# I. Introduction

## *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of this document is to provide a snapshot of the socioeconomic conditions and projected future condition for the region falling within and surrounded by the four southern California National Forests (Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino), spanning from the U.S./Mexico border in the south to the San Francisco Bay Area in the north (*fig. 1*). It is not a decision-making document. Instead, it provides a foundation of social and economic information necessary in the process of formulating natural resource policies, strategies, and decisions. Because the assessment area is characterized by projections of dramatic population change, the focus is on current context and projected future. Its scope extends far beyond forest lands, into the counties surrounding these lands from which recreational visitors come and which are home to the publics served by the USDA Forest Service.

A scheduled update of the plans for the four southern California National Forests served as an impetus for this assessment. The biological and ecological assessment for the region was published in December of 1999 (Stephenson and Calcarone 1999), providing an information base for decisions. However, the social and economic context of land management in the region was not the focus of that assessment, leaving a gap in the information needed for resource decisions. The socioeconomic assessment addresses that information gap.

California is experiencing a shift in population from the coastal counties of Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area to the Central Valley and the Inland Empire. The distribution of the population has implications not only for political empowerment and the allocation of public resources, but also for the protection of environmental resources. In the past two decades, the middle class has headed for outlying areas: either the Inland Empire of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties in the SCAG region; the rural eastern reaches of the ABAG region, including the Sierra Nevada foothills; or counties in the Central Valley of California. All these areas are environmentally sensitive (Bradshaw 1991, 1992, Fulton 1999), creating the complex problem of how to manage growth and simultaneously protect endangered species and their habitats.

We provide a variety of indicators to capture the complex demographic and environmental changes occurring in the southern California region. We hope the document will encourage forest supervisors, natural resource managers, urban and regional planners, academics, and other interested readers to delve further into the aspects of the assessment of particular relevance to their management area or particular area of interest.

Companion documents to this volume were created as part of the socioeconomic assessment. They include: (1) an atlas for southern California, published by the Pacific Northwest Research Station focused on social and economic indicators (Raettig, Elmer and Christensen 2001); (2) a volume summarizing findings from focus groups conducted to examine public opinions regarding threatened and endangered species (Cvetkovich and Winter 2001); and (3) an annotated bibliography of public opinions regarding wildlife management (Finn 1999).

**Figure 1—**The assessment area includes 26 counties (shaded area).


Source: 50 Individual States—Counties 1995

# The Assessment Area

## Rationale for County Selection

The counties for this assessment were chosen in a three-step process. First, previous research on forest use from the Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures Unit of the Pacific Southwest Research Station was used which indicates that most visitors to the Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres National Forests come from an area 1- to 1½-hours' drive from each forest (Chavez 2001). On the basis of this finding, populations within a 1- to 1½-hour proximity from each of the forests was the key criterion for initial county selection. These counties represent the majority of counties selected. The second involved a consideration of human-forest dependencies, leading to an even broader perspective of who might be visiting these urban forests. Larger metropolitan areas, which would have potential for significant impact because of their population, though a bit farther away, should be considered in land management planning. Therefore, large urban areas farther than 1½-hours from the forests were included in the study. This second step captured Sacramento County and counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. Finally, the list of proposed counties was reviewed by southern California forest supervisors and resource managers. On the basis of their recommendation, one additional county was included, bringing the total to 26 of the 58 California counties.

## Regional Divisions for the 26 Counties

The 26 counties lie in a region that extends from Sacramento south to the Mexican border. The counties fall into five major regional political and geographical areas *(appendix A)*. These include:

