DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

SKYLINE AGGREGATES QUARRY DEVELOPMENT
HAT CREEK CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS, INC.
LASSEN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE No. 2023100834

Prepared for

County of Lassen

Technical Assistance by

VESTRA Resources Inc.
5300 Aviation Drive
Redding, California 96002

UPDATED May 6, 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Environmental Impact Report

Lassen County (County) is a Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services is responsible for preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). This DEIR has been prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code [PRC] §21000 et seq.), California CEQA Statutes and Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, §15000 et seq.), and the rules, regulations, and procedures for implementation of CEQA, as adopted by the County.

CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term *project* refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines §15378[a]). Pursuant to CEQA's definition, the County has determined that the proposed Use Permit and Reclamation Plan for the Skyline Aggregates Development is a project that has the potential to result in significant environmental effects. The purpose of this DEIR is to review the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts, and identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant effects related to the proposed project.

An EIR is an informational document that apprises decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed action. An EIR must describe a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the project and identify possible means to minimize the significant effects. The Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services and Planning Commission will consider the information in the EIR, including the public comments and staff response to those comments, during the public hearing process. As a legislative action, the final decision is made by the Board of Supervisors, which may approve, conditionally approve, or deny the project. As provided in CEQA Guidelines §15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues. The purpose of an EIR is to identify:

- The significant potential impacts of the project on the environment and the manner in which those significant impacts can be avoided or mitigated;
- Any unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated; and
- Reasonable and feasible alternatives to the project that would eliminate any significant adverse environmental impacts or reduce the impacts to a less than significant level.

An EIR also discloses growth-inducing impacts, impacts found not to be significant, and cumulative impacts of the project when taken into consideration with past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects.

The County, which has the principal responsibility of processing and approving proposed projects, and other public agencies that may use this DEIR in the decision-making or permit process, will

consider the information in this DEIR, along with other information that may be presented during the CEQA process. CEQA requires an EIR that reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency regarding the impacts, the level of significance of the impacts both before and after mitigation implementation, and mitigation measures proposed to reduce the impacts. Environmental impacts are not always mitigable to a level considered less than significant; in those cases, impacts are considered significant, unavoidable impacts. In accordance with §15093(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, if a public agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed, per §15093 of the CEQA Guidelines, a "statement of overriding considerations."

This document analyzes the environmental effects of the proposed project to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed action, as required by §15146 of the CEQA Guidelines. The analysis considers the actions associated with the proposed project to determine the short-term and long-term effects associated with their implementation.

1.2 Summary of Proposed Project

Hat Creek Construction & Materials submitted an application to conduct mining and reclamation activities on a 640-acre undeveloped parcel located just northeast of the City of Susanville, herein referenced as the Skyline Aggregates Quarry project, proposed project, or proposed quarry. The proposed project includes surface mining and reclamation activities on 460 acres of the parcel for the extraction of 39,864,900 cubic yards of hard rock aggregate. Mining operations would include the extraction of material at a rate of 450,000 tons per year, the processing of aggregate with a crusher, a concrete plant, an asphalt plant, and aggregate transportation. Following mining activities, the 460-acre mining area would be reclaimed for agricultural use. The proposed project will require approval of the following permits and plans:

- Conditional Use Permit, Lassen County Planning Commission
- Reclamation Plan, Lassen County Planning Commission and Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR)
- Permits for Operation, Lassen County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)
- *Industrial General Permit Order 2014-0057-DWQ as amended in 2015 and 2018* (Industrial General Permit), Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and Concrete Facilities, State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).
- Sewage Disposal Permit, Lassen County Environmental Health Department.

This DEIR evaluates the potential for mining and reclamation activities to result in significant impacts to the environment. The proposed project will also operate under the requirements encumbered during the approval of the above permits or plans. Mining will commence upon approval of the Use Permit and Reclamation Plan.

1.3 Documents Incorporated by Reference

CEQA Guidelines §15150 permits documents of lengthy technical detail to be incorporated by reference in an EIR. The documents listed below are incorporated by reference as source documents for this DEIR.

1.3.1 Lassen County General Plan

The *Lassen County General Plan*, adopted in September 1999 (General Plan), is the long-range planning guide for growth and development for Lassen County. The General Plan helps to ensure that day-to-day decisions conform to the long-range program designed to protect and further the public interest as related to the County's growth and development and mitigate environmental impacts. The General Plan also serves to guide the private sector of the economy in relating its development initiatives to the public plans, objectives, and policies of the County. The General Plan contains a Land Use Element, Natural Resources Element, Agriculture Element, Wildlife Element, Open Space Element, Circulation Element, and Safety and Seismic Safety Element. The County's General Plan was utilized throughout this DEIR as one of the fundamental planning documents governing development on the project site, as the subject property and adjacent parcels are currently within unincorporated Lassen County. Background information and policy information from the General Plan are cited in several sections of this DEIR.

1.3.2 Lassen County Zoning Plan

The Lassen County Zoning Plan was initially adopted in 1984. The zoning plan was adopted to provide for the promotion and protection of the public health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, convenience, and general welfare, as well as the more particularly specified purposes such as:

- To assist in providing a definite development plan for the county, and to guide, control, and regulate the future growth of the county, in accordance with said plan;
- To protect the character and the social and economic stability of agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and other areas within Lassen County and to assure the orderly and beneficial development of such areas;
- To obviate the menace to the public safety resulting from the location of buildings and the uses thereof and of land, adjacent to highways which are a part of the streets and highways plan of the master plan of the county, or which are important thoroughfares, in such manner as to cause interference with existing or prospective traffic movements on said highways.

1.3.3 Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* (Area Plan) was adopted in 1984 and was intended to guide decisions regarding land use for an approximate 20-year timeframe. In the plan, it is stated, "The plan is long-range in nature and should be reviewed every five years to determine whether it still reflects community values." The Area Plan contains three categories: Environmental Safety, Natural Resources, and Community Development. It has been more than 20 years since the Area

Plan was adopted; however, since there have not been any updates since 1984, the goals, policies, and implementation measures are still applicable to the proposed project.

1.4 Responsible and Trustee Agencies

Certain projects or actions undertaken by a Lead Agency require subsequent oversight, approvals, or permits from other public agencies to be implemented. Such other agencies are referred to as "Responsible Agencies" and "Trustee Agencies." Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15381 and §15386, as amended, Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies are respectively defined as follow:

"Responsible Agency" means a public agency that proposes to carry out or approve a project for which a Lead Agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines §15381).

"Trustee Agency" means a State agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project that are held in trust for the people of the State of California. Trustee Agencies include the California Department of Fish and Game, State Lands Commission, State Department of Parks and Recreation, and the University of California with sites within the Natural Land and Water Resource System (CEQA Guidelines §15386).

Responsible and Trustee Agencies and other entities that may use this DEIR in their decision-making process or for informational purposes include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- California Air Resources Board
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Water Resources
- California Department of Transportation
- California Division of Mine Reclamation
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Water Resources Control Board
- Native American Heritage Commission
- State Office of Historic Preservation

1.5 Public Scoping

In accordance with CEQA, a good-faith effort has been made during the preparation of this DEIR to contact affected agencies, organizations, and persons who have an interest in this project. This effort included the circulation of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of this DEIR by the Lead Agency to the California Office of Planning and Research on October 26, 2023. The NOP was mailed directly to parties with an interest in the proposed project. The NOP was mailed to the following agencies and organizations:

Local

Banner Lassen Medical Center

County

Lannen Municipal Utility District
Lassen County Administrative Officer
Lassen County Agricultural Commissioner
Lassen County Air Pollution Control District
Lassen County Air Pollution Control Officer
Lassen County Assessor's Office
Lassen County Counsel
Lassen County Environmental Health Department
Lassen County Fire Warden
Lassen County Fish & Game Commission
Lassen County Public Works – Road Division
Lassen County Regional Solid Waste Management Authority

City of Susanville

City of Susanville Planning
City of Susanville Public Works

State

California Air Resources Board
California Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
California Department of Parks and Recreation
California Department of Toxic Substances Control
California Department of Transportation – District 2
California Department of Water Resources
California Highway Patrol
California Office of Historic Preservation
California Office of Planning and Research – State Clearinghouse
California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Lahontan Region
California State Lands Commission

Federal

Bureau of Land Management - Susanville
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Native American Groups

Honey Lake Maidu
Susanville Indian Rancheria
Greenville Rancheria of Maidu Indians
Pit River Tribe of California
Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California

Fire Protection Districts
Susan River Fire Protection District

Supervisors
Tom Neely

School Districts
Lassen County Community College District
Lassen Union High School District
Susanville Elem. School District

The purpose of the NOP was to solicit comments from public agencies on issues germane to that agency that should be considered in the DEIR. The public review period for the NOP ends approximately 30 days after public distribution of the NOP. The NOP and formal comment letters received are included in Appendix A. The following responses were received and considered during the preparation of this DEIR:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (December 8, 2023)
- Native American Heritage Commission (October 31, 2023)
- Lassen County Department of Public Works (June 6, 2024)
- Susanville Indian Rancheria (October 31, 2024, October 7, 2025)
- Lassen County Planning and Building Services (October 30, 2025)

1.6 AB 52 Tribal Notification

Consultation and coordination with various culturally affiliated Tribal groups and agencies were conducted in accordance with PRC Section 21080.3.1 (AB 52).

On October 26, 2023, the County initiated environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed project. On October 26, 2023, the County distributed project notification letters to the Pit River Tribe of California, Greenville Rancheria of Maidu Indians, Susanville Indian Rancheria, Honey Lake Maidu, and Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, each a California Native American Tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, pursuant to PRC Section 21080.3.1. The notification letter informed each group of project details, which were under County review, and requested within 30 days from the receipt of the letter any request for consultation on the project be received in writing.

A response from the Native American Heritage Commission was received on October 31, 2023, requesting initiation of consultation under the provisions of AB 52. A response was also received by the County from Susanville Indian Rancheria requesting initiation of consultation under the provisions of AB 52.

Susanville Indian Rancheria (SIR) was consulted by the project archaeologist over the course of several months during evaluation of onsite tribal cultural resources that resulted in a subsequent investigation performed on February 22, 2024, of prehistoric and historic-era Native American sites for potential eligibility.

An evaluation was also conducted on September 4, 2024, for an impacts assessment of the Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape (STCL) included as Appendix L, in collaboration with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Natural Resources Director, and tribal elders to ensure such impact determinations remain culturally sensitive and accurate. This impacts assessment resulted in delineation of the tribal cultural landscape boundaries, an evaluation of eligibility for identified resources that reflect the cultural priorities and perspectives of the SIR, a detailed list of contributing elements and roles in preserving the Tribe's heritage, establishment of appropriate mitigation measures to minimize impacts to less than significant and signature of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for implementation of mitigation, as a result of potential impacts on the cultural landscape, lifeways and known tribal resources. The MOA was developed to resolve any known and potential impacts per CEQA and PRC 5097.98 and to establish a framework for the implementation of mitigation. Impacts to Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources are further detailed in Section 4.6 of this document.

1.7 Review of DEIR

This DEIR will be published and made available to local, regional, State, and federal agencies and any interested organizations or individuals who may want to review and comment on the adequacy of the analysis included in the DEIR. Notice of this DEIR will also be sent directly to parties of interest that commented on the NOP. The DEIR will undergo a 45-day public review period.

Following the close of the public comment period, responses to comments on the DEIR will be prepared and published as separate documents. The DEIR, together with the responses to comments document, will constitute the Final EIR. The Final EIR will be considered by the Lead Agency prior to any action taken on the proposed project.

Written comments on the DEIR may be sent to:

Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services
707 Nevada Street, Suite 5
Susanville, CA 96130
Attn: Nancy McAllister

1.8 Guidelines for Commenting on the DEIR

The purpose of the public review of the DEIR is to evaluate the adequacy of the environmental analysis in terms of compliance with CEQA. CEQA §15151 states the following regarding standards from which adequacy is judged:

"An EIR should be prepared with sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible."

CEQA §15204(a) provides guidance to assist members of the public and public agencies in preparing comments on a DEIR. Section 15204.5(a) states:

"In reviewing draft EIRs, persons and public agencies should focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated.

Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate the significant environmental effects. At the same time, reviewers should be aware that the adequacy of an EIR is determined in terms of what is reasonably feasible, in light of factors such as the magnitude of the project at issue, the severity of its likely environmental impacts, and the geographic scope of the project. CEQA does not require a Lead Agency to conduct every test or perform all research, study, and experimentation recommended or demanded by commenters. When responding to comments, lead agencies need only respond to significant environmental issues and do not need to provide all information requested by reviewers, as long as a good faith effort at full disclosure is made in the EIR."

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, an effect is not considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence; therefore, comments should be accompanied by factual support. Section 15204(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states:

"Reviewers should explain the basis for their comments, and should submit data or references offering facts, reasonable assumptions based on facts or expert opinion supported by facts in support of the comments. Pursuant to Section 15064 an effect shall not be considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence."

1.9 Organization of the DEIR

The DEIR is organized by the following chapters:

- *Chapter 1: Introduction.* Chapter 1 describes the intended uses of this DEIR, the environmental review approach, documents incorporated by reference, environmental review process, and document organization.
- *Chapter 2: Executive Summary.* Chapter 2 includes a summary of the proposed project, environmental impacts and mitigation, areas of known controversy, and issues to be resolved in the DEIR. A summary table is included presenting the summary of potential environmental impacts, their level of significance without mitigation measures, mitigation measures, and levels of significance with mitigation measures.
- *Chapter 3: Project Description.* Chapter 3 includes a description of the proposed project background, project location, and existing conditions of the subject site. Chapter 3 also includes the project objectives, description of the project characteristics, and approvals and entitlements necessary to implement the proposed project.
- *Chapter 4: Environmental Setting, Impact Analysis, and Mitigation Measures.* Chapter 4 describes the existing environmental setting, impacts and mitigation measures for specific areas identified by the County requiring environmental review.
- *Chapter 5: Other CEQA Considerations.* Chapter 5 discusses other CEQA issues, including growth-inducing impacts, cumulative impacts, significant and unavoidable impacts on the environment, and significant irreversible environmental changes.

- *Chapter 6: Alternatives to the Proposed Project.* Chapter 6 describes the alternatives to the proposed project, along with an analysis of the ability of the alternatives to meet the Project objectives and associated environmental impacts.
- *Chapter 7: List of Preparers.* Chapter 7 contains a list of report authors and subconsultants.
- *Chapter 8: References.* Chapter 8 contains a list of documents referenced in the DEIR.
- *Appendices.* The appendices include materials and studies that support the findings and conclusions presented in the DEIR.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Introduction

This Executive Summary section is provided in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15123. As stated in the CEQA Guidelines §15123(a), "An EIR shall contain a summary of the proposed actions and their consequences. The language of the summary should be as clear and simple as reasonably practical." CEQA Guidelines §15123 (b) states, the summary shall identify:

- Each significant effect with proposed mitigation measures and alternatives that would reduce or avoid that effect.
- Areas of controversy known to Lassen County, including issues raised by agencies and the public.
- Issues to be resolved, including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate the significant effects.

Accordingly, this summary includes a brief synopsis of the proposed project and alternatives, environmental impacts and mitigation, areas of known controversy, and issues to be resolved in the DEIR. Table 2-2, *Summary of Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures* (at the end of this section), presents the summary of potential environmental impacts, their level of significance without mitigation measures, mitigation measures, and levels of significance with mitigation measures.

2.2 Project Location

The proposed project is located approximately 1-½ miles east of Highway 139 off Skyline Road to the northeast of Susanville in Lassen County. The site is approximately ½ mile to the east of Lassen Community College and ¾ mile northeast of the Lassen County Fairgrounds. The City of Susanville is located directly west of the project site. Geographically, the proposed project is located north ½ of Section 34 and south ½ of Section 27, Township 30 North, Range 12 East, Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM). The latitude and longitude at the center of the site are 40.424213 and -120.622222, respectively. The general site location is shown in Figure 3-1 in Section 3.

2.3 Surrounding Land Use

The proposed project is currently vacant. Surrounding parcels are used for agricultural purposes or vacant land. The closest developed parcels are within the Susanville city limits. The site is located directly west of the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant and Lassen County Fairgrounds, southeast of Lassen Community College, south of Banner Lassen Medical Center, and the Northeastern Rural Health Clinic. A few scattered residences on large parcels and limited other development occur within a one-mile radius to the north and east of the project site. Land use adjacent to the proposed project is defined by the *Lassen County General Plan* as "Planned Development" and "Parks and Recreation" to the north, "Extensive Agriculture" to the east, "Urban Reserve" and "Intensive Agriculture" to the west, and "Resource Conservation" and "Public" to the south. Zoning designations adjacent to the project area include U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District) to the south and east, M-1 (Light

Industrial Activity) to the southwest, A-3 (Agricultural District) and U-C (Upland Conservation District) to the west, and U-C (Upland Conservation District) to the north.

The nearest residential development occurs approximately 2,675 feet from the western site boundary within the City of Susanville. Several residences are present on large agricultural properties south and southwest of the site, the closest of which is located approximately 3,050 feet from the site's southern boundary. The current zoning and land use designations for the project site and surrounding parcels are shown in detail in Section 3.2.

2.4 General Plan and Zoning

The proposed project is located within unincorporated Lassen County and within the area covered by the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* (Area Plan). The Area Plan extends 1 to 1.5 miles from the 1982 Susanville city limits. The project parcel (APN 101-110-24) is designated as "Urban Reserve/Intensive" by the Lassen County General Plan and is zoned U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District).

Land use adjacent to the current operation boundaries are defined by the General Plan and Area Plan as "Planned Development" and "Parks and Recreation" to the north, "Extensive Agriculture" and "Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve" to the east, "Intensive", and "Urban Reserve/Intensive" the west, and "Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve", "Urban Reserve/Intensive", and "Intensive" to the south. Zoning designations adjacent to the project area are PD (Planned Development) and O-S (Open Space) to the north, U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District) to the east, U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District), and M-1 (Light Industrial Activity) to the south, A-3 (Agricultural District) and U-C (Upland Conservation District) to the west. The current zoning and land use designations for the project site and surrounding parcels are shown in detail in Section 3.2.

2.5 Project Summary

The proposed project site is currently a 640-acre undeveloped parcel located just northeast of the City of Susanville in unincorporated Lassen County.

The proposed project includes surface mining, mining-related disturbance, and reclamation activities on 460 acres of the parcel for the extraction of 39,864,900 cubic yards of hard rock aggregate. Mining will occur on approximately 430 acres, with an additional 30 acres of development consisting of the stormwater retention pond, landscape sales area, shop, and truck scales. Project design considers final topography, stormwater and dust containment, noise barriers and lighting limitations, revegetation and use of aesthetic color pallets and landscaping elements. Mining operations would include the extraction of material at a rate of 450,000 tons per year, processing of aggregate, a concrete plant, an asphalt plant, and aggregate transportation. Following mining activities, the 460-acre mining area would be reclaimed to support agricultural and open space resources, including wildlife habitat, cultural and scenic resources.

The proposed project will require approval of the following permits and plans:

- Conditional Use Permit, Lassen County Planning Commission
- Reclamation Plan, Lassen County Planning Commission and Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR)
- Permits for Operation, Lassen County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)
- Industrial General Permit, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and Concrete Facilities, State Water Resources Control Boards

This DEIR evaluates the potential for mining and reclamation activities to result in significant impacts to the environment. The proposed project will also operate under the requirements encumbered during the approval of the above permits or plans. Mining will commence upon approval of the Use Permit and Reclamation Plan.

2.6 Project Objectives

The project objectives are:

- Provide a comprehensively planned and financially feasible project that will continue to accommodate projected growth in construction-related activities and associated services to serve to meet the current and future demands for construction materials both locally and regionally.
- Provide a full-service mine operation that includes the extraction of material at a rate of approximately 450,000 tons per year.
- Placement of a new quarry near major highways to minimize vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Provide construction material diversion from landfills through recycling up to 100,000 tons of asphalt/concrete annually.
- Provide a local source of materials for emergency jobs (during federal, State, or locally declared emergencies) and other construction jobs requiring nighttime work.
- Contribute to the improvement of the Lassen County economy by increasing sales taxes, but also not impose fiscal demands on the provision of County services compared to other types of development projects.
- Avoid sensitive natural resources to the extent feasible and provide adequate mitigation where avoidance is not feasible; minimize aesthetic impacts through site design, mine phasing, and ultimate site reclamation.
- Implement a reclamation plan that provides for long-term slope stability, prevents wind and water erosion, and establishes self-sustaining native and naturalized vegetation cover.
- Provide additional high-quality jobs within Lassen County.

2.7 Project Alternatives

Section 15126(d) of the CEQA Guidelines mandates that all EIRs include a comparative evaluation of the proposed project with alternatives to the project that are capable of attaining most of the project's basic objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. CEQA requires a "reasonable range" of alternatives, including the "no project" alternative. Chapter 6, Alternatives, of this DEIR discusses each alternative in detail. The alternatives evaluated include:

2.7.1 Rejected Project Alternatives

Two potential alternatives to the proposed project were initially considered but determined not to be viable and were eliminated from further consideration. These alternatives are described below.

Alternative Project Location
Materials produced at the site will include asphalt, concrete, various sizes of crushed rock, and crushed base rock, which are used as construction materials. The quality of the resources and the choice of location for the existing and potential market aggregates and paving materials were the determining factors in choosing the proposed project site for the planned operations.

An alternative location would require the identification and design of a quarry and aggregate processing facilities at another location that meets the criteria above to avoid or lessen significant impacts within the project region capable of producing up to 450,000 tons of aggregate annually, or the identification of multiple quarry locations that could achieve that combined capacity. Successful development of quarry and processing facilities at an alternative location would depend on a number of geologic, environmental, and economic factors.

No specific location with attributes necessary to accomplish the project objectives is known in enough detail to be identified as a specific alternative site. Because of the multiple and underdetermined site conditions that could exist at an alternative location, the County does not possess sufficient information to determine whether potential mining and processing sites at alternative locations are available to feasibly meet the project objectives.

Alternative Asphalt Plant Location
An Alternative Asphalt Plant Location was initially considered but rejected for further consideration. This alternative included trucking material from the project site to different quarry site locations owned and operated by the project proponent. The closest and most highly considered for the production of asphalt was the existing Ward Lake Pit asphalt plant. Ward Lake Pit is operated by the project proponent and is located approximately 15 miles southeast of the project site. This alternative was initially considered as a means to reduce potential noise, air quality, and odor concerns of the project. After site-specific studies were completed and evaluated, the proposed project impacts were found to be less than significant with mitigation with the development of an asphalt plant operation onsite. This alternative would result in the same emissions as the proposed project from asphalt production and would result in increased impacts. Under this alternative, additional truck traffic and vehicle miles traveled would be required to transport materials between sites, resulting in increased energy use, air pollutants, and greenhouse

gas emissions. Other existing quarry facilities were farther in distance, resulting in even higher thresholds. As a result, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.

2.7.2 Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, environmental conditions at the site would remain as they currently exist. The No Project Alternative would eliminate the significant impacts of the proposed project to Aesthetics and Biological Resources, as well as the less than significant impacts of the proposed project. Construction materials for local and regional demands, including jobs, could be met by the nearby Ward Lake Pit, which is permitted to operate until the year 2050, or a combination of other smaller quarries in Lassen County. Local and regional demand could not be met if Ward Lake Pit runs out of material prior to 2050 and if demand is greater than 200,000 tons of material per year. The No Project Alternative would not meet the proposed project objectives to contribute to the Lassen County economy and provide additional high-quality jobs. If the site were to remain vacant, there would not be an associated generation of jobs, tax revenue, or utility fee revenue.

