

### 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures

#### 3.15 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

##### 3.15.1 Introduction

Section 3.15, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, of this *Merced to Fresno Section: Central Valley Wye Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* (Final Supplemental EIR/EIS) updates the *Merced to Fresno Section Final EIR/EIS* (Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS) (California High-Speed Rail Authority [Authority] and Federal Railroad Administration [FRA] 2012) with new and revised information relevant to parks, recreation, and open space analyzes the potential impacts of the No Project Alternative and the Central Valley Wye alternatives, and describes impact avoidance and minimization features (IAMF) that would avoid, minimize, or reduce these impacts. Where applicable, mitigation measures are proposed to further reduce, compensate for, or offset impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. Section 3.15 also defines the parks, recreation, and open-space resources within the region and describes the affected environment in the resource study area (RSA).

The analysis presented in this section is consistent with analysis conducted in the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS. Both analyses used the same methods of data collection through a review of regional and local plans and policies, outreach to local planning organizations, and the use of geographic information system (GIS) databases. Where information has changed or new information has become available since the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS was prepared in 2012, the analysis in this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS uses the updated versions of these sources or datasets. Relevant portions of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS that remain unchanged are summarized and referenced in this section but are not repeated in their entirety.

The *Merced to Fresno Section: Community Impact Assessment Technical Report* (Community Impact Assessment Technical Report) (Authority and FRA 2012b) provides additional detail on parks, recreation, and open space. This technical report is available via the Authority's website: [https://www.hsr.ca.gov/programs/environmental/eis\\_eir/draft\\_supplemental\\_merced\\_fresno.aspx](https://www.hsr.ca.gov/programs/environmental/eis_eir/draft_supplemental_merced_fresno.aspx).

Parks, recreation, and open space are important considerations in analyzing the impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives because of their influence on a community's quality of life. Seven other resource sections in this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS provide additional information related to parks, recreation, and open space:

- **Section 3.2, Transportation**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on community facilities associated with road closures
- **Section 3.3, Air Quality and Global Climate Change**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on schools and other community facilities from dust and other air emissions
- **Section 3.4, Noise and Vibration**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on community facilities from noise and vibration
- **Section 3.11, Safety and Security**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on the safety and security of parks, recreation, and open space
- **Section 3.12, Socioeconomics and Communities**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives from acquisition and displacement of community facilities
- **Section 3.16, Aesthetics and Visual Quality**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on visual quality of parks, recreation, and open space
- **Chapter 4, Final Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Evaluations**—Impacts of constructing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on parklands and recreational properties subject to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, commonly referred to as Section 4(f),

and Section 6(f) of Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, commonly referred to as Section 6(f).

### **Definition of Resources**

The following are definitions for parks, recreation, and open space resources analyzed in this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS. These definitions are the same as those used in the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2012a).

- **Parks**—Parks refers to publicly owned properties set aside for recreational use by the public and maintained in a natural or landscaped state. A park is sometimes a large area of land with grass and trees, sports fields or courts, and/or play equipment, with accessory amenities like parking, water fountains, and restrooms, which are maintained for public use and enjoyment.
- **Recreation**—Recreation is a pastime, diversion, exercise, or other activity affording relaxation and enjoyment. Areas used for recreation generally include the following: public parks and open spaces, including greenbelts, pedestrian and bicycle trails, playfields, and school district play areas available for public use during non-school hours.
- **Open Space**—Open space is any open piece of land that is undeveloped and accessible to the public. Open space is generally green space or an area that is partially covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation, and does not contain buildings or other built structures.

Since publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, there have been no substantive changes to this section, beyond the global issues described at Section S.1.2, Global Changes in the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS, of the Summary.

## **3.15.2 Laws, Regulations, and Orders**

This section identifies laws, regulations, and orders that are relevant to the analysis of parks, recreation, and open space in this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS. Also provided are summaries of new or updated laws, regulations, and orders that have occurred since publication of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS.

### **3.15.2.1 Federal**

The following federal laws, regulations, and orders, are the same as those described in Section 3.15.2, Laws, Regulations, and Orders, of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2012a: pages 3.15-1 through 3.15-4):

- Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 303)
- Section 6(f) Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (PL 88-578, 16 U.S.C. §§ 4601-4-4601-11)

### **3.15.2.2 State**

The following state laws, regulations, and orders are the same as those described in Section 3.15.2 of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2012a: pages 3.15-4 through 3.15-5):

- California Public Park Preservation Act (California Public Resources Code §§ 5400-5409)
- California Department of Fish and Game Ecological Reserves (Cal. Fish and Game Code § 1580 et seq., California Code of Regulations, title 14, Division 1, Chapter 11, § 630)

### **3.15.2.3 Regional and Local**

The following regional and local laws, regulations, orders, and plans are the same as those described in Section 3.15.2 of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2012a: page 3.15-5):

- *Madera County General Plan*, Section 4, Recreational and Cultural Resources (Madera County 1995)

- *City of Merced Park and Open Space Master Plan* (City of Merced 2004)
- City of Merced Municipal Code

The remainder of this section describes new or updated regional and local laws, regulations, and orders.

**General Plan Policies and Ordinances**

Table 3.15-1 lists the county and city general plans, policies, and objectives relevant to the Central Valley Wye alternatives. Refer to Section 3.15.2.3, Regional and Local, of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS for more information.

**Table 3.15-1 Local Plans and Policies**

Policy Title	Summary
<b>Merced County</b>	
<p><i>2030 Merced County General Plan, Part II, Recreation and Cultural Resources Element</i> (2013b)</p>	<p>Merced County adopted the <i>2030 Merced County General Plan</i> on December 10, 2013, updating the previous version of the general plan that was included in Section 3.15.2.3 (page 3.15-5) of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS. The general plan includes the following goals and policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Goal RCR-1: Preserve, enhance, expand, and manage Merced County’s diverse system of regional parks, trails, recreation areas, and natural resources for the enjoyment of present and future residents and park visitors.</li> <li>▪ Policy RCR-1.1: Encourage the continuation and expansion of existing public recreation land uses, including, but not limited to, public beaches, parks, recreation areas, wild areas, and trails.</li> <li>▪ Policy RCR-1.3: Encourage a minimum of 3 acres of either neighborhood, community, or regional parkland per each 1,000 persons in the County by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Working with other agencies and private interests to provide for adequate neighborhood, community, and regional parkland and facilities.</li> <li>b. Actively participating in the planning of projects that have regional recreation benefits.</li> <li>c. Encouraging and supporting local agency efforts to achieve their objectives for providing local parklands. All local providers should seek to provide at least 3 acres of parkland for each 1,000 persons.</li> <li>d. Actively seeking available regional, state, and federal grant funds for acquiring, developing, and maintaining regional parks.</li> <li>e. Encouraging and supporting other public agencies and private groups in the development of recreation facilities that are consistent with the 2030 Merced County General Plan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>▪ Policy RCR-1.6: Require buffering between non-recreational land uses and sensitive public recreation lands through site design and other techniques when the non-recreational land use may significantly impact recreational lands.</li> <li>▪ Policy RCR-1.10: Develop pedestrian, bike, and equestrian</li> </ul>

Policy Title	Summary
	<p>trails along the Merced River.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policy RCR-1.11: Encourage the use of regional parks and open-space areas as a mechanism to preserve the county's natural scenic beauty and protect land for public purposes.</li> </ul>
Merced County Code of Ordinances (2013a)	<p>Merced County Code of Ordinances include titles for building and construction, including building codes, and zoning, including performance standards. The ordinances also include construction site requirements for the maintenance of public facilities. Specifically, these ordinances include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Title 16 Building and Construction, Chapter 16, Section 16.52.010 (2009) provides that in order to implement the goals and objectives of the Merced County General Plan and to mitigate impacts caused by new development within Merced County, public facilities fees are necessary. The fees are needed to finance public facilities and to assure that new development pays its fair share for these improvements.</li> <li>▪ Title 7, Chapter 5, Sections 66000 et seq. of the California Government Code provides that public facilities fees may be enacted and imposed on development projects. The Merced County Board of Supervisors finds and determines that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New development projects cause the need for construction, expansion, or improvement of public facilities within Merced County.</li> <li>2. Funds for construction, expansion, or improvement of public facilities are not available to accommodate needs caused by development projects, which results in inadequate public facilities within Merced County.</li> </ol> </li> <li>▪ The board of supervisors finds that the public health, safety, peace, morals, convenience, comfort, prosperity, and general welfare will be promoted by the adoption of public facilities fees for construction, expansion, or improvement of public facilities.</li> <li>▪ Failure to enact public facility fees will subject county residents to conditions perilous to their health and safety. (Ord. 1641 § 1, 2000).</li> </ul>
City of Merced, <i>Merced Vision 2030 General Plan</i> , Chapter 7, Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation (City of Merced 2016)	<p>The City of Merced adopted the <i>Merced Vision 2030 General Plan</i> on January 3, 2012, which was included in Section 3.15.2.3 (page 3.15-5) of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS. In 2016, the City of Merced amended Chapter 7 Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation of the general plan. The amended general plan contains the following relevant policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ OS-3.1 Provide high-quality park and open space facilities to serve the needs of a growing population.</li> <li>▪ OS-3.3 Maintain the City's existing high-quality open space facilities.</li> <li>▪ OS-4.1 Preserve open space areas which are necessary to maintaining public health and safety.</li> </ul>

Policy Title	Summary
<b>Madera County</b>	
Madera County Code of Ordinances (2013)	<p>Madera County Code of Ordinances include titles for building and construction, including open-space regulations. Specifically, these include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Title 14 Buildings and Construction, Chapter 14.50 Grading and Erosion Control</li> <li>▪ Title 18 Zoning, Chapter 18.50 OS-Open Space District</li> <li>▪ Title 18 Zoning, Chapter 18.52 POS-Public Open Space District</li> </ul>
<b>City of Chowchilla</b>	
<i>City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan, Land Use Element (2011a)</i>	<p>An earlier City of Chowchilla General Plan was included in Section 3.15.2.3 (page 3.15-5) of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS but a new one has since been adopted—the <i>City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan</i>. The City of Chowchilla adopted the new general plan on May 2, 2011, and it includes the following objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Objective LU 16: To provide for an integrated recreation facility in cooperation with the Chowchilla Water District and private property owners to utilize Berenda Reservoir, Ash Slough, and Berenda Slough as a recreational and open-space trail system.</li> </ul>
City of Chowchilla Municipal Code, Chapter 12.24, Chowchilla City Parks (2012)	<p>City of Chowchilla Ordinances include defining the city’s park designation and regulations. Specifically, these ordinances include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12.24.010: Defines the “City park” designation and outlines regulations that govern their use</li> </ul>

Source: Merced County, 2013a, 2013b; Madera County, 2013; City of Chowchilla, 2011a, 2012; City of Merced, 2016

### 3.15.3 Compatibility with Plans and Laws

As indicated in Section 3.1.5.3, Compatibility with Plans and Laws, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations<sup>1</sup> require a discussion of inconsistencies or conflicts between a proposed undertaking and federal, state, regional, or local plans and laws. As such, this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS describes the inconsistency of the Central Valley Wye alternatives with federal, state, regional, and local plans and laws to provide planning context.

There are a number of federal and state laws and implementing regulations, listed in Section 3.15.2.1, Federal, and Section 3.15.2.2, State, that relate to the protection of parks, open space, and other recreation facilities. A summary of the federal and state requirements considered in this analysis follows:

- Federal and state laws that provide protections for public parks and open-space resources to avoid loss or diminishment of these public resources.
- State law that establishes areas as ecological reserves and establishes protections for resources in these areas.

<sup>1</sup> NEPA regulations refer to the regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality located at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508.

The Authority, as the NEPA and CEQA lead agency proposing to construct and operate the high-speed rail (HSR) system, is required to comply with all federal and state laws and regulations and to secure all applicable federal and state permits prior to initiating construction on the selected alternative. Therefore, there would be no inconsistencies between the Central Valley Wye alternatives and these federal and state laws and regulations.

The Authority is a state agency and therefore is not required to comply with local land use and zoning regulations; however, it has endeavored to design and construct the HSR project so that it is compatible with land use and zoning regulations. For example, the Central Valley Wye alternatives would be designed to maintain access to existing parks, recreation, and open-space facilities during and after construction (PK-IAMF#1, Parks, Recreation and Open Space). A total of nine regional and local plans and ordinances were reviewed. The Central Valley Wye alternatives would be consistent with eight plans and ordinances and inconsistent with one local policy within the following local plan:

- **City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan**—Objective LU 16. The Central Valley Wye alternatives would be inconsistent with Objective LU 16 because they would cross Ash Slough or Berenda Slough, which could impede development of a future trail system identified in the general plan.