- The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which includes only San Diego County.
- The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region, which includes the six-county area of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, and Ventura. Some counties belong to a council of governments (COG) and have sub-regional COGs as well. This is the case in the SCAG region. Each of the six counties has anywhere from one sub-regional COG (Imperial, Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura), to two sub-regional COGs (Riverside), to as many as eight sub-regional COGs (Los Angeles).
- The Central Coast counties, which include the four-county region of Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara. Some of these counties are part of a region-wide body (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments). Division of the counties into regions follows pre-existing political divisions and facilitates an understanding of the counties as geographical entities that are quite distinct from one another.
- The Central Valley counties, which are not part of a region-wide body, but have individual COGs. These counties include Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, San Benito, Merced, Fresno, Kings, and Kern. Almost all of the counties in the assessment are included in a COG. Counties in the state that are not represented in a COG are predominantly rural. For the counties included in the assessment, there are exceptions to the general pattern of COG representation. For example, Kings County is represented by the Kings County Regional Planning Agency, which functions both as a county planning agency and a COG.
- The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which includes the nine-county region of San Francisco, Marin, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Mateo (as well as Sonoma and Napa, which are not part of the assessment).

## *The Structure for Land Management and Planning in the Assessment Area*

The regulation of land in California is predominantly the domain of local governments. In some areas, particularly with regard to environmental protection, housing, and transportation, the State is involved in the formulation of policy for local governments to implement. In other areas, particularly the regulation of open space, the Federal government has the primary jurisdictional control. The levels of government most heavily involved in growth and development projections are the regional and sub-regional bodies *(fig. 2)*. As described in Levy (2000), regional planning began in the United States in the 1920s, but did not become widespread until the 1960s. In the 1960s, there was rapid suburban growth, environmental issues began to carry more weight, and Federal money for highways, urban redevelopment, and environmental projects increased tremendously. In order to receive Federal grants, local governments had to meet the requirements for regional planning. Thus, Federal funding was the impetus for the formation of COGs, which today are the main instrument for inter-municipal cooperation in the United States. Planning for a metropolitan area necessitates a regional mechanism because city governments can be too small to adequately address metropolitan area problems (Levy 2000). In addition, many land-use issues involve externalities or spill-over effects that overlap jurisdictional boundaries (for example air pollution, traffic, and water pollution), making a regional perspective necessary for effective planning. Despite the need for a regional perspective, it can be a daunting task to form a successful regional governing body. In fact, attempts to give SCAG or any other regional organization broad powers to overrule local land-use decisions have been opposed by cities, and the concept of home rule remains strong in California (Feldman 1991, Jeffe 1995).

### COGs as Regional Entities

Because of their regional focus, COGs are often the appropriate contact for land management agencies that want to establish planning relationships on issues