2.7.3 Alternative 2 – Reduced Footprint Alternative

The Reduced Footprint Alternative would include an excavation area of 270 acres rather than the 430 acres that are included in the proposed project. This alternative would result in reduced impacts to Aesthetics and Biological Resources, as the excavation area would be smaller than the excavation area of the proposed project and would lessen the footprint of disturbance. Although reduced, impacts related to degradation of the existing visual character of the site, deterioration of spiritually significant basalt rocks and traditional hunting grounds, unearthing of lithic scatters, and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds would remain significant and unavoidable.

Overall energy demand, as well as air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions generated by the reduced footprint, would be less than the proposed project due to a shorter duration of operations; however, daily and annual emissions would remain the same during the operational period of the Reduced Footprint Alternative. Noise and odor impacts from material extraction would also be reduced, as mobile equipment and blasting would occur within a smaller area. Impacts to other resource areas would be similar to the proposed project, but would simply occur for a shorter duration of time, as a result of the reduced footprint of the excavation area.

The Reduced Footprint Alternative would meet all project objectives, but for a shorter duration of time, considering the life of the mine would be reduced due to the reduced footprint of the excavation area.

2.7.4 No Asphalt Plant Alternative

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative includes the same mining area and activities as the proposed project, apart from asphalt production. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would not include the propane/natural gas-fired hot mix plant, associated hoppers and conveyor belt, or three diesel backup generators required for the asphalt plant. Without the asphalt plant, extension of natural gas utilities to the site would not be required.

No asphalt production at the site would result in less energy required and lower emissions of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases than the proposed project. In addition, fewer trucks would be required, as asphalt would not be produced or hauled, and noise levels from onsite operations and from traffic would be lower than the noise generated by the proposed project. Noise, odor, and human disturbance would be reduced, resulting in reduced disturbance impacts to wildlife. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would also require fewer hazardous materials, resulting in fewer fire and safety hazards onsite. Although impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Greenhouse Gases, Energy, Hazardous Materials, Noise, and Traffic would be lessened under the No Asphalt Plant Alternative, the overall level of significance for these impacts would be the same as the proposed project. Impacts to other resources would be similar to the impacts of the proposed project, and the mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required for the No Asphalt Plant Alternative.

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative does not eliminate or substantially reduce the significant and unavoidable impacts of the project. As with the proposed project, impacts related to the cultural, historical, and spiritual significance of the Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape, degradation of the existing visual character of the site, and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds will remain significant. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative fails to meet many of the project objectives. Without the production of asphalt, this alternative would not be able to meet current and future demands for construction materials, both locally and regionally, as projects requiring asphalt could not be served. The Project would not be a full-service operation without asphalt production. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative could not serve emergency projects requiring asphalt, including most road repair projects. In addition, asphalt recycling could not be conducted without an asphalt plant.

2.7.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA Guidelines §15126.6 requires that the alternatives analysis must identify the environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives considered. The No Project Alternative would eliminate all the impacts of the proposed project and would be the environmentally superior alternative. However, the No Project Alternative does not meet the project objectives. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires that if the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must also identify the environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

The Reduced Footprint Alternative results in the fewest impacts among the remaining alternatives considered. As discussed previously, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would reduce long-term impacts of the project to Biological Resources and Aesthetic Resources to less than significant after reclamation. However, degradation of the visual character of the site as well as the loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds, will be significant and unavoidable for the duration of mining activities. Impacts to the Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape would also still be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation. Impacts to other resource areas would be reduced from the smaller footprint and shorter operational period of this alternative. Therefore, in lieu of the No Project Alternative, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative.

2.8 Environmental Impacts

2.8.1 Environmental Impacts Not Considered Further in this DEIR

Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines states, "An EIR shall contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR.

Mineral Resources
California's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) requires the State Geologist to classify land into mineral resource zones based on the known or inferred mineral resource potential of that land. The primary goal is to ensure that important mineral resources do not become inaccessible due to uninformed land use decisions. To this end, the California Geological Survey performs objective mineral land classification (MLC) to assist in the protection and wise development of California's mineral resources (California Department of Conservation, 2019). A search of the SMARA Mineral Lands Classification (MLC) data portal did not show any MLC-related studies or maps for Lassen County or the proposed project site. There are no designated mineral deposits of regional or statewide importance within the project site.

The State of California has not designated an area of statewide or regional mineral resource significance within the proposed project site. In addition, the proposed quarry is not delineated in the *Lassen County General Plan* or *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* as a locally important mineral resource. As a result, implementation of the proposed project will not result in the loss of availability of a mineral resource of value to the region or residents of the state or delineated locally important mineral resource. Therefore, the proposed project will have no impact to mineral resources.

Population and Housing
The proposed project includes the extension of electricity and possibly natural gas to the site from the City of Susanville. No more than twenty employees are anticipated. In addition, the project does not propose any housing, and no existing housing or people will be displaced by the proposed project. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will have no impact to the population and housing.

2.8.2 Less Than Significant Impacts

The following subject areas have been identified as having a less-than-significant impact:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources (Section 4.3)
- Energy (Section 4.7)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Section 4.9)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 4.10)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 4.11)
- Public Services (Section 4.14)
- Recreation (Section 4.15)
- Utilities and Service Systems (Section 4.16)

2.8.3 Less Than Significant with Incorporation of Mitigation

Implementation of the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts with the incorporation of mitigation measures on the following subject areas:

- Air Quality (Section 4.4)
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (4.6)
- Geology and Soils (Section 4.8)
- Land Use and Planning (Section 4.12)
- Noise (Section 4.13)
- Transportation (Section 4.15)
- Wildfire (Section 4.17)

2.8.4 Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Section 15126(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss the significant impacts of a proposed project that cannot be reduced to a less than significant level. These impacts are referred to as significant and unavoidable impacts of the project. In Sections 4.2 through 4.17 of this DEIR, the issue areas were analyzed to determine whether project implementation would result in a significant adverse environmental impact. Based on the analyses given in these sections, the following environmental impacts were determined to be significant and unavoidable:

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
Impact 4.2-2: In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the public views of the site and its surroundings.

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.).

Implementation of the proposed project will alter the visual character of the site by physical disturbance of the 460-acre mining area. Initial mining operations within the Phase 1 area will represent the most swift and significant change in visual character. In the first two years of the project, mining operations will be required to extract enough material to reach the Phase 1 base elevation. Design features and equipment will be placed below the existing topography.

Topography was carefully considered during design development to utilize the lowest elevation possible for the selection of locations for planned operations, installation of fencing, headwalls and berms, with landscaped revegetation of disturbed areas within the viewshed of existing surrounding recreational features and highway corridors referenced in Table 4-36. Over the remainder of the 50-year lifespan, aesthetic changes will be limited in areas to be immediately mined; therefore, changes to the character of the site would be gradual for the remaining period. As practicable, areas that have been mined and are not to be disturbed by ongoing operations would be reclaimed and revegetated. Following completion of mining activities, the project site

will be reclaimed for agricultural and open space resources, including wildlife habitat, cultural, and scenic resources.

Figures 4-2 and 4-3 depict the estimated areas where the proposed project will be visible. As shown in these figures, the project will be visible from public areas, including highways considered scenic and the Lassen County Fairgrounds. Implementation of the proposed project will result in the removal of vegetation from the site. Excavation areas, stockpile areas, the landscape yard, shop, and processing areas will be visible and represent a change in the existing character of the project site from undeveloped and agricultural to an industrial nature for the duration of mining activities. Following reclamation, the proposed end use for the project site would be for agricultural and open space resources, including wildlife habitat, cultural and scenic resources. Due to the long-term nature of the disturbance and extent of topographic change, this impact will be significant with mitigation incorporated.

Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 includes the use of natural materials and earth-tone colors for project structures and stationary equipment that will allow the project to better blend with the surrounding landscape. Mitigation Measure 4.2-4 includes design configuration limited to the lowest topography available within the mining disturbance area, installation of headwalls and/or berms revegetated with landscaping elements by means to minimize visual nuisance within Highway 36 and the Lassen County Fairgrounds grandstand viewsheds. Although the implementation of these measures will reduce the direct visual impact of mining activities, the implementation of the proposed project will still degrade the existing visual character of the site through the conversion of vacant/agricultural land to industrial use during mining activities. This direct impact will remain significant and unavoidable.

Biological Resources

Impact 4.5-2: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

The proposed project will remove 460 acres of juniper woodland and sagebrush vegetation, which provides important food sources for wintering birds and acts as available nesting and foraging habitat for many songbird species. Juniper trees provide protective cover in an otherwise sparsely vegetated landscape for many bird species. Impacts to nesting habitat would also result from human presence, noise, and light pollution from project operations. These factors can influence the selection of habitat, which can negatively impact population dynamics over time for avian species.

While site design includes revegetation, the project would still ultimately result in a permanent loss of potential nesting and foraging habitat that would represent a significant impact. Direct impacts to nesting birds will be mitigated to less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-8 by surveying prior to site preparation and creating buffers around any active nests. Indirect impacts from human presence, noise and light pollution, and removal of vegetation within the mine footprint will be significant due to long-term population dynamics, with mature juniper forests playing an important role in the sage steppe ecosystem.

With the incorporation of mitigation, this impact will remain significant and unavoidable regarding indirect impacts from human presence, noise, light pollution, and a permanent, unrecoverable loss of foraging and nesting habitat for songbird species.

2.8.5 Significant Cumulative Impacts

According to §15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, the term "cumulative impacts" refers to two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. Individual effects that may contribute to a cumulative impact may be from a single project or a number of separate projects. Individually, the impacts of a project may be relatively minor, but when considered along with the impacts of other closely related or nearby projects, including newly proposed projects, the effects could be cumulatively considerable.

This DEIR has considered the potential cumulative effects of the proposed project along with other current and reasonably foreseeable projects. Impacts to the following areas have been found to be cumulatively significant:

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Aesthetic and visual resource impacts of the project include mining activities in the previously undisturbed 460-acre mining and reclamation area. Following completion of mining activities, the project site will be revegetated and used to support agricultural and open space wildlife, cultural, and scenic resources. The geographic scope for cumulative visual resource impacts includes the viewsheds that will be affected by the proposed project. These areas include the area from which the project site will be visible. The project site is visible from the grandstands of the Lassen County Fairgrounds, Highway 36, and the surrounding City of Susanville area. This geographic extent is appropriate, as other projects that can be viewed at the same time as the project site could contribute to cumulative visual effects.

The project will result in physical disturbance of the 460-acre mining and operations area, including removal of vegetation, excavation, change in topography, and development. Stockpile areas, the landscape yard, and the crusher and asphalt plant will be less visible from public areas with mitigation incorporated but overall represent a significant change in the existing character of the area from undeveloped and agricultural to industrial in nature. Following mining, the area will be revegetated and used for agricultural and open space for wildlife, cultural, and scenic resources. Project-level impacts related to the degradation of the existing visual character or aesthetic quality of the site and its surroundings will be significant and unavoidable after incorporation of Mitigation Measures 4.2-1 through 4.2-4.

The project will be visible to the public along Skyline Road, portions of Highway 36, and the grandstands of the Lassen County Fairgrounds. Project-level impacts are cumulatively considerable with visibility from the Lassen County Fairgrounds with the same viewpoints as the project site. Limitations of scheduled nighttime deliveries and mining operations during scheduled concert events at the Lassen County Fairgrounds and City of Susanville community events will reduce cumulative impacts from noise and lighting of the surrounding scenic vista landscape.

The impacts of the project are cumulatively considerable to existing and proposed development within the project vicinity. Project design was reconfigured as a means to reduce cumulative impacts; however, it will not reduce project-level impacts to a less-than-significant level. As a result, cumulative impacts related to the degradation of the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings are significant and unavoidable.

Biological Resources
Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

The geographic context for cumulative biological resource impacts is both regional and local. The geographic context for cumulative impacts includes the area immediately surrounding the project site for direct and indirect impacts from mining and reclamation activities. The geographic context for cumulative impacts related to habitat loss includes similar habitat types within Lassen County. Cumulative projects include those operating or affecting habitat concurrent with the proposed project.

As discussed in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*, the project will result in significant and unavoidable impacts through the loss of foraging and nesting habitat for songbird species. The loss of songbird habitat resulting from the project is cumulatively considerable in combination with other projects in the county that would result in habitat loss for nesting songbirds. All projects involving the removal of trees or shrubs near the project site are cumulatively considerable for nesting songbird habitat loss. Significant project-level impacts in combination with additional development discussed in this document and activities within the region will result in significant and unavoidable cumulative impacts.

2.9 Areas of Controversy, Issues Raised, and Areas Resolved in the DEIR

As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the City issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. Comments received include those received during early consultation as well as in response to the NOP for the proposed project. The following comments were received (refer to Appendix A for initial NOP response):

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (December 8, 2023)
- Native American Heritage Commission (October 31, 2023)
- Lassen County, Department of Public Works (June 6, 2024)
- Susanville Indian Rancheria (October 31, 2024; October 7, 2025)

Section 15123(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain issues to be resolved, which includes the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate significant impacts. The following major issues are to be resolved:

- Determine whether the DEIR adequately describes the environmental impacts of the proposed project;
- Choose among alternatives;

- Determine whether the recommended mitigation measures should be adopted or modified; and
- Determine whether additional mitigation measures need to be applied to the proposed project.

2.10 Summary of Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Under CEQA, a significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. For these areas, this DEIR discusses the impacts and mitigation measures that could be implemented by Lassen County to reduce potential adverse impacts to a level that is considered less than significant. An impact that remains significant after mitigation is considered an unavoidable adverse impact of the proposed project. The mitigation measures presented in the DEIR will form the basis of the *Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program*.

Table 2-2, *Summary of Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, provides a summary of the environmental effects of the proposed project identified in each technical issue chapter. The table consists of the environmental impacts, the significance of the impacts for the project, the proposed mitigation measures, and the significance of the impacts after the mitigation measures are implemented.

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
4.2 AESTHETIC AND VISUAL RESOURCES			
Impact 4.2-1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.	Potentially Significant	4.2-1: Structures, walls, or buildings constructed within the project site shall be constructed of natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. Stationary equipment shall be pained earth-tone colors. 4.2-4: The design of the site will utilize end grade topography for development at the lowest elevation feasible to reduce visual nuisance to public views and the surrounding area. Visual barriers such as headwalls and berms will be installed and revegetated to include landscape elements.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.2-2: In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the public views of the site and its surroundings.	Significant	4.2-1: Structures, walls, or buildings constructed within the project site shall be constructed of natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. Stationary equipment shall be painted earth-tone colors. 4.2-2: All exterior lighting shall be designed and located so as to confine direct lighting to the premises. A light source shall not shine upon or illuminate directly on any surface other than the area required to be lit. No lighting shall be of the type or in a location that constitutes a hazard to vehicle traffic, either on private property or abutting streets. All mobile lighting equipment shall utilize shielded directional lighting that is pointed downward, thereby minimizing illumination to adjacent natural areas and the night sky. The project applicant shall apply minimal lighting standards to minimize project-related light and glare to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with safety considerations. The development plans for Skyline Quarry shall include lighting standards as required by this mitigation measure, including maximum standards for light "spillage." Compliance with the lighting standards shall be demonstrated in the Project Compliance Report submitted for each development phase.	Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		4.2-3: Scheduled deliveries and activities for mining operations shall be prohibited during nighttime hours conflicting with scheduled events at the Lassen County Fairgrounds, and City of Susanville community events. 4.2-4: The design of the site will utilize end grade topography for development at the lowest elevation feasible to reduce visual nuisance to public views and the surrounding area. Visual barriers such as headwalls and berms will be installed and revegetated to include landscape elements.	
Impact 4.2-3: Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.	Potentially Significant	4.2-1: Structures, walls, or buildings constructed within the project site shall be constructed of natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. Stationary equipment shall be painted earth-tone colors. 4.2-2: All exterior lighting shall be designed and located so as to confine direct lighting to the premises. A light source shall not shine upon or illuminate directly on any surface other than the area required to be lighted. No lighting shall be of the type or in a location such that constitutes a hazard to vehicle traffic, either on private property or abutting streets. All mobile lighting equipment shall utilize shielded directional lighting that is pointed downward thereby minimizing illumination to adjacent natural areas and the night sky. The project applicant shall apply minimal lighting standards to minimize project-related light and glare to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with safety considerations. The development plans for Skyline Quarry shall include lighting standards as required by this mitigation measure, including maximum standards for light "spillage." Compliance with the lighting standards shall be demonstrated in the Project Compliance Report submitted for each development phase.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		4.2-3: Scheduled deliveries and activities for mining operations will be prohibited during nighttime hours that conflict with scheduled events at the Lassen County Fairgrounds and City of Susanville community events.	
4.3 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES			
Impact 4.3-1: Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.3-2: Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.3-3 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.4 AIR QUALITY			
Impact 4.4-1: Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.	Potentially Significant	4.4-1**:** The proposed project shall include the use of off-road diesel-powered equipment with 25 horsepower or greater that meets the USEPA's and CARB's Tier 4 engine emissions standards, for all phases of construction activity and during operations, as specified in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts. 4.4-2: The applicant shall implement the following mitigation measures to further reduce fugitive dust emissions: a. Increased water frequency is required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 miles per hour (mph). b. All material excavated, stockpiled, or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated, or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard. c. All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have a dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		d. All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph. e. All onsite vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads. f. All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded, or watered until a suitable cover is established. g. All material transported offsite shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance. h. To address fugitive dust emissions, the proposed project will require a well capable of meeting the anticipated water demand for mining uses at the site. This demand is expected to be up to 16,000 gallons for aggregate washing and dust suppression per day with an estimated total annual demand of 3,180,000 gallons (9.76 acre-feet). Water will also be recycled from the wash water and used for dust suppression. The well is anticipated to be located near the southern parcel boundary. 4.4-3: Construction will include three-sided enclosures with 50 percent porosity for storage piles, and/or plant tree windbreaks on the windward (southwest) perimeter of project site, and/or water the storage piles or apply cover when wind events exceed 25 mph. 4.4-4: The applicant shall use alternative methods to open burning for vegetation disposal. The open burning of site-cleared vegetation shall be prohibited. Among suitable alternatives to be used shall be chipping, grinding, hauling to an approved disposal site, cutting for firewood, and conversion to biomass fuel. 4.4-5: Construction includes installation and maintenance of track out control devices in effective condition at all	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		access points where paved and unpaved access or travel routes intersect (e.g., install wheel shakers, wheel washers, and limit site access). 4.4-6: When materials are transported offsite, all material shall be covered, effectively wetted to limit visible dust emissions, and at least six inches of freeboard space from the top of the container shall be maintained. 4.4-7: All streets located within the project site area shall be swept periodically using Air District certified street sweepers if visible soil materials are carried to adjacent streets. 4.4-8: The applicant will implement the following operational equipment requirements and operation protocols for generators operating at the proposed project. These features would be included in applicable bid documents, and successful contractor(s) must demonstrate the ability to supply such equipment and comply with such protocols. Operational features would include the following: ● All backup generators used for proposed project operations shall be selected from the Lassen County APCD certified generators list and meet applicable federal standards for diesel emissions. For after-treatment of engine exhaust air, a diesel particulate filter shall be provided to meet the emission level requirements of the Lassen County APCD. The proposed project would have three backup generators, each could operate up to two hours per day and a total of 500 hours per year for testing and maintenance to ensure reliability in the case of a power outage. ● The backup generators shall meet the USEPA's and CARB's Tier 4 engine emissions standards, as	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		specified in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts. ● The applicant shall conduct maintenance and/or testing on the three backup generators on separate days (i.e., one generator on the 5th day of the month, one generator on the 15th day of the month, and one generator on the 25th day of the month).	
Impact 4.4-2: Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.4-3: Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.	Potentially Significant	4.4-9: To reduce the opportunity for odor impacts, the applicant shall develop an Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP), which will provide a toolbox for the proposed project to properly monitor, assess, and mitigate odor impacts resulting from the operation of the asphalt plant. In general, the OIMP shall be used to accomplish the following objectives: 1. Monitor site conditions and resulting odor emissions using accepted techniques. 2. Eliminate origins of odor from the facility, as feasible. 3. Implement corrective actions as required to mitigate odor impacts resulting from facility operation. The OIMP would be triggered if five or more confirmed complaints per year, averaged over three years, are made to and verified by the Lassen County APCD. The OIMP would establish a protocol for responding to odor events.	Less than Significant
4.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES			
Impact 4.5-1: Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by DFG or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).	Potentially Significant	4.5-1: Impacts of nighttime lighting shall be minimized by using shielded directional lighting that is pointed downward thereby avoiding illumination to adjacent natural areas and the night sky. 4.5-2: Equipment shall be visually inspected each day for the presence of wildlife to prevent injury or harm to an animal.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		4.5-3: Wildlife-friendly slopes of 2:1 or less shall be maintained on the south and east mine boundaries to prevent injury or entrapment of wildlife. 4.5-6: The mine site will be kept clean and free of loose garbage, food scraps, or any materials that could attract raccoons, skunks, ravens, or crows, as these are known predators of crane nests. 4.5-8: If vegetation removal will occur during the bird nesting season (February 1 to August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within seven days before construction activities. The survey area shall include the proposed disturbance area and surrounding 500 feet. If nesting birds or raptors are found, CDFW will be consulted. An appropriate buffer based on species and conservation status will be placed around the nest until the young have fledged. If an appropriate buffer distance is not achievable, then alternate compliance measures may be implemented instead, such as noise attenuation measures or project activities monitoring by a qualified biologist until the nest is no longer active. 4.5-10: Within the mine footprint: A protocol-level survey shall be completed by a qualified botanist or biologist for potentially occurring special-status plant species Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*) and Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*) prior to each phase of ground disturbance, and prior to any other new ground disturbance, throughout the life of the mine. Surveys will be completed during the appropriate time of year when the target species are flowering: Pulsifer's milk-vetch flowers between May and August, and Susanville beardtongue flowers between June and July. The purpose of the surveys will be to assess the presence or absence of the potentially occurring species. If none of the target species are found in the impact area or the surrounding 50-foot buffer, then no further mitigation	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		measures shall apply. If a target species is found, then the location(s) will be mapped, and data will be submitted to the CNDDB. Plants shall be avoided by implementing a non-disturbance buffer or will otherwise be preserved through collecting seeds and spreading in a designated non-disturbance area onsite where habitat for the species occurs. The non-disturbance area shall be designated in consultation with CDFW. ● Within the utility corridor: If ground disturbance occurs within wetland habitat, then a protocol-level survey shall be completed by a qualified botanist or biologist for potentially occurring special-status plant species Sheldon's sedge (*Carex sheldonii*) and grass alisma (*Alisma gramineum*) prior to ground disturbance. The survey shall be completed between June and August when the species are flowering and identifiable. If neither of the target species are found in the impact area, then no further mitigation measures shall apply. If a target species is found, then the location(s) will be mapped, and data will be submitted to the CNDDB. Plants shall be avoided by implementing a 25-foot non-disturbance buffer or will otherwise be preserved through collecting seeds and spreading in a designated non-disturbance area onsite where habitat for the species occurs in consultation with CDFW. 4.5-11: To prevent the spread of invasive species, including medusahead and cheatgrass, equipment tracks that have come into contact with these species shall be thoroughly washed or otherwise cleaned of all vegetation materials prior to being removed from the site. No measure is required for vehicles that remain on access roads, processing areas, and parking lots. 4.5-12: Initiation of vegetation removal would follow Recommended Management Timing, according to the Xerces Society's "Managing for Monarchs in The West	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		Best Management Practices for Conserving the Monarch Butterfly and Its Habitat," which states that new vegetation disturbance should occur between September 30 and June 1 annually when it is least likely to disturb monarch development. If vegetation disturbance occurs between June 1 and September 30, milkweed species would be included on the target list for pre-disturbance surveys and, if found, disturbance to the plant would be avoided until the following year's management period (June 1 to September 30). If avoidance is not possible, then conditional mitigation requirements for monarch butterfly would apply. Mitigation for monarch butterfly would be determined through consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 4.5-14: Surveys for Morrison's bumble bee should be performed by a qualified entomologist or biologist familiar with the species' behavior and life history to determine the presence/absence of bumble bee nests within one year prior to vegetation removal and/or grading. Surveys should be conducted during flying season when the species is most likely to be detected above ground, between March 1 to September 1. If "take" or adverse impacts to a bumble bee nest cannot be avoided either during Project activities or over the life of the Project, then consultation with CDFW shall occur to determine if a CESA Incidental Take Permit is required (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq.).	
Impact 4.5-2: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.	Potentially Significant	4.5-4: A maximum speed limit of fifteen miles per hour shall be implemented onsite when pronghorn could potentially be present (fall through early spring). Speed limit signs shall be posted along access roads. If a pronghorn is present within a roadway anywhere onsite, then vehicles shall stop until the animal(s) are no longer on the path of travel. If the presence of vehicles causes pronghorn to move toward Skyline Road, then vehicles shall remain stopped until the pronghorn are at least 50-feet away	Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		from the road to avoid driving pronghorn toward higher traffic areas. 4.5-5: The use of deer-friendly perimeter fencing should be installed wherever feasible to preserve habitat availability for American pronghorn, mule deer, and other migratory wildlife. Specifications for such fencing include the use of barbed wire (woven hog-wire is prohibited), with wire spacing as follows: ● The first (bottom) strand should be eighteen inches above the ground, smooth, not barbed; ● The second strand should be eight inches above the first strand; ● The third strand should be ten inches above the second strand; ● An optional fourth strand can be twelve inches above the third strand. 4.5-7: Until the final grade in the Phase 1 area is achieved, blasting and processing will adhere to one of the following: ● Blasting and Processing operations should be initiated outside of the sandhill crane nesting season (April-August) to avoid disturbing active sandhill crane nests. ● If blasting or processing must be initiated during the sandhill crane nesting season, or if operations cease for more than 14 days and then are reinitiated within the sandhill crane nesting season, then a qualified biologist shall complete a survey to determine if any sandhill cranes are nesting within 0.25 miles south of the project area boundary. The survey can be supplemented by using binoculars to view all sandhill crane habitat as thoroughly as possible without disturbing any potential nests. If nesting sandhill cranes are found, then one of the following shall occur:	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		A. Operations noise levels will be reduced to less than 10 dB above ambient at the slough, or B. A qualified biologist shall monitor the nest on the first day of activities to determine if the nesting cranes exhibit behavior that suggests they are disturbed by the activities. If operations appear to disturb the nesting cranes, then a buffer or other noise reducing activity shall be implemented. The distance of the buffer will be based on the location of the nest and onsite conditions such as topography and existing vegetation. The buffer shall remain in place until the chicks have fledged or the nest is deemed to be no longer active by the qualified biologist. 4.5-8: If vegetation removal will occur during the bird nesting season (February 1- August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within seven days before construction activities. The survey area shall include the proposed disturbance area and surrounding 500 feet. If nesting birds or raptors are found, CDFW will be consulted. An appropriate buffer based on species and conservation status will be placed around the nest until the young have fledged. If an appropriate buffer distance is not achievable, then alternate compliance measures may be implemented instead, such as noise attenuation measures or project activities monitoring by a qualified biologist until the nest is no longer active. 4.5-13: Initial disturbance of boulder fields will occur when pregnant long-eared myotis females are least likely to occur (between July and November). Boulders will be removed from the boulder field and stockpiled in preparation of mining for the following year.	

