists, motorists on SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard, workers in nearby farming areas, and residents of the area. However, the construction areas would typically be distant from and/or screened from most viewers. Where residents would be near the construction area (e.g., in project Segment 3), construction would pass by these areas relatively quickly and changes in aesthetic conditions would be short term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

Temporary aesthetic impacts on project Segments 1 and 3 would be the same as in Impact LS-5.7-a, described under Alternative 1 above. However, because Segment 2 includes the construction of the ASB setback levee, additional aesthetic effects would result under Alternative 2, as described below.

The major components of ASB setback levee construction in project Segment 2 would be the removal of most of the existing levee, excavation of borrow areas between the setback levee alignment and the Feather River and/or east of Star Bend, transport of material from these sources to the setback levee alignment, construction of a detention basin in the area east of Star Bend, preparation of the setback levee foundation, and construction of the setback levee. New temporary-access haul roads would be needed to transport borrow across orchard land. The construction activities would require the use of various types of equipment such as scrapers, graders, and hydraulic excavators and a crew generally of 60–70 persons, with as many as 100 at the peak of construction. A total volume of about 3.1 million cubic yards of borrow would be moved across the levee setback area to the ASB setback levee alignment in about 155,000 haul unit trips (fewer if loads larger than about 20 cubic yards are possible). This transport of material would take place during an approximately 7- to 9-month (April through November) construction season for project Segment 2 (see Section 4.4.3, “Alternative 2—Construction,” and Section 4.6.1, “Implementation Schedule,” in Chapter 4, “Description of the Proposed Project,” regarding the construction schedule).

The presence and movement of heavy construction equipment and construction-related generation of dust could temporarily degrade the existing visual character and/or quality of the area. Most viewers of the construction area associated with project Segment 2 would be recreationists on the west side of the existing Feather River levee, travelers along SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard, workers in nearby farming areas, and occupants of scattered residences between Feather River Boulevard and the proposed ASB setback levee alignment. Of these groups, recreationists and residents are considered the most sensitive to aesthetic qualities. Recreationists' views of the construction activities would consist primarily of the removal of segments of the existing Feather River levee. Views from the western end of the Feather River floodway would be screened or partially screened by the riparian corridor there. Recreational use areas also extend along the Feather River to the north and south of this area, so recreationists could move away from areas close to visual disturbance to areas where construction activities would not encroach on the viewshed. Many views from the land side of the construction corridor would be largely screened by orchard trees.

The total duration of construction activity (construction of the levee foundation, the levee embankment, and the detention basin) in project Segment 2 would be about 17 months. Construction activity would be less during the winter months based on weather, regulatory guidelines, and other factors. Construction activity would not be continuous in any particular area during the 17-month construction period. The levee foundation may be constructed along a segment for several weeks, then construction could cease in that area for several months until the beginning of embankment construction or another activity. As the levee embankment is built, activity would occur at various times up and down the approximately 5.9-mile-long alignment. Therefore, close-up views of major construction activity in any given area along the ASB setback levee alignment in Segment 2 would be short term and temporary.

For the reasons listed above, project construction would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This impact would be less than significant.

**Impact  
ASB-5.7-b**

**Changes in Light and Glare.** There would be no substantial sources of light or glare associated with levee repairs or with the long-term presence of the ASB setback levee and detention basin. However, equipment staging areas may be temporarily lit at night during construction, and portions of the construction areas may also need to be lit at night. Although such nighttime lighting may be visible from various residences, particularly in project Segment 3, in most locations views of the construction areas would be largely shielded by orchards, other vegetation, and structures. Where lit construction areas are visible, lighting would be short term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

Aesthetic effects on project Segments 1 and 3 associated with the temporary use of construction lighting would be the same as in Impact LS-5.7-b, described under Alternative 1 above. However, because Alternative 2 includes the construction of the ASB setback levee and a detention basin in project Segment 2, potential aesthetic impacts associated with light and glare in Segment 2 are described below.

There would be no substantial sources of light or glare associated with the long-term presence of the ASB setback levee and detention basin in project Segment 2. However, equipment staging areas may be temporarily lit for security reasons during construction, and portions of the

construction areas may need to be lit if activities need to take place at night. However, views of staging areas and the construction areas associated with Segment 2 would be largely shielded by orchards, other vegetation, and structures. Homes and other sensitive viewpoints are few and dispersed in the Segment 2 area; therefore, few individuals would be able to see nighttime construction lighting. If nighttime lighting were required, its use would be short term and temporary as construction proceeds along various portions of the construction area.

For the reasons listed above, nighttime lighting related to project construction would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. This impact would be less than significant.

Impact  
ASB-5.7-c

**Long-Term Modifications of Views from Levee Repairs and Installation of the Setback Levee.** Levee repair and strengthening activities would not dramatically change the appearance of project Segments 1 and 3. Construction of the ASB setback levee would change the appearance of Segment 2. However, all three project segments are of low to moderate aesthetic value, there would be no substantial adverse effect on any scenic vista, and these changes would not substantially alter the general character of views of the area. This impact would be **less than significant**.