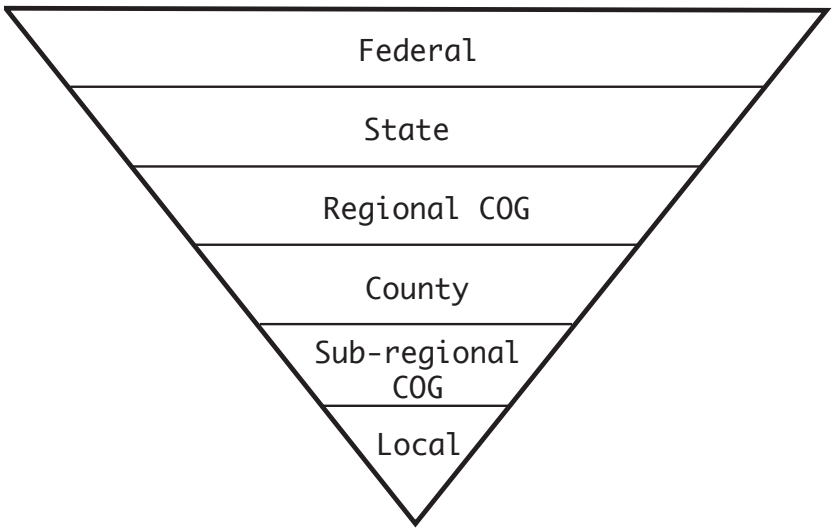


**Figure 2**—Hierarchy of government in California.

of mutual concern like urban growth that borders wildland areas (see *appendix B* for list of COGs and sub-regional COGs in the assessment area). Councils of government were authorized by statute in 1963 (Cox and Whiteside 1991) and are voluntary associations of counties and cities. Their regional role is to serve as a forum for local governments to address regional issues that transcend city limits. COGs can provide an arena in which local governments can prepare regional plans, deal with regional issues, set regional policy, strengthen the effectiveness of local government, and develop and maintain a regional database. Traditionally, transportation and the coordination of regional housing goals are the two largest regional issues that are in a COG's domain. COGs can serve as area-wide clearinghouses for reviewing and assuring consistency between Federal and State plans, projects, and grants, and they carry out various Federal and State mandates. COGs are also the designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations for the disbursement of Federal highway funding. Depending on local needs, they can also serve in a variety of other roles, such as waste management boards, transportation agencies, or airport land use commissions. For example, the San Bernardino Association of Governments serves as a regional COG and the county transportation commission.

COG boards of directors are appointed by county boards of supervisors and city councils within the geographical boundary of the COG. Board members must be locally elected officials. An advantage to COGs is that they are perceived as "bottom-up" organizations because they are created by cities and counties as a Joint Powers Authority, not by the State of California (Cox and Whiteside 1991).

## *Information Sources and Challenges*

### Scope of Analysis

The socioeconomic assessment provides an analysis of the following indicators:

- Regional context
- County context from historical accounts and present-day description
- Sociodemographic characteristics of each county, focused on projected population, ethnic and racial diversity, and changing age structures
- Development and real estate trends
- Quality of life indices including: (1) transportation, commuting, and employment; (2) education; (3) health care; (4) recreation and tourism; and (5) environmental quality.

The reader will find that not all sections contain parallel information. This occurred whenever data were not available for all areas, but were of value and interest in other counties or regions.

When combined, this information provides the reader with a picture of each county contained in the assessment area, including how it originated, selected current characteristics, and county future.

### Data and Methodology

Multiple sources were used in the assessment including Federal, State, regional, county, and local governments in addition to research conducted by independent academic researchers, private research firms, and newspapers *(table 1)*.

**Table 1—***Summary of types of data included in this assessment.*

| |
|---|
| **Federal data**<br>1990 and 2000 U.S. Census<br>Bureau of Labor Statistics<br>National Center for Health Statistics<br>Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures Research Work Unit, Pacific Southwest Research Station, USDA Forest Service |
| **State data**<br>California Air Resources Board<br>California Department of Education<br>Demographic Research Unit of the California Department of Finance (DOF)<br>California Research Bureau of the California State Library |
| **Regional data**<br>Councils of Government (COGs) and sub-regional COGs |
| **County data**<br>Construction Industry Research Board<br>County government websites<br>County general plans<br>County histories written by county or local historians |
| **Academic research**<br>Journal articles |
| **Private research firms**<br>Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, Palo Alto<br>The Rand Corporation<br>Torf Fulton Associates California Planning and Development Report (CPDR) |
| **Journalistic accounts**<br>*The Press-Enterprise*<br>*Los Angeles Times*<br>*Orange County Register*<br>*San Bernardino County Sun* |

## Challenges of Using Local Planning Documents

Varied and multiple sources of data were used in this socioeconomic assessment. The variability among local plans affected the availability of documents from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, the only mandated element of the General Plan in California is the housing element, which must be updated every 5 years. However, even the housing element was older than 5 years for some counties in the assessment area. Other elements of county general plans in the assessment area dated back to 1986. Because of this, city and county general plans could not always be relied on for the most recent information.

## Additional Challenges

In addition to the variability in the recency of planning documents, other issues arose with regard to the methods by which various agencies count populations, how race and ethnicity are defined by various agencies, and how projections are developed. Population projections are developed by multiple agencies using different assumptions about fertility, mortality, migration, and job availability. The

variation in projections disseminated by the different agencies highlights the varying perspectives agencies have about the pace and magnitude of future growth. In order to clarify the many issues, a brief discussion of the U.S. Census and State of California Department of Finance (DOF) follows. While the U.S. Census does not develop population projections for a scale smaller than the state level, 1990 U.S. Census county population figures and 2000 figures, as available, were included because U.S. Census numbers are often used as the base population by state and regional agencies developing projections within the state of California. Not addressed at length, but also an issue, was the constraint presented by ever-changing and somewhat contradictory numbers provided by various regional and county planning bodies. When multiple sources were available, their unique numbers and/or analysis were reported, allowing the reader to observe the range in reporting of current and projected data.