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
Impact 4.5-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or USFWS.	Potentially Significant	4.5-9: A non-disturbance buffer of 175 feet or more shall be implemented around the stream onsite for any mining or other industrial activities. Any work below the Ordinary High-Water Mark of a stream or within a wetland boundary shall acquire the necessary permits from regulatory agencies including ACOE, The Regional Water Board, and/or CDFW.	Less than Significant
4.6 CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES			
Impact 4.6-1: The Project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5.	Potentially Significant	4.6-1: If subsurface deposits believed to be a cultural resource or of tribal origin are discovered during construction, all work must halt within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. Discoveries are to be handled, stored, recorded, and conveyed at the discretion of the Susanville Indian Rancheria. A site monitor and a qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. If the site monitor and professional archaeologist determine that the find does not represent a resource, then work may resume immediately and no agency notifications are required. If the site monitor and professional archaeologist determines that the finding represents a cultural resource, then they shall immediately notify the THPO and County, which shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures. Work cannot resume within the no-work radius until the THPO and County, through consultation as appropriate, determine site treatment measures have been completed. 4.6-3 Impacts to historic cultural resources within the Natural Gas Utility Corridor will be avoided by placing the line within the Skyline Road fill. 4.6-5: The project shall follow adherence to notification, site work, treatment measures and conveyance as specified in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		developer and Susanville Indian Rancheria for project monitoring, mitigation and oversight of impacts to tribal cultural resources.	
Impact 4.6-2: The Project would disturb human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.	Potentially Significant	4.6-2: In the event of the discovery of human remains, or remains that are potentially human, the contractor shall ensure reasonable protection measures are taken to protect the discovery from disturbance (Assembly Bill [AB] 2641). The archaeologist shall notify the Lassen County Coroner (as per §7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code). The provisions of §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, §5097.98 of the California PRC, and AB 2641 will be implemented. If the Coroner determines the remains are Native American and not the result of a crime scene, the Coroner will notify the site monitor and NAHC, which then will designate a Native American Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for the project (§5097.98 of the PRC). The designated MLD will have 48 hours from the time access to the property is granted to make recommendations concerning treatment of the remains. If the landowner does not agree with the recommendations of the MLD, then the NAHC can mediate (§5097.94 of the PRC). If no agreement is reached, the landowner must rebury the remains where they will not be further disturbed (§5097.98 of the PRC). This will also include either recording the site with the NAHC or the appropriate Information Center; using an open space or conservation zoning designation or easement; or recording a reinternment document with the county in which the property is located (AB 2641). Work cannot resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.6-3: The Project would Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource.	Potentially Significant	4.6-1: If subsurface deposits believed to be a cultural resource or of tribal origin are discovered during construction, all work must halt within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. Discoveries are to be handled, stored, recorded and conveyed at the discretion of the Susanville Indian	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		Rancheria. A site monitor and a qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. If the site monitor and professional archaeologist determine that the find does not represent a cultural resource or human remains, then work may resume immediately, and no agency notifications are required. If the site monitor and professional archaeologist determine that the find does represent a cultural resource, then they shall immediately notify the County Coroner, who shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures. Work cannot resume within the no-work radius until the County, through consultation with SIR as appropriate, determines that the site treatment measures have been completed. 4.6-4: The project requires implementation of a Tribal Monitoring Agreement for monitoring of topsoil disturbance activities, or other project activities with the potential to impact tribal cultural resources. A tribal monitor must be present during initial site grading and topsoil ground-disturbing activities below the plow zone, approximately 4 inches below the surface. 4.6-5: The project shall follow adherence to notification, site work, treatment measures, and conveyance as specified in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the developer and Susanville Indian Rancheria for project monitoring, mitigation, and oversight of impacts to tribal cultural resources.	
4.7 ENERGY			
Impact 4.7-2: Conflict or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy standards.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
4.8 GEOLOGY AND SOILS			
Impact 4.8-1: Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury, or death involving: *i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist- Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?*	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
iv) Landslides?	Potentially Significant	4.8-2: During mining and reclamation, the operator shall conduct all mining operations and implement slope design as set forth in the Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry (Bajada, 2023), found at Appendix F of this DEIR, to reduce the likelihood of slope failure along working and final slopes. Any changes to the operational or final faces or slopes shall be evaluated by a qualified geotechnical engineer who shall produce an amended geotechnical report, which shall be submitted to Lassen County for approval.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.8-2: Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.8-3: Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.8-4: Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.8-5 Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	Potentially Significant	4.8-1: Should any potentially unique paleontological resources (fossils) be encountered during development activities, work shall be suspended and the County shall be immediately notified. At that time, the County will coordinate any necessary investigation of the discovery with a qualified paleontologist. The mine operator shall be required to implement mitigation necessary for the	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
		protection of paleontological resources. Such measures may include avoidance, preservation in place, excavation, documentation, curation, data recovery, or other appropriate measures.	
4.9 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS			
Impact 4.9-1: Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.9-2: Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.10 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS			
Impact 4.10-1: Create a significant hazard to the public or environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through reasonable foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.10-2: Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.11 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY			
Impact 4.11-1: Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.11-2: Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.11-3: Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or offsite.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or offsite.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
Impact 4.11-4: Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.12 LAND USE AND PLANNING			
Impact 4.12-1: Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.13 NOISE			
Impact 4.13-1: Result in substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in excess of standards established in the Lassen County General Plan.	Potentially Significant	4.13-1: Nighttime Noise Control Procedures. The following specific noise control procedures should be implemented to reduce the potential for adverse noise impacts associated with periodic nighttime operations. 1. Ensure that all processing area conveyors are properly lubricated at all times. 2. Utilize electric power rather than generators for onsite power. 3. Equip all mobile plant area equipment with acoustic "growler-type" backup warning systems, rather than conventional "beepers". 4. Limit asphalt and ready-mix operations to daytime hours with limited delivery of materials during nighttime hours. 5. Suspend acoustic curtains as close as possible to the asphalt plant burner and ready-mix plant in the direction of the nearest residences to the south and west. 6. Install an acoustic silencer on the asphalt plant bag house exhaust fan outlet. 7. Pre-load asphalt plant and ready-mix feed hoppers prior to nighttime operations to reduce the degree of nighttime loading required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.13-2: Result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.	Potentially Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.13-3: For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, where the project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels			
4.14 PUBLIC SERVICES			
Impact 4.14-1 Police Protection	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.14-2 Fire Protection	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.15 TRANSPORTATION			
Impact 4.15-1: Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.15-2: Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.15-3: Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).	Potentially Significant	4.15-3: The project proponent shall construct separate southbound left turn and northbound right turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point. Turn lanes shall be constructed with 200 feet of pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length. Installation of an acceleration lane for westbound left turning vehicles exiting the project site is also required. The project shall not construct structures or vegetation impeding intersection sight distance. 4.15-4: To reduce the potential for crashes, the project proponent shall construct safety counter measures such as a curve ahead warning sign (W1-2), flashing beacon in conjunction with the sign and/or curve warning chevron signs (W1-8) can be installed to reduce future crashes. Lassen County Public Works will approve of the signage prior to installation.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.15-4: Result in inadequate emergency access	Less than Significant	4.17-1: The project shall adhere to building code standards in wildfire-prone areas, including materials and landscaping practices. Ingress and egress to the project area shall ensure adequate emergency access for fire crews, including road width and signage.	Less than Significant
4.16 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS			
Impact 4.16-1: Require or Result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant

Table 2-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Significance After Mitigation
storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effect?			
Impact 4.16-2 Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
4.17 WILDFIRE			
Impact 4.17-1: The Project could substantially Impair an Adopted Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Evacuation Plan.	Potentially Significant	4.17-1: The project shall adhere to building code standards in wildfire-prone areas, including materials and landscaping practices. Ingress and egress to the project area shall ensure adequate emergency access for fire crews, including road width and signage.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.17-2: Due to Slope, Prevailing Winds, and Other Factors, the Project could Exacerbate Wildfire Risks, and thereby Expose Project Occupants to Pollutant Concentrations from a Wildfire or the Uncontrolled Spread of Wildfire.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.17-3: Require the Installation or Maintenance of Associated Infrastructure (Such as Roads, Fuel Breaks, Emergency Water Sources, Power Lines or Other Utilities that May Exacerbate Fire Risk or that May Result in Temporary or Ongoing Impacts to the Environment.	Potentially Significant	4.17-3: The utility corridor must be installed to maintain a clear distance between existing structures and vegetation to reduce the risk of ignition from wildfires. Revegetation and landscaped components within the mine operation area must be maintained to reduce fire risk.	Less than Significant
Impact 4.17-4: Expose People or Structures to Significant Risks, Including Downslope or Downstream Flooding or Landslides, as a Result of Runoff, Post-Fire Slope Instability, or Drainage Changes.	Less than Significant	No mitigation measures are required.	Less than Significant

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this section is to describe the proposed project in a useful and comprehensible manner to the public, other organizations, agencies, and decision-makers. CEQA Guidelines §15124 requires a project description to contain:

- A regional map showing the location of the project and a detailed map showing the precise location and boundaries of the project;
- A statement of objectives sought by the project, including the underlying purpose of the project;
- A general description of the project's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics; and
- A statement briefly describing the intended uses of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), including a list of agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision-making, a list of permits and other approvals required to implement the project, and a list of related environmental review and consultation requirements required by federal, State, and local laws, regulations, or policies.

Under CEQA, the project description is required to provide general information but not an engineering level of detail. The CEQA Guidelines provide: "The description of the project shall contain the following information, but should not supply extensive detail beyond that needed for evaluation and review of the environmental impact.

- A general description of the project's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics, considering the principal engineering proposals, if any, and supporting public service facilities." (CEQA Guidelines §15124[c].)

The information provided in this DEIR section meets the requirements §15124 of the CEQA Guidelines, and provides a level of detail adequate for public, other organizations, and agency review in consideration of the proposed project and the potential environmental impacts associated with project implementation.

3.1 Site Location

The proposed project is located approximately 1.5 miles east of Highway 139 off Skyline Road in unincorporated Lassen County (APN 101-110-24, immediately northeast of Susanville city limits). In addition, the proposed project is located approximately 0.6 miles to the east of Lassen Community College and approximately 0.7 miles northeast of Lassen County Fairgrounds, and 0.4 miles south of Banner Lassen Medical Center and Northeastern Rural Health Clinic. Geographically, the proposed project is situated within the north ½ of Section 34 and the south ½ of Section 27, Township 30 North, Range 12 East, Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM). Latitude and longitude at the center of the site are 40.424213 and -120.622222, respectively. The general site location is illustrated on Figure 3-1. The project boundaries are illustrated on Figure 3-2.

3.2 Environmental Setting

3.2.1 Topography

The project site is located to the southwest of Antelope Mountain in Hidden Valley. Topography generally gently slopes from north to south. Site elevation ranges from 4160 feet above mean sea level in the southwest corner of the project site to 4350 feet along the northern edge of the site. USGS topography is shown on Figure 3-3.

3.2.2 Hydrology and Water Quality

The project site is located within the Lassen Creek-Susan River HUC 12 watershed (180800030704). Drainage within the mining and reclamation boundaries of the project site primarily sheet flows to the southwest into wetlands associated with Brockman Slough. Limited sections of the project site outside of the mining and reclamation boundary drain through an intermittent tributary to Jensen Slough.

An intermittent tributary to Jensen Slough flows through the project from the northeastern corner of the site and along the eastern boundary. Three stock ponds totaling approximately 0.05 acres are mapped onsite. A large freshwater emergent wetland system is located adjacent to the southern end of the project. This system is comprised of Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough, which flow across the adjacent parcel in a series of meandering, interconnected shallow channels. The slough is fed by a side channel from the Susan River, which flows through adjacent agricultural fields, and then flows south of the proposed mine property's southern border before flowing into the slough. Water flows from the slough ultimately back into the Susan River approximately 3.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the slough. Project activities, including potential stormwater discharge points, are located approximately one-quarter mile from the nearest point of the slough.

The project site is not located within a 100-year floodplain. Hydrology of the site is illustrated in Figure 3-4.

The southern end of the proposed project is located within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin, which has been identified as a "low priority basin" by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), signifying that it is not currently at risk for overdraft. Within this basin, Bulletin 118 estimates the total volume of water stored in the upper 100 feet of saturated basin-fill deposits and volcanic-rock aquifers to be 10 million acre-feet. Estimated annual groundwater extraction for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental wetland use are 51,000, 15,000, and 3,800 acre-feet, respectively. Deep percolation from agricultural-applied water is estimated to be 14,000 acre-feet.

3.2.3 Geology and Soils

One geological unit exists within the boundary of the project site. Bedrock within the site is entirely mapped as the Basalt of Susanville. This unit, alternatively known as the Susanville Basalt, is Pleistocene in age with a K-Ar radiometric age of 1.3 ± 0.3 Ma (Grose and McKee, 1986). The Susanville Basalt is a dark gray to black, diktytaxitic to finely and sparsely olivine-porphyritic massive basalt. It occurs as multiple massive flow units, averaging 3 to 5 meters thick, that may locally exhibit columnar jointing. Total thickness is unknown but estimated to be greater than 100

meters based on outcrop exposures and bedding orientation (Grose et al, 2013). Thin paleosol and pyroclastic horizons occur between some of the flow units. Unlike many of the other eruptive units in the area, the source for the Susanville Basalt is unknown. Onsite geology is illustrated on Figure 3-5.

Geological mapping of the Susanville area by C. Wills (Wills, 1990) identified two faults within the subject property. One fault defines a drainage running north-south through the approximate center of the project site, while the other defines a steeply incised drainage along the eastern margin of the property. The age and sense of motion of both faults are poorly constrained. Wills interpreted them to be Quaternary in age as they cut and displace the Susanville Basalt but are deeply weathered and partly overlain by Holocene alluvium, constraining their ages. Neither fault is believed to be recently active. Sense of displacement is similarly poorly constrained due to the weathering of the fault lineaments, but is believed to be predominantly dextral strike-slip with a down-to-the-east dip-slip component. These faults are roughly perpendicular to the northwest-striking dextral slip faults of the Honey Lake Fault Zone that dominate local tectonics (Jennings and Saucedo, 2002).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS, 2025) identified the following seven primary soil types within the project boundary. Cleghorn sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes, is well drained with a high run off classification, and is primarily comprised of sandy loam, clay loam, and loam. Horsecamp cobbly silty clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes, is well drained with a very high runoff classification and is primarily comprised of cobbly silty clay and silty clay. Lakeview loam, warm, 0 to 2 percent slopes, is moderately well drained with a medium runoff classification and is comprised of loam and clay loam. Searles-Orhood-Devada association, 5 to 30 percent slopes, is well drained with a high runoff classification and is comprised of very stony loam and very cobbly clay loam. Springmeyer sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes, is well drained with a medium runoff classification and is comprised of sandy loam, clay loam, and stratified gravelly loamy sand to sandy clay loam. Tunnison very cobbly clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes, is well drained, has a very high run off classification, and is primarily comprised of very cobbly clay and clay. The most common soil group within the project area is Tunnison-Devada association, 2 to 9 percent slopes, which is well drained, has a very high runoff classification, and is comprised of very stony clay and clay. Existing onsite soils are illustrated in Figure 3-6.

3.2.4 Biota

A Biological Assessment was prepared for the project by VESTRA Resources, Inc. (VESTRA) (see Appendix E). Onsite vegetation was identified via the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP) data and field surveys, which compile vegetation communities on a small-scale using definitions published in A Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer et al., 2009). The vegetation alliances identified onsite in order of dominance onsite are *Artemisia arbuscula* ssp. *arbuscula* Shrubland Alliance, *Juniperus occidentalis* Woodland Alliance, *Bromus tectorum - Taeniatherum caput-medusae* Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance, and *Artemisia tridentata* Shrubland Alliance. Vegetation communities onsite are shown on Figure 3-7.

The project is located near a large freshwater emergent wetland system, which is adjacent to the southern end of the project. This system is comprised of Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough, which flow across the adjacent parcel in a series of meandering, interconnected shallow channels.

The slough is fed by a side channel from the Susan River, which flows through adjacent agricultural fields, and then flows south of the proposed mine property's southern border before flowing into the slough. Water flows from the slough ultimately back into the Susan River approximately 3.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the slough.

Special-status species identified by the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) database searches and literature review were evaluated for their potential to occur within the project area. CNDDB occurrences within five miles of the site are shown in Appendix E. Potential for occurrence was based on habitat requirements and proximity to known recorded occurrences of a species.

The potentially occurring species that were generated through desktop review were assessed based on the actual observed habitat types onsite. The assessment found that the following species have the potential to occur and require further discussion.

Special-status species that are known to occur, or have the potential to occur, within the project area include:

- Greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*)
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)
- Long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*)
- North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)
- Morrison's bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*)
- Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*)
- Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*)

3.2.5 Archaeological and Historical Resources

An archaeological study was conducted for the proposed project in 2020 (ALTA, 2020) with subsequent studies in 2023 and 2024. These studies indicated that the site is located in the Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape, used by members of the Maidu, and evaluated for eligibility in Appendix L. The site is also near the Nobles Emigrant Trail. Use of the trail, which passes north of Susanville, began in 1841. The archaeological study identified ten cultural resources and eighteen isolated finds within the proposed mining area and one resource within the utility corridor. An MOA was signed to establish effective mitigation measures for the implementation of monitoring, discovery, treatment, and conveyance. Refer to Section 4.6, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources.*

3.2.6 Surrounding Land Use

The site is directly adjacent to the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant, Fairgrounds, Lassen Community College, and Banner Lassen Medical Center. Land uses adjacent to the proposed project are defined by the General Plan as "Planned Development" and "Parks and Recreation" to the north, "Extensive Agriculture" and "Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve" to the east, "Intensive Agriculture", and "Urban Reserve/Intensive Agriculture" the

west, and "Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve", "Urban Reserve/Intensive Agriculture", and "Intensive Agriculture" to the south. Zoning designations adjacent to the project include PD (Planned Development) and O-S (Open Space) to the north, U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District) to the east, U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District), and M-1 (Light Industrial Activity) to the south, and A-3 (Agricultural District) and U-C (Upland Conservation District) to the west.

Existing uses, zoning, and land use designations are summarized in Table 3-1 and shown on Figures 3-9 and 3-10.

3.2.7 Sensitive Receptors

Land uses such as residences, schools, children's daycare centers, hospitals, clinics, and convalescent homes are considered to be more sensitive. The nearest residence is approximately 4,000 feet (to the south) from the proposed aggregate, concrete, and asphalt plants and 2,300 feet (to the west) from the quarry area. Lassen College is approximately 2,100 feet (to the west) from the proposed quarry area. Banner Lassen Medical Center and the Northeastern Rural Health Clinic are approximately 2,700 feet (to the north) from the quarry area. Nearby sensitive receptors are illustrated on Figure 3-11, and adjacent property ownership is illustrated on Figure 3-12.

3.2.8 General Plan and Zoning

The proposed project site is located in unincorporated Lassen County and within the area covered by the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* (Area Plan). The Area Plan extends 1 to 1-½ miles from the 1982 Susanville city limits. The proposed project site is zoned U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District) and is designated as "Urban Reserve/Intensive" by the *Lassen County General Plan* (General Plan). Surface mining and mineral processing activities are allowed within the U-C-A-P zone with issuance of a use permit. As a result, the proposed project will not require a change in existing land use designations or zoning.

Existing uses, zoning, and land use designations are summarized in Table 3-1 and shown on Figures 3-9 and 3-10.