The inconsistency with the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* would be reconciled through application of mitigation measure PK-MM#1, Design Features to Allow for Future Development of Trails at the Slough Crossings. PK-MM#1 would establish crossings for future recreational trails at Ash and Berenda Sloughs, thereby avoiding any impediments to the development of a future trail system along the sloughs. With implementation of this mitigation measure, the Central Valley Wye alternatives would not be inconsistent with any local plans or policies.

### 3.15.4 Methods for Evaluating Impacts

The evaluation of impacts on parks, recreation, and open space is a requirement of NEPA and CEQA. The following sections summarize the RSA and the methods used to analyze impacts on parks, recreation, and open-space resources. Chapter 4 discusses Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) evaluations for publicly owned lands of a public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historical site of national, state, or local significance as determined by the federal, state, regional, or local officials having jurisdiction over the resource.

#### 3.15.4.1 Definition of Resource Study Area

As defined in Section 3.1, Introduction, RSAs are the geographic boundaries in which the environmental investigations specific to each resource topic were conducted. The RSA for direct and indirect impacts on parks, recreational facilities, and open space includes the project footprint for each of the Central Valley Wye alternatives, plus 1,000 feet from the proposed track centerline and 1,000 feet from any roadway construction or new/modified electrical infrastructure required to implement the Central Valley Wye alternatives. The 1,000-foot distance for the RSA was selected because parks, recreation, and open space resources located within this distance from the tracks and construction work areas could experience the direct or indirect impacts from construction and operation of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. In areas where an existing transportation corridor separates parks, school district play areas, recreational facilities, and open space from components of the Central Valley Wye alternatives, the 1,000-foot distance for the RSA for direct impacts does not extend beyond these transportation rights-of-way because they provide a barrier to potential direct impacts on parks and recreation resources. The RSA for indirect impacts on parks, recreational facilities, and open space relating to visual quality, noise, and air quality may not be limited by the existing transportation corridors, and therefore the RSA for indirect impact extends the full 1,000 feet of the track centerline, roadway construction, or new/modified electrical infrastructure.

Table 3.15-2 provides a general definition and boundary definition for the parks, recreation, and open space RSA. Figure 3.15-1 depicts the RSA and the locations of parks, recreation, and open-space resources within the RSA.



**Table 3.15-2 Definition of Parks, Recreation, and Open-Space Resource Study Area**

Source	General Definition	RSA Boundary Definition
<b>Parks, Recreation, and Open Space</b>		
Construction and Operations	Parks, recreation, and open-space resources within the project footprints of the Central Valley Wye alternatives and in the vicinity of the HSR alignment reasonably expected to experience physical changes (direct impacts) and visual quality, noise, and air quality impacts (indirect impacts).	The project footprints of the Central Valley Wye alternatives, plus 1,000 feet from the proposed track centerline and 1,000 feet from any roadway or electrical infrastructure construction required to construct and operate the Central Valley Wye alternatives.

Source: Authority, 2018

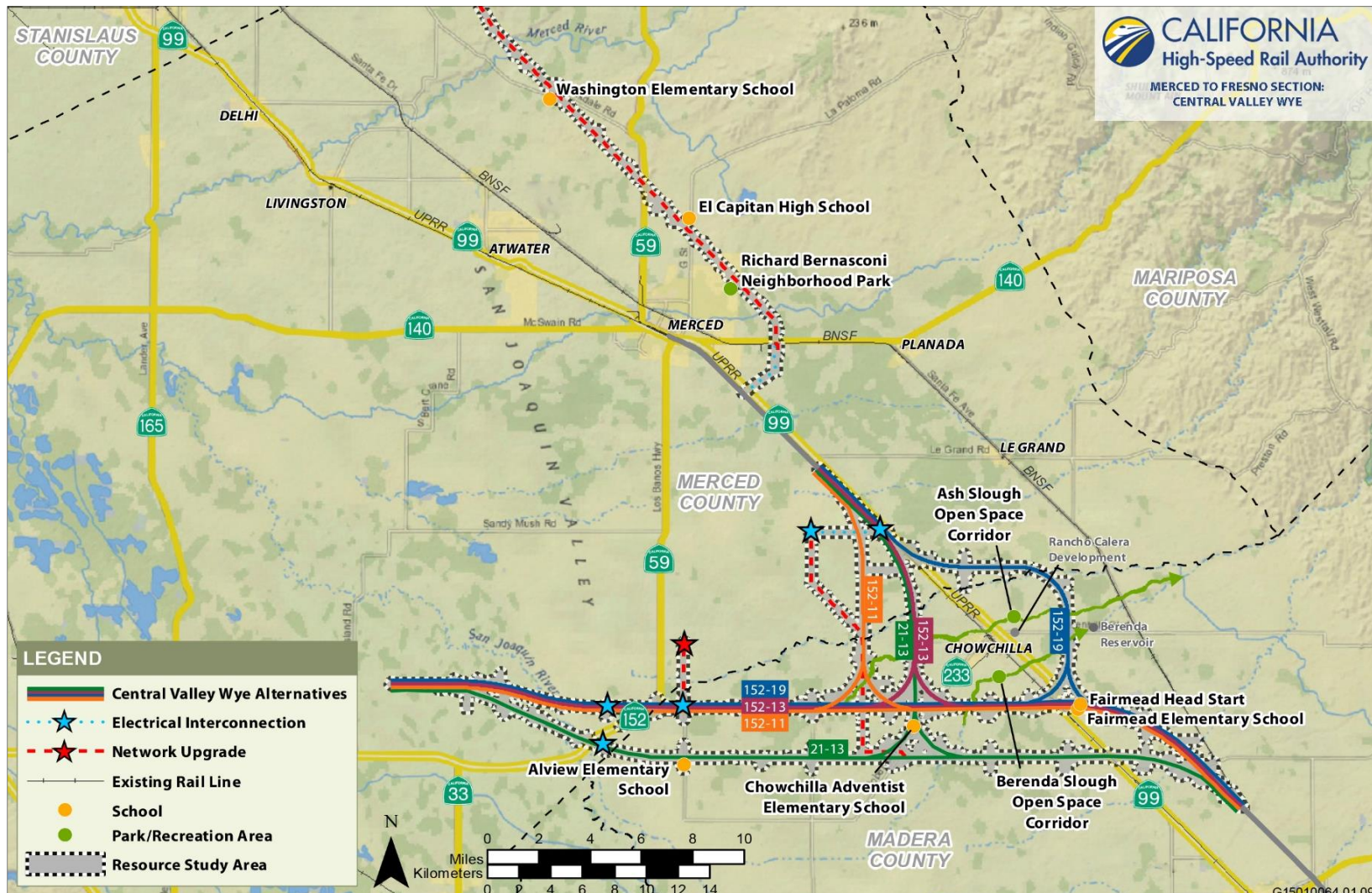
### 3.15.4.2 Impact Avoidance and Minimization Features

As noted in Section 2.2.3.7, Impact Avoidance and Minimization Features, the Central Valley Wye alternatives would incorporate standardized IAMFs to avoid and minimize impacts. The Authority would incorporate IAMFs during project design and construction, and, as such, the analysis of the impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives in this section factors in all applicable IAMFs. Appendix 2-B, California High-Speed Rail: Impact Avoidance and Minimization Features, provides a detailed description of IAMFs that are included as part of the Central Valley Wye alternatives design. IAMFs applicable to parks, recreation, and open-space resources include:

- PK-IAMF#1, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- NV-IAMF#1, Noise and Vibration
- AQ-IAMF#1, Fugitive Dust Emissions
- TR-IAMF#2, Construction Transportation Plan
- TR-IAMF#4, Maintenance of Pedestrian Access
- TR-IAMF#5, Maintenance of Bicycle Access
- TR-IAMF#7, Construction Truck Routes
- TR-IAMF#8, Construction during Special Events

### 3.15.4.3 Methods for NEPA and CEQA Impact Analysis

This section describes the sources and methods the Authority used to analyze potential impacts from implementing the Central Valley Wye alternatives on parks, recreation, and open space. These methods apply to both NEPA and CEQA unless otherwise indicated. Refer to Section 3.1.5.4, Methods for Evaluating Impacts, for a description of the general framework for evaluating impacts under NEPA and CEQA. As described in Section 3.15.1, Introduction, and in the following discussions, the Authority has applied the same methods and many of the same data sources from the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS to this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS. Refer to the Community Impact Assessment Technical Report (Authority and FRA 2012b) for more information regarding the methods and data sources used in this analysis. Laws, regulations, and local planning documents (see Section 3.15.2, Laws, Regulations, and Orders) that regulate parks, recreation, and open space were also considered in the evaluation of direct and indirect impacts on parks, recreation, and open-space resources.



Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a; Merced County Assessor Office, 2016; City of Merced, 2016

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Figure 3.15-1 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Resource Study Area



Analysts collected information on parks, recreation, and open space resources through review of the plans and policies referenced in Section 3.15.2.3, Regional and Local, written and telephone correspondence with local jurisdictions including school districts, and the use of GIS data sources to identify parks, recreation, and open space resources in the RSA. Only parks and recreational facilities open to the public were considered in the analysis. Schools that contained play areas and other recreational facilities, such as sports fields or running tracks, were also included in this analysis if they were available for public use outside of school hours. Refer to Chapter 4 for a discussion of methods for impact analysis and the consultation efforts for Section 4(f) and Section 6(f).

The parks, recreation, and open space analysis in Section 3.15, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2012a; pages 3.15-1 through 3.15-51) was also reviewed to compare the resources identified and impacts disclosed. The boundaries for parks, recreation, and open space properties in the RSA were obtained from the cities, counties, state, and federal government agencies in GIS data format and in their adopted plans.

Analysts used the following methods to evaluate potential direct and indirect impacts from construction on parks, recreation, and open space:

- GIS spatial analysis identified the distance of parks, recreation, and open space resources from the Central Valley Wye alternatives, and facilities and functions that could be temporarily and permanently affected during construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives.
- Analysis of the design and location of Central Valley Wye alternative elements determined whether the Central Valley Wye alternatives could create any barriers to park access and use or change access and parking at parks, recreation, and open-space areas.
- Analysis of proposed construction rights-of-way determined whether there could be temporary changes to access or reduced parking at parks, recreation, and open-space areas.
- Evaluation of temporary construction easement locations and general construction activity identified the potential to disrupt established community and visitor use of parks, recreation, and open space resources.

Analysts used the following methods to evaluate potential direct and indirect impacts from operations on parks, recreation, and open space:

- GIS spatial analysis and review and analysis of the other Final Supplemental EIR/EIS sections, including Section 3.2, Section 3.3, Section 3.4, and Section 3.16, to determine any indirect impacts on parks, recreation, and open space resources as a result of operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives through changes in visual quality, noise, and air quality.
- Analysis of potential safety impacts on parks, recreation, and open space resources associated with the operation of the Central Valley Wye alternatives.

#### **3.15.4.4 Determining Significance under CEQA**

CEQA requires that an EIR identify the significant environmental impacts of a project (CEQA Guidelines § 15126). One of the primary differences between NEPA and CEQA is that CEQA requires a significance determination for each impact using a threshold-based analysis (see Section 3.1.5.4 for further information). By contrast, under NEPA, significance is used to determine whether an EIS will be required; NEPA requires a federal lead agency to prepare an EIS when the proposed federal action (project) as a whole has the potential to “significantly affect the quality of the human environment.” Accordingly, Section 3.15.9, CEQA Significance Conclusions, summarizes the significance of the environmental impacts on parks, recreation, and open-space resources for each Central Valley Wye alternative. The Authority is using the following thresholds to determine if a significant impact on parks, recreation, and open-space resources would occur as a result of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. Under CEQA, a significant impact is one that would:

- Prevent the use of an established or planned park, recreation, or open space.

- Acquire an open space resource that would result in a diminished capacity to use that resource or a substantially reduced value of that resource.
- Create a physical barrier (or a perceived barrier) to the access to or established use of any park, recreation, or open-space areas.
- Result in acquisition of a recreation resource that would result in a diminished capacity to use the resource for specific and defined recreational activities.
- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreation facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- Result in the physical alteration of the existing facilities or a need to provide new parks or other recreation facilities—the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts—to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives.

### 3.15.5 Affected Environment

This section describes the affected environment for parks, recreation, and open space resources in the RSA, including parks, school play areas, recreation facilities, and open space. It also discusses changes to parks, recreation, and open space in the San Joaquin Valley since publication of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS. This information provides the context for the environmental analysis and evaluation of impacts.

Figure 3.15-1 shows the locations of parks, recreation, and open space resources within the RSA of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. Table 3.15-3 identifies the parks, recreation, open-space resources, and school district play areas and recreation facilities available for public use during non-school hours that are within the parks, recreation, and open space RSA. Some resources depicted on Figure 3.15-1 are not available for public use and are therefore not included in Table 3.15-3.