## U.S. Census

The census was written into the political system in 1787. Its purpose is to count the population every 10 years. New population numbers may trigger changes in legislative formulas that allocate tax revenue and Congressional seats (Anderson and Fienberg 1999). From the beginning of the census, there has been debate about the best way to count people.

Undercounts sometimes occur because the population is mobile and because certain groups may not want to be counted. For example, problems occur in convincing undocumented immigrants that census results will not be given to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Anderson 1988). Anderson and Fienberg (1999) found that the census undercount of racial/ethnic groups and the urban poor has historically been a concern.

Another reason why undercounts occur is because of language barriers, which contribute to misunderstanding census takers' missions, compounded by the fact that interpreters are rarely provided (King and Magnuson 1995). Undercounts can also occur because people are unaware of the census and its purpose (Barrett 1994). In one study, those who felt that the census was not important to the country or their community were more than twice as likely to fail to return their census forms (Barrett 1994).

Variation between census years also presents some difficulty. For example, greater attention to Asian and Pacific Islander groups in the 1980 and 1990 censuses (Barrett 1994) can make comparison to earlier censuses difficult. In addition, the definitions of race, ethnicity, and national origin have been an issue. In contrast to other agencies such as DOF, the Bureau of the Census defines Hispanic origin as an ethnic category rather than a racial one. Furthermore, an individual may belong to more than one racial/ethnic category and thus, self-identification may change considerably between censuses (Passel 1993). The 2000 census allowed for multiple ethnic/racial identifications for each individual.

The most complete census data available for this assessment was from 1990, though the newest census conducted in 2000 was drawn from wherever possible.

## State of California Department of Finance (DOF)

Because the U.S. Census only develops population projections at the national and state levels, DOF is used for projections at the county level (*appendix C*). (Information on the various statistical methods used for different data sets can be found on the DOF website, www.dof.ca.gov.)

According to DOF, the population projections depict only one possible course of future population change, e.g., the one reflecting recent trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. The projections do not reflect judgments about what is desirable or undesirable, but rather what can be expected if current trends continue through 2040. [See Johnson (1999) for a discussion of the differences in long-term population projections for California by DOF, U.S. Census Bureau,

United States Bureau of Economic Analysis, the UCLA Anderson Forecast, and the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy. The paper can be accessed at www.ppic.org/publications/CalCounts1/calcounts1.html]. Also, DOF numbers "… do not consider the economic side of the growth equation" (Schuiling 1999). The availability of jobs will influence population growth, and DOF does not take into account the out-migration or importation of people based on the availability of jobs. For DOF, the focus in calculating projections is on demographics. Regional COGs, such as SCAG and ABAG, consider both demographics and economics in developing projections. The extent to which regional COGs incorporate local land uses into their projections varies. Local land-use factors, especially cases of military base conversions, the decline of the local real estate market, or build-out can significantly modify growth projections. Therefore, local governments are instrumental in providing input on local land use and helping SCAG and other regional COGs to revise or develop projections that accurately reflect these local circumstances.

### Summary of Cautions on Using These Secondary Sources

This assessment compiles data from a wide variety of sources, including government agencies, private research firms, universities, historical texts, and journalistic accounts. While a spectrum of data sources can provide multiple perspectives and often a more complete picture of a complex problem, data from multiple secondary sources can be contradictory. We found this to be true with the population projections and the extent of growth that was predicted. Different governing bodies used various assumptions (demographic, economic, or local land-use decisions) when formulating projections. Rather than attempting to choose the "right" number, we present all numbers, which more accurately portray the debate about the form and extent of urban growth in the rapidly changing southern California region.