Long-term modifications of views of project Segments 1 and 3 resulting from levee repair and strengthening activities would be the same as in Impact LS-5.7-c, described under Alternative 1 above. However, because Alternative 2 includes the construction of the ASB setback levee and an associated detention basin in project Segment 2, additional effects on aesthetic resources would result under this alternative, as described below.

Construction of the ASB setback levee and the associated detention basin would change the long-term appearance of project Segment 2, which is rural/rural residential. As noted in Impact LS-5.7-c, the proposed detention basin would occupy land east of Feather River Boulevard and north of Algodon Road that is currently in agricultural use. Because of the flat terrain, the basin would not be highly visible from most vantage points. Its side and bottom surfaces would be vegetated with grasses, lessening any adverse effect on the viewshed.

The levee setback and the associated changes in land use would alter both the area's scenic vistas and its scenic resources; however, these effects would not be substantial. There are no historic buildings or state or local scenic highways located near the setback levee alignment. The largest viewing populations of the ASB setback levee would be travelers along SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard just west of SR 70. These viewers would have transitory and primarily obstructed views of the setback levee and levee setback area and are not considered a sensitive viewer group. Orchards obscure much of the view of the existing and proposed levee alignments; therefore, implementation of the levee setback would have only a minor effect on views.

In general, the proposed levee repair and strengthening activities, levee setback, and detention basin construction would not adversely affect a scenic vista and would not have a substantial adverse effect on the character or quality of views of the area. This impact would be less than significant.

### Alternative 3 – The Levee Strengthening and Intermediate Setback Levee Alternative

**Impact  
IS-5.7-a**

**Temporary Changes in Visual Resources Associated with Levee Repairs and Setback Levee Construction.** Levee repair and strengthening activities and construction of the intermediate setback levee would temporarily reduce the aesthetic qualities of views by introducing earthmoving equipment and other construction equipment, materials, and work crews into the viewshed of recreationists, motorists on SR 70 and Feather River Boulevard, workers in nearby farming areas, and residents of the area. However, the construction areas would typically be distant from and/or screened from most viewers. Where residents would be near the construction area (e.g., in project Segment 3), construction would pass by these areas relatively quickly and changes in aesthetic conditions would be short term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

The intermediate setback levee alignment under this alternative would be west of the ASB setback levee alignment under Alternative 2 (Figure 4-1, “Project Features,” in Chapter 4, “Description of the Proposed Project”). Temporary changes to visual resources would be essentially the same for either setback levee alignment; therefore, this impact would be the same as Impact ASB-5.7-a, described under Alternative 2 above. For the same reasons as described above, this impact would be less than significant.

**Impact  
IS-5.7-b**

**Changes in Light and Glare.** There would be no substantial long-term sources of light or glare associated with levee repairs or with the long-term presence of the intermediate setback levee and detention basin. However, equipment staging areas may be temporarily lit at night during construction, and portions of the construction areas may also need to be lit at night. Although such nighttime lighting may be visible from various residences, particularly in project Segment 3, in most locations views of the construction areas would be largely shielded by orchards, other vegetation, and structures. Where lit construction areas are visible, lighting would be short-term and temporary. For these reasons, this impact would be **less than significant**.

The intermediate setback levee alignment under this alternative would be west of the ASB setback levee alignment under Alternative 2 (Figure 4-1). Temporary short-term increases in light and glare during project construction would be essentially the same for either setback levee alignment; therefore, this impact would be the same as Impact ASB-5.7-b, described under Alternative 2 above. For the same reasons as described above, this impact would be less than significant.

**Impact  
IS-5.7-c**

**Long-Term Modifications of Views from Levee Repairs and Installation of the Setback Levee.** Levee repair and strengthening activities would not dramatically change the appearance of project Segments 1 and 3. Construction of the intermediate setback levee would change the appearance of Segment 2. However, all three project segments are of low to moderate aesthetic value, there would be no substantial adverse effect on any scenic vista, and these changes would not substantially alter the general character of views of the area. This impact would be **less than significant**.

The intermediate setback levee alignment under this alternative would be west of the ASB setback levee alignment under Alternative 2 (Figure 4-1). Moderate changes to views within the project area where levees would be strengthened or set back would be essentially the same for either setback levee alignment; therefore, this impact would be the same as Impact ASB-5.7-c, described under Alternative 2 above. For the same reasons as described above, this impact would be less than significant.

### **5.7.5 MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### **ALTERNATIVE 1 – THE LEVEE STRENGTHENING ALTERNATIVE**

No mitigation is required for Impacts LS-5.7-a, LS-5.7-b, and LS-5.7-c.

#### **ALTERNATIVE 2 – THE LEVEE STRENGTHENING AND ASB SETBACK LEVEE ALTERNATIVE**

No mitigation is required for Impacts ASB-5.7-a, ASB-5.7-b, and ASB-5.7-c.

#### **ALTERNATIVE 3 – THE LEVEE STRENGTHENING AND INTERMEDIATE SETBACK LEVEE ALTERNATIVE**

No mitigation is required for Impacts IS-5.7-a, IS-5.7-b, and IS-5.7-c.

### **5.7.6 IMPACTS REMAINING SIGNIFICANT AFTER MITIGATION**

All impacts of the three proposed project alternatives on aesthetic resources would be less than significant.