Table 3-1
EXISTING USES, ZONING, AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Direction	Current Zoning	Current Land Use	Current General Plan Land Use Designation
Project Site	U-C-A-P	Urban Reserve/Intensive	U-C-A-P
North	PD, O-S	Open Space: Parks and Recreation, Planned Development	PD, O-S
East	U-C-A-P	Extensive Agriculture, Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve	U-C-A-P
South	U-C-A-P, M-1	Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve, Urban Reserve/Intensive, Intensive	U-C-A-P, M-1
West	U-C-A-P A-3	Intensive, Urban Reserve/Intensive	U-C-A-P A-3

Source: Lassen County, 2023.

3.3 Excavation and Mining Plan

The proposed project includes mining and reclamation activities described in the Mining and Reclamation Plan (*Mining and Reclamation Plan, Skyline Aggregates, Hat Creek Construction & Materials, Inc., Lassen County, California).* Refer to Appendix B.

Proposed mining and reclamation operations on the Skyline Aggregates site would be carried out by Hat Creek Construction and Materials, Inc. (project applicant and mine operator). The project site encompasses approximately 640 undeveloped acres, of which approximately 460 acres will be directly affected by mining and processing activities. The remaining 180 acres within the project site will serve as setback areas and buffers from surrounding properties, critical habitats, and archeological resources.

Materials mined onsite will consist of hard rock aggregate. Aggregate mined on the site will be crushed, screened, washed, and graded onsite and then used in the production of virgin aggregates, asphalt mix, and ready-mix concrete. These end products are generally associated with roadway construction, but they will also be used by public agencies to improve existing infrastructure.

Proposed mining operations will follow the guidelines established by SMARA and will conform to the monitoring schedule established by the Lead Agency. The site will be mined in five phases, taking approximately 10 years per phase and 50 years total to complete. Mining operations will begin in the summer of 2026 following permit approval. The termination date will be based on demand.

"Overburden," the material lying above the aggregate deposits, will be removed and stockpiled to be used in support of site reclamation. Overburden and topsoil stockpiles will be located along the southern mining area boundary. Overburden will be used as backfill after mining activities are complete. Overburden varies in nature depending on its location onsite, but is generally a mix of loam and clay and is limited in supply. Rock is generally at the surface. Topsoil will not be mapped prior to mining.

To the extent possible, overburden will be moved directly to its final planned location immediately after excavation. Stockpiles will be managed to minimize water and wind erosion. Stockpiles will receive an application of hydroseed/mulch to stabilize the slope. The topsoil will be clearly identified to distinguish the topsoil material. Topsoil removal will not precede mining by more than one year. Topsoil stockpiles will be maintained, identified, signed, and managed prior to reclamation.

The excavation and mining plan included in the Reclamation Plan is described below.

3.3.1 Mining Operation Plan

Operation Overview
Existing topography is shown on Figure 3-13. Setbacks and other areas of non-mining features are illustrated on the Site Plan (Figure 3-14).

A factor that will determine the amount of material to be removed is the quantity and quality of the aggregate in the gross excavated material. The depth of mining will vary with the depth of the material. Generally, the plan is to remove the 50 to 65 feet of basalt that overlies the base formation. The maximum depth of cut will be at the ground surface level of the existing site. The elevation of the final mine grade will be from 4180 to 4272 feet above mean sea level. The site will include a headwall along the northern and western portions and sloping topography to the south and east, as shown on Figure 3-14.

The total volume of material removed per day will fluctuate with seasonal demand. An estimated maximum of 10,000 tons of material could be removed in a 24-hour period. This excavation rate would occur on an operating schedule of Monday through Saturday, with some mining activities occurring on Sundays. An estimated 450,000 tons will be extracted each year. Drilling reports indicate an excess of 39,864,00 cubic yards of material is available in the basalt flow.

Approach to Mining and Excavation
The mining and excavation will begin with the removal of the topsoil and overburden material in each phase area. All salvageable topsoil will be removed as a separate layer and monitored. This material will be used immediately for reclamation in previously mined areas or stockpiled for future use. Stockpiles will be seeded and/or covered.

Following the removal and placement of overburden materials, the mining and processing of underlying aggregate materials will begin. Excavation will follow the 50 to 65 feet of overlying basalt upslope to a final slope at the north portion of the site.

Mine operations will result in small amounts of dust that will be controlled through the use of water trucks. Water trucks will apply approximately five 2,000-gallon applications of water a day as needed to control dust during onsite operations.

Existing onsite topography is illustrated on Figure 3-13. Mine phasing and final contours are shown on Figure 3-14. Mining will occur in five phases, starting southeast of the site and moving west. Phase 1 will contain processing equipment such as an asphalt plant, concrete plant, lime plant, crusher, wash plant, wash pond, and stockpile areas during the mining of the remaining phases and will not be reclaimed immediately upon completion, but upon completion of all onsite mining activities. The remaining phases will be partially reclaimed as practical upon each phase completion, excluding areas needed for movement of material between active phases and the processing area. The final mine cross-section is included as Figure 3-15, and the pond detail is provided on Figure 3-16.

Extraction will utilize a mix of explosives and mechanical methods. Blasting events will occur approximately five times per year. Explosives and detonators are not stored onsite. Materials will be brought to and used on the site by a third-party contractor. Loosened material will be mechanically extracted and transported to stockpiles or processing areas.

The mining plan will follow the slope recommendations in the attached Geotechnical Report (Appendix F). Quarry slope angles will be limited to: maximum vertical bench height of 40 feet, minimum bench width of 23 feet, maximum design bench face angle of 80 degrees, and maximum overall slope angle of 53 degrees. Variations of the bench width and height may be made if the modification results in a flatter slope and the maximum bench height of 40 feet and minimum

bench width of 23 feet are observed. Additional operational recommendations made in the Geotechnical Report shall be implemented, including presplitting all final rock faces, scaling of blasted rock faces to remove loose rocks, maintenance of a 25-foot-wide offset barrier from all inactive rock faces, and complete daily inspections of rock faces.

3.3.2 Employees and Equipment Use

Various types of equipment and machinery will be utilized to mine the materials. The machinery will generally be diesel-powered, hydraulically operated wheel and track-mounted machines. Power for the crushing equipment will be supplied by the local utility. The asphalt plant will be propane-fired until a natural gas line is installed and connected to the local utility supply.

The following equipment will be used on the project site:

- One asphalt plant (propane/natural gas);
- One concrete plant with feeder and aggregate hopper;
- Portland cement silo;
- Fly ash silo;
- Lime plant;
- One water truck for dust control (diesel);
- Two front-end loaders to feed the crusher and load trucks (diesel);
- One hydraulic excavator to harvest raw material from extraction areas (diesel);
- Two off-highway trucks to transport raw material from extraction areas to the processing area (diesel);
- One self-loading scraper to remove and transport overburden (diesel);
- One track dozer to level fill (diesel);
- One HP300 cone crusher (300 hp drive motor) (electric);
- One GP200 cone crusher (200 hp drive motor) (electric);
- One JCl 7 x 20 3-deck wash screen, 40-hp drive motor on stand with 15-hp drive motor (electric);
- One El Jay 7 x 20 3-deck wash screen, 40-hp drive motor on stand (electric);
- One 35-yard feeder bin with 36-inch feed belt, 20-hp drive motor (electric);
- One 15-yard feeder bin for wet screen, 15-hp motor drive (electric);
- One 15-yard supplemental feeder bin, 15-hp motor (electric);
- One 44-inch sand screw, 20-hp drive motor (electric);
- One 8-inch by 6-inch volume water pump, 15-hp drive motor (electric);
- One 8-inch by 6-inch high-pressure water pump, 100-hp drive motor (electric);
- Three 24-inch x 60-foot stacker conveyors, 10-hp drive motors (electric);
- Two superior 30-inch x 60-foot radial stacker conveyors, 10-hp drive motors (electric);
- Two 30-inch x 90-foot radial stacker conveyors, 25-hp drive motors (electric);
- Two 36-inch x 55-foot conveyors, 15-hp drive motors (electric);
- Two 30-inch x 55-foot conveyors, 15-hp drive motors (electric);
- One 30-inch x 60-foot conveyor, 15-hp drive motor (electric);
- One 36-inch x 10-foot stub conveyor, 10-hp drive motor (electric);
- One 75-foot truck scale
- One scale office trailer

The general equipment locations are illustrated on the site plan. A centralized processing plant is proposed to reduce traffic and dust generation (see Figure 3-14). Tracked equipment will be parked in the area designated for processing or material storage when not in use. Personnel vehicles will be parked at the entrance area during working hours. Daily fueling, maintenance (lubing), and repairs will take place near the processing facility until the onsite shop is constructed. Minor occurrences of breakdowns may require equipment to be repaired away from the processing facility or shop.

3.3.3 Processing Plant Operations and Aggregate Transport

Processing Plant Operations

Processing plant operations will include the stockpiling of aggregate, loading of raw aggregate into convey or chutes, washing the aggregate, sorting and crushing the aggregate to market specifications, and delivery into stockpiles or into hauling trucks for delivery. In general, the proposed mining operations would normally occur between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday, with occasional need to operate on Sundays. Depending on demand, processing may occasionally operate 24 hours per day, a maximum of 150 days per year.

Loaders will deliver raw mined aggregate to the plant chutes, which will carry the aggregate into a jaw crusher. Aggregate will then enter a cone crusher, followed by screening and washing into its final form for delivery via hauling trucks, or will be further processed into concrete or asphalt.

The aggregate plant would be rated at 250 tons per hour. During typical operations, the aggregate plant would operate for 12 hours per day (3,000 tons per day) and 450,000 tons per year. The aggregate plant would have one jaw crusher, two cone crushers, two screen decks, and nine secondary conveyors. The wash plant may operate for 12 hours per day (3,000 tons per day) and will process approximately 90,000 tons of aggregate material annually. The wash plant would have one feeder, eight conveyors, one deck screen, and two sand screws. It is estimated that aggregate material extracted onsite will weigh 1.8 tons per cubic yard.

The concrete plant would be rated at 150 tons per hour. During typical operations, the concrete plant would operate for 10 hours per day (1,500 tons per day) and 100,000 tons per year. The concrete plant would have one feeder, an aggregate hopper, a Portland cement silo, and a fly ash silo. A lime plant will be directly adjacent to the concrete plant.

The asphalt drum hot mix plant (natural gas/propane-fired) would be rated at 350 tons per hour. During typical operations, the asphalt hot mix plant would operate for 10 hours per day (3,500 tons per day) and 400,000 tons per year. The material would be metered from the hoppers onto a conveyor belt and transported into a rotary natural gas/propane-fired dryer. The asphalt hot mix plant would contain a baghouse for emissions control and a 100 million British Thermal Units (BTU) per hour natural gas/propane-fueled burner. The lime slurry plant would be rated at 400 tons per hour (4,000 tons per day) and 400,000 tons per year. The lime slurry mix plant would have a single hopper/pug mill/surge/conveyor. The facility would require three backup diesel generators for two hours per day, 500 hours per year, and 10 days per year: a 755-horsepower (hp) generator (asphalt plant), a 475-hp generator (wash plant), and a 350-hp generator (asphalt plant).

Processing plant operations will primarily occur below grade. As shown in Figure 3-14, all processing plants will be located on a below-grade flat within the boundaries of Phase 1. Operations will excavate the area required within the first two years of operation.

Aggregate Transport
Haul trucks will generally deliver aggregate processed at the site to nearby road construction projects. Project traffic is expected to occur as follows:

- Aggregate hauling will occur 300 days/year;
- Approximately 90 percent of the processed aggregate will be hauled to nearby job sites, and approximately 10 percent will be hauled to the open market;
- Aggregate generally will be hauled between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, with nighttime and off-hour deliveries during high-demand or in peak periods, or as required by the project contract;
- 20 employees will be onsite;
- A single truckload will carry approximately 25 tons of aggregate;
- Typical operations would occur 12 hours per day (6:00 am to 6:00 pm), Monday through Saturday, with maximum operations of 24 hours per day, six days a week;
- Annual average daily truck trips of 120 truck trips (60 arriving and 60 departing) throughout the calendar year and a daily maximum of 800 truck trips (400 arriving and 400 departing); and
- The access road into the site and back to the processing plant will be paved.

3.3.4 Hours of Operation

Generally, the facility will operate from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday, with some operational Sundays. During construction season, the site may operate 24 hours a day to meet construction demand and Caltrans requirements for nighttime work. Nightwork will occur for up to 150 days per year but will be restricted during special events scheduled at the Fairgrounds and within the City of Susanville.

3.3.5 Mining /Reclamation Area

The mining area of the proposed operation is 430 acres, and 30 acres of associated impacts and disturbances, including landscape sales stockpiles, shop, parking, stormwater retention pond, roads, and scalehouse for a total disturbed area of 460 acres.

3.3.6 Site Life

Mining activities are anticipated to commence by the summer of 2026, with the ultimate end date dependent upon market demand. The Reclamation Plan for the project includes a minimum 50-year duration of mining.

3.3.7 Volume Removal

Mining is expected to remove approximately 50 to 65 feet of basalt flow located over previous formations. Approximately 39 million cubic yards of total aggregate will be mined and removed from the project site. An estimated 450,000 tons of aggregate will be removed per year, with a maximum of 10,000 tons per day.

3.3.8 Water Use

An onsite groundwater well will be utilized for washing the aggregate and dust suppression. Assuming an operational period of 300 days per year, 10,000 gallons per day would be used for dust suppression (total 3,000,000 gallons for dust suppression annually). Washing will occur at the site on average 30 days per year, with an estimated 6,000 gallons of water used per day. The combined water usage of dust suppression and washing would result in approximately 3,180,000 gallons of water used per year (9.76 acre-feet per year).

Water use estimates for dust suppression are based on water use at a similar project site owned and operated by Hat Creek Construction and Materials, where five applications of 2,000 gallons are used daily for dust suppression. Water used for washing will be stored in the 0.4-acre wash pond and reused; the consumption of water is only that which is retained by the material. Water retention is estimated at 1 percent to 5 percent of product weight, depending on product type, resulting in a maximum of 6,000 gallons per day of wash plant operation.

The water used on the site for these purposes would be pumped from a well or collected from the stormwater retention pond. The southern end of the project is located within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin. Within this basin, Bulletin 118 estimates the total volume of water stored in the upper 100 feet of saturated basin-fill deposits and volcanic-rock aquifers to be 10 million acre-feet. Estimates of annual groundwater extraction for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental wetland uses are 51,000, 15,000, and 3,800 acre-feet, respectively. Deep percolation from agricultural-applied water is estimated to be 14,000 acre-feet. The basin is expected to be able to provide the 9.76 acre-feet per year required by the project. The extraction will be reduced based on stormwater availability but may vary year to year and will not be relied upon for operational water needs.

3.3.9 Stormwater

The proposed project includes the construction of a stormwater retention pond in the southern portion of the project site. Site stormwater will be directed to the retention pond onsite as shown on Figures 3-14 and 3-16. Water will be reused for dust suppression. The pond is designed for the 25-year, 24-hour storm event plus average annual precipitation. The ponds will have emergency spillways should capacity be breached. Spillways will discharge into adjacent pastureland and are unlikely to directly discharge to a water of the State. Spillways may indirectly discharge to the waterways south of the project area; these discharges will be permitted and regulated under the Industrial General Permit.

3.3.10 Waste Disposal

Portable toilets will be provided onsite for sewage at the active quarry face and serviced/pumped at regular intervals. The shop will have facilities with a septic system. Domestic waste generated by workers at the site will be disposed of in trash cans with lids or a dumpster. Solid waste will be picked up by C&S Waste Solutions of Lassen County. No mining waste material will be generated.

3.3.11 Pollution Prevention

Potential sources of pollution onsite will be from the fuels and oils used in equipment and processing. The maximum fluid amounts stored onsite will be 20,000 gallons of fuel in two aboveground tanks and approximately five 55-gallon drums of lubricants and transmission oil.

Storage of fuels and oils will comply with the state guidelines for pollution prevention near water bodies. Onsite water bodies are limited to several small stock ponds, which do not connect to any streams or rivers, and an intermittent stream located along the eastern parcel boundary and outside of the project area. The vehicles and equipment used in the operation of the project would be maintained to prevent any possible leaks. Routine maintenance will be conducted onsite. Major repairs, other than emergency repairs, will be conducted at the onsite shop area. Since onsite drainage will be designed to remain on the site and erosion control measures will be used to control offsite erosion, offsite drainage of potential leaks from operations would not occur. A Hazardous Materials Business Plan will be prepared for the project following reclamation plan approval.

3.3.12 Fire Suppression

The onsite stormwater retention pond and wash pond will provide a readily available water source for fire suppression needs onsite. In addition to the utilization of onsite ponds as a fire suppression resource, onsite operations will include safety procedures to minimize the risk of wildland fires to onsite personnel and adjacent properties. These include an evacuation plan identifying routes to be taken throughout the project site for any emergency, whether operation-related or from offsite conditions, and vegetation removal from areas to be mined prior to the operation of equipment in those areas.

3.3.13 Energy Demand

Equipment use will result in diesel fuel, natural gas, electricity, and gasoline consumption. The project will require approximately 137,220 gallons of diesel fuel annually; 1.076 million gallons of propane or 128 million cubic feet of natural gas, respectively; 11,787 MWh of electricity annually; and 5,945 gallons of gasoline annually (RCH 2024). Equipment will initially be self-propelled and powered by Tier-4 diesel engines, before being connected to the local power grid once the site is developed. The asphalt plant will be propane-fired for the first year until a connection to natural gas infrastructure is completed. Once connected to local infrastructure, electricity will be supplied by Lassen Municipal Utility District, and natural gas may be supplied by the City of Susanville (annexation may be required). If natural gas is not feasible due the City of Susanville requiring annexation, propane will continue to be used.

3.3.14 Lighting

Permanent lighting on the site will be installed around the asphalt and concrete plant for any required nighttime work. Two 42,000-lumen lights will be installed at the asphalt plant, and one 42,000-lumen light will be installed at the concrete plant. The crusher, wash plant, lime plant, and scalehouse will each have one 21,000-lumen security light installed. The shop area will have six 21,000-lumen lights installed around the building exterior. Two mobile 42,000-lumen lights may be used onsite if light for irregular night operations is needed; these units extend up to 20 feet high for the safe ingress/egress of the property or for security only. All lights will be downcast.

3.4 Reclamation

The area to be reclaimed after mining activities are completed includes the 460 acres that will be disturbed for aggregate material or used for processing activities. The rest of the acreage will remain undisturbed (180 acres) and will not require reclamation. The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA, PRC, Sections 2710-2796) requires that the means by which the areas disturbed by proposed mining activities will be restored for beneficial use be identified.

3.4.1 Reclaimed Land Use

The proposed end use after mining activities will consist of agricultural use for open space as allowed by the existing U-C zoning district. The site will be revegetated with a dryland pasture seed mix. The Phase 1 area will include a 5-acre area replanted with bitterbrush, and cattle exclusion fencing shall be installed to prohibit cattle grazing in this area during the winter months (November to April) when mule deer or pronghorn may be present. The onsite wash pond, retention pond, and well will be retained onsite as a livestock water source and for fire suppression. The wash pond and retention pond will be revegetated with suitable riparian species to prevent erosion.

3.4.2 Final Topography

Final area topography follows bench geometries recommended in the Geotechnical Report prepared for the site by BAJADA Geosciences, Inc. (Appendix F). Variations on bench width and height may be made, but the proportion of maximum height to minimum width will be maintained or flatter. Recommendations include a maximum bench height of 40 feet, a minimum bench width of 23 feet, a maximum design face angle of 80 degrees, and a maximum overall slope angle of 53 degrees. The upper quarry slope phase should be inclined no steeper than 1.5:1 HV (horizontal:vertical) when exposing soil and 1:1 HV when exposing intensely to moderately weathered rock materials. The remaining areas to the south and east will be sloped at 3:1. Final topography is shown on Figure 3-14.

3.5 Required Site Improvements

3.5.1 Road Construction

Construction of a paved haul road will be required for the use of the site. The haul road will connect Skyline Road to the landscape yard, stockpile area, and active mining and processing areas. The road will be approximately 3,735 linear feet and paved to reduce dust generation. A scale and office trailer will be located along the road.

3.5.2 Stormwater Pond

Construction of a stormwater pond will be required to capture runoff from the active mining site. The stormwater retention pond will be constructed at the southern end of the mining area and south of the haul road. The pond will have a maximum capacity of 30 acre-feet. Three 24-inch culverts will run under the haul road, hydrologically connecting it with the mining area. The pond will discharge through a constructed 60-foot spillway near its southwestern corner. The pond is designed for the 25-year, 24-hour storm event plus average annual precipitation, and is unlikely to discharge (Figure 3-16).

3.5.3 Landscape Yard and Shop

The project area will include a "landscape yard" area, comprised of a 17,660-square-foot graded area along Skyline Road, as shown on Figure 3-14. The landscape yard will provide an area for the retail sales of sand and aggregate materials, additional truck parking, and house a 5,000-square-foot shop.

The landscape yard area will have up to fifteen transfer and belly dump trucks parked when not needed for aggregate transportation or other operations. The 5,000-square-foot shop will consist of a single-story metal construction building. The shop will be used for the onsite repair of trucks and diesel equipment.

3.5.4 Well

The project will require a well capable of meeting the anticipated water demand for mining uses at the site. This demand is expected to be up to 16,000 gallons for aggregate washing and dust suppression per day, with an estimated total annual demand of 3,180,000 gallons (9.76 acre-feet). Water will also be recycled from the wash water and used for dust suppression. The well is anticipated to be located near the southern parcel boundary.

3.5.5 Offsite Utility Extensions

The project will require the extension of both electric utility and natural gas utility to the site. The electricity will be used to meet the power requirements demanded by onsite equipment. Natural gas will be utilized by the asphalt plant. Natural gas lines will be extended from the intersection of Skyline Road and Highway 139. Power lines will run from a connection at Lassen College to Skyline Road and continue to the proposed project site. Natural gas extensions will occur within the Skyline Road right-of-way, which has been previously disturbed. Natural gas lines will be placed underground, and power lines will be extended on aboveground poles.

3.5.6 Offsite Road Improvements

The operator will construct separate southbound left-turn and northbound right-turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point. Turn lanes shall be constructed with 200 feet of turn pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length. Turn lanes are proven safety countermeasures helpful at two-way stop-controlled intersections (FHWA). These turn lanes are intended to provide safety and circulation benefits to reduce potential conflicts between traffic on Skyline Road and inbound traffic as a result of the project. The project will not construct structures

or vegetation impeding intersection sight distance or affecting evacuation routes. The project will not result in the introduction of any features apart from the turn lanes consistent with Caltrans design standards.

3.6 Project Objectives

The project objectives are:

- Provide a comprehensively planned and financially feasible project that will continue to accommodate projected growth in construction-related activities and associated services and also serve to help meet the current and future demands for construction materials both locally and regionally.
- Provide a full-service mine operation that includes the extraction of material at a rate of approximately 450,000 tons per year.
- Siting of a new quarry near major highways to minimize vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Provide construction material diversion from landfills through recycling of up to 100,000 tons of asphalt/concrete annually.
- Provide a local source of materials for emergency jobs (during federal, State, or locally declared emergencies) and other construction jobs requiring nighttime work.
- Contribute to the improvement of the Lassen County economy by increasing sales taxes, but also not impose fiscal demands on the provision of County services compared to other types of development projects.
- Avoid sensitive natural resources to the extent feasible and provide adequate mitigation where avoidance is not feasible; minimize aesthetic impacts through site design, mine phasing, and ultimate site reclamation.
- Implement a reclamation plan that provides for long-term slope stability, prevents wind and water erosion, and establishes self-sustaining native and naturalized vegetation cover.
- Provide additional high-quality jobs within Lassen County.