In other cases, we present multiple data sources to highlight the layers of complexity that one indicator cannot provide in isolation. For example, we include the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census populations for each county by ethnicity. The ethnic breakdown of the population does not capture the extent of ethnic diversity that can exist in each county. In order to understand more completely who future forest users might be and the communication challenges that could arise for forest managers, we included the percentages of Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) students in the public school system for the 1997-98 school year. We offer no hypotheses as to whether the percentages of LEP students in the school system will decline with length of tenure in the United States or whether these percentages will increase as a result of U.S. or California immigration policy changes. We present the data to demonstrate the variety of languages spoken throughout the assessment region and to suggest to forest supervisors and managers that they will have a multi-ethnic population of future forest users with a diverse spectrum of natural resource interests.

## *Social and Political Context*

### Health and Aging of the United States Population

The southern California socioeconomic assessment occurs within a broader social and political context in which the nationwide population is increasing, the median age of the population is increasing, and racial and ethnic diversity is increasing. National data is introduced here to demonstrate that trends in California are not an anomaly. In 1997, 13 percent of the U.S. population was 65 years of age or older. It is estimated that in 2030, 20 percent of Americans will be 65 years of age or older (Kramarow and others 1999). In 2030, 17 percent of the California population will be 65 years or older (State of California Department of Finance 1998). Of the older population, the fastest growing segment is people aged 85 years or older. Over the past 50 years there have been changes in mortality rates. For example, the biggest

decreases in mortality have been in death rates for heart disease and stroke. However, death rates for pneumonia and influenza among the elderly have increased in the last two decades (Kramarow and others 1999). Many factors have contributed to declines in mortality in the last 50 years. Some of these factors include decreases in the number of individuals who smoke, improvements in nutrition, increases in the overall educational level of older segments of the population, and innovations in medical technology.

Health status varies across ethnic groups. Life expectancy varies by race and ethnicity. In 1997, life expectancy at birth was approximately 5 years longer for White women than for Black women and 7 years longer for White men than for Black men. At age 65, differences by race narrowed and life expectancy was 1.7 years longer for White women than for Black women and 1.8 years longer for White men than for Black men. However, at age 85, life expectancy for Blacks was slightly higher than for Whites (Kramarow and others 1999).

One factor affecting the health of people of all ages is socioeconomic status. Although poverty rates among the elderly have declined since the 1960s, 1 out of 10 persons 65 years of age or older was living below the Federal poverty threshold in 1997 (Kramarow and others 1999). The poverty rate was higher among older Black and Hispanic persons compared with older White persons. In 1997 among persons 65 years of age and older, Blacks were 2.9 times as likely and Hispanic persons were 2.7 times as likely to live in poverty as White persons (Kramarow and others 1999). Women also had higher rates of poverty than men.

Health care coverage is not uniform. From 1987 to 1997, the percentage of people without health care coverage rose in the United States (*table 2*). In California, the percentage of those without health care coverage is higher than the national average and it is growing.

**Table 2—***Persons without health care coverage in the United States and California, by percent, 1987-1997.*

| | 1987 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.S. | 12.9 | 13.9 | 14.1 | 15.0 | 15.3 | 15.2 | 15.4 | 15.6 | 16.1 |
| California | 16.8 | 19.1 | 18.7 | 20.0 | 19.7 | 21.1 | 20.6 | 20.1 | 21.5 |

Source: National Center for Health Statistics 1999

## The Growth in Income Inequality Nationwide and in California

In the late 1990s the U.S. economy was in a period of economic growth. Despite the economic expansion, long-term trends in the distribution of wealth present a troubling picture. An examination of the percent of people living below the poverty level by race and ethnicity reveals that nationwide Blacks and Hispanics have historically had much higher rates of poverty than Whites and Asians *(table 3)*.