#### Open-Space Corridors

Berenda Slough and Ash Slough are soft-bottom water diversion facilities designated as open space under the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a). The intent of this land use designation is to develop a future integrated trail connection between the city of Chowchilla and the Berenda Reservoir along these sloughs. The extent of the planned open-space corridors along the sloughs, as identified in the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan*, are depicted on Figure 3.15-1. Figure 3.15-2 through Figure 3.15-6 display the locations where the Central Valley Wye alternatives cross the sloughs. The sloughs receive water from the Chowchilla River that is then transported to irrigation networks within the agricultural areas south and west of the city of Chowchilla. Currently, neither slough serves a recreational purpose, and they are both dry at different times of the year. The Berenda Reservoir, approximately 1.7 miles east of the parks, recreation, and open space RSA, has several recreational uses, including picnic areas, boating, and swimming, that would be served by the planned trail developments along Berenda and Ash Sloughs. In addition, future park or recreational uses are envisioned by the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a) at various locations along Berenda Slough.

Although no formal recreational use is supported within the open-space areas, pedestrians can currently access the sloughs at various points along their lengths. Pedestrian movement in the open-space areas is generally unimpeded with intermittent and informal paths or along the bed of the sloughs. Seasonally, when there is no water in the slough, pedestrians can freely utilize the open-space area; however, during periods when water is present, pedestrian travel along the sloughs is impeded at several locations, such as at the Union Pacific Railroad crossings that parallel Chowchilla Boulevard, and at the Road 19 crossing of Berenda Slough. The planned Rancho Calera Development, approximately 1 mile west of the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, includes potential park features along the planned Ash Slough open-space corridor, and General Plan Objective LU 16 calls for an integrated recreation facility utilizing the Berenda Reservoir, Ash Slough, and Berenda Slough as a recreational and open space trail system (City of Chowchilla 2011a).

**Table 3.15-3 Parks, Recreation, and Open-Space Resources Available for Public Use in the Resource Study Area**

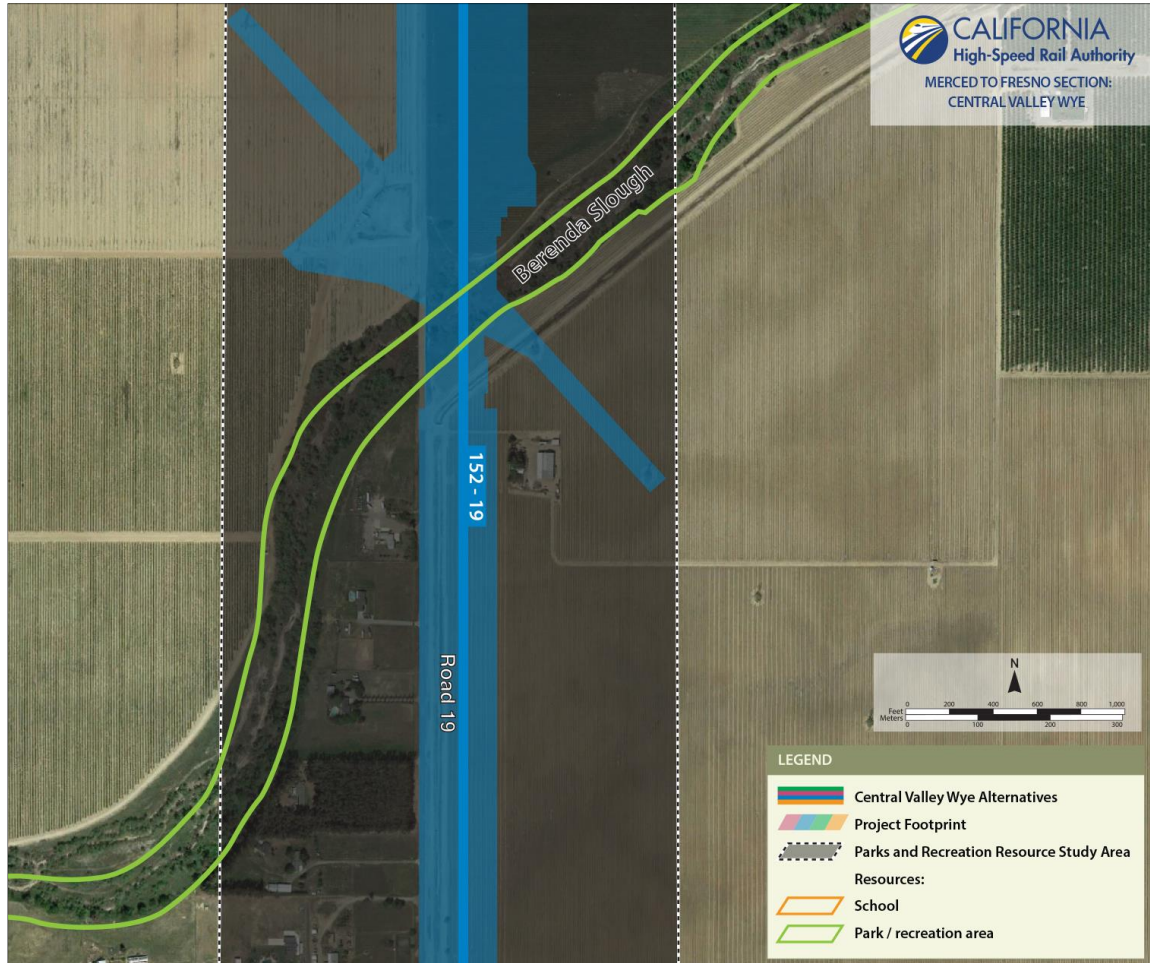
Resource Name	Owner	Amenities	Total Size	Central Valley Wye Alternative				Distance
				SR 152 (North) to Road 13	SR 152 (North) to Road 19	Avenue 21 to Road 13	SR 152 (North) to Road 11	
Berenda Slough	Chowchilla Water District	Water diversion slough designated as open space	6 linear miles <sup>1</sup>	X	X		X	Alternatives would cross Berenda Slough
Ash Slough	Chowchilla Water District	Water diversion slough designated as open space	8.9 linear miles <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X	Alternatives and Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Wilson–Dairyland (idle) 115 kV Power Line would cross Ash Slough
Fairmead Elementary School	Chowchilla Elementary School District	Elementary school play areas	4.3 acres	X	X		X	Alternatives are within 1,000 feet of this resource
Washington Elementary School	Merced River School District	Elementary school play areas	2 acres		X			Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line is within 1,000 feet of this resource
El Capitan High School	Merced Union High School District	High school play areas	28 acres		X			Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line is within 1,000 feet of this resource
Richard Bernasconi Park	City of Merced	Play areas and picnic tables	6.5 acres		X			Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line is within 1,000 feet of this resource

Source: City of Chowchilla, 2011b; City of Merced, n.d.; Fresno County, 2000; Fresno County Assessor Office, 2015; Madera County Assessor Office, 2015; Martin, 2015; Merced County, 2013b, 2013c, 2014; Stanislaus County, 2016; Stanislaus County Assessor Office, 2016

X = Resource is potentially affected by the Central Valley Wye alternative.

SR = State Route

<sup>1</sup> Includes only the portions of the Ash and Berenda Sloughs within the parks, recreation, and open space resource study area.

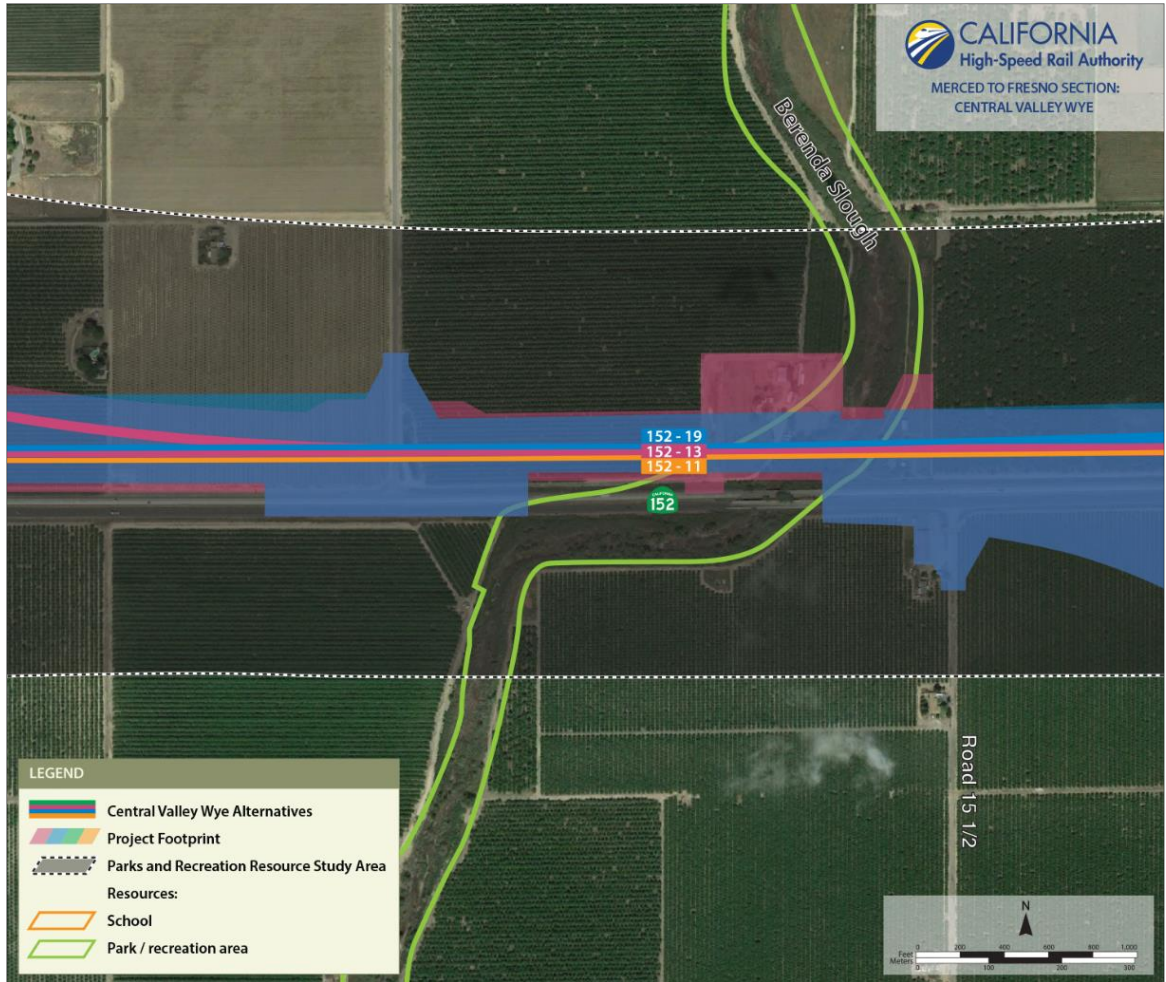


Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a

AUGUST 15, 2017

**Figure 3.15-2 Berenda Slough at Road 19**

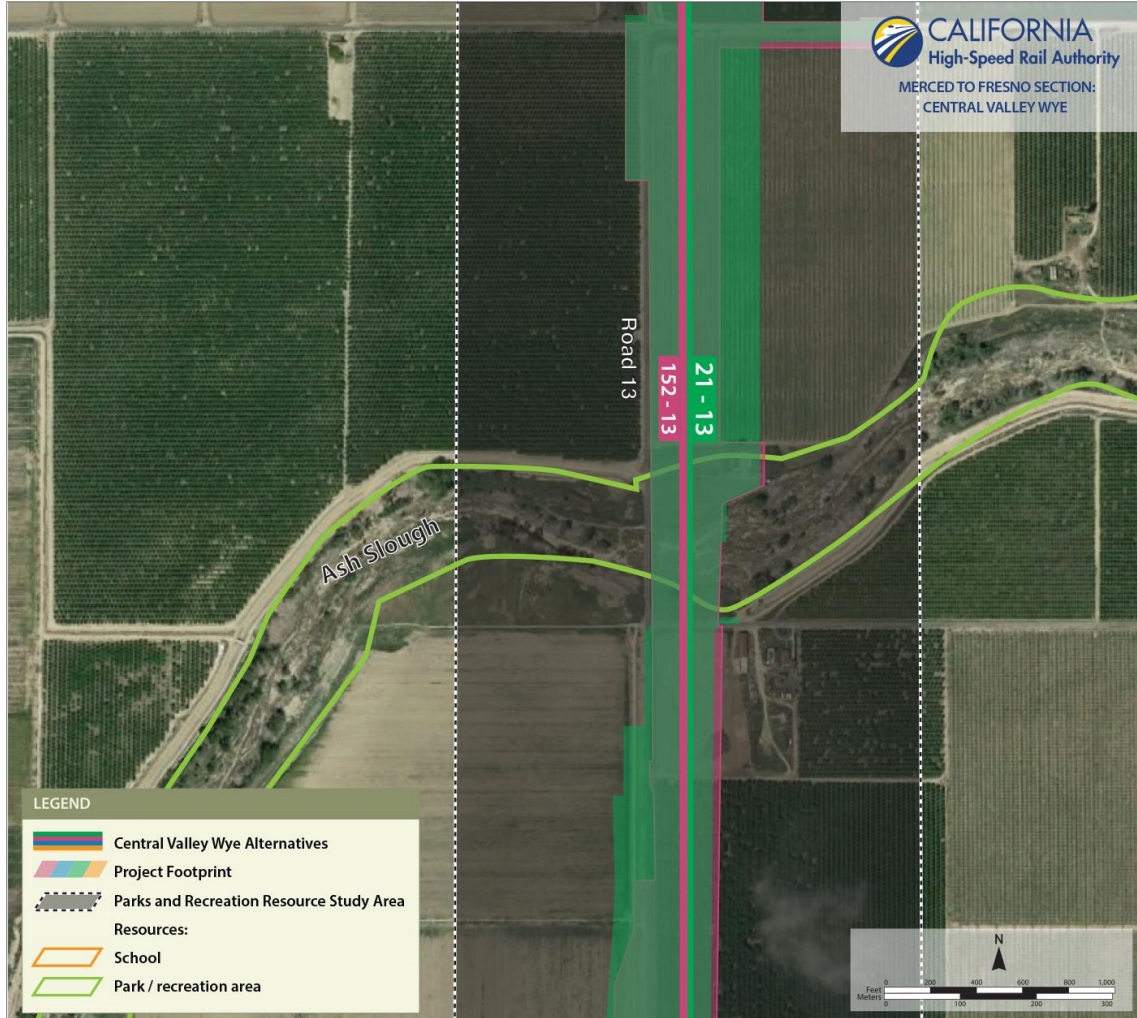




Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a

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**Figure 3.15-3 Berenda Slough at State Route 152**