3.7 Required Approvals

Lassen County is considered the Lead Agency under CEQA and is responsible for reviewing and certifying the adequacy of this DEIR. Responsible agencies are those agencies that have discretionary approval over one or more actions involved with the development of the proposed project site. Trustee agencies are state agencies having discretionary approval or jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project. Prior to development of the proposed project, a number of discretionary permits and approvals must be obtained from local and State agencies, as listed below. This DEIR and Final EIR will be relied on by the County and other responsible agencies when determining whether to issue discretionary approvals to implement the project. To implement the proposed project, the mine operator will need to obtain, at a minimum, the following discretionary permits/approvals:

- Conditional Use Permit, Lassen County Planning Commission
- Reclamation Plan, Lassen County Planning Commission and Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR)
- Early consultation with the Lassen County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)
- Industrial General Permit, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and Concrete Facilities, State Water Resources Control Boards
- Sewage Disposal Permit, Lassen County Environmental Health Department

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACT ANALYSIS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impact Analysis, and Mitigation Measures, contains 16 topical sections that evaluate the direct and indirect environmental impacts of the proposed project. Cumulative impacts are discussed and evaluated in Chapter 5, Other CEQA Considerations. The chapter is organized as follows:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources (Section 4.2)
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources (Section 4.3)
- Air Quality (Section 4.4)
- Biological Resources (Section 4.5)
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (Section 4.6)
- Energy (Section 4.7)
- Geology and Soils (Section 4.8)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Section 4.9)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 4.10)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 4.11)
- Land Use and Planning (Section 4.12)
- Noise (Section 4.13)
- Public Services (Section 4.14)
- Recreation (Section 4.15)
- Transportation (Section 4.16)
- Utilities and Service Systems (Section 4.17)
- Wildfire (Section 4.18)

The following sections describe the format of the environmental analysis, the thresholds of significance, and the methodology of determining the significance of impacts.

4.1.1 Format of the Environmental Analysis

Each topical section of this DEIR is organized into the following subsections:

- *Environmental Setting.* The environmental settings present the existing environmental conditions, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15125. The subsection describes the baseline conditions against which the environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and the potential future development of the property are assessed.
- *Regulatory Setting.* The regulatory settings describe the laws, regulations, and policies that affect the resource or the assessment of impacts on the specific resource. The regulatory setting subsection establishes the regulatory framework for the analysis of each resource. This subsection is divided into federal, State, and local regulations.
- *Threshold of Significance.* Thresholds of significance describe the criteria used to determine the significance of impacts. The thresholds and criteria for determining the significance of

impacts for analysis are derived from the Environmental Checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (§§15000 to 15387) and other resource-specific sources as described in each subsection.

- *Impact Analysis.* The impact analysis presents thresholds of significance used and discusses potential effects of the proposed project on the existing environmental conditions (in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §§15126.2(a) and 15143).
- *Mitigation Measures.* Mitigation measures provide measures to reduce potentially significant effects associated with the proposed project to the extent feasible (in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §§15002(a)(3), 15021(a)(2), and 15091(a)(1)).
- *Level of Significance after Mitigation.* This subsection describes whether mitigation measures feasibly would or would not substantially reduce or avoid an impact. This subsection is presented in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §§15091(a)(1), 15092(b)(2)A), and 15126.2(b), which require identification of impacts capable of avoidance or mitigation, as well as those that cannot be avoided.

4.1.2 Impact Significance Conclusions

This DEIR evaluates whether the proposed project and alternatives would cause a change in the environment. Conclusions reached are based on information in the record, including scientific and factual data as well as professional knowledge and judgment. Consistent with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, significance conclusions are characterized as one of the following:

- *No Impact.* This signifies that a project or an alternative would not cause any change in the environment relative to the applicable significance criterion; under these circumstances, no mitigation measures would be required or may be imposed, and the project or alternative could not cause or contribute to any cumulative effect.
- *Less Than Significant Impact.* This signifies that a project or an alternative could cause an adverse change in the environment, but not one that would be substantial, relative to the applicable significance criterion. Under these circumstances, no mitigation measures would be required or may be imposed. The analysis considers whether the project or alternative could cause or contribute to a potential cumulative effect.
- *Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.* This signifies that a project or an alternative could cause an adverse change in the environment that would be substantial relative to the applicable significance criterion, but that the implementation of one or more feasible mitigation measures would reduce the significance of the impact below the established threshold. The analysis considers whether the project or alternative could cause or contribute to a potential cumulative effect.
- *Significant and Unavoidable.* This signifies that a project or an alternative could cause a substantial adverse change in the environment relative to the applicable significance criterion; however, either no feasible mitigation measures are available, or, even with implementation of feasible mitigation measures, the significance of the impact would remain above the established threshold. The analysis considers whether the project or alternative could cause or contribute to a potential cumulative effect.

- *Cumulatively Considerable*. This signifies that a project-specific or alternative-specific contribution to a significant cumulative effect would be considerable when viewed in connection with the incremental impacts of past projects, the impacts of other current projects, and the impacts of reasonably foreseeable probable future projects (as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15130).

For each impact identified as significant, the DEIR provides mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate, or avoid adverse effects. The effectiveness of a recommended mitigation measure has been evaluated by analyzing the impact remaining after the implementation of the measure. In some cases, the implementation of more than one mitigation measure may be needed to reduce the significance of an impact below an established threshold. Whether the mitigation would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level successfully is stated in the DEIR.

4.2 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

This section provides a description of existing visual conditions in the area and describes the changes to those conditions that would result from implementation of the proposed project. This section includes a discussion of project-related impacts to aesthetics and visual resources, as well as mitigation measures to reduce the visual impacts of the proposed project. The analysis is based, in part, on information contained in the *Viewshed Technical Summary, Skyline Aggregates, Lassen County, California* (VESTRA, 2025) (refer to Appendix C).

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located in Hidden Valley, southwest of Antelope Mountain. Elevations on the project site range from 4150 feet above mean sea level on the southern end to 4300 feet above mean sea level along the northern site boundary. Skyline Road intersects the southwestern-most corner of the site. Geographically, the proposed project lies between Highway 139 (0.54 miles from the closest parcel boundary) and Highway 36 (0.70 miles from the closest parcel boundary). The project area is visible from Highway 139, Highway 36, and Highway 395.

The current visual character of the project site is undeveloped open space. Vegetation on the site is scant due to the geology and soils. The existing visual character of the surrounding area includes undeveloped or agricultural areas on the properties adjacent to the project site. However, the visual character begins to become more developed to the north, northeast, and east of the project site. Lassen Community College is approximately 0.6 miles north of the project site. The project site is 0.7 miles northeast of the Lassen County Fairgrounds and wastewater treatment plant ponds, and 0.75 miles east of the current Susanville city limits. Homes within eastern Susanville are located approximately one mile north of the project site. Additional residences exist sporadically to the south on agricultural parcels.

Within the immediate project vicinity, the existing sources of nighttime lighting include Lassen Community College, Lassen County Fairgrounds, Banner Lassen Medical Center, Northeastern Rural Health Clinic, Skyline Park, the city disc golf course, and Barry Reservoir. The Community College and fairgrounds use exterior lighting that is bright and visible from a large area at night. Existing lighting includes continued operational lighting from the Banner Lassen Medical Center and Lassen Community College, intermittent stadium lighting from the sports and equestrian

fields, and intermittent stadium lighting from the Lassen County Fairgrounds. Other light sources in the project vicinity are primarily associated with existing developments located within the City of Susanville or along Highway 36.

There are no "State Scenic Highways" designated by the State of California in Lassen County. There are also no official "County Scenic Highways", as recognized by the state. Lassen County utilizes an evaluation system to classify scenic resources within the County. The class designations combine several evaluation elements, including judgment of inherent scenic quality, character, and diversification; sensitivity in regard to the amount and type of public exposure to the particular landscape, the distance at which the landscape is perceived (foreground, middle ground, or background); and the existing extent to which an area's scenic quality has already been impacted. The project site is mapped as Class II and III in the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. Descriptions for these classifications included in the *Lassen County General Plan* are included below.

Class II: These areas have one or both of the following scenic resource characteristics:

1. Scenic value that is relatively common to the region.
2. Average sensitivity due to the location near local travel routes and residential areas.

   The scenic values of Class II areas or more or less common or characteristic of the region. Public exposure may be considerable, but the areas fall into a far middle ground or background distance zone.

Class III: These areas have one or both of the following scenic resources:

1. Landscapes have relatively minimal scenic distinction from the average scenery characteristics of the region.
2. Have low visual sensitivity because of low levels of public exposure due to the isolation of the area.

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

Federal

National Scenic Byways Program

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Established in Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code, the program is a grassroots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve, and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. FHWA's May 18, 1995, interim policy sets forth the procedures for the designation by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation of certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are 150 such designated byways in 46 states. There are no federally designated byways in the project vicinity.

State

California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263. Caltrans has compiled a list of State highways that are designated as scenic highways and are eligible for designation as scenic. There are no State-designated scenic highways in the project vicinity.

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The Lassen County General Plan contains the following goals, policies, and implementation measures applicable to the proposed project:

- Goal N-23: Scenic resources of high quality that will continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors and will continue to be an asset to the reputation and economic resources of Lassen County.
- NR 78 Policy: The County has identified areas of scenic importance and sensitivity along state highways and major County roads and has designated those areas as "Scenic Corridors." The County will develop and enforce policies and regulations to protect areas designated as scenic corridors from unjustified levels of visual deterioration.
- Goal N-24: Protection of the scenic qualities of the county's night sky.
- NR 82 Policy: The County will encourage projects within Lassen County but outside the County's jurisdictional authority to include provisions to minimize the adverse intrusion of lighting on the surrounding area and the night sky in general.

Implementation Measures

- NR-U The County shall adopt policies to minimize adverse impacts which will significantly deteriorate the scenic qualities of visually sensitive areas.
- NR-V Areas designated and zoned for development in scenic corridors shall be zoned as "Design Review Combining Districts" or otherwise regulated to require review and management by the County of the visual impacts of proposed development.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* (Area Plan) contains the following policy on aesthetics:

> Policy 8.1: Lassen County should protect, maintain, and establish scenic corridors in order to preserve the beauty of its landscapes. The scenic corridors designated are shown on the land use map. These corridors shall protect the visual quality of unique scenic resources.

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* identifies the following Scenic Corridors:

- State Highway 139 from the northern end of the planning area to the northern border of Section 28 (Township 30 North, Range 12 East). The area presents a spectacular view of the valley, the Diamond Mountains, and the planning area.
- State Highway 36 from the western border of the planning area to the Susanville City limits. This portion of the highway provides tourists with a spectacular view of the valley, the Susan River, and the planning area.
- State Highway 36 from the eastern border of the planning area to the Southern Pacific Railroad lines. This area includes sites of agricultural land and the rural character of the Honey Lake Valley.

Implementation Measures

The Area Plan contains the following implementation measures for scenic corridors:

- 8.12: New development in these corridors should use natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape.
- 8.16: Utilities in the scenic corridors should be placed underground whenever possible.

Lassen County Code

Section 18.108.155, *Lighting*, of the Lassen County Code contains the following policy related to aesthetics that would apply to the proposed project:

> *"Unless otherwise provided in this title, the following lighting requirements shall apply: All lighting, exterior and interior, shall be designed and located so as to confine direct lighting to the premises. A light source shall not shine upon or illuminate directly on any surface other than the area required to be lighted. No lighting shall be of the type or in a location such that constitutes a hazard to vehicle traffic, either on private property or on abutting streets."*

4.2.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Aesthetic and Visual Resources* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic visa.*
- *Substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.*
- *In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings.*

- *Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

4.2.4 Impact Analysis

Implementation of the proposed project will result in changes to the existing visual appearance of the site, including vegetation removal, excavation that will result in changes to existing topography, and the addition of structures and equipment. Lighting will be required for nighttime operations and security. Mining activities will occur over a duration of 50 years. Following mining activities, the end use for the mining and reclamation area will be used as open space for wildlife habitat, cultural, and scenic resources.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Aesthetics and Visual Resources* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. After further review of County-designated scenic corridors that are excluded from State scenic highways, all highways and recreational facilities within the vicinity of the project area are now classified as having impacts, and most are reducible to less than significant.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.2-1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
As noted above under Subsection 4.2.2, Regulatory Setting, the area in the vicinity of the mine site is not identified as an area of high scenic value. The project site is classified as a Class II and III scenic resource in the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* and has scenic value relatively common to the region, with average to low sensitivity.

A significant impact would occur if the project substantially obstructs, interrupts, or detracts from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, a trail within an adopted county or state trail system, a scenic vista or highway, or a recreational area.

Visual changes will include the removal of vegetation throughout the mining area as needed. Mining will occur in five phases, and vegetation will be removed from only the parts of each phase that are to be mined each year. The entirety of each phase will be mined prior to the initiation of subsequent phases. Upon the completion of each phase, areas that are not going to be continuously disturbed by processing, stockpiling, or the movement of materials will be

revegetated. Equipment will be installed on the site, the largest of which will be the silo asphalt plant at 75 feet in height. Equipment and processing facilities will be set below ground level within the Phase 1 area within two years of the initiation of mining activities. Additional visual impacts will include the landscape yard and shop area, which include a landscape material retail area, parking for transportation trucks, and a 5,000-square-foot shop. This area will be visible from Skyline Road and subsequently visible from Highway 36.

Permanent lighting on the site will be installed around the asphalt and concrete plant for nighttime work. Two 42,000-lumen lights will be installed at the asphalt plant, and one 42,000-lumen light will be installed at the concrete plant. The crusher, wash plant, lime plant, and scalehouse will each have one 21,000-lumen security light installed. The shop area will have six 21,000-lumen lights installed around the building exterior. Two mobile 42,000-lumen lights may be used onsite if light for irregular night operations is needed; these units extend up to 20 feet high. All lights will be downcast.

Based on the viewshed analysis, several recreational and scenic highway vistas were evaluated for impacts, including Highway 395, Highway 139, Skyline Park, the City frisbee golf course, Skyline Recreational Trail, and Barry Reservoir. After further investigation, the current topography from existing development and natural reoccurring vegetation prevents a direct view of the proposed project site from these facilities. The project site is, however, directly visible from the grandstands of the Lassen County Fairground Stadium, and Highway 36, portions of which are designated scenic corridors as mapped in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan.* The resulting data is illustrated in Figure 4-1. The total linear feet from the viewshed analysis, where the proposed mining area is visible from Highway 395, Highway 36, and Highway 139 within five miles of the proposed project, is shown in Table 4-1.

As described previously, the project site is within the scenic corridors and will be visible from scenic corridors, which are subject to the applicable implementation measures for scenic corridors included in the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*.

Table 4-1
VIEWSHED STATISTICS

Observation Location	Linear Feet of Highway 139	Linear Feet of Highway 36	Linear Feet of Highway 395
North Observation Point	12,610	27,750	12,756
South Observation Point	8,852	18,686	6,353

Source: VESTRA, 2025

Implementation of the proposed project will result in changes to the project site, including vegetation removal, excavation that will result in changes in topography, and the addition of structures and equipment to the project site as described above. Structures onsite will be no more than 75 feet tall and will be placed within the excavated area and below existing ground level within two years of the start of mining operations, and vegetation removal will only occur immediately prior to mining a specific area. Visual changes will be incremental over the 50-year anticipated life span of the mine.

The project does include features that would block the view of a scenic vista (Highway 36); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.2-4, the sign of the site will utilize end-grade topography to lower stockpiles and structures that could block views. The landscape yard, shop, and truck parking area will be above the existing grade and plainly visible, however, and will potentially block an existing scenic vista. The shop structure will be a single-story building. Truck parking will be intermittent, and stockpiles in these areas will not be substantial enough to block views.

The Lassen County Susanville Area Plan requires that new development within scenic corridors use natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape, and utilities in the scenic corridors should be placed underground whenever possible. Onsite equipment and structures will utilize natural materials and earth tones wherever possible. Mining equipment, such as the processing plants, will be most noticeable at a distance and from higher elevations once the initial excavation of Phase 1 is complete and the processing area is developed. The use of earth tones will significantly reduce the noticeability of these structures from a distance, as they will blend into the surrounding area. Gas lines will be run underground along Skyline Road to where they are needed onsite, as required by the Susanville Area Plan. Powerlines will be extended on aboveground poles from Lassen College.

Since the project is visible at a distance from portions of designated scenic corridors within Lassen County, impacts to views from the corridors are potentially significant. Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 is included to ensure the project complies with *Implementation Measure 8.12* of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* requirements for development within scenic corridors. Mitigation Measures 4.2-1 includes construction of structures with natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape to reduce the visibility of the site from a distance and from the designated scenic corridors. Impacts will be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation.

Mitigation Measure 4.2-2 will require the project to apply minimal lighting standards to minimize project-related light and glare to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with safety considerations. The development plans for Skyline Quarry shall include lighting standards as required by this mitigation measure, including maximum standards for light "spillage." Compliance with the lighting standards shall be demonstrated in the Project Compliance Report submitted for each development phase. Specifically, the lighting standards shall include the following measures:

Lights shall be installed at the lowest allowable height. Color-corrected halide lights shall be used rather than low-pressure sodium lights. The lowest allowable wattage shall be used for parking lot and roadway lighting. Lights shall be screened and directed away from the night sky to the maximum extent possible. The number of nighttime lights used shall be minimized. Light fixtures shall be made of galvanized steel (that will oxidize naturally shortly following installation and will not cause reflective daytime glare) or other non-reflective surface.

Impact 4.2-2: In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the public views of the site and its surroundings.

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood,

community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.).

Implementation of the proposed project will alter the visual character of the site by physical disturbance of the 460-acre mining area. Initial mining operations within the Phase 1 area will represent the most swift and significant change in visual character. In the first two years of project operations, mining will be required to extract enough material to reach the Phase 1 base elevation and place equipment below the existing topography. Over the remainder of the 50-year lifespan of the mine, changes will be in areas to be immediately mined; therefore, changes to the character of the site will be gradual. As practicable, areas that have been mined and are not to be disturbed by ongoing operations will be reclaimed and revegetated. Following completion of mining activities, the project site will be reclaimed for open space.

Figures 4-2 and 4-3 depict the estimated areas where the proposed project will be visible. As shown in these figures, the project will be visible from public areas, including roadways, the Lassen County Fairgrounds, and Banner Lassen Medical Center. Implementation of the proposed project will result in the removal of vegetation from the site. Excavation areas, stockpile areas, the landscape yard, shop, and processing areas will be visible and represent a change in the existing character of the project site from undeveloped and agricultural to an industrial nature for the duration of mining activities. Following reclamation, the proposed end use for the project site will be agricultural use for open space. Due to the long-term nature of the disturbance and extent of topographic change, this impact will be significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 includes the use of natural materials and earth-tone colors for project structures and stationary equipment that will allow the project to better blend with the surrounding landscape. Although this measure will reduce the visual impacts of mining activities, the implementation of the proposed project will degrade the existing visual character of the site through the conversion of vacant/agricultural land to industrial use during mining activities. This impact will remain significant and unavoidable.

Impact 4.2.3: Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The proposed project does not include a new source of glare, as all onsite structures and equipment will use natural material and earth-tone colors, thereby reducing reflectivity. Generally, the facility will operate from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday, with some operational Sundays. During construction season, the site may operate 24 hours a day to meet construction demand and Caltrans requirements for nighttime work. It is estimated that this will be fewer than 150 days per year. Nighttime work will require nighttime lighting. The project site does not currently include any light sources; however, the site is surrounded by uses to the north and west that use nighttime light, including the Lassen County Fairgrounds, Lassen Community College, Northeastern Rural Health Clinic, Skyline Park, Barry Reservoir, and Banner Lassen Medical Center.

Permanent lighting on the site will be installed around the asphalt and concrete plant for any required nighttime work. Two 42,000-lumen lights will be installed at the asphalt plant, and one

42,000-lumen light will be installed at the concrete plant. The crusher, wash plant, lime plant, and scalehouse will each have one 21,000-lumen security light installed. The shop area will have six 21,000-lumen lights installed around the building exterior. Two mobile 42,000-lumen lights may be used onsite if light for irregular night operations is needed. These units extend up to 20 feet high. All lights will be downcast and directional. Nighttime operations will cease during any concerts at Lassen County Fairgrounds, so lighting on the property during events will be limited to that necessary for security and safety.

Lighting, when utilized, will be visible from offsite areas and could result in impacts to nighttime views in the area if it were to shine offsite or illuminate the night sky. Mitigation Measure 4.2-2 includes compliance with the lighting requirements contained in Section 18.108.155 of the Lassen County Code, requiring lighting to be confined to the project site. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.2-2, as well as Mitigation Measure 4.5-1 in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*, requiring night lighting to be shielded and confined to the project site and only visible as a faint source from a distance, the impact of nighttime operations lighting will be reduced. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 and Mitigation Measure 4.2-2, impacts to nighttime views will be less than significant.

4.2.6 Mitigation Measures

4.2-1: Structures, walls, or buildings constructed within the project site shall be constructed of natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. Stationary equipment shall be painted earth-tone colors.

4.2-2: All exterior lighting shall be designed and located so as to confine direct lighting to the premises. A light source shall not shine upon or illuminate directly on any surface other than the area required to be lit. No lighting shall be of the type or in a location that constitutes a hazard to vehicle traffic, either on private property or abutting streets. All mobile lighting equipment shall utilize shielded directional lighting that is pointed downward, thereby minimizing illumination to adjacent natural areas and the night sky. The project applicant shall apply minimal lighting standards to minimize project-related light and glare to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with safety considerations. The development plans for Skyline Quarry shall include lighting standards as required by this mitigation measure, including maximum standards for light "spillage." Compliance with the lighting standards shall be demonstrated in the Project Compliance Report submitted for each development phase.

4.2-3: Scheduled deliveries and activities for mining operations shall be prohibited during nighttime hours conflicting with scheduled events at the Lassen County Fairgrounds and City of Susanville community events.

4.2-4: The design of the site will utilize end grade topography for development at the lowest elevation feasible to reduce visual nuisance to public views and the surrounding area. Visual barriers such as headwalls and berms will be installed and revegetated to include landscape elements.

4.2.7 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impacts of the proposed project to scenic vistas (Impact 4.2-1) will be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.2-1, which includes construction of structures with natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. This measure will ensure compliance with the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* requirements for development within scenic corridors and reduce the visibility of the site from a distance.

Impact 4.2-2 (degradation of the existing visual character of the site visible from public areas) will be reduced by implementation of mitigation; however, implementation of the proposed project will result in a change to the existing visual character of the site from undeveloped/agricultural land to an industrial operation and will be visible to the public from other locations. This impact will remain significant and unavoidable.

Impacts related to nighttime lighting (Impact 4.2-3) will be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the incorporation of mitigation that requires fixed and mobile lighting to be contained onsite and directed downward. Impacts will be less than significant.

4.3 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section describes the agricultural and forestry setting of the project site, summarizes the applicable regulations that govern those resources, and includes a discussion of changes that would occur from the project and an analysis of the project's impacts to agriculture and forestry resources. The analysis includes a discussion of the potential agricultural productivity of the onsite soils and the potential impacts of the proposed project to that productivity.

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

The *Lassen County General Plan* land use designation for the project site is "Urban Reserve/Intensive." Land uses adjacent to the proposed project are designated by the Lassen County General Plan as "Planned Development" and "Parks and Recreation" to the north, "Extensive Agriculture" to the east, "Urban Reserve" and "Intensive Agriculture" onsite and to the west, and "Resource Conservation" and "Public" to the south.