The incomes of the country's wealthiest families have increased substantially over the past two decades, but middle- and lower-income families have seen their incomes stagnate or decline. Nationwide, from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the average income of the lowest-income families fell by slightly more than 6 percent after adjustment for inflation, and the average real income of the middle fifth of families grew by 5 percent. In contrast, the average real income of the highest-income families increased by more than 30 percent (Bernstein and others 2000). As reported by Bernstein and others (2000), in 46 states the gap between the incomes of the richest 20 percent of families and the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of families is wider than it was two decades ago. California ranks fifth in the ratio of incomes of the top and bottom fifths of families from 1996 to 1998. The ratio between the average income of the bottom fifth of families in California ($12,239) and the average income of the top fifth of families ($146,066) is 11.9. This compares to a nationwide ratio of 10.6.

**Table 3—***Persons living below poverty level, according to race and Hispanic origin: United States, by percent, selected years, 1973-1997.*

| | 1973 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All races | 11.1 | 13.0 | 14.0 | 13.5 | 14.2 | 14.8 | 15.1 | 14.5 | 13.8 | 13.7 | 13.3 |
| White | 8.4 | 10.2 | 11.4 | 10.7 | 11.3 | 11.9 | 12.2 | 11.7 | 11.2 | 11.2 | 11.0 |
| Black | 31.4 | 32.5 | 31.3 | 31.9 | 32.7 | 33.4 | 33.1 | 30.6 | 29.3 | 28.4 | 26.5 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | N/A | N/A | N/A | 12.2 | 13.8 | 12.7 | 15.3 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 14.5 | 14.0 |
| Hispanic origin | 21.9 | 25.7 | 29.0 | 28.1 | 28.7 | 29.6 | 30.6 | 30.7 | 30.3 | 29.4 | 27.1 |
| White, non-Hispanic | N/A | N/A | N/A | 8.8 | 9.4 | 9.6 | 9.9 | 9.4 | 8.5 | 8.6 | 8.6 |

Source: National Center for Health Statistics 1999

The increasing income gap is a policy concern because poverty has been linked to poor health outcomes, substandard housing, and higher levels of crime victimization (Bernstein and others 2000). Bernstein and others (2000) also suggest that a widening gulf between the rich and the poor and middle class can reduce social cohesion, trust in institutions including government, and participation in the democratic process.

## Four Socioeconomic Trends in California

Four dominant socioeconomic trends in California have major implications for planning and the protection of open space in California. The four trends are population growth and demographic change, a dramatic shift in the distribution of the population, the crisis in local government organization and finance, and the Federal influence in rural land use. Development pressures are greatest on the urban fringe, especially in California's Central Valley and in the eastern counties of the ABAG and SCAG regions. As California grows, it will reach build-out in certain areas such as Orange and Los Angeles Counties, and thus, planning will have to shift its focus to redevelopment in older urban areas. A shift to redevelopment will entail a significant re-orientation for planning, which has traditionally concerned itself with new development (Fulton 1999).

### Population Growth and Demographic Change

The historic trend of population growth driven by migration from other states (Johnson and Lovelady 1995) has been replaced by a new trend, in which virtually all population growth comes from foreign immigration and natural increase. Between 1940 and 1970, migration from other states was more important than international migration, but from 1970 to 1998, the trends reversed (Lopez 1999). Since 1990, natural increase has also grown in importance and accounts for more than 50 percent of the population growth in California (Lopez 1999).

Ethnic and racial diversity increased at a faster pace than demographers originally anticipated so that as of 2000, no ethnic group was the majority in California. In fact, "one of every four cities above 50,000 in population in California has no racial or ethnic majority of any kind; neither Anglos nor Hispanics nor Blacks nor Asians constitute a majority of the population. Such settings are the likely precursors of a national pattern in large cities" (Clark and Morrison 1993, p. 1). According to Clark and Morrison (1993), variations of these settings are projected to become more commonplace and will occur at larger scales in future decades. They cite DOF data, which show that in 1990, only two of California's 58 counties had populations

without a racial or ethnic "majority." By 2010, a total of 15 counties are expected to acquire this demographic pattern.