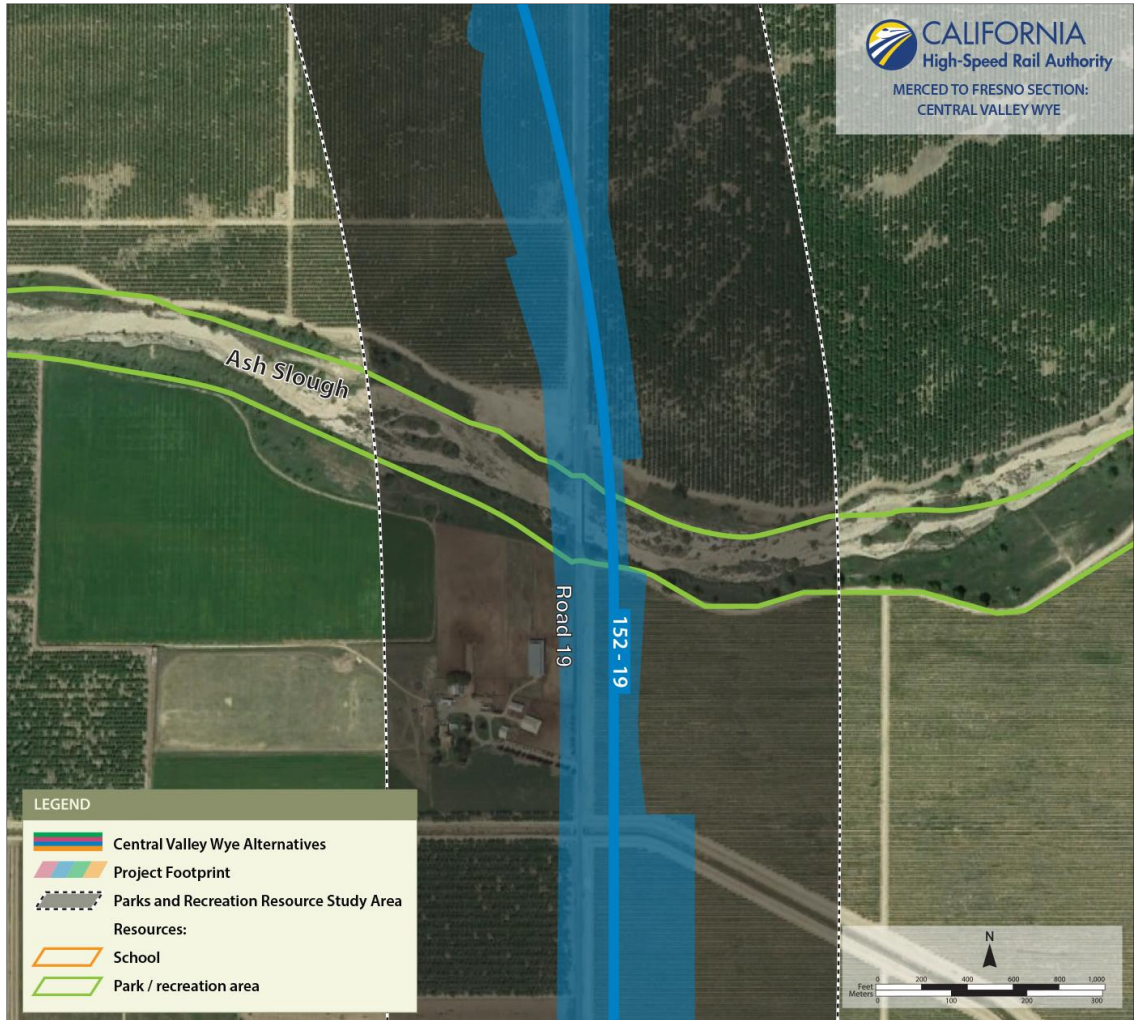


Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a

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**Figure 3.15-4 Ash Slough at Road 13**

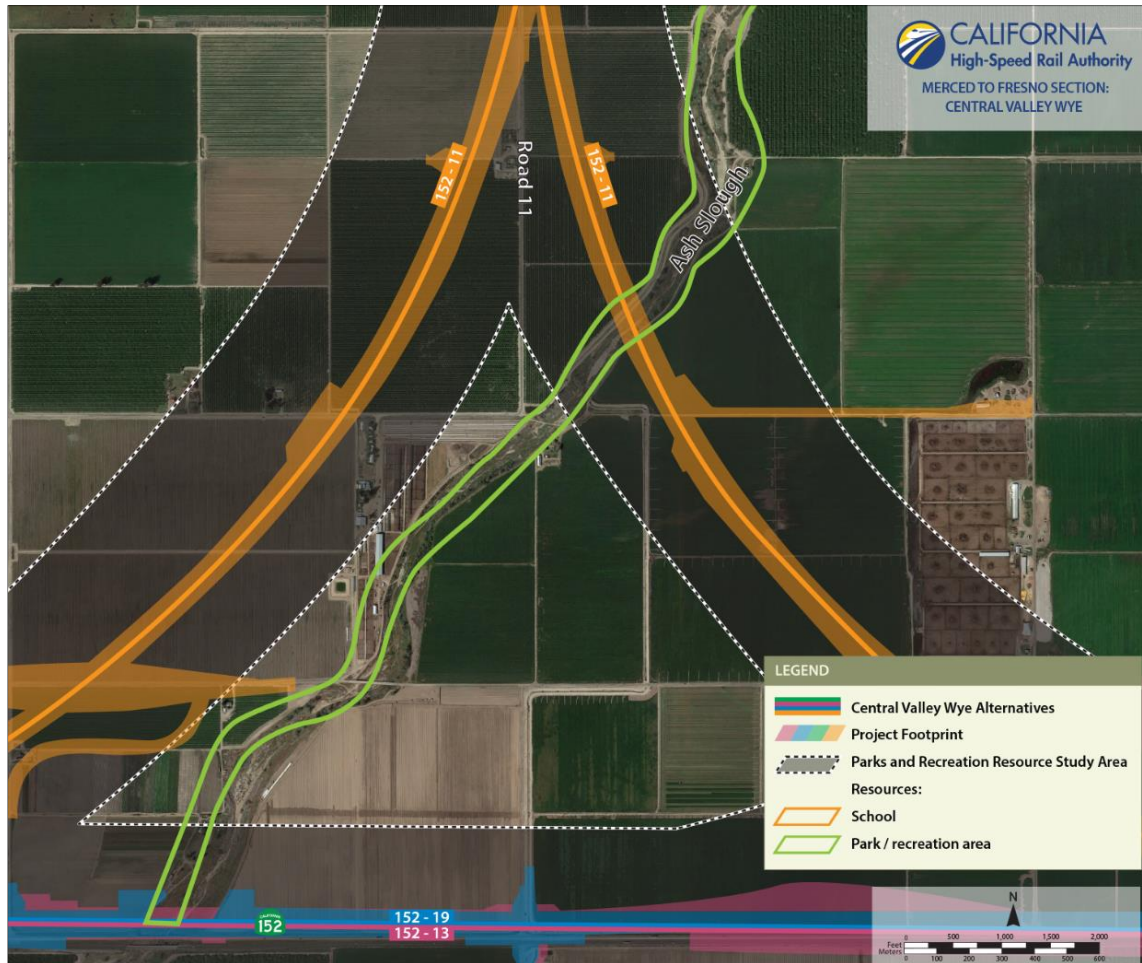




Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a

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**Figure 3.15-5 Ash Slough at Road 19**



Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015; City of Chowchilla, 2011a

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**Figure 3.15-6 Ash Slough at SR 152**

The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, and the SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative are located within 1,000 feet of Berenda and Ash Sloughs. Ash Slough is also located within the RSA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, but Berenda Slough is outside the RSA. Additionally, the Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Wilson—Dairyland (idle) 115 kV Power Line alignment associated with the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, currently spans Ash Slough.

### School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities

Areas for public recreation also are available within the RSA at public schools and parks. For more information on the schools in the vicinity of the Central Valley Wye alternatives, please refer to Section 3.12. One private school, Chowchilla Seventh-day Adventist School, is within the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative parks, recreation, and open space RSA; Chowchilla Seventh-day Adventist School is not located within the RSA of the other alternatives. Chowchilla Seventh-day Adventist School is a private school and does not offer public play areas or recreational facilities, and is therefore not included in this analysis. Similarly, Alview Elementary School contains a school district play area within the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative



parks, recreation, and open space RSA,<sup>2</sup> but this school district play area is not open to the public and therefore is not included in this analysis (Romeri 2018).

The Fairmead Head Start Childcare Center is a private daycare center located in the RSA of the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives. This facility does not offer public play areas or recreational facilities and therefore is not included in this analysis (Rodriguez 2017).

### ***Fairmead Elementary School***

Fairmead Elementary School, at the northeast corner of Maple Street and Avenue 22 3/4, is within the Chowchilla Elementary School District (Figure 3.15-7). The school's play areas consist of a centralized playground, a paved recreation area, two basketball courts, and a grassy open space. The centralized playground and paved area are fenced and not accessible to the public; however, the two basketball courts and grassy field are available for public use outside of school hours and on weekends.

The public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School would be located 410 feet (measured from the edge of the school property line) from the project footprint of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative and 460 feet from the project footprints of the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternatives. The distance of the centerline of the alternatives (where the HSR trains would operate) would be located 780 feet from the play areas under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative and 850 feet from the play areas under the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternatives. Fairmead Elementary School is not within the RSA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative.

The Section 4(f) evaluation provided in Chapter 4 discusses this resource and the potential for the Central Valley Wye alternatives to result in "use" of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas.