The dominant habitat type at the project site, identified through the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) classification, is sagebrush (Mayer and Laudenslayer, 1988). Sagebrush habitat is usually large, open, and often discontinuous, and stands are usually dominated by big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). This habitat occurs over a range of middle and high elevations. Sagebrush is often mixed with other similar shrub species, such as rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), horsebrush (*Tetradymia* spp.), and bitterbrush (*Purshia* spp.). In some places, stands may have an understory of perennial grasses and forbs.

The site is not covered by a Williamson Act contract. In addition, the proposed project is not zoned as forestland, timberland, or timberland production.

4.3.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process.

Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. §4201)
The purpose of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) is to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. It additionally directs federal programs to be compatible with State and local policies for the protection of farmlands. Congress passed the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-98) containing the FPPA—Subtitle I of Title XV, §1539-1549. The final rules and regulations were published in the Federal Register on June 17, 1994.

The FPPA is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. It assures that, to the extent possible, Federal programs are administered to be compatible with State, local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland. Federal agencies are required to develop and review their policies and procedures to implement the FPPA every two years. The FPPA does not authorize the federal government to regulate the use of private or non-federal land or, in any way, affect the property rights of owners.

For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land. Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland (directly or indirectly) to non-agricultural use and are completed by a federal agency or with assistance from a federal agency.

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), maps soils and farmland and provides science-based soil information. The NRCS manages the Farmland Protection Program, which provides funds to conserve productive farmland.

State

California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which monitors the conversion of the State's farmland to and from agricultural use, relies on information from the NRCS soils surveys, NRCS land inventory and monitoring criteria, and land use and water availability. Topography, climate, soil quality, and available irrigation water all factor into the FMMP farmland classifications.

The FMMP was established by the California Department of Conservation (DOC), under the Division of Land Resource Protection. Important Farmland Maps are compiled by the FMMP pursuant to §65570 of the California Government Code. The FMMP is an informational service

only and does not constitute State regulation of local land use decisions. Under the FMMP, "Important Farmland Categories" were established based on soil characteristics that have significant agricultural production values. Categories mapped by the FMMP are as follow:

- *Prime Farmland.* Prime Farmland is land that has been used for irrigated agricultural production and meets the physical and chemical criteria for Prime Farmland as determined by the USDA, NRCS. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- *Farmland of Statewide Importance.* Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland but generally includes steeper slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. In order to be classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance, the land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- *Unique Farmland.* Unique Farmland is farmland of lesser quality soils used to produce the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- *Farmland of Local Importance.* Farmland of Local Importance is land important to the local economy as determined by the County Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. This land includes dryland grain-producing lands and farmlands that are presently irrigated but do not meet the soil characteristics of Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance.
- *Urban and Built-up Land.* Urban and Built-Up Land is land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- *Other Land.* Other Land is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments, brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities, strip mines, borrow pits, and water bodies smaller than forty acres.
- *Water.* This category includes perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is promulgated in California Government Code §51200-51297.4, and therefore is applicable only to specific land parcels within the State of California. The Williamson Act enables local governments to enter contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses in return for reduced property tax assessments. Private land within locally designated agricultural preserve areas is eligible for enrollment under Williamson Act contracts. The Williamson Act program is administered by the CDC, in

conjunction with local governments, which administer the individual contract arrangements with landowners.

The landowner commits the parcel to a 10-year period wherein no conversion out of agricultural use is permitted. Each year, the contract automatically renews unless a notice of non-renewal or cancellation is filed. In return, the land is taxed at a rate based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted market value. An application for immediate cancellation can also be requested by the landowner, provided that the proposed immediate cancellation application is consistent with the cancellation criteria stated in the California Land Conservation Act and those adopted by the affected county or city. Non-renewal or immediate cancellation does not change the zoning of the property. Participation in the Williamson Act program is dependent on county adoption and implementation of the program and is voluntary for landowners.

The Williamson Act states that a board or council, by resolution, shall adopt rules governing the administration of agricultural preserves. The rules of each agricultural preserve specify the uses allowed. Generally, any commercial agricultural use will be permitted within any agricultural preserve. In addition, local governments may identify compatible uses permitted with a use permit.

California Government Code §51238 states that, unless otherwise decided by a local board or council, the erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of electric and communication facilities, as well as other facilities, are determined to be compatible uses within any agricultural preserve. Also, §51238 states that boards of supervisors may impose conditions on lands or land uses to be placed within preserves to permit and encourage compatible uses in conformity with §51238.1.

Further, California Government Code §51238.1 allows a board or council to allow as compatible any use that, without conditions or mitigations, would otherwise be considered incompatible; however, this may occur only if that use meets the following conditions:

- The use will not significantly compromise the long-term productive agricultural capability of the subject contracted parcel or parcels on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves.
- The use will not significantly displace or impair current or reasonably foreseeable agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves. Uses that significantly displace agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels may be deemed compatible if they relate directly to the production of commercial agricultural products on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or neighboring lands, including activities such as harvesting, processing, or shipping.
- The use will not result in the significant removal of adjacent contracted land from agricultural or open-space use.

The proposed project site is not under a Williamson Land Use contract.

Farmland Security Zone Contract

The CDC passed the Farmland Security Zone legislation (Govt. Code §51296) in 1998. The Farmland Security Zone allows counties to establish an additional program for farmlands to enter contracts with the State. This legislation allows landowners whose land is under a Williamson Act contract to petition the county board of supervisors to annul the Williamson Act contract for a Farmland Security Zone Contract. A Farmland Security Zone Contract is a 20-year contract that allows the property owner to receive 35 percent more in tax savings than a Williamson Act contract. Both contracts require that lands be within an established Agricultural Preserve. Agricultural lands that are not in a preserve face the greatest threat of conversion, as they are assessed higher property taxes due to their proximity to urbanization. The proposed project site is not under a Farmland Security Zone contract or within an agricultural preserve.

Forest Land and Timberland

PRC §12220(g) defines Forest Land as "*land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.*"

Public Resources Code §4526 defines timberland as "*land, other than land owned by the Federal government, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees.*"

Government Code §51104(g) defines Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) as "*an area which has been zoned pursuant to [Government Code] §§51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, as defined in subdivision (h).*"

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The following General Plan objectives and policies are pertinent to the agricultural resources evaluation for the proposed Project:

> GOAL A-1: Conservation of productive agricultural lands and lands having substantial physical potential for productive agricultural use, and the protection of such lands from unwarranted intrusion of incompatible land uses and conversion to uses which may obstruct or constrain agricultural use and value.
>
> - Policy AG-1: The County recognizes that land having the physical characteristics (e.g., soil) for the production of agricultural crops and livestock is a resource of significant value that needs to be protected for its economic value, its contribution to the character of the community, and its environmental and scenic values.
> - PolicyAG-4: To support the existing and future economic value and viability of agricultural lands, including grazing lands, such lands should remain in relatively large units. Except in limited circumstances pursuant to the County's zoning ordinance (e.g., segregation of homesites, use permits, etc.), County zoning and subdivision regulations shall protect agricultural lands by not allowing isolated subdivisions intended primarily for residential use to be developed in areas which

are not specifically designated in the General Plan or an area plan for a community development land use (e.g., rural residential) and zoned accordingly.

- Policy AG-5: In order to minimize the disruption and displacement of agricultural operations and lands by non-agricultural development, non-agricultural development in agricultural areas should be directed to: sites where soils do not have significant potential for productive agricultural use, sites least likely to impact productive agricultural uses in the vicinity, sites where, or which are adjacent to where, similar non-agricultural uses already exist, and sites where adequate community services are or will be available.

GOAL A-2: Maintain area plan policies and related land use and resource management decisions that support the agricultural policies of the Agriculture Element.

- Policy AG-6: The policies of area plans relating to agricultural resources are recognized as complementary to and supportive of the Agriculture Element as they may apply to the land and resources of each particular planning area.

GOAL A-3: Maintain an orderly process and review criteria for the consideration of project proposals which may result in the conversion of agricultural lands to uses which are not primarily agricultural or directly related to agriculture, consistent with related policies of the General Plan which are intended to protect agricultural resources and land uses.

- Policy AG-7: In order to minimize the disruption and displacement of agricultural operations and lands by non-agricultural development, non-agricultural development in agricultural areas should be directed to: sites where soils do not have significant potential for productive agricultural use, sites least likely to impact productive agricultural uses in the vicinity, sites where, or which are adjacent to where, similar non-agricultural uses already exist, and sites where adequate community services are or will be available.
- Policy AG-8: The County recognizes that some agricultural areas may, in the future, be more specifically identified and evaluated for alternative land uses. If it can be demonstrated with findings by the Board of Supervisors that there is adequate justification to consider the conversion of agricultural land, those lands may be considered for a General Plan amendment to redesignate them for a specific non-agricultural land use. The conversion of agricultural lands, including rangeland, to non-agricultural uses may be allowed if and when such proposed conversions are supported by findings based on substantial evidence, and consideration of related policies established by local agricultural industry organizations, which demonstrate consistency with all of the provisions listed below. (Note: Some types of land uses may be specifically exempted by the General Plan or an area plan from full consistency with these agricultural conversion findings, e.g., certain industrial uses.)

    - The conversion is justified by a factor of significant benefit to the community (e.g., facilitating orderly expansion of a community, facilitating construction of a public facility, providing significant employment-generating opportunities, etc.);

- There is a substantial limitation to alternative non-agricultural sites for the proposed land use;
- Conversion will not have a significant adverse impact on agricultural land use, agricultural water supplies, significant wildlife habitat, or other natural resource based uses on adjacent lands;
- Adequate community services to support the proposed use are or will be available at the proposed site; and
- The proposed use is or will be supported by an appropriate land use designation and the establishment of a corresponding zoning district.

- Policy AG-9: When considering proposals for agricultural land conversions and/or associated mitigation measures, the County will recognize that the cumulative impacts from land conversions places an increased burden on the remaining agricultural land to provide environmental quality, wildlife habitat and open space values and may threaten the viability of the remaining agricultural land; therefore, the County will support measures to help minimize the impacts of that burden.
- Policy AG-10: The County shall not expect or require that agricultural lands bear the burden of fulfilling open space requirements for residential and other forms of community development proposed in or adjacent to agricultural areas.
- Policy AG-11: Agricultural production and product processing facilities are encouraged by the County and, unlike most general industrial uses, are considered to be related to agricultural uses and, therefore, may be considered for location in areas designated for intensive or extensive agricultural use without being considered as a "conversion" of agricultural land and without all of the required findings set forth in this section for conversions. However, the siting of agricultural production facilities in these areas, when allowed, shall be supported by information and findings that demonstrate that the facility will not substantially interfere with agricultural or other natural resource-based uses on adjacent lands.
- Policy AG-12: Subject to case-by-case review (including review for compatibility with surrounding agricultural uses), and in compliance with relevant area plan, zoning, permitting and environmental review requirements, the development and operation of the following land uses will typically be deemed to be consistent with the Extensive and Intensive Agriculture land use designations and will not require zoning to an "Industrial" zoning district, nor will they be interpreted by the County to constitute an "agricultural conversion" pursuant to this General Plan:

  a) processing plants for the production of agricultural products;

  b) processing plants for the production of natural resource products where the location of the resource is fundamental to the location of processing and packaging facilities (e.g., water bottled at the source, etc.);

  c) mines, the extraction of minerals, and the ancillary processing of mineral materials generated onsite, including the production of asphalt, ready-mix concrete, and similar products;

d) sawmills and related timber processing operations;

e) geothermal and natural gas wells, hydroelectric projects, and ancillary facilities for the production of energy; and

f) uses of similar character as may be determined by the Board of Supervisors.

- Policy AG-13: The operation of a minor non-agricultural activity by the owner of agricultural land on lands designated for agriculture, when such use is clearly subordinate to and does not reduce, constrain, or interfere with agricultural operations on the property or in the vicinity, shall not be interpreted by the County as a "conversion" of agricultural land pursuant to the General Plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, bed-and-breakfast establishments, hunting and other small lodges, guest ranches, and home occupations.

GOAL A-4: Support for the economic viability and continuation of agricultural operations and the protection of agricultural resource lands.

- Policy AG-14: The County shall encourage the ongoing review of agriculture-related land use and resource management issues by local organizations representing the agriculture industry (e.g., the Farm Bureau, the Cattlemen's Association) and shall consider their recommendations regarding related land use and resource management policies and actions.
- Policy AG-15: The County supports the consideration of innovative ways to maintain the economic viability of productive agricultural lands, subject to the unique circumstances of each area. Measures may include use of land conservation contracts (e.g., Williamson Act contracts), land banks, transfer of development rights, voluntary conservation easements, and use of buffer areas between agricultural lands and developing areas.
- Policy AG-16: Where proposed residential, commercial, or industrial development abuts lands devoted to agricultural production, the non-agricultural uses shall be required to incorporate buffer areas to mitigate potential land use conflicts as conditions of approval for subdivisions or use permits. The type and width of buffer areas shall be determined based on the character, intensity, and sensitivity of the abutting land uses.

GOAL A-5: Productive cooperation with and from Federal and State agencies that manage natural resources in Lassen County and improved consistency in resource management objectives, policies, and programs.

- Policy AG-17: The County supports grazing practices on private lands and lands managed by State and Federal agencies that support the long-term health and sustainability of rangeland resources.
- Policy AG-18: The County supports cooperative efforts between private sector interests and public agencies that incorporate economic viability while addressing environmental resource concerns, such as the Eagle Lake I Pine Creek Coordinated Resources Management Planning (CRMP) group.

- Policy AG-19: The County advocates grazing policies on Federal and State lands which support the economic viability of related private livestock operations while maintaining the long-term productivity of rangeland ecosystems. Proposed changes in resource management policies regarding rangeland use need to consider and mitigate potential economic, social, and cultural impacts to Lassen County citizens and communities, and impacts to related private lands in Lassen County.

GOAL A-6: To protect and maximize the present and future productive, economic, and environmental values of the County's soil resources.

- Policy AG-20: The County recognizes the need to protect and conserve areas where soils have high resource values, especially in terms of potential agricultural productivity.
- Policy AG-21: The County discourages the development of land having soils of significant agricultural value for purposes other than agriculture or land uses directly related to agriculture.

GOAL A-7: Protection of agricultural lands and lands having substantial potential for productive agricultural use from the intrusion of incompatible neighboring uses and factors that threaten to constrain or reduce agricultural productivity.

- Policy AG-22: The County shall continue to support "right to farm" provisions and shall discourage and minimize the introduction and encroachment of uses which may conflict with agricultural operations or future agricultural development.
- Policy AG-23: The County encourages strategy plans and strong measures to manage feral horses and burros on public and private rangelands and to minimize related damage to livestock and wildlife forage and water resources.
- Policy AG-24: The County supports strong measures to eliminate or prevent the spread of invasive weeds and plant species, including, but not limited to, medusahead, yellow starthistle, and perennial pepperweed (whitetop), and to control the adverse effects from the excessive spreading of such species as juniper and cheatgrass.

GOAL A-8: Administrative relief in limited circumstances when the creation of a parcel is needed for a homesite or other special need related to an agricultural operation, when the resulting parcel would be smaller than otherwise required in the agricultural area.

- Policy AG-25: The County may establish and administer processes to allow, under limited circumstances and with appropriate findings. The division of land in agricultural zones to create special parcels that would be smaller than the size of parcels generally required in the agricultural areas. Approval of such processes (e.g., "Segregation of Homesites", ancillary to an approved use permit, or other processes) shall not be construed to be a "variance" of the County Code and may be exempted from the required findings of an "agricultural conversion". When supported by appropriate findings, such land divisions shall not be regarded as inconsistent with the intent of the agricultural land use designation.

GOAL A-9: Maintain a good regional reputation for locally produced agricultural products.

- Policy AG-26: The County supports measures to promote and protect the quality and image of agricultural products produced in Lassen County.

GOAL A-10: Maintain a sensible appropriation and utilization of water for agricultural use in the county.

- Policy AG-27: To ensure adequate supplies of irrigation water to areas having the highest potential for agricultural productivity, the County supports analysis and, when warranted, development of water impoundments and aqueducts to transport water resources to areas within the County which have the foremost agricultural soils.
- Policy NR-8: The County recognizes the need to protect and conserve areas where soils have high resource values, especially in terms of potential agricultural productivity.
- Policy NR-9: The County discourages the development of land having soils of significant agricultural value for purposes other than agriculture or land uses directly related to agriculture.

GOAL N-11: Healthy forest environments that will continue to provide resources for multiple uses and timber production in sustainable quantities, which will benefit the local economy.

- Policy NR-31: It is recognized by the County that the timber industry has historically been and continues to be a major economic and social component of Lassen County and therefore represents a vital factor in the fundamental culture and customs of the community.
- Policy NR-33: The County supports the balancing of policies for the conservation of natural resources (including wildlife management policies) in forested areas with the need to maintain production of timber at abundant, sustainable levels as an economic resource.
- Policy NR-34: The County recognizes the critical role that timber resources on Federal lands have in the economy of Lassen County and shall continue to advocate and support Federal resource management policies and practices that make plentiful, sustainable quantities of timber available for local lumber and timber-related industries.
- Policy NR-35: The County supports the efforts of the timber industry and local citizens to forge cooperative plans and agreements to achieve diverse objectives for protecting and managing forest resources while providing for the long-term economic stability of timber-reliant industries.
- Policy NR-36: In areas having significant forest and timber resources, the County supports the formulation of resource management goals and objectives that address the long-term health and diversity of resources in these areas as well as the sustained productivity of timber products.

- Policy NR-37: The County supports management of endangered species and critical wildlife habitats in balance with other resource management needs, including the need for economic stability related to timber industries.
- Policy NR-38: The County supports successful reforestation of harvested and fire-damaged areas on private and publicly owned timberlands.

GOAL N-12: To manage the resources of rangeland areas within Lassen County by maintaining healthy, diverse ecosystems while encouraging and providing for multiple use of resources which contribute to the economic stability of the County's citizens.

- Policy NR-39: To protect the extensive resource values of rangeland areas, the County will support the maintenance of relatively large parcel sizes by discouraging small, isolated land divisions without appropriate justification.
- Policy NR-40: The County supports the management of wildlife resources in rangeland areas in ways that enhance the health and abundance of wildlife populations and the diversity of species and their habitats, and which, at the same time, balance management policies and program objectives with the range of social and economic needs for which the County is also responsible.
- Policy NR-41: The County supports grazing practices on private lands and lands managed by state and Federal agencies that support the long-term health and sustainability of rangeland resources.
- Policy NR-42: The County advocates grazing policies on federal and state lands which support the economic viability of related private livestock operations while maintaining the long-term productivity of rangeland ecosystems. Proposed changes to resource management policies regarding rangeland use need to consider and mitigate potential economic, social, and cultural impacts to Lassen County citizens and communities, and impacts to related private lands in Lassen County.
- Policy NR-43: The County typically recognizes and designates rangeland areas as "Extensive Agriculture."
    - Lands which are designated "Extensive Agriculture" in the County General Plan or in an applicable area plan should be zoned "U-C-2, Upland Conservation/Resource Management District," or a similar conservation or agricultural district.
    - The County will continue to review and, when warranted, adopt development standards that mitigate the impacts of development on agricultural land uses in rangeland areas and place the responsibility for mitigation on new development. Such standards and mitigation measures shall include, but not be limited to, fencing standards and the use of setbacks and buffer areas.
- Policy NR-44: In order to address environmental concerns regarding rangelands while continuing to provide for economic and social needs related to resource use and management of private and public lands, the County supports the development and implementation of cooperative resource management programs,

based on sound biological science, which include goals and objectives that address and provide for the sustained health of rangeland resources.

GOAL L-16: Conservation of productive agricultural lands and lands having substantial physical potential for productive agricultural use, and the protection of such lands from unwarranted intrusion of incompatible land uses and conversion to uses which may significantly obstruct or constrain agricultural use and value.

- Policy LU-35: Subject to case-by-case review (including review for compatibility with surrounding agricultural uses), and in compliance with relevant area plan, zoning, permitting and environmental review requirements, the development and operation of the following land uses will typically be deemed to be consistent with the Extensive and Intensive Agriculture land use designations and will not require zoning to an "Industrial" zoning district, nor will they be interpreted by the County to constitute an "agricultural conversion" pursuant to this General Plan:
    - processing plants for the production of agricultural products;
    - processing plants for the production of natural resource products where the location of the resource is fundamental to the location of processing and packaging facilities (e.g., water bottled at the source, etc.);
    - mines, the extraction of minerals, and the ancillary processing of mineral materials generated onsite, including the production of asphalt, ready-mix concrete, and similar products;
    - sawmills and related timber processing operations;
    - geothermal and natural gas wells, hydroelectric projects, .and ancillary facilities to produce energy; and
    - uses of similar character as may be determined by the Board of Supervisors.
- Policy LU-40: The County recognizes and has generally assigned General Plan land use designations for lands having high agricultural resource value as "Intensive Agriculture" or "Crop Land and Prime Grazing Land." It also recognizes the potentially important agricultural values of some of the areas designated "Extensive Agriculture" or "Grazing and Sagebrush Environment" for rangeland grazing and other agricultural purposes.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The Susanville Vicinity Area Plan (Area Plan) contains the following goals, objectives, and policies related to timber resources:

- Policy 6.1: The County shall conserve timberland resource areas suitable for commercial operations and shall protect these areas from incompatible land uses. Timberland reserve areas shall be designated as extensive agriculture, general forest environment.

The Area Plan contains the following implementation measures related to timber resources:

- 6.11: The County should support and promote reforestation and forest improvement practices.
- 6.12: Land adjacent to commercial timberlands shall receive land use designations that are compatible with timberland management activities. These uses include open space, low-density residential, and recreation.
- 6.13: Land designated as general forest shall be zoned "TPZ," timber production zone, "FR", forest recreation or "DC", upland conservation.

The Area Plan contains the following goals, objectives, and policies related to agricultural resources:

- Policy 7.1A: Agricultural land in Lassen County shall be protected for its economic importance, its contribution to the character of the community, and its environmental values. The designation of intensive agriculture is applied to agricultural land (as shown on the area plan land use map) in the planning area.
- Policy 7.1B: Parcel sizes shall be retained at sufficient sizes for productive economic agricultural use.
- Policy7.1C: Non-agricultural uses shall be directed to areas with soils with limited value for intensive agricultural use or in areas where similar uses already exist. Non-agricultural uses shall not interfere with agricultural operations.

The Area Plan contains the following implementation measures related to agricultural resources:

- 7.11: Land designated intensive agriculture on the area plan and land use map shall be zoned "A-3", agriculture or "EA", exclusive agriculture.
- 7.12: Where dense residential or commercial development abuts lands devoted to agricultural production, the non-agricultural uses shall incorporate buffer setbacks and or construct natural screens to mitigate potential land use conflicts.

4.3.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Agriculture and Forestry Resources* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.*
- *Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.*

- *Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.*
- *Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)) or result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.*

4.3.4 Impact Analysis

Implementation of the proposed project could affect agriculture and forestry resources, as mining activities will result in the removal of all existing vegetation, overburden, and topsoil from the 460-acre mining and reclamation area during phased mining activities. Mining and processing of materials are proposed to occur for a period of 50 years at the project site. Following completion of mining activities, the mining area will be reclaimed to an end use of agricultural and open space. Implementation of the proposed project will not require a general plan amendment or rezone, as the proposed mining activities and post-reclamation use are permitted under the existing U-C-A-P zoning designation. Agricultural land will not be permanently removed.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Agriculture and Forestry Resources* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Agriculture and Forestry Resources.*

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

As stated in Lassen County General Plan Policy AG-12, mining and processing activities will typically be deemed to be consistent with the Intensive Agriculture land use designation and will not require zoning to an industrial zoning district or interpreted by the County to constitute an agricultural conversion pursuant to the General Plan. Following completion of mining and reclamation activities, the end use of the project site will be agricultural use for open space. Mineral extraction and surface mining are allowed uses within the U-C-A-P zoning designation and will be reclaimed for agricultural use.