Implications for planning hinge on the extent to which new immigrants will embrace American cultural and political values, and the extent to which they will be able to afford traditional American goals (e.g., home ownership) if they choose to embrace them. Community life for immigrant families is often very public in nature and centers around churches, parks, and other institutions that attract families and large groups of people (Fulton 1999). Research on ethnicity and the use of open space indicates that there are differences in use patterns, perceptions of the environment, and recreation activities (Chavez 2001). Finally, the number of people age 65 years and older is growing numerically and proportionally. By 2020, it is forecasted that 14 percent of California's population will be 65 years or older (Lopez 1999).

### Dramatic Shift in the Distribution of California's Population

The story of California for almost a century and a half has been the story of growth. Since the beginning of World War II, "the state's population has grown by 25 million residents, or 1,300 new residents every day" (Fulton 1999, p. 3). Although California's population fluctuates depending on economic conditions, the trend has been one of growth, even during the recession of the 1990s. Today, California's growth is driven by immigration from Latin America and Asia and, more importantly, by the large families born to those immigrants once they are here (Fulton 1999).

California's population distribution is shifting at the same time as its population is growing. Population growth is moving in two opposite directions: inward to central cities and older suburbs and outward to the metropolitan fringe and to rural areas. Although middle class people of all races and ethnicities move to the suburbs if they can, the working-class industrial areas of California cities have not emptied as a result (Fulton 1999). Instead, new immigrants have inhabited the older areas of cities as the middle class has departed. Nationwide, older suburbs are struggling with the problems of weakening infrastructure, job loss, crime, poverty, and declining populations (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 1999). In California, problems of older suburbs are compounded because of the shortage of affordable housing and the growing population.

The challenge in California is how to accommodate a quickly growing population that is already living in crowded conditions. For instance, in Orange County in 1999, the city of Santa Ana with a population of 315,000 (State of California Department of Finance 1999) had a higher population density at 4.24 persons per household (www.infooutfitters.com) than San Francisco with a population of 790,500 (State of California Department of Finance 1999). San Francisco has a projected 2.40 persons per household by 2000 (Association of Bay Area Governments 1997). According to SCAG, southern California will have to add nearly 2 million housing units to its present stock to accommodate the anticipated growth in population. "Put in other terms, it is as if the equivalent of two Orange Counties is added to an already largely developed region" (Jeffe 1995, p. 42).

Furthermore, the geographic concentration of racial and ethnic groups in the population can affect political empowerment. Election districts can be configured to encompass and concentrate ethnic communities or to disperse them. For African Americans, who are typically concentrated within cities, geographically based political empowerment is feasible. By contrast, Asians tend to be residentially scattered, which makes political engagement within single-member election districts more difficult; Hispanics are between these two extremes (Clark and Morrison 1993). Therefore, the distribution of the population and ethnic clustering can influence political empowerment and the distribution of public resources.

### Crisis in Local Government Organization and Finance

Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, which restricted local governments' revenue-raising ability to a rate of 1 percent of the assessed value of property,

local governments have been experiencing an ongoing crisis in their funding and operations (Fulton 1999). Funding crises have a significant impact on land use because local governments compete to attract land uses that will generate a tax revenue surplus for their cities. Proposition 13 was designed to address a system of property assessment and taxation that was arcane and unpredictable, but the limitation on local governments' revenue-raising abilities has had a number of unintended consequences for cities. Proposition 13 transferred a great deal of power from local governments to the State government in Sacramento because it gave the State power to allocate property tax revenue among local agencies. Cities and school districts, while not in the best financial position they could be in, are doing better than counties (Baldassare 1998, Fulton 1999). Each time an area incorporates (becomes a city) it draws revenue sources away from the county. Ironically then, as counties become urbanized, they have a more difficult time sustaining themselves financially. Conversely, single-purpose agencies, such as special districts and assessment districts, are faring best of all since they often have independent sources of revenue that shield them from the larger financial context.