### ***Washington Elementary School***

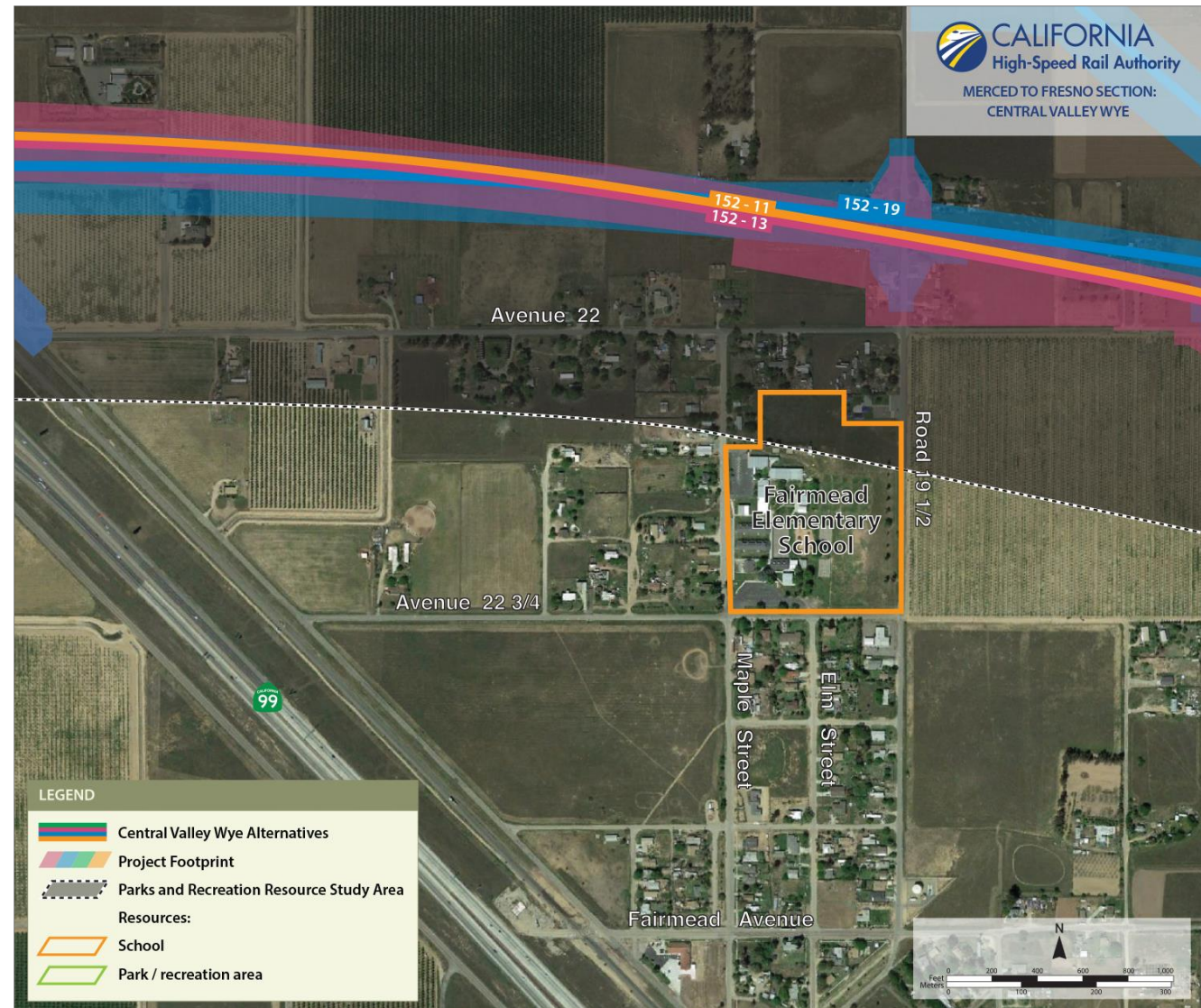
Washington Elementary School is located at 4402 W. Oakdale Road in Winton, CA (Figure 3.15-8). The school's recreation facilities consist of a soccer/football field and two baseball diamonds. These facilities are available for public use outside of school hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. weekdays) and on weekends with a joint-use agreement (Lopez 2016).

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, specifically a structure work area associated with the Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville—Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line, would be located approximately 450 feet from the outdoor field areas of the Washington Elementary School. Washington Elementary School is not within the RSA for SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, or SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative.

The Section 4(f) evaluation provided in Chapter 4 does not discuss this resource because there would be no direct or constructive use effects.

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<sup>2</sup> The Alview Elementary School is within 1,000 feet of the proposed grade separation at Avenue 21 and Lincoln Road and is therefore within the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative parks, recreation, and open space RSA.

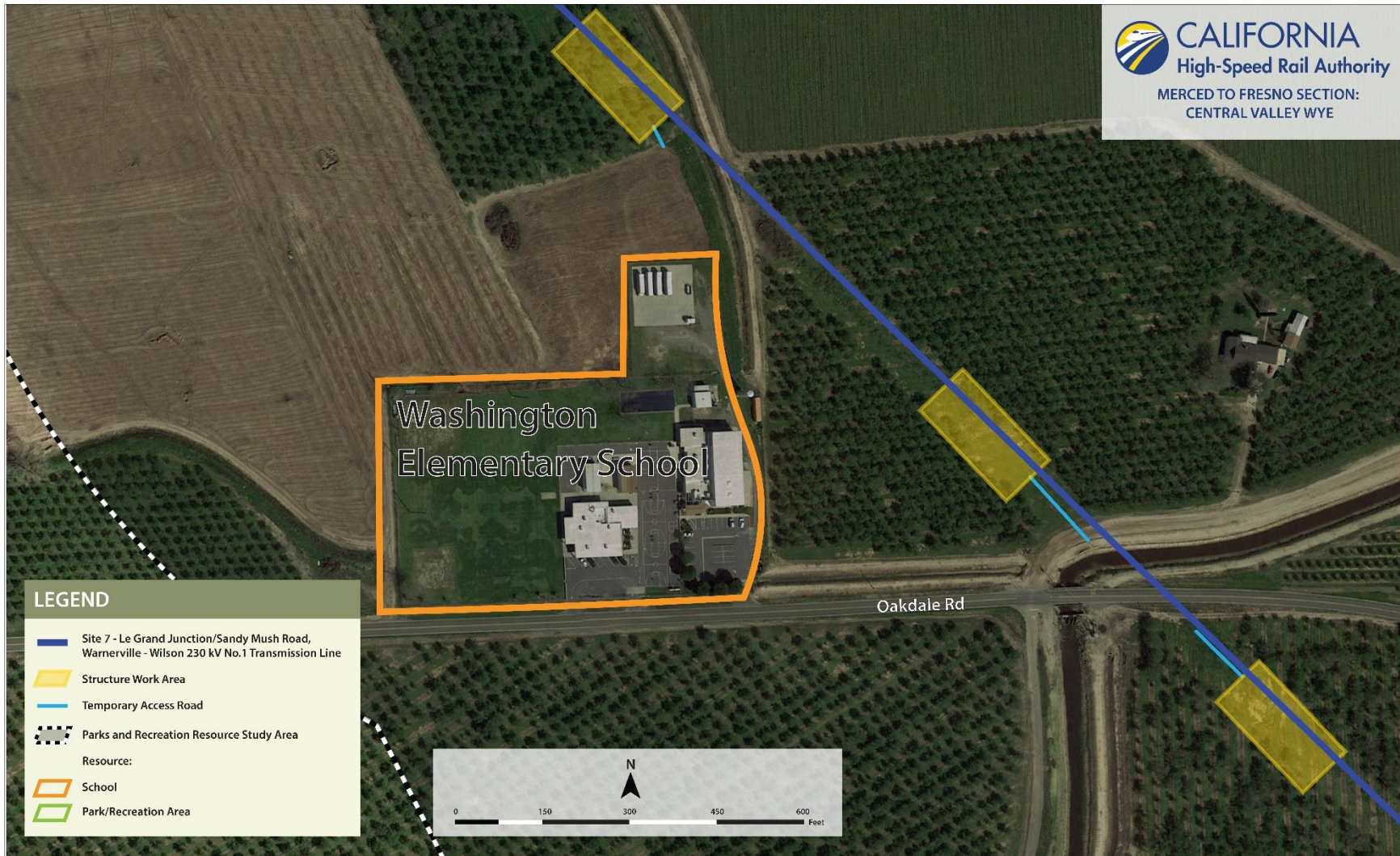


Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2015

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**Figure 3.15-7 Fairmead Elementary School**





Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2016

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Figure 3.15-8 Washington Elementary School

### ***El Capitan High School***

El Capitan High School is located at 100 Farmland Avenue in Merced, CA (Figure 3.15-9). The school's recreation facilities include basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, a swimming pool, soccer and baseball fields, and track and field amenities. These amenities are available for public use outside of school hours (7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. weekdays) and on weekends with a joint use agreement. There is currently a joint use agreement between the school and the City of Merced for use of one of the two gymnasiums (Olson 2016). The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, specifically a structure work area associated with the Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line, would be located approximately 200 feet from the baseball field of the El Capitan High School. El Capitan High School is not within the RSA for SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, or SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternatives.

The Section 4(f) evaluation provided in Chapter 4 does not discuss this resource because there would be no direct or constructive use effects.

### ***Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park***

Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park is located at 3770 De Soto Way in Merced (Figure 3.15-10). The publicly owned park, operated by the City of Merced Park and Community Services, includes a playground, baseball fields, basketball courts, and picnic tables. The park is open to the public from sunrise to sunset daily (Segura 2016).

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, specifically two structure work areas, a pull and tension site, and helicopter landing zone associated with the Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line, would be located approximately 860, 900, 840, and 600 feet, respectively from the Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park facilities. Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park is not within the RSA for SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, or SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternatives.

The Section 4(f) evaluation provided in Chapter 4 does not discuss this resource because there would be no direct or constructive use effects.



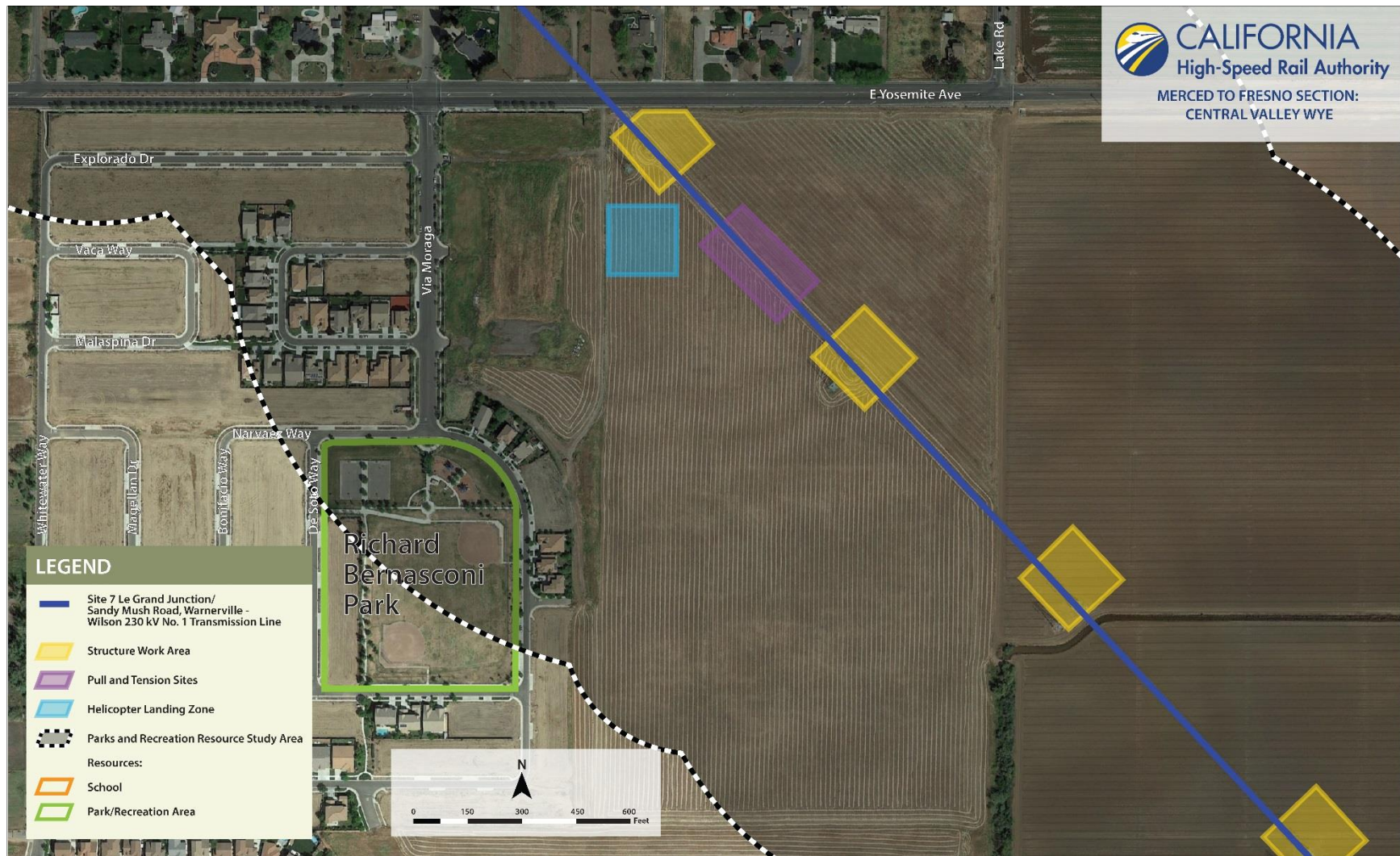


Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2016

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Figure 3.15-9 El Capitan High School





Source: ESRI, 2013; CAL FIRE, 2004; ESRI/National Geographic, 2015; Google Earth, 2016

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Figure 3.15-10 Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park

### 3.15.6 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.15.6.1 Overview

This section evaluates how the No Project Alternative and the Central Valley Wye alternatives could affect parks, recreation, and open-space resources. The impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives are described and organized in Section 3.15.6.3, Central Valley Wye Alternatives, as follows:

#### Construction Impacts

##### *Open Space Corridors*

- Impact PK#1: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor
- Impact PK#2: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Ash Slough Open-Space Corridor

##### *School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities*

- Impact PK#3: Temporary Impacts from Noise and Dust on School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities
- Impact PK#4: Access to School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities

#### Operations Impacts

##### *Open Space Corridors*

- Impact PK#5: Visual Change and Noise Impacts on Open Space Areas

##### *School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities*

- Impact PK#6: Changes to the Character of School Play Areas and Park Facilities
- Impact PK#7: Visual Change and Noise Impacts at School Play Areas and Park Facilities

#### 3.15.6.2 No Project Alternative

The population of the San Joaquin Valley is expected to grow through 2040 (see Section 2.2.2.2, Planned Land Use). Development in the San Joaquin Valley to accommodate the population increase would continue under the No Project Alternative and result in associated direct and indirect impacts on parks, recreation, and open space resources. Such planned projects that are anticipated to be constructed by 2040 include residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, transportation, and agricultural projects. Regional and local land-use plans contain provisions for funding, acquiring, and maintaining public parks and recreation facilities that would adequately meet the needs of future planned population growth (see Section 3.15.2.3). Accordingly, no increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreation facilities, such as the Fairmead Elementary School play areas, would occur such that physical deterioration of the play areas would accelerate.