The proposed project is consistent with Policy 7.1C of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan,* which requires that non-agricultural uses be directed to areas with limited value for intensive agricultural use. In addition, the project would not interfere with agricultural activities on adjacent parcels. The proposed project is not covered by a Williamson Act contract. No impact would occur in this regard.

Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)) or result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

The project area is not zoned for forestland, timberland, or a timber production zone. The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* identifies Yellow Pine Forest (ponderosa pine and Jeffrey pine) as the principal forest type for commercial timber and forest use in the area. The project area is mapped by the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* as being sagebrush and juniper woodlands. The Biological Assessment (Appendix E) has similarly identified the habitats onsite as *Artemisia arbuscula* ssp. *arbuscula* Shrubland Alliance, *Juniperus occidentalis* Woodland Alliance, *Bromus tectorum - Taeniatherum caput-medusae* Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance, and *Artemisia tridentata* Shrubland Alliance. Juniper woodlands will be removed as a result of project implementation; however, juniper has not been identified as a commercial timber species important to the area and is generally of little commercial value. No impact would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.3-1: Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.

According to the NRCS, Lassen County has not been surveyed for inclusion in the FMMP. Pursuant to CEQA §21060.1, in those areas of the State where lands have not been surveyed, "agricultural land" means land that meets the requirements of "prime agricultural land" as defined in California Government Code Section 51201(a)(1), (2), (3), and (4) as follows:

- All land that qualifies for rating as class 1 or class 2 in the NRCS land use capability classifications.
- Land which qualifies for a rating of 80 through 100 in the Storie Index Rating.
- Land which supports livestock used to produce food and fiber and has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the USDA.
- Land planted with fruit- or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops which have a nonbearing period of less than five years, and which will normally return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than two hundred dollars ($200) per acre.

The Land Capability Classification Rating

The Land Capability Classification (LCC) indicates the suitability of soils for most kinds of crops. Groupings are made according to the limitations of the soils when used to grow crops, and the risk of damage to soils when they are used in agriculture. Soils are rated from Class 1 to Class 8, with soils having the fewest limitations receiving the highest rating (Class I). Specific subclasses are also utilized to further characterize soils. A description of each soil rating is provided in Table 4-2. The LCC also includes capability subclasses, which are soil groups within one capability class and are designated by the letters "e", "w", "s", or "c" as described in Table 4-3.

Table 4-2
LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION CLASSES

Class	Description
1	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
2	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require moderate conservation practices.
3	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require special conservation practices, or both.
4	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require very careful management, or both.
5	Soils are subject to little or no erosion but have other limitations that are impractical to remove, that restrict their use mainly to pasture, rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat.
6	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuitable for cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to pasture, rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat.
7	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuitable for cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to grazing, forestland, or wildlife habitat.
8	Soils and miscellaneous areas have limitations that preclude commercial plant production and that restrict their use to recreational purposes, wildlife habitat, watershed, or aesthetic purposes.

Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2017.

Table 4-3
LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION SUBCLASSES

Subclass	Description
e	The main problem or hazard is the risk of erosion. The susceptibility of erosion and past erosion damage are the main soil factors that affect soils in this subclass.
w	Water in or on the soil interferes with plant growth or cultivation. Poor soil drainage, wetness, a high-water table, and overflow are the factors that affect soils in this subclass.
s	The soil has limitations within the rooting zone, mainly because it is shallow, has low moisture-holding capacity, or is stony.
c	The chief limitation is climate that is very cold or very dry.

Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2017.

Storie Index Rating

The Storie Index provides a numeric rating (based upon a 100-point scale) of the relative degree of suitability or value of a given soil for intensive agriculture. The rating is based upon the character of the soil profile, surface texture, steepness of the slope, drainage, alkalinity, fertility, wind and water erosion, acidity, and microrelief.

Animal-Unit Rating

An animal unit (AU) is generally one mature cow of approximately 1,000 pounds and a calf as old as six months, or their equivalent. The NRCS uses 30 pounds per day (10,950 pounds per year) air-dry weight (as-fed) of forage as the standard forage demand for a 1,000-pound cow with a calf. The range production ratings shown in Table 4-4 identify the amount of vegetation that can be expected to grow annually in a well-managed area that is supporting the potential natural plant community. It includes all vegetation, whether or not it is palatable to grazing animals.

Project Site Soils

Soils on the project site were shown on Figure 3-6 and are summarized in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4
PROJECT SOIL TYPES

Map Unit Symbol	Soil Name	Total Acres	% of Project Site	Land Capability Classification (LCC)	Storie Index	Range Production (pounds per acre per year)
159	Cleghorn sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes	0.6	0.1	6e	81-100	900
242	Horsecamp cobbly silty clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes	28	4.4	6s	41-60	702
265	Lakeview loam, warm, 0 to 2 percent slopes	2.6	0.4	4w	81-100	95
360	Searles-Orhood-Devada association, 5 to 30 percent slopes	158.9	24.7	7s	11-20	1075
365	Springmeyer sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes	26.2	4.1	6e	81-100	1515
388	Tunnison very cobbly clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes	114.8	22.1	7s	21-40	678
390	Tunnison-Devada association, 2 to 9 percent slopes	283.8	44.2	7s	21-40	735

Sources: Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2017; USDA, Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service.

No portion of the proposed project site is irrigated; therefore, the LCCs presented in Table 4-4 reflect the classification for non-irrigated soils. As indicated in Table 4-4, the project site does not include any LCC Class 1 or 2 soils. Approximately 29.4 acres of soils with a Storie Index Rating of 81-100 exist onsite in the southwestern corner of the parcel. These soils are outside of the proposed mining and reclamation boundary. Although the project site could be used as grazing land, based on range production as shown in Table 4-4, the site does not yield sufficient vegetation to support an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre. The limited acreage of higher-quality soils that will be lost due to the land use change would not be significant due to the limited scope and availability of surrounding land. In addition, there are no fruit- or nut-bearing trees on the project site. Therefore, the proposed project site does not meet the definition of prime agricultural land included in California Government Code §51201; impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 4.3-2: Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

The proposed project will not result in the loss of prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of Statewide importance. The proposed project will result in the temporary loss of approximately 460 acres of low-capability grazing land from mining and reclamation activities. The project proposes an end use of an agricultural and open space following mining activities. Refer to the discussion under Impact 4.3-1. Impacts related to the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use would be less than significant.

4.3.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.3.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.4 Air Quality

This section includes an overview of existing air quality conditions in the region and at the project site, a summary of air quality regulations, and an analysis of the potential air quality impacts of the proposed project. This section also contains the results of a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) that focuses on health impacts on existing residences and schools from diesel generators and off-road equipment associated with aggregate extraction and resultant diesel particulate matter (DPM), as well as the operation of the asphalt and concrete plants proposed by the project. Odor impacts are also addressed. The analysis is based on information contained in the *Air Quality Technical Report for the Hat Creek Skyline Aggregates* prepared for the proposed project by RCH Group in November 2025 (refer to Appendix D, *Air Quality Technical Report*).

The air quality analysis includes a review of criteria pollutant emissions such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOC) as reactive organic gases (ROG), particulate matter less than 10 micrometers (coarse or PM_{10}), and particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers (fine or $PM_{2.5}$).

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

Regional Climate and Topography
The project site is in the Northeast Plateau Air Basin (Air Basin), which comprises Siskiyou, Modoc, and Lassen counties. The Air Basin has a climate regime that is distinct from the rest of California. The Air Basin has sharply defined seasons that follow a continental, rather than marine, pattern. Winters are cold and snowy; summers are warm and dry. The Air Basin includes part of the Klamath Mountains to the west and the Cascade Range and Modoc Plateau, plus a slice of the Great Basin along its eastern edge. The volcanic Modoc Plateau extends across the northeastern expanse, with an elevation mostly higher than 4500 feet above mean sea level.

The region receives little to no transport air pollution from major urban areas. As in many rural areas in California, particulates from dust and wood smoke are sometimes a problem. Only the City of Yreka experiences occasional ozone concentrations that approach "near exceedances" of ambient air quality standards.

According to a United States Geological Soil Survey map of areas where naturally occurring asbestos in California is likely to occur, the project is not located in an area known to contain naturally occurring asbestos. Based on the geotechnical observations at the existing quarry site, rock materials associated with naturally occurring asbestos are not present within the proposed mining and reclamation area.

Sensitive Receptors

Land uses such as residences, schools, children's daycare centers, hospitals, and convalescent homes are considered to be more sensitive than the general public to poor air quality because the population groups associated with these uses have increased susceptibility to respiratory distress. Persons engaged in strenuous work or exercise also have increased sensitivity to poor air quality. California Air Resources Board (CARB) has identified the following people as most likely to be affected by air pollution: children less than 14 years of age, the elderly over 65 years of age, athletes, and those with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. These groups are classified as sensitive population groups.

Residential areas are considered more sensitive to air quality conditions than commercial and industrial areas because people generally spend longer periods of time at their residences, resulting in greater exposure to ambient air quality conditions. Recreational uses are also considered sensitive, due to the greater exposure to ambient air quality conditions and because the presence of pollution detracts from the recreational experience.

The project site is surrounded by open lands with some residences to the west and south. The nearest residence is approximately 4,000 feet (to the south) from the aggregate, concrete, and asphalt plants and 2,300 feet (to the west) from the quarry area. Lassen College is approximately 2,100 feet (to the west) from the quarry area. Banner Lassen Medical Center is approximately 2,700 feet (to the north) from the quarry area. The Project Description provides further information and figures showing the location of nearby receptors and the location of Project operations.

Local Air Quality

The Lassen County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) is the local air district governing Lassen County, which is part of the Air Basin. According to the Lassen County APCD, the Air Quality Index in Lassen County is classified as "good" for the majority of the year, although events such as wildfires and inversion layers in winter months can periodically degrade air quality. There are no ambient air quality monitoring stations in Lassen County; therefore, local ambient concentrations are not available. There are ambient monitoring stations in Lassen National Volcanic Park measuring ozone. PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ are measured in Chico (East Avenue).

Consideration of data from "regional sites" impacted by similar natural and man-made sources is an accepted practice by the USEPA; therefore, a summary of ambient air quality monitoring data collected by the previously mentioned monitoring stations for ozone and particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) is provided in Table 4-5. Although the wider region experiences elevated air concentrations, Lassen County is in attainment/unclassified for federal and state particulate matter

(PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) standards as well as ozone (CARB, 2023). Therefore, the values in Table 4-5 are more representative of the higher concentrations in surrounding areas and less representative of the Project site. The PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ values may be reflective of wildfires.

Table 4-5
AIR QUALITY DATA SUMMARY (2022 - 2024)

Pollutant	Standard[a]	2022	2023	2024
Ozone				
Highest 1-Hour Average (ppm)[b]	0.090	**0.075**	**0.073**	0.074
Highest 8-Hour Average (ppm)[b]	0.070	**0.065**	**0.064**	**0.070**
Particulate Matter (PM_{10})				
Highest 24-Hour Average (ug/m^3)[b]	50	**75**	**78**	**112**
Annual Average (ug/m^3)[b]	20	**18.9**	**22.1**	19.8
Particulate Matter (PM2.5)				
Highest 24-Hour Average (ug/m^3)[b]	35	**42.8**	**35.4**	**85.2**
Annual Average (ug/m^3)[b]	12	**7.73**	**7.92**	6.93

Notes: Values in **bold** are in excess of at least one applicable standard.
a. Generally, State standards and National standards are not to be exceeded more than once per year.
b. ppm=parts per million; ug/m3=micrograms per cubic meter.

Source: California Air Resources Board, *Air Quality Trend Summaries*, https://www.arb.ca.gov/adam/index.html

4.4.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the proposed project.

Federal Clean Air Act
The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) was first signed into law in 1970. In 1977, and again in 1990, the law was substantially amended. The federal CAA is the foundation for a national air pollution control effort, and it is composed of the following basic elements: National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for criteria air pollutants, hazardous air pollutant standards, state attainment plans, motor control measures, stratospheric ozone protection, and enforcement provisions.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is responsible for administering the federal CAA. The federal CAA requires the USEPA to set NAAQS for several problem air pollutants based on human health and welfare criteria. Two types of NAAQS were established: primary standards, which protect public health, and secondary standards, which protect the public welfare from non-health-related adverse effects such as visibility reduction.

Permit to Operate (Title V)
Air Operating Permits, which are also referred to as Title V permits, are required for major sources of air pollution. Lassen County Rules and Regulations include general provisions and rules for APCD-issued permits, fees, prohibitions (including but not limited to nuisance, particulate matter, specific air contaminants, open burning, gasoline storage, reduction of odorous matter, fugitive dust emissions, and equipment breakdown), procedures, new source siting, and Title V permits. Operation of the Project would be implemented in compliance with the Lassen County APCD Air Quality Rules and Regulations.

The Lassen County APCD, through the Air Pollution Control Officer and with technical assistance from the CARB, reviews proposals and plans to ensure that air quality standards are met. Projects that may emit pollutants from a stationary source must consult with the Lassen County APCD prior to construction. After the construction of the facility is completed and the project can demonstrate that it can operate in compliance with emission requirements set forth in the Authority to Construct, a Permit to Operate must be obtained.

California Clean Air Act

The California CAA was first signed into law in 1988. The California CAA provides a comprehensive framework for air quality planning and regulation, and spells out, in statute, the state's air quality goals, planning and regulatory strategies, and performance. CARB is the agency responsible for administering the California CAA. CARB established California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code (CH&SC) [§39606(b)], which are similar to the federal standards.

Ambient Air Quality Standards

Regulation of air pollutants is achieved through both NAAQS and CAAQS and emissions limits for individual sources. Regulations implementing the federal CAA and its subsequent amendments established NAAQS (national standards) for the six criteria pollutants. California has adopted more stringent CAAQS (state standards) for most of the criteria air pollutants. Criteria air pollutants consist of CO, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and lead (Pb). In addition, California has established CAAQS for sulfates, hydrogen sulfide (H_2S), vinyl chloride, and visibility-reducing particles. Because of the meteorological conditions in the state, there is a considerable difference between State and federal standards in California.

The ambient air quality standards are intended to protect the public health and welfare and incorporate an adequate margin of safety. They are designed to protect those segments of the public most susceptible to respiratory distress, known as sensitive receptors, including asthmatics, the very young, elderly, people weakened from other illness or disease, or persons engaged in strenuous work or exercise. Healthy adults can tolerate occasional exposure to air pollution levels somewhat above the ambient air quality standards before adverse health effects are observed.

Under amendments to the federal CAA, USEPA has classified air basins or portions thereof as either "attainment" or "non-attainment" for each criteria pollutant, based on whether or not the national standards have been achieved. The California CAA, which is patterned after the federal CAA, also requires areas to be designated as "attainment" or "non-attainment" for the state standards. Thus, areas in California have two sets of attainment/nonattainment designations: one set with respect to the federal standards (NAAQS) and one set with respect to the state standards (CAAQS). Table 4-6 shows the NAAQS and CAAQS for the different criteria pollutants, major pollutant sources, and health effects for each pollutant. Appendix D, *Air Quality Technical Report,* includes a further description of the criteria air pollutants emitted by the proposed project.

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Table 4-6
AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS AND MAJOR POLLUTANT SOURCES

Pollutant	Averaging Time	State Standard	National Standard	Pollutant Health and Atmospheric Effects	Major Pollutant Sources
Ozone	1 Hour 8 Hour	0.09 ppm 0.07 ppm	– 0.070 ppm	High concentrations can directly affect lungs, causing irritation. Long–term exposure may cause damage to lung tissue.	Formed when reactive organic gases and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight. Major sources include on–road motor vehicles, solvent evaporation, and commercial/ industrial mobile equipment.
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	1 Hour 8 Hour	20 ppm 9.0 ppm	35 ppm 9.0 ppm	Classified as a chemical asphyxiant, carbon monoxide interferes with the transfer of fresh oxygen to the blood and deprives sensitive tissues of oxygen.	Internal combustion engines, primarily gasoline–powered motor vehicles.
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	1 Hour Annual	0.18 ppm 0.03 ppm	0.10 ppm 0.053 ppm	Irritating to eyes and respiratory tract. Colors atmosphere reddish–brown.	Motor vehicles, petroleum–refining operations, industrial sources, aircraft, ships, and railroads.
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	1 Hour 3 Hour 24 Hour Annual	0.25 ppm – 0.04 ppm –	0.075 ppm 0.5 ppm 0.14 ppm 0.030 ppm	Irritates upper respiratory tract; injurious to lung tissue. Can yellow the leaves of plants, destructive to marble, iron, and steel. Limits visibility and reduces sunlight.	Fuel combustion, chemical plants, sulfur recovery plants, and metal processing.
Coarse Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	24 Hour Annual	50 µg/m^3 20 µg/m^3	150 µg/m^3 –	May irritate eyes and respiratory tract, decrease lung capacity, cause cancer and increased mortality. Produces haze and limits visibility.	Dust and fume–producing industrial and agricultural operations, combustion, atmospheric photochemical reactions, and natural activities (e.g., wind–raised dust and ocean sprays).
Fine Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)	24 Hour Annual	– 12 µg/m^3	35.0 µg/m^3 12.0 µg/m^3	Increases respiratory disease, lung damage, cancer, and premature death. Reduces visibility and results in surface soiling.	Fuel combustion in motor vehicles, equipment, and industrial sources; residential and agricultural burning; Also, formed from photochemical reactions of other pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and organics.
Lead (Pb)	Month Rolling 3 Month	1.5 µg/m^3 –	– 0.15 µg/m^3	Disturbs gastrointestinal system and causes anemia, kidney disease, and neuromuscular and neurological dysfunction.	Present sources: lead smelters, battery manufacturing and recycling facilities. Past source: combustion of leaded gasoline.

Source: Air Quality Standards, https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/background-air-quality-standards

Toxic Air Contaminants

Toxic Air Contaminants (TAC) are pollutants that may be expected to result in an increase in mortality or serious illness or that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. Health effects include cancer, birth defects, neurological damage, damage to the body's natural defense system, and diseases that lead to death. Although ambient air quality standards exist for criteria pollutants, no such standards exist for TAC. Many pollutants are identified as TAC because of their potential to increase the risk of developing cancer or because of their acute or chronic health risks. For TAC that are known or suspected carcinogens, the CARB has consistently found that there are no levels or thresholds below which exposure is free of risk. Individual TAC can vary greatly in the risk they present. At a given level of exposure, one TAC may pose a hazard that is many times greater than another. For certain TAC, a unit risk factor can be developed to evaluate cancer risk. For acute and chronic health risks, a similar factor called a Hazard Index is used to evaluate risk. In the early 1980s, CARB established a statewide comprehensive air toxics program to reduce exposure to air toxics. The Toxic Air Contaminant Identification and Control Act (Assembly Bill [AB] 1807) created California's program to reduce exposure to air toxics. The Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act (AB 2588) supplements the AB 1807 program by requiring a statewide air toxics inventory and notification of people exposed to a significant health risk and sensitive receptors.

Diesel exhaust is a complex mixture of numerous individual gaseous and particulate compounds emitted from diesel-fueled combustion engines. DPM is formed primarily through the incomplete combustion of diesel fuel. DPM is removed from the atmosphere through physical processes, including atmospheric fall-out and washout by rain. Humans can be exposed to airborne DPM by deposition on water, soil, and vegetation, although the main pathway of exposure is inhalation. Cal/EPA has concluded that the potential cancer risk from inhalation exposure to whole diesel exhaust outweighs the multi-pathway cancer risk from the speciated components.

In August 1998, the CARB identified DPM as an air toxic. CARB developed the *Risk Reduction Plan to Reduce Particulate Matter Emissions from Diesel-Fueled Engines and Vehicles* and *Risk Management Guidance for the Permitting of New Stationary Diesel-Fueled Engines* and approved these documents on September 28, 2000. The documents represent proposals to reduce DPM emissions, with the goal of reducing emissions and the associated health risk by 75 percent in 2010 and by 85 percent in 2020. The program aimed to require the use of state-of-the-art catalyzed DPM filters and ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel.

In 2001, CARB assessed the state-wide health risks from exposure to diesel exhaust and to other toxic air contaminants. It is difficult to distinguish the health risks of diesel emissions from those of other air toxics, since diesel exhaust contains approximately 40 different air toxics. The CARB study detected diesel exhaust by using ambient-air carbon soot measurements as a surrogate for diesel emissions. The study reported that the state-wide cancer risk from exposure to diesel exhaust was about 540 per million population, as compared to a total risk for exposure to all ambient air toxics of 760 per million. This estimate, which accounts for about 70 percent of the total risk from TAC, included both urban and rural areas in the state. The estimate can also be considered an average worst case for the state, since it assumes constant exposure to outdoor concentrations of diesel exhaust and does not account for expected lower concentrations indoors, where most of the time is spent. DPM is estimated to increase statewide cancer risk by 520 cancers per million residents exposed over a lifetime (CARB, 2016).

Exposure to DPM results in a greater incidence of chronic non-cancer health effects, such as cough, labored breathing, chest tightness, wheezing, and bronchitis. Individuals particularly vulnerable to DPM are children, whose lung tissue is still developing, the elderly, and people with illnesses who may have other serious health problems that can be aggravated by exposure to DPM. In general, children are more vulnerable than adults to air pollutants because they have higher inhalation rates, narrower airways, and less mature immune systems. In addition, children with allergies may have an enhanced allergic response when exposed to diesel exhaust.

Crystalline silica is a component of soil, sand, granite, and many other minerals. Crystalline silica may become respirable-sized particles when workers chip, cut, drill, or grind materials that contain it. If respirable crystalline silica dust enters the lungs, it causes the formation of scar tissue (silicosis), which can be disabling or even fatal, reducing the lungs' ability to take in oxygen and increasing the susceptibility to lung infections like tuberculosis. The non-crystalline form of silica (amorphous silica) is not nearly as toxic since it usually does not cause the formation of scar tissue in the lungs. High occupational exposure to crystalline silica has been linked to respiratory problems and, in some cases, to cancer. Crystalline silica-related illnesses have historically been associated with industrial processes such as mining. However, due to stringent health and safety regulations that have been imposed over the years, mining-related respiratory illnesses have steadily declined.

Although not specifically required by CEQA, the following discussion related to naturally occurring asbestos is included to satisfy requirements for full disclosure of potential project-related impacts and is for information purposes only. In areas containing naturally occurring asbestos, earthmoving and construction-related activities, such as grading and trenching, could expose receptors to windblown asbestos. According to a United States Geological Soil Survey map of areas where naturally occurring asbestos in California is likely to occur, the project is not located in an area known to contain naturally occurring asbestos. Based on the geotechnical observations at the existing quarry site, rock materials associated with naturally occurring asbestos are not present within the proposed mining and reclamation area (BAJADA, 2023). Lassen County APCD Rule 4:18 (Fugitive Dust Emissions) requires that reasonable precautions shall be taken to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne, thereby reducing the chance of exposure to asbestos during construction-related activities and aggregate processing.

Hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) is found in nature around some hot springs, geothermal sources, and oil fields (sour gas). It is also produced by anaerobic decomposition and is sometimes called swamp gas. The asphalt plant is also a source of H_2S emissions. The human nose can detect H_2S at concentrations well below toxic levels. Heavier than air, this gas is considered obnoxious and unpleasant. At higher levels, it desensitizes the nose and can be fatal because it blocks oxygen uptake by the blood. Mainly a health threat to industrial workers, H_2S is usually regulated to eliminate nuisance for nearby residents or property owners.