The State has required cities to provide affordable housing in an attempt to ensure that a more diverse spectrum of housing is built. The requirement is needed because the commercial base of a city may only be able to support a limited amount of housing and developers tend to build high-cost housing. The housing element of the General Plan is the only State-mandated element, and it must be completed every 5 years. Each city's fair-share housing allocation is delineated in the State-mandated Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). Because of State budgetary constraints, the analysis of housing needs for the state was delayed in the late 1990s. In 1998 state funds were allocated for RHNA, but the development of RHNA is causing much of the current debate about population projections in the SCAG region.

If cities cannot afford to pay for the infrastructure that new housing developments require, then they must tax residents. Since 1978, there has been an increase in impact fees, development fees, and all kinds of assessments to raise revenue for building infrastructure. In sum, the changes in the financial structure of California government have led cities to engage in turf battles that make it more difficult for local governments to plan for the long-term interests of their communities (Fulton 1998).

### Federal Influence in Rural Land Use

As urban and suburban areas expand across the landscape, planning has become even more significant in rural areas. In recent years, the Federal regulatory role in rural areas has become more important as endangered species and wetlands have slowed or halted development (Fulton 1997). The Federal government is important in California land-use planning, because it owns 45 percent of the land in the state (www.blm.gov/natacq/pls98). Where the land in California is Federal, the USDA Forest Service and the USDI Bureau of Land Management are the primary agencies with jurisdiction. In 1999 California received the second largest payment from the Forest Service from revenues collected from timber sales, grazing, recreation, minerals, and land uses on National Forest land (www.fs.fed.us/news/20000216.htm). Local economies are tied to resource extraction on Federal land, particularly in rural counties. Federal ownership limits the amount of private land available for urban development, which is historically a key method of raising revenue for counties.

## *Setting the Context for the Assessment*

The area surrounding the four National Forests in southern California is a unique social and ecological zone. Wildland-urban areas are diverse in terrain, topology, and culture. The pressures facing natural areas are more pronounced in

the wildland-urban interface because of their proximity to urban environments where people from divergent cultures congregate and where urban expansion is gradually encroaching upon wildland areas (Murphy 2000). Pressure on wildland areas will continue to increase in magnitude and complexity as populations grow and become more diverse in race and ethnicity, age, and the values held toward natural resources.

As the management of wildland areas proximate to densely populated urban areas becomes more complex, there is increasing recognition that human activities are creating environmental impacts. Human forces stem from economic growth, population and demographic change, technological change, political institutions, and attitudes and beliefs held by the citizenry (Ewert 1996). Thus, management of these areas must successfully integrate an ecological component, an economic component, a political component, and a sociocultural component (Decker and others 1996). "Historically, resource agencies have focused most attention on the ecological component; it is now apparent, however, that the other elements must be given greater attention. In some cases, resource management has been driven principally by components other than the ecology of the system being managed" (Decker and others 1996, p. 32). Because of these human forces, resource management agencies are facing the complicated task of managing natural resources for an ever-expanding array of sociopolitical interests.

Natural resources planning benefits from the development of socioeconomic assessments because they indicate how the population is likely to grow and change. It is important for natural resource managers, especially in southern California, to know the possible scenarios of population growth and change so that impacts on wildland areas can be anticipated and management strategies devised with the most up-to-date scientific information available. The potential for increased recreation demand, changing public values, and housing developments closer to the forests are at the forefront of natural resource management agency discussions (see Phillips 2000).

## Organization of this Assessment

The assessment examines 26 California counties beginning from the southernmost region of the state, San Diego, and moving north through the central regions of the state to the San Francisco Bay Area. First each region is described. Then, the counties within the region are discussed with respect to the historical aspects of the county's development. The county's current condition is then presented, focusing on sociodemographic characteristics, development and real estate, quality of life, and environmental indicators. The summary and implications are discussed for each region and for the assessment area as a whole.

Following the presentation of county and regional data is a chapter focused on the main trends across the regions, serving as a synthesis of some key findings in the assessment. The final chapter explores implications of findings from the assessment.

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