As described in Section 3.15.5, Affected Environment, there are six parks, recreation, and open space resources available for public use in the RSA (see Table 3.15-3). The Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, Fairmead Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, and El Capitan High School include publicly accessible play areas. Berenda Slough and Ash Slough are designated open space and are planned for future trail development pursuant to the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a). Use of these public recreation areas is expected to increase under the No Project Alternative as a result of population growth.

Future development projects in Merced and Madera Counties include dairy farm expansions, implementation of airport development and land-use plans, and implementation of general and specific plans throughout both counties. Planned projects under the No Project Alternative would also include recreational bike/pedestrian trail construction. A full list of anticipated future development projects is provided in Appendix 3.19-A, Cumulative Plans and Non-Transportation

Projects List, and Appendix 3.19-B, Cumulative Transportation Projects Lists. The residential and commercial growth expected in and around the city of Chowchilla, as described in the Introduction and Land Use sections of the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (pages I-1 through L-69) (City of Chowchilla 2011b), is anticipated to increase demand on existing parks, recreation, and open space resources. New park and recreational facilities proposed for future development in regional and local land-use plans are anticipated to adequately meet the demand of population growth and maintain established service ratios.

Under the No Project Alternative, recent development trends are anticipated to continue, leading to impacts on parks, recreation, and open space resources. The demand for parks, recreation, and open space would increase as a result of increased population from newly planned development. Planned park and recreational developments would help to relieve the strain on existing facilities and minimize impacts on parks, recreation, and open space resources.

### 3.15.6.3 Central Valley Wye Alternatives

Construction and operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives could result in temporary and permanent impacts on parks, recreation, and open spaces. Impacts could potentially include disrupted future trail development near Ash Slough and disrupted future trail development near the Berenda Slough. The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative could reduce access to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas and alter the visual rural character at the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. Temporary impacts from noise and dust associated with construction activities could affect recreational activity and user experience at school play areas and recreational resources within the RSA.

#### Construction Impacts

Construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would involve, for example, demolition of existing structures; clearing and grubbing; handling, storing, hauling, excavating, and placing fill; possible pile driving; and construction of aerial structures, bridges, road modifications, utility upgrades and relocations, HSR electrical systems, and railbeds. Construction activities are further described in Chapter 2, Alternatives.

#### Open-Space Corridors

Ash Slough and Berenda Slough are considered in this analysis only as planned recreational areas. Direct physical impacts on the future recreational corridors or their setting from construction, are not considered because the recreational trail facilities would be developed after construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives.

#### Impact PK#1: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor

The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would cross Berenda Slough at the same location approximately 1 mile south of the city of Chowchilla. The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would cross Berenda Slough a second time approximately 1 mile east of Chowchilla. The Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative would not cross Berenda Slough.

One of the primary stated purposes of the future trail corridor along Berenda Slough in the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a) is to connect the city of Chowchilla to the Berenda Reservoir, which is located east of the city. The crossings of Berenda Slough south of the city by the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would have limited potential to disrupt the continuity of a future trail between the city and the reservoir because these crossings would be constructed south of the city of Chowchilla. The portions of Berenda Slough that would be crossed south of the city are in areas identified for more dense development under the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a). While it is reasonably foreseeable that the planned trail corridor along Berenda Slough could be developed south of the city, any disruptions to the trail to the south of the city would not diminish the corridor's value as a trail link



between the city and Berenda Reservoir. As a result, while this crossing could result in some impacts on Berenda Slough, by placing a physical barrier across the slough south of the city that could restrict trail development in that area, it would not affect the stated purpose of the trail corridor to connect the city to Berenda Slough or reduce the value of the open-space resource.

In addition to the crossing south of the city, the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would cross Berenda Slough between the city of Chowchilla and Berenda Reservoir, east of the city. The potential impact on the future development and use of the planned trail corridor would be greater than the crossings south of the city because the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would bisect the necessary connection between the city and the reservoir. This crossing could affect the future development and use of the planned trail corridor along Berenda Slough by acting as a physical barrier that could impede the trail system's development between its two primary destinations.

Although impacts on access to the Berenda Slough open-space corridor would be minimized through design measures that provide access to parks and recreational facilities (PK-IAMF#1), the impacts on the future use and development of the recreational trail corridor remain. The construction of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would impede development of the vital trail link between the city and Berenda Reservoir, potentially diminishing or preventing the use of the planned trail system.

#### **CEQA Conclusion**

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative because they would not prevent the use of the future trail system between the city of Chowchilla and Berenda Reservoir. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

The impact under CEQA would be significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative because construction of the alternative across Berenda Slough east of the city of Chowchilla would impede the use of the planned recreational trail corridor in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor. The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would be designed to provide access to parks and recreational facilities that would minimize but not avoid the potential impacts on the development and use of the planned recreational trail corridor. The Authority would implement mitigation measure PK-MM#1, which would involve installation of an undercrossing below HSR tracks at Berenda Slough. The undercrossing would be designed with a minimum clearance of 14.5 feet and width of 12 feet, which would be sufficient to allow for development of a future recreational trail. With implementation of PK-MM#1, the impact under CEQA would be less than significant because the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would not prevent the use of the planned recreational trail in the Berenda Slough open-space corridor.

There would be no impact under CEQA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative because it would not cross the Berenda Slough open-space corridor.

#### **Impact PK#2: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Ash Slough Open-Space Corridor**

The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would cross Ash Slough west of the city of Chowchilla, and the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would cross Ash Slough to the east of the city of Chowchilla. Additionally, a network upgrade to an existing power line associated with the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would continue to span Ash Slough southwest of the city of Chowchilla. The City of Chowchilla has identified Ash Slough as an open-space corridor with a plan to develop the corridor into a recreational trail to connect the city to recreational facilities at Berenda Reservoir to the east of the city (City of Chowchilla 2011a). The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would have limited potential to disrupt the continuity of a future trail between the city and the reservoir because these alternatives would be constructed to the west of the city of Chowchilla. The primary purpose of the corridor is to provide a link between the city and the reservoir to the east. Limiting the corridor development potential to the west of the city would not diminish the corridor's value as a trail link between the city and Berenda Reservoir. As a result, while this crossing could result in some impacts

on Ash Slough because of the diminished capacity to develop the corridor, it would not reduce the value of the open-space resource because of the location of the crossing.

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, which would cross Ash Slough to the east of the city of Chowchilla, could impede development of the future trail connection to Berenda Reservoir. This could pose greater impacts than those associated with the crossing of Ash Slough west of Chowchilla because the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would be constructed between the city and Berenda Reservoir. As a result, the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative could affect the future development and use of the planned trail corridor along Ash Slough by acting as a physical barrier that could impede the trail system's development between the two primary destinations. The Authority and its contractors would employ design measures that take into account trails and other recreational facilities to provide access to park and recreation facilities, which would minimize but not completely avoid impacts from construction across trail corridors that restrict future trail development and use (PK-IAMF#1). The network upgrade to an existing power line that currently spans Ash Slough under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative (i.e., Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Wilson–Dairyland (idle) 115 kV Power Line) would consist of reconductoring the existing power line. A single-circuit power line already exists in this location and spans Ash Slough southwest of the city of Chowchilla. The reconductoring may result in slightly taller structures; however, there would be the same number of conductors in the same locations as compared to existing conditions. Therefore, reconductoring would not reduce the capacity to develop the corridor or reduce the value of the open-space resource.

#### **CEQA Conclusion**

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives because they would not prevent the use of the planned trail corridor in the Ash Slough open-space corridor between the city of Chowchilla and Berenda Reservoir. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

The impact under CEQA would be significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative because construction of the alternative could impede the use of the planned recreational trail corridor along Ash Slough between Chowchilla and Berenda Reservoir. The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would be designed to provide access to parks and recreational facilities, which would minimize but not avoid the potential impacts on the development and use of the planned recreational trail corridor. The Authority would implement mitigation measures to minimize the impacts at the crossings of Ash Slough east of the city. Mitigation measure PK-MM#1 would involve the installation of undercrossings beneath HSR tracks at Ash Slough with a minimum clearance of 14.5 feet and width of 12 feet, which would be sufficient to allow for development of a future recreational trail. With implementation of PK-MM#1, the impact under CEQA would be less than significant because the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would not prevent the use of the planned recreational trail in the Ash Slough open-space corridor.

#### ***School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities***

##### **Impact PK#3: Temporary Impacts from Noise and Dust on School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities**

Construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would generate noise and dust that have the potential to indirectly affect recreational activity and user experience at nearby school play areas and recreational facilities. If the impacts from noise and dust are severe enough, use of the play areas and recreational facilities could be diminished or prevented. The potential for impacts would vary by alternative, depending in large part on the proximity of construction activity to a play area or recreational facility. Construction activities would be in closest proximity to school play areas and park facilities, and therefore have the greatest potential to generate noise and dust impacts, under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative. Under this alternative, construction activities would take place within 410 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas near Avenue 23. In addition, construction associated with the network upgrade (i.e., Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line) under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would occur within 600, 450, and

200 feet of Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park and the Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas, respectively. Under the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative, the nearest construction activity would be within 460 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas; no other school play areas or recreational facilities would be affected from construction of these alternatives. The Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative is not expected to result in temporary impacts from noise and dust because construction activity would occur far enough away from school play areas and recreational facilities (over 1,000 feet) that such impacts are not anticipated.

Noise would be generated from a variety of activities during construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives; such noise would be audible from school play areas and recreational facilities. The Authority would minimize construction-related noise impacts through adherence to FRA guidelines (FRA 2012), which require strategic siting of equipment, phasing of construction operations, and using alternative construction methods (NV-IAMF#1). Track-laying would be the loudest construction activity that would take place in proximity to the Fairmead Elementary School. As described in Section 3.4.6.3, Central Valley Wye Alternatives, construction-related human noise annoyance could occur during daytime hours within 340 feet of track-laying activity during daytime hours. Construction activities for all three SR 152 alternatives would occur at a distance greater than 340 feet from the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. Therefore, while noise levels generated by construction equipment could be audible in portions of the play areas, they would be below a level that is harmful to human health, identified by the FRA as 80 dBA  $L_{eq}^3$  during daytime hours. Additionally, because the Fairmead Elementary School play areas are for active recreation use and generate their own audible noise levels, users are not highly sensitive to changes in external noise levels. For this reason, while noise generated from construction could be noticeable to users of the play areas, it would not be disruptive to the normal use or user experience of the play areas under any of the three SR 152 alternatives.

The operation of helicopters would be required during network upgrade construction, which would be the loudest piece of equipment operated during reconductoring activities associated with the Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line, associated with the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative. The daytime distance from the nearest helicopter landing area to a park or recreation facility during which construction-related human noise annoyance would occur is 600 feet from Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park. All other helicopter landing areas are farther than 600 feet from the park and recreation facilities. As discussed in Appendix 2-D, Electrical Interconnections and Network Upgrades, and Section 3.4, noise levels of 72 dBA  $L_{eq}$  would occur at 50 feet from the work area where a helicopter is hovering for 10 minutes. The combined hourly  $L_{eq}$  of overall construction noise combined with the noise from helicopters would be 89 dBA at 50 feet. At a distance of 600 feet, the combined construction noise would be reduced to approximately 67 dBA  $L_{eq}$ , which is well below the levels that FRA has identified as potentially harmful to human health (80 dBA  $L_{eq}$  during daytime hours). Furthermore, the activities occurring closest to Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and the outdoor play areas at Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School are reconductoring of lattice steel towers, which would last up to 1 week at each lattice steel tower site. The noise generated by reconductoring would be temporary and would move along the transmission line as construction activities proceed. Similar to Fairmead Elementary School play areas, these facilities are for active recreation use where users do not rely on quiet surroundings. The temporary increase in noise levels during construction, while presenting a potential nuisance, would not diminish or prevent the normal use and functions of these facilities.

For each of the three SR 152 alternatives, construction activities would generate fugitive dust near school play areas and park facilities. If generated in high enough quantities, fugitive dust could generate health concerns or nuisance impacts that could disrupt recreational activity and user experience at the play areas and parks. AQ-IAMF#1 would include measures to reduce the indirect impacts related to fugitive dust emissions generated during construction by requiring a fugitive dust control plan to control dust emissions from equipment, materials, and construction activities. This

<sup>3</sup> See Section 3.4 for definitions and information on noise descriptors used in this Final Supplemental EIR/EIS.

would minimize the amount of fugitive dust that could affect nearby users of play areas and recreational facilities. Although fugitive dust concentrations would be expected to be higher under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative than the other alternatives because of closer proximity to school play areas and recreational facilities, the overall effect on use of these facilities from fugitive dust would be the same under all three SR 152 alternatives. According to the air quality analysis (refer to Section 3.3), emissions of fugitive dust under each of the Central Valley Wye alternatives are not expected to be in a high concentration that could compromise the health of sensitive receptors (i.e., users of the school play areas). While fugitive dust could still present a nuisance to some users, these impacts would result in only limited disruptions to normal use of the play areas. Therefore, the use and functions of the play areas would not be prevented or diminished by fugitive dust emissions under any of the Central Valley Wye alternatives.

### CEQA Conclusion

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives because noise and fugitive dust generated from construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would not prevent use of the Fairmead Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, El Capitan High School play areas, and Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park. The Central Valley Wye alternatives would incorporate IAMFs that would minimize noise impacts and fugitive dust emissions. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

There would be no impact under CEQA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative because there are no school play areas or recreation facilities within the RSA of the alternative. Therefore, there would be no impacts from construction noise and dust, and the alternative would not prevent use of any play area or recreation facility.

### Impact PK#4: Access to School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities

Vehicular access to school play areas and recreational facilities during construction could be affected as a result of temporary and permanent road closures under the SR 152 (North) to Road 13, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternatives. There are no play areas or recreational facilities within the RSA of the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative and therefore no impacts on recreational facility access are anticipated. The impacts on access to school play areas and recreational facilities would be similar under the three SR 152 alternatives, although because of the location of road closures near Fairmead Elementary School play areas and road closures associated with network upgrades, the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would result in slightly greater impacts than the other two SR 152 alternatives.

All of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would be designed to maintain access to parks and limit temporary construction impacts, which would minimize both permanent and temporary impacts on access to the school play areas and recreational facilities. These measures include providing access to parks and maintaining sufficient separation of HSR guideway systems from existing parks and recreation facilities. Temporary construction impacts on access and traffic, such as road closures and other disruptions, would be minimized by providing detours and signage so that motorists and pedestrians would continue to have access to local parks and recreation areas (TR-IAMF#2, TR-IAMF#4, TR-IAMF#5, TR-IAMF#7, and TR-IAMF#8). Following construction, access via major thoroughfares would be restored and there would be no barriers to access.

The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives share the same general alignment near the Fairmead Elementary School play areas and would result in the same impacts on play area access. These alternatives would require closure of Avenue 22, Road 19 1/2, and Road 20, which provide access to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. During construction, while vehicular access would be maintained, access to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas could be less direct. Potential play area users would have to travel approximately 1 mile south of the play areas, where they would have to navigate local roadways (e.g., Avenue 22 1/2) to access the school play areas. Detours and signage would help to avoid impacts on access and play area users from being inconvenienced by temporary disruptions to traffic patterns (TR-IAMF#2). Following the construction period, the reconstructed Road 20 1/2 would maintain north-south access near the Fairmead Elementary School play areas, although access to the school from those areas



north of Avenue 22 3/4, could be permanently reduced. Users of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas who intend to access the play areas from the north would either travel south on SR 99 and exit at Avenue 21 1/2 or travel south on Road 20 1/2. However, despite the change in how the facility is accessed, there would be no permanent barriers to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas.

Construction of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would result in similar impacts on access to Fairmead Elementary School play area as the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives, including requiring the closure of Avenue 22, Road 19 1/2, and Road 20. The primary difference is that some construction activities associated with roadwork along Maple Street and Road 19 1/2 would be slightly closer in proximity to the Fairmead Elementary School because of the differing geometry of the alternative alignment. Maple Street is located west of Fairmead Elementary School and provides north-south directional access. Construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives could disrupt access to the school play areas from the adjacent neighborhood along Maple Street, although this impact would be temporary during construction and would be minimized using detours and signage.

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative could also affect access to Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas associated with the network upgrade (i.e., Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville—Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line). During construction, a road closure or a rolling stop would be arranged for any locations where the transmission line crosses over roads before conductor installation begins. Any road closures that must occur on private and county roads typically would not exceed a few minutes in duration and would be coordinated with the county or landowner. Additionally, alternative access routes would be provided if necessary to maintain access (TR-IAMF#2).

The three SR 152 alternatives would all result in temporary impacts on access as a result of road closures. Although impacts would be similar, they would be slightly greater under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative because it would result in more temporary road closures in proximity to school play areas and recreational facilities than the other SR 152 alternatives. The Authority would provide temporary access and signage for users to maintain access to school play areas. Because access would be restored following construction, there would be no barriers or other long-term impacts on access under any of the alternatives.

### **CEQA Conclusion**

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives because there would be no disruptions to the access of the school play areas and park facilities due to construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. IAMFs incorporated as part of construction would limit temporary traffic interruptions by providing detours and signage and providing users access to park and recreation facilities. There would be no permanent barriers to access of the Fairmead Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, and El Capitan High School play areas or Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

There would be no impact under CEQA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative because there would be no road closures or other construction activity that could affect access within at least 1,000 feet of a school play area or recreation facility; therefore, there would be no permanent barriers to access.

### **Operations Impacts**

In addition to trains running on the tracks, operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would include inspection and maintenance along the track and railroad right-of way, as well as on the structures, fencing, power system, train control, and communications. Operations and maintenance activities are more fully described in Chapter 2.

### **Open Space-Corridors**

Ash Slough and Berenda Slough are considered in this analysis only as planned recreational areas. The recreational trail facilities along the sloughs are anticipated to be developed after

construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives. Once the recreational trail facilities are installed, users of these facilities could be exposed to visual changes and noise impacts.

### **Impact PK#5: Visual Change and Noise Impacts on Open-Space Areas**

Operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would generate noise from trains and maintenance activities and passing trains would be visible to future recreational trail users at the crossings of the Ash Slough and Berenda Slough open-space corridors. Because the recreational trail facilities would not be constructed until after the Central Valley Wye alternatives become operational, there are no existing recreational users or activities to serve as a baseline against which impacts can be measured. However, because the trails are intended to serve as a link between the city of Chowchilla and Berenda Reservoir according to the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a), users are anticipated to include primarily cyclists or pedestrians traveling between these or other intermediate destinations. Use of the trail would therefore be active recreation and transportation. Users would not be highly sensitive to noise or visual changes compared to other recreational uses, such as nature viewing, which require quiet and tranquil settings.

Where the Central Valley Wye alternatives cross the future recreational trail corridors, users would experience an increase in noise and the visible presence of passing trains. These impacts would be greatest under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, which would cross Berenda Slough twice and Ash Slough once, followed by SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives, which would cross each slough once, and Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, which would cross Ash Slough once and would not cross Berenda Slough. The sudden increase in noise from the rapid approach of HSR trains has the potential to startle or annoy trail users who are passing on either side of the HSR tracks. As described in Section 3.4, the distance at which a startle impact could occur from trains traveling at the maximum speed of 220 mph would be almost entirely within the fenced portion of the right-of-way,<sup>4</sup> which would be inaccessible to the public, and would therefore not affect trail users. While annoyance from operations noise could still occur, because such impacts would be of a short duration (a few seconds) and would only occur at HSR crossings, the overall user experience on the trails would not be diminished. Visual impacts associated with the visible presence of a passing train would similarly be brief and would only occur along short sections of trail corridors where a trail user would have a viewpoint of passing trains. Moreover, the visible impacts of passing trains would be similar to those from other transportation uses visible from the trail, such as vehicles crossing the trails on SR 99, and would therefore not further degrade user experience on the trails.

For these reasons, and because Ash and Berenda Slough trail users would not be sensitive to noise and visual changes, operations of any of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would not detract from the overall user experience of the recreational corridors or prevent their use. While use of the corridors would not be diminished, annoyance from operations noise and visual impacts could still occur. These effects would be greatest under SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative (three trail crossings), followed by the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative (two trail crossings) and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative (two trail crossings), with the least effect under the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative (one trail crossing).

### **CEQA Conclusion**

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant because periodic noise increases and visual changes from operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would be of short duration and would not prevent the use of the Ash Slough or Berenda Slough open-space corridors. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

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<sup>4</sup> The right-of-way extends a minimum of 100 feet from fence to fence, with 16 feet of track separation. At the design speed of 220 mph, a startle effect is possible up to 3 feet outside of the right-of-way to either side.

### ***School District Play Areas and Recreational Facilities***

#### **Impact PK#6: Changes to the Character of School Play Areas and Park Facilities**

Operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would introduce new features into the parks, recreation, and open space RSA that could change the surrounding setting and character of school play areas and park facilities. HSR operations would be in closest proximity to school play areas and park facilities, and therefore have the greatest potential to affect the character of these facilities, under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, which would operate within approximately 780 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas; additionally, transmission lines reconducted as part of network upgrades would operate within approximately 1,000 feet of Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park and the Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas. The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would operate within approximately 850 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. There are no school play areas or park facilities within the RSA of the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative and therefore HSR operations would not change the character of these facilities.

Operations of the three SR 152 alternatives, which would introduce passing trains and maintenance activity into a rural area, would be visible to users in portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas and would make for a less characteristically rural landscape. Although there would be a slight difference in proximity to the play areas, all three SR 152 alternatives share a similar geometry where they cross Road 19 1/2 just to the north of the Fairmead Elementary School (see Figure 3.15-7), and there would be no substantive difference in changes to the setting of the play areas among these alternatives. The presence of HSR infrastructure and trains would not detract from the regular use of a school play area. Changes in the character of the school fields that could occur as a result of operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would not affect use of the school fields because they are not reliant on the rural character of their surroundings to function as an active play facility. At a distance of 780 to 850 feet, users of the play areas may be able to hear when a high-speed train passes; however, at this distance, noise generated from operations of any of the SR 152 alternatives would generally not be disruptive to the use of the play areas to the extent that it would degrade the user experience. While the HSR could be noticeable to users of the play areas, thus reducing the rural nature of the play areas and their surroundings, the change would not be such that the regular use or user experience would be altered.

The Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line associated with the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would continue to operate within approximately 1,000 feet of Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park and the Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas. However, the presence of the reconducted transmission line would not detract from the regular use of school play areas or park facilities as it would operate similarly to existing conditions, and the changes in character, potentially taller lattice steel towers, would be minimal.

#### **CEQA Conclusion**

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives because use of the school play areas and park facilities is not reliant on the rural character of their surroundings, and HSR and network upgrade operations would not prevent the use of the facilities. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

There would be no impact under CEQA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative because there are no school play areas or recreation facilities within the RSA of the alternative. Therefore, there would be no impacts on the character of school play areas and park facilities, and the alternative would not prevent use of these facilities.

#### **Impact PK#7: Visual Change and Noise Impacts at School Play Areas and Park Facilities**

Operation of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would generate noise and visual impacts from trains and maintenance activities that could affect the use and user experience of play areas and



park facilities within the parks, recreation, and open space RSA. HSR operations would be in closest proximity to school play areas and park facilities, and therefore have the greatest potential to generate noise and visual impacts, under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, which would operate within approximately 780 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas; additionally, transmission lines reconducted as part of network upgrades would operate within approximately 1,000 feet of Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park and the Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas. The SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would operate within approximately 850 feet of the public portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. There are no school play areas or park facilities within the RSA of the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative and therefore there would be no impacts from visual changes or noise.

As described in Impact PK#6, operations of the three SR 152 alternatives would introduce new transportation elements into an existing rural landscape setting, which would be partially visible to users in portions of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. Although there would be a slight difference in proximity to the play areas, all three SR 152 alternatives share a similar geometry where they cross Road 19 1/2 just to the north of the Fairmead Elementary School (see Figure 3.15-7), and there would be no substantive difference in visual impacts from HSR operations among these alternatives. Because the Fairmead Elementary School play areas is for active recreation use, users of the play areas are not sensitive to visual changes, and the presence of HSR infrastructure and trains would not detract from the regular use of the play areas under any of the alternatives.

The three SR 152 alternatives would generate operations noise levels from passing trains at the Fairmead Elementary School play areas. Although the alignment of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative is slightly closer to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas, the split in train traffic where the Merced to Fresno leg separates from the San Jose to Fresno leg at Road 20 east of the Fairmead Elementary School play areas, would generate approximately the same noise levels as the other SR 152 alternatives. As described in the *Merced to Fresno Section: Central Valley Wye Noise and Vibration Technical Report* (Authority and FRA 2016), the increase in noise level at all community facilities (including Fairmead Elementary School) would be below the FRA's impact assessment criteria for moderate or severe impacts. Additionally, because the Fairmead Elementary School play areas are for active recreation use, users are not highly sensitive to changes in noise levels. Therefore, while noise generated from operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives could be noticeable to users of the play areas, it would not be disruptive to the use of the play areas and user experience would not be degraded.

The Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas are all located within 1,000 feet of the existing Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line, which would be reconducted under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative. As discussed in Section 3.16, reconducting of the Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line may potentially result in taller lattice steel towers; however, the visual change relative to existing conditions would not be such that the regular use or user experience would be altered. Moreover, as discussed in Section 3.4, operations corona noise associated with reconducting the Warnerville–Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line would not result in any noticeable difference from existing conditions (i.e., the change would not be so severe that the user experience would be altered), and would not alter or prevent the use of the play areas.

### CEQA Conclusion

The impact under CEQA would be less than significant for the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternatives because operations and maintenance activity would not result in any noticeable difference in impacts related to visual change or noise and would not alter or prevent the use of the play areas. Therefore, CEQA does not require any mitigation.

There would be no impact under CEQA for the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative because there are no school play areas or recreation facilities within the RSA of the alternative. Therefore,

there would be no impacts on users of school play areas and park facilities from visual change and noise, and the alternative would not prevent use of these facilities.

### 3.15.7 Mitigation Measures

This section presents updated mitigation that is generally consistent with the mitigation required under the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS. The following mitigation measure would be implemented to address impacts on future development of recreational trail corridors.

#### **PK-MM#1: Design Features to Allow for Future Development of Trails at the Slough Crossings.**

The Authority would design crossings for Ash and Berenda Sloughs that would allow for future development of a recreational trail corridor. During final design, the Authority and its engineers would coordinate with the City of Chowchilla and Chowchilla Water District to determine the desired or planned width and height limitations as well as the specific location of the trail in order to design an undercrossing below the HSR tracks. At a minimum, undercrossings at the sloughs would maintain a clearance of 14.5 feet and width of 12 feet, which would be sufficient to allow for development of a future recreational trail. These crossings would be designed in accordance with FRA safety standards to provide access for trail users (e.g., pedestrians, bicyclists) and to meet the standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act. The design of the crossings and adherence to safety and accessibility standards would allow the City of Chowchilla to pursue the development of a recreational trail under HSR tracks and would not hinder the City of Chowchilla's ability to apply for federal, state, or other private funding that are contingent upon meeting these standards. Proposed overcrossings would be presented to the city for their input during the final design stage and prior to construction. Pedestrian and bicycle overcrossings would be designed by the Authority. The Authority would consider the input of the City of Chowchilla and Chowchilla Water District in its final design of the trail crossing. The design features and standards specified in this mitigation measure would be included in the design-build contract requirements. Should design changes preclude these requirements from being met, additional environmental review would be required to assess the potential impacts from the design changes.

This mitigation measure would be effective in allowing for future development of the planned open-space corridors at the Berenda Slough and Ash Slough crossings by the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative east of the city of Chowchilla. The installation of crossings at both sloughs would avoid obstructing future development opportunities and preventing the use of the recreational trail corridors along both sloughs.

Implementing PK-MM#1 could involve design modifications to include under- or overcrossings of the HSR track and coordination with the City of Chowchilla and Chowchilla Water District. No changes to the alignment or scale of infrastructure required would result from potential design modifications. Therefore, no changes to the environment would result directly from this mitigation measure.

### 3.15.8 Impacts Summary for NEPA Comparison of Alternatives

This section summarizes the impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives and compares them to the anticipated impacts of the No Project Alternative. Table 3.15-4 provides a comparison of the potential impacts of each of the Central Valley Wye alternatives, summarizing the more detailed information provided in Section 3.15.6, Environmental Consequences.

Under the No Project Alternative, development pressures resulting from an increasing population in Merced and Madera Counties would continue to lead to associated direct and indirect impacts on parks, recreation facilities, and open-space areas. Development under the No Project Alternative is anticipated to result in a continuation of recent development trends that have led to increased demand on parks, recreation facilities, and open-space areas. Planned park and recreational developments identified in regional and local land-use plans would help to relieve the strain on existing facilities and minimize impacts on parks, recreation, and open-space resources. Construction of these new facilities is anticipated to adequately meet the demand of population growth and maintain established service ratios.

The Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS concluded that development of the HSR system would result in impacts on parks, recreation facilities, and open-space resources, primarily associated with

displaced park use during construction, acquisition of park property for HSR right-of-way, and severe noise impacts during operations. Mitigation measures were identified to reduce these impacts. Implementing the Central Valley Wye alternatives would also result in impacts on parks, recreation facilities, and open-space resources, particularly associated with restricting development of future recreational trails.

**Table 3.15-4 Comparison of Central Valley Wye Alternative Impacts**

Impacts	SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
<b>Construction Impacts</b>				
<b>Open-Space Corridors</b>				
Impact PK#1: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor				
Impede future development of recreational trail along Berenda Slough	No	No, after mitigation	No	No
Impact PK#2: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Ash Slough Open-Space Corridor				
Impede future development of recreational trail along Ash Slough	No	No, after mitigation	No	No
<b>School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities</b>				
Impact PK#3: Temporary Impacts from Noise and Dust on School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities	Noise and dust could be a nuisance to users of Fairmead Elementary School play areas but would not prevent or diminish use of play areas	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, except in proximity to three additional recreation facilities and nearer to Fairmead Elementary School play areas	No impact	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye
Impact PK#4: Access to School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities				
Impact on access to play areas and recreation facilities	Temporary traffic interruptions from road closures but no long-term disruptions in access	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, except there would be a greater number of road closures that would affect more facilities (see below)	No Impact	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye
Number of road closures temporarily affecting access to Fairmead Elementary School Play Areas	3	4	0	3



Impacts	SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
Temporary road closures affecting access to Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas (EINU only)	No	Yes	No	No
<b>Operations Impacts</b>				
<b>Open-Space Corridors</b>				
Impact PK#5: Visual Change and Noise Impacts on Open-Space Areas				
Impacts on use of future recreational trail corridors	Future use of the recreational trail corridors would not be diminished although annoyance from operations noise and visual impacts could still occur at crossings			
Number of future trail crossings	2	3	1	2
<b>School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities</b>				
Impact PK#6: Changes to the Character of School Play Areas and Park Facilities	Change in rural character at one play area but use or user experience would not be altered	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, except changes would occur at four play areas and recreation facilities	No impact	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye
Impact PK#7: Visual Change and Noise Impacts at School Play Areas and Park Facilities	Noise and visual changes perceptible to users at one play area but use of the play areas would not be diminished	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, except changes would occur at four play areas and recreation facilities	No impact	Same as SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye

Source: Authority, 2018

SR = State Route

EINU = electrical interconnection and network upgrade

The Central Valley Wye alternatives would incorporate IAMFs that would reduce impacts on parks and recreational facilities. These IAMFs would include design features to provide access to parks and recreational facilities for a range of travel modes (e.g., bicycle, pedestrian, vehicle) and to preserve user experience of recreational facilities in proximity to HSR infrastructure. IAMFs specific to transportation, noise, and air quality would also minimize indirect impacts on park facilities related to park access, construction-related noise, and fugitive dust. While these IAMFs would minimize most impacts on park and recreation facilities, the introduction of HSR infrastructure would inhibit future recreational trail opportunities in the city of Chowchilla. The Authority has identified mitigation that would avoid these impacts and accommodate future trail development.

Construction of the Central Valley Wye alternatives has the potential to affect access and use of existing parks and recreational facilities and future development opportunities of planned recreational improvements, including along the Ash and Berenda Sloughs. Planned trail corridors have been proposed for both sloughs in the *City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan* (City of Chowchilla 2011a) to connect to the Berenda Reservoir east of the city. All four Central Valley Wye alternatives would cross Ash and Berenda Sloughs, although only the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative would cross the sloughs to the east of city where the trail connection to

Berenda Reservoir has been proposed. Construction of this alternative would impede the development and use of these future trail corridors, and the Authority has identified mitigation to avoid this impact. PK-MM#1 would involve the installation of undercrossings beneath HSR tracks of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative at Ash and Berenda Sloughs with a minimum clearance of 14.5 feet and width of 12 feet, which would be sufficient to allow for development of a future recreational trail.

Temporary increases in noise and fugitive dust would occur at the Fairmead Elementary School play areas during construction of the three SR 152 alternatives, and at Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas during construction of a network upgrade for the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative (Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville—Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line). No impacts would occur under the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative. Although noise and dust could present a nuisance to users of these facilities, noise levels and dust concentrations would be below levels harmful to human health and the normal use and functions of the facilities would not be diminished under any of the alternatives. Access to these facilities would also be affected by road closures during construction of the three SR 152 alternatives. The potential for disruptions in access would be greatest under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, which would result in more temporary closures of direct access routes to the Fairmead Elementary School play areas than the two other SR 152 alternatives and would require rolling stops or temporary closures of access routes to Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, and play areas associated with Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School during reconductoring activities. The Authority would provide temporary access and signage for users to maintain access to school play areas and recreation facilities at all times. Although users attempting to access the facilities could be inconvenienced or delayed as a result of detours, these impacts would be temporary and there would be no barriers or other long-term impacts on access under any of the alternatives.

Operations of the Central Valley Wye alternatives would introduce intermittent visual changes and noise associated with passing trains that would be perceptible to future users of the Ash and Berenda Slough recreational trails. Because these trails would be for active recreation use and transportation, users would generally not be highly sensitive to visual or noise changes, and use and enjoyment of these trails would not be diminished under any of the alternatives. Annoyance from operations noise and visual impacts could still occur, which would be greatest under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative (three trail crossings) and least under the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative (one trail crossing).

Play areas and other recreational facilities in the RSA would also be subject to operations impacts. Changes in character, noise, and visual impacts would occur at the Fairmead Elementary School play areas during operation of the three SR 152 alternatives. In addition, under the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative the reconductored overhead transmission line (Site 7—Le Grand Junction/Sandy Mush Road, Warnerville—Wilson 230 kV Transmission Line) would result in slightly taller structures, which could be visible from Washington Elementary School and El Capitan High School play areas, and Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park during operations, although the changes would not be such that the regular use or user experience would be altered. These parks and recreational facilities are for active recreation use, and, as such, users would generally not be highly sensitive to changes in setting, noise, or visual impacts. Although operations impacts would be perceptible to users of these facilities, the changes would not be such that the regular use or user experience would be altered under any of the alternatives.

### 3.15.9 CEQA Significance Conclusions

Table 3.15-5 provides a summary of the CEQA determination of significance for all construction and operations impacts discussed in Section 3.15.6.3. Any differences in impacts before or after mitigation among the four Central Valley Wye alternatives are noted in the table. Where there is no difference in the CEQA level of significance before and after mitigation for a particular impact, the level of significance for that impact is the same for all Central Valley Wye alternatives.

**Table 3.15-5 CEQA Significance Conclusions for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space for the Central Valley Wye Alternatives**

Impacts	CEQA Level of Significance before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	CEQA Level of Significance after Mitigation
<b>Construction Impacts</b>			
<b>Open-Space Corridors</b>			
Impact PK#1: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor	Significant: Prevent the use of the planned recreational trail corridor in the Berenda Slough Open-Space Corridor for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	PK-MM#1: Design Features to Allow for Future Development of Trails at the Slough Crossings	Less than significant
	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
	No impact for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
Impact PK#2: Permanent Impacts on Future Development of Recreational Trail Corridors in the Ash Slough Open-Space Corridor	Significant: Prevent the use of the planned recreational trail corridor in the Ash Slough Open-Space Corridor for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	PK-MM#1: Design Features to Allow for Future Development of Trails at the Slough Crossings	Less than significant
	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable



Impacts	CEQA Level of Significance before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	CEQA Level of Significance after Mitigation
<b>School District Play Areas and Recreation Facilities</b>			
Impact PK#3: Temporary Impacts from Noise and Dust on School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
	No impact for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
Impact PK#4: Access to School Play Areas and Recreational Facilities	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
	No impact for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
<b>Operations Impacts</b>			
<b>Open-Space Corridors</b>			
Impact PK#5: Visual Change and Noise Impacts on Open-Space Areas	Less than significant for all alternatives	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable

Impacts	CEQA Level of Significance before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	CEQA Level of Significance after Mitigation
<b>School District Play Areas and Recreational Facilities</b>			
Impact PK#6: Changes to the Character of School Play Areas and Park Facilities	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
	No impact for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
Impact PK#7: Visual Change and Noise Impacts at the School Play Areas and Park Facilities	Less than significant for the following Central Valley Wye alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable
	No impact for the following Central Valley Wye alternative: Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	No mitigation measures are required	Not applicable

Source: Authority, 2018  
SR = State Route