Appendix D, Air Quality Technical Report*,* includes a further description of air toxins emitted by the proposed project.

Regulatory Requirements
The following regulatory requirements are accounted for within the air quality analysis:

Regulatory Requirement AQ-1: Based on Lassen County APCD Rule 4:18 (Fugitive Dust Emissions), reasonable precautions shall be taken to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne, including, but not limited to, the following provisions:

a. Covering open-bodied trucks when used for the transportation of materials is likely to give rise to airborne dust.

b. Installation and use of hoods, fans, and other fabric filters to enclose and vent the handling of dusty materials. Containment methods may be employed during sandblasting and other similar operations.

c. The application of asphalt, oil, water, or suitable chemicals to dirt roads, material stockpiles, land clearing, excavation, grading, or other surfaces which can give rise to airborne dusts.

d. The prompt removal of earth or other material from paved streets onto which earth or other material for earth-moving equipment, erosion by water, or other means has been deposited.

Regulatory Requirement AQ-2: The applicant shall implement the following measures to reduce exhaust emissions:

> Idling times shall be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to five minutes (as required by the California Airborne Toxics Control Measure Title 13, Section 2485, of the California Code of Regulations). Clear signage shall be provided for construction workers at all access points.
>
> All equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. All equipment shall be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.

Lassen County Rules and Regulations include general provisions and rules for APCD-issued permits, fees, prohibitions (including but not limited to nuisance, particulate matter, specific air contaminants, open burning, gasoline storage, reduction of odorous matter, fugitive dust emissions, and equipment breakdown), procedures, new source siting, and Title V permits. Operation of the project would be implemented in compliance with the Lassen County APCD Air Quality Rules and Regulations.

Regulatory Requirement AQ-3: The applicant shall comply with Authority to Construct and Permit to Operate regulations, which require that owners of applicable construction or operation equipment obtain air quality permits from the Lassen County APCD prior to construction and operation. As a condition of approval, the applicant would be required to send a copy of an Authority to Construct/Permit to Operate from the Lassen County APCD to the Lassen County Planning and Building Services before commencing operations.

Regulatory Requirement AQ-4: The asphalt plant will contain a baghouse system consisting of a primary dust collector, an enclosed fabric filter structure (baghouse), and a draft package which includes the fan, variable frequency drive, and ductwork as designed best available control technology for particulate matter.

Regulatory Requirement AQ-5: The proposed project will include the installation of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ abatement equipment on processing equipment, as needed (including spray bars, nozzles, foggers, or misters) to reduce project PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions from aggregate processing, asphalt plant, concrete plant, and associated operations. Conveyors shall be placed to reduce the free-fall distance of material for all transfer points.

Regulatory Requirement AQ-6: The following (but not limited to) may be applicable air quality-related conditions issued as part of the Operating Permit:

- The Federal New Source Performance Standards for Non-Metallic Mineral Processing Plants (40 CFR, Part 60, Chapter 1, Subpart 000) shall be complied with at all times. Fugitive emissions from any transfer point on belt conveyors shall not exceed seven percent opacity in accordance with Section 60.672.(b). Fugitive emissions from any crusher at which a capture system is not used shall be limited to twelve percent opacity in accordance with Section 60.672(c).
- All water bars, wet suppression systems must be inspected monthly to check that water is flowing to the discharge spray nozzles in the wet suppression system. Corrective action must be taken immediately if water is not flowing properly to the discharge spray nozzles. A logbook shall be maintained that includes the date of each inspection and any corrective actions taken. The logbook shall be kept on file for a period of two years and made available to the Air District upon request. [40 CFR, Part 60, Subpart OOO]
- The total facility emissions of NOx, VOC, SOx, and PM_{10}, shall be limited to 25 tons per year of each pollutant. For purposes of this condition, the facility shall include all emissions units associated with this permit. If any of the above-mentioned nonattainment or precursor pollutants for the facility exceed 25 tons per year, based on Lassen County APCD calculations of emissions, the permittee will be required to apply for a Permit to Operate, which shall require emission offsets.
- All mobile rock crushing and screening equipment brought onsite shall maintain valid In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation (DOORS) registrations.
- All portable or mobile rock crushing and screening equipment brought onsite shall maintain valid Portable Equipment Registration Program (PERP) registrations.
- Portable/mobile equipment working under this permit shall comply with all General Requirements, Emission Limitations, and Operating Requirements of the equipment units PERP operating conditions.
- Daily records of operating hours and material processed shall be maintained and kept on file for a period of two years to verify compliance with PERP operating conditions. Records shall be maintained for each mobile/portable equipment unit. [Rule 2:27] [PERP]
- Annual reporting shall be as follows:
  1. Portable equipment working under the permit shall report hours of operation and throughput to the Lassen County APCD.
  2. Portable equipment working under this permit shall not report hours of operation and throughput to the PERP.

3. Mobile equipment shall report engine operation to the DOORS. [Rule 2:27] [PERP] [DOORS]

Regulatory Requirement AQ-7: Lassen County APCD has a nuisance rule that implicitly regulates pollutants other than those for which criteria standards have been adopted. Rule 4:2 states that a person shall not discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other materials which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public or which cause or have a natural tendency to cause injury or damage to business and property. Rule 4:2 may be interpreted to restrict ambient concentrations of pollutants, such as toxic and hazardous pollutants, until other standards are in place.

4.4.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Air Quality* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.*
- *Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.*
- *Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.*
- *Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.*

The Lassen County APCD Rule 6:4 includes the following Best Available Control Technology (BACT) Emission thresholds: An applicant shall apply BACT to a new source or modification of an existing source, except cargo carriers, for each affected pollutant emitted, including halogenated hydrocarbons, under the following conditions:

1) A new stationary source emits more than 150 pounds per day of ROG, NO_x, SO_x, PM_{10}, or $PM_{2.5}$; or 550 pounds per day of CO (equivalent to 27 tons per year and 100 tons per year, respectively).
2) A modification of an existing stationary source will result in a net emission increase of an affected pollutant by an amount more than any of the limits above.
3) A new source or modification subject to BACT for any pollutant subject to this section shall apply BACT for any other affected pollutant emitted from the new source or modification if the Air Pollution Control Officer should so require.

Therefore, the lead agency has chosen to apply the BACT Emission thresholds to both construction and operational emissions for the proposed project. Secondly, the total operational emissions from both stationary sources and mobile sources were compared to the BACT Emission thresholds, which provides a conservative assessment of the air quality impacts.

Given the absence of a health impact significance threshold from the Lassen County APCD (but considering such thresholds within other air districts such as Bay Area Air Quality Management District and South Coast Air Quality Management District), exposure of persons by siting a new source or a new sensitive receptor to substantial levels of TAC resulting in (a) a cancer risk level greater than 10 in one million or (b) a noncancerous risk (chronic or acute) hazard index greater than 1.0 would be considered a significant health impact. For this threshold, sensitive receptors include residential uses, schools, parks, daycare centers, nursing homes, and medical centers.

4.4.4 Impact Analysis

The proposed project could affect air quality during project construction and operations, including truck trips, aggregate processing plant, wash plant, concrete plant, asphalt plant, other processing equipment (i.e., loaders, excavators), vehicular traffic on unpaved surfaces, blasting, and material handling/disturbance. Air pollutant (combustion and fugitive dust) emissions associated with the construction and operations were estimated for the proposed project using CARB emissions inventory models. See the *Air Quality Technical Report* (Appendix D) for air emission assumptions, calculation methodology, and detailed results.

Regulatory models used to estimate air quality impacts include:

- California Air Pollution Officers Association (CAPCOA) CalEEMod (California Emissions Estimator Model Version 2022.1) land use emissions model estimates emissions due to demolition and construction activities and operations for land use development.
- CARB EMFAC emissions inventory model. EMFAC is the latest emission inventory model that calculates emission inventories and emission rates for motor vehicles operating on roads in California. This model reflects CARB's current understanding of how vehicles travel and how much they emit. EMFAC can be used to show how California motor vehicle emissions have changed over time and are projected to change in the future.
- CARB OFFROAD emissions inventory model. OFFROAD is the latest emission inventory model that calculates emission inventories and emission rates for off-road equipment such as loaders, excavators, and off-road haul trucks operating in California. This model reflects CARB's current understanding of how equipment operates and how much it emits. OFFROAD can be used to show how California off-road equipment emissions have changed over time and are projected to change in the future.
- USEPA AP-42, Compilation of Air Pollutant Emission Factors, has been published since 1972 as the primary compilation of USEPA's emission factor information. It contains emission factors and process information for more than 200 air pollution source categories. A source category is a specific industry sector or group of similar emitting sources. The emission factors have been developed and compiled from source test data, material balance studies, and engineering estimates.

- AERMOD (American Meteorological Society/USEPA Regulatory Model) is an atmospheric dispersion model that can simulate point, area, volume, and line emissions sources and has the capability to include simple, intermediate, and complex terrain along with meteorological conditions and multiple receptor locations. AERMOD is commonly executed to yield 1-hour maximum and annual average concentrations (in $\mu g/m^3$) at each receptor.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, Lassen County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

- *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.*

Lassen County is in attainment/unclassified for all criteria pollutants. There are no applicable attainment plans or other local air quality plans for the Air Basin or Lassen County APCD. Therefore, Lassen County is not subject to an air quality plan. No impact would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.4-1: Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.

Intermittent (short-term construction emissions that occur from activities, such as site grading, paving, and building construction) were evaluated. California Air Pollution Officers Association (CAPCOA) CalEEMod (California Emissions Estimator Model Version 2022.1) is a model that estimates emissions due to demolition and construction activities and operations for land use development. CalEEMod was used to quantify construction-related emissions for the proposed project. The emissions generated from these construction activities include:

- Dust (including PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) primarily from "fugitive" sources (i.e., emissions released through means other than through a stack or tailpipe) such as material handling and travel on unpaved surfaces;
- Combustion exhaust emissions of air pollutants (VOC as ROG, NO_x, CO, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$) primarily from the operation of heavy off-road construction equipment, haul trucks (primarily diesel-operated), and construction worker automobile trips (primarily gasoline-operated); and
- VOC as ROG primarily from "fugitive" sources such as architectural coating and paving.

Construction-related fugitive dust emissions would vary from day to day, depending on the level and type of activity, silt content of the soil, and the weather. High winds (greater than 10 miles per hour [mph]) occur infrequently in the area, less than two percent of the time. In the absence of mitigation, construction activities may result in significant quantities of dust, and as a result, local visibility and PM_{10} concentrations may be adversely affected on a temporary and intermittent basis during construction. In addition, the fugitive dust generated by construction would include not only PM_{10}, but also larger particles, which would fall out of the atmosphere within several hundred feet of the site and could result in nuisance-type impacts.

The following construction elements of the proposed project will occur:

Construction of a paved haul road will be required for the use of the project site. The haul road will connect Skyline Road to the landscape yard, stockpile area, and active mining and processing areas. The road will be approximately 3,735 linear feet and paved to reduce dust generation. A scale and office trailer will be located along the road.

Construction of a stormwater pond will be required to capture runoff from the active mining site. The stormwater retention pond will be constructed at the southern end of the mining area and south of the haul road. The pond will have a maximum capacity of 30 acre-feet. Three 24-inch culverts will run under the haul road, hydrologically connecting it with the mining area. The pond will discharge through a constructed 60-foot spillway near its southwestern corner. The pond is designed for the 25-year, 24-hour storm event plus average annual precipitation, and is unlikely to discharge.

The project area will include a "landscape yard" area comprised of a 17,660-square-foot graded area along Skyline Road. The landscape yard will provide an area for the retail sales of sand and aggregate materials, provide additional truck parking, and house a 5,000-square-foot shop.

Truck parking within the landscape yard area will consist of up to fifteen transfer and belly dump trucks parked when not needed for aggregate transportation or other operations. The 5,000-square-foot shop will consist of a single-story metal construction building. The shop will be used for the onsite repair of trucks and diesel equipment.

The project will also require a well capable of meeting the anticipated water demand for mining uses at the site. The well is anticipated to be located near the southern parcel boundary.

The project will require the extension of electricity to the project site to meet the power demands of onsite equipment. Electrical lines will be extended from the intersection of Skyline Road and Highway 139. These extensions will occur within the Skyline Road right-of-way, which has been previously disturbed. Power lines will be run underground. Propane will be utilized by the asphalt plant via storage tanks, or natural gas will be provided via a pipeline.[1]

The operator will construct separate southbound left turn and northbound right turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point. Turn lanes shall be constructed with 200 feet of pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length.

[1] The asphalt plant will be propane fired, until a natural gas line is installed connected to the local utility supply.

Table 4-7 displays the daily construction emissions for the proposed project. The daily construction emissions are less than the significance thresholds.

Table 4-7
PROPOSED PROJECT DAILY CONSTRUCTION EMISSIONS (POUNDS)

Emission Source	ROG	CO	NOX	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Construction Activities	17.3	66.8	67.5	0.11	26.3	13.3
Significance Threshold	**150**	**550**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

The emissions inventory analysis prepared for the proposed project also focuses on pollutant (combustion and fugitive dust) emissions associated with the aggregate processing operations, asphalt plant, concrete plant, blasting operations, and supporting equipment (i.e., diesel generators associated with crushing, asphalt, and wash plants and off-road equipment such as loaders, excavators, and dozers). The regulatory models used to estimate the air quality impacts are described in detail in the air quality analysis prepared for the proposed project (refer to Appendix D, Air Quality Technical Report).

Table 4-8 displays the daily unmitigated operational emissions for the proposed project. Table 4-9 displays the annual unmitigated operational emissions for the proposed project. The unmitigated emissions included regulatory actions that are required under Lassen County APCD rules (Regulatory Requirements AQ-1 through AQ-7).

Table 4-8
PROPOSED PROJECT DAILY UNMITIGATED OPERATIONAL EMISSIONS (POUNDS)

Emission Source	ROG	CO	NOX	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Onsite Equipment	1.33	15.4	15.6	0.03	0.65	0.60
Generators	0.38	5.54	52.1	21.7	0.65	0.65
Employees	0.03	1.49	0.12	<0.01	0.02	0.01
Haul Trucks	0.25	1.20	15.8	0.36	2.18	0.88
Aggregate Plant	-	-	-	-	150	22.5
Wash Plant	-	-	-	-	20.0	2.99
Sand Plant	-	-	-	-	56.0	8.39
Concrete Plant	-	-	-	-	1,532	230
Asphalt Plant	46.5	26.4	67.4	36.0	24.3	23.6
Asphalt Silo	53.8	8.86	-	-	21.0	6.82
Lime Slurry	-	-	-	-	7.00	1.05
Material Handling/Stockpiles	-	-	-	-	2.83	0.42
Blasting	-	-	-	-	7.42	1.11
Grand Total	**102**	**58.9**	**151**	**58.1**	**1,825**	**299**
Significance Threshold	**150**	**550**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Total (Stationary Sources)	**101**	**40.8**	**120**	**57.7**	**1,811**	**296**
Significance Threshold	**150**	**550**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

Table 4-9
PROPOSED PROJECT ANNUAL UNMITIGATED OPERATIONAL EMISSIONS (TONS)

Emission Source	ROG	CO	NOX	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Onsite Equipment	0.10	1.01	1.21	<0.01	0.05	0.05
Generators	0.05	0.69	6.52	2.71	0.08	0.08
Employees	<0.01	0.22	0.02	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Haul Trucks	<0.01	0.03	0.36	0.01	0.05	0.02
Aggregate Plant	-	-	-	-	10.1	1.52
Wash Plant	-	-	-	-	0.27	0.04
Sand Plant	-	-	-	-	1.37	0.21
Concrete Plant	-	-	-	-	51.1	7.66
Asphalt Plant	2.66	1.5	3.85	2.06	1.39	1.35
Asphalt Silo	3.08	0.51	-	-	1.20	0.39
Lime Slurry	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
Material Handling/Stockpiles	-	-	-	-	0.51	0.08
Blasting	-	-	-	-	0.02	0.00
Grand Total	**5.90**	**3.97**	**11.9**	**4.78**	**66.2**	**11.4**
Significance Threshold	**27**	**100**	**27**	**27**	**27**	**27**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Total (Stationary Sources)	**5.78**	**2.71**	**10.4**	**4.77**	**65.5**	**11.2**
Significance Threshold	**27**	**100**	**27**	**27**	**27**	**27**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

The applicant has a similar asphalt plant at Ward Lake Quarry in Lassen County, which contains a 2006 Almix Model Duo Drum 100 Hot Mix asphalt dryer with a maximum capacity of 350 tons per hour and 400,000 tons per year (Permit # PTO-19-140). The permitted emission factors associated with the Ward Lake Quarry asphalt plant were used in the air quality analysis for the proposed project.

The daily unmitigated operational emissions of NOx (due mainly to the asphalt plant) and PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ (due mainly to the asphalt and concrete plants) would potentially exceed the significance thresholds. The annual unmitigated operational emissions of PM_{10} would potentially exceed the significance thresholds.

Table 4-10 displays the daily mitigated operational emissions for the proposed project. Table 4-11 displays the annual mitigated operational emissions for the proposed project. The mitigated emissions included regulatory actions that are required under Lassen County APCD rules (Regulatory Requirements AQ-1 through AQ-7) as well as the project Mitigation Measures 4.4-1 through 4.4-8 that include measures to reduce exhaust and fugitive dust emissions during construction and operations. The daily and annual mitigated operational emissions would be less than significant.

Table 4-10
PROPOSED PROJECT DAILY MITIGATED OPERATIONAL EMISSIONS (POUNDS)

Emission Source	ROG	CO	NOX	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Onsite Equipment	1.01	36.9	4.36	0.03	0.13	0.13
Generators	0.20	2.20	29.7	18.3	0.26	0.26
Employees	0.03	1.49	0.12	<0.01	0.02	0.01
Haul Trucks	0.25	1.20	15.8	0.36	2.18	0.88
Aggregate Plant	-	-	-	-	16.5	2.48
Wash Plant	-	-	-	-	4.12	0.62
Sand Plant	-	-	-	-	9.38	1.41
Concrete Plant	-	-	-	-	55.8	8.37
Asphalt Plant	46.5	26.4	67.4	36.0	24.3	23.6
Asphalt Silo	53.8	8.86	-	-	21.0	6.82
Lime Slurry	-	-	-	-	2.34	0.35
Material Handling/Stockpiles	-	-	-	-	1.25	0.19
Blasting	-	-	-	-	7.42	1.11
Grand Total	**102**	**77.1**	**117**	**54.7**	**145**	**46.2**
Significance Threshold	**150**	**550**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**
Total (Stationary Sources)	**101**	**37.5**	**97.1**	**54.3**	**134**	**43.9**
Significance Threshold	**150**	**550**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

Table 4-11
PROPOSED PROJECT ANNUAL MITIGATED OPERATIONAL EMISSIONS (TONS)

Emission Source	ROG	CO	NOX	SO2	PM10	PM2.5
Onsite Equipment	0.07	2.46	0.29	0.00	0.01	0.01
Generators	0.05	0.69	6.52	2.71	0.08	0.08
Employees	<0.01	0.22	0.02	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Haul Trucks	<0.01	0.03	0.36	0.01	0.05	0.02
Aggregate Plant	-	-	-	-	1.05	0.16
Wash Plant	-	-	-	-	0.30	0.04
Sand Plant	-	-	-	-	0.30	0.04
Concrete Plant	-	-	-	-	1.86	0.28
Asphalt Plant	2.66	1.5	3.85	2.06	1.39	1.35
Asphalt Silo	3.08	0.51	-	-	1.15	0.34
Lime Slurry	-	-	-	-	<0.01	<0.01
Material Handling/Stockpiles	-	-	-	-	0.22	0.03
Blasting	-	-	-	-	0.02	0.00
Grand Total	**5.86**	**5.42**	**11.0**	**4.78**	**6.24**	**2.37**
Significance Threshold	**27**	**100**	**27**	**27**	**27**	**27**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**
Total (Stationary Sources)	**5.78**	**2.71**	**10.4**	**4.77**	**5.94**	**2.31**
Significance Threshold	**27**	**100**	**27**	**27**	**27**	**27**
Exceed?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

Generally, projects that exceed the project-specific significance thresholds are considered by the SCAQMD to be cumulatively considerable. Conversely, projects that do not exceed the project-specific thresholds are generally not considered to be cumulatively significant. As such, impacts

from the proposed project would generate less than significant air emissions and thus would not result in a cumulatively considerable increase in air emissions during operations.

Impact 4.4-2: Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

A Health Risk Assessment (HRA) was included in the *Air Quality Technical Report* (refer to Appendix D) to address health impacts on existing residences and schools from DPM emissions from onsite equipment and haul trucks, as well as crystalline silica from aggregate processing and various air toxics from the concrete and asphalt operations. Based on the geotechnical observations at the existing quarry site, rock materials associated with naturally occurring asbestos are not present within the proposed mining and reclamation area

Health effects from carcinogenic air toxics are usually described in terms of individual cancer risk. Individual cancer risk is the likelihood that a person exposed to air toxic concentrations over a 70-year lifetime will contract cancer, based on the use of standard risk-assessment methodology. The maximally exposed individual represents the worst–case risk estimate, based on a theoretical person continuously exposed for a lifetime at the point of highest compound concentration in the air. This is a highly conservative assumption since most people do not remain at home all day, and on average, residents change residences every 11 to 12 years. In addition, this assumption assumes that residents are experiencing outdoor concentrations for the entire exposure period. Figure 4-4 shows the health risk assessment receptors.

The HRA includes an analysis of the incremental cancer risks to sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the proposed project, using emission rates (in pounds per hour). Air toxics emissions rates were input into the USEPA's AERMOD atmospheric dispersion model to calculate the ambient air concentrations at receptors in the Project vicinity. The HRA is intended to provide a worst–case estimate of the increased exposure by employing a standard emission estimation program, an accepted pollutant dispersion model, approved toxicity factors, and conservative exposure parameters.

In accordance with OEHHA *Air Toxics Hot Spots Program Guidance Manual for Preparation of Health Risk Assessments,* the HRA was accomplished by applying the highest estimated concentrations of TAC at the receptors analyzed to the established cancer potency factors and acceptable reference concentrations for non-cancer health effects. Increased cancer risks were calculated using the modeled DPM concentrations and OEHHA-recommended methodologies for both a child exposure (third trimester through 2 years of age) and adult exposure. The cancer risk calculations were based on applying the OEHHA-recommended age sensitivity factors and breathing rates, as well as the fraction of time at home and an exposure duration of 30 years, to the TAC concentration exposures. Age-sensitivity factors reflect the greater sensitivity of infants and small children to cancer-causing air pollutants. The supporting methodology and assumptions used in the HRA are provided in Appendix D, Air Quality Technical Report.

These conservative methodologies overestimate both non-carcinogenic and carcinogenic health risk, possibly by an order of magnitude or more. Therefore, for carcinogenic risks, the actual probabilities of cancer formation in the populations of concern due to exposure to carcinogenic pollutants are likely to be lower than the risks derived using the HRA methodology. The extrapolation of toxicity data in animals to humans, the estimation of concentration prediction methods within dispersion models, and the variability in lifestyles, fitness, and other confounding

factors of the human population also contribute to the overestimation of health impacts. Therefore, the results of this HRA are highly conservative.

The following describes the HRA results associated with existing receptors due to proposed project activities. As shown in Table 4-12, the maximum cancer risk (construction plus maximum project operations) from proposed project emissions for a residential receptor would be 1.0 per million. The maximum cancer risk depends on the phase in which the activities would occur. Phases 1 through 3 would have the highest contribution to cancer risk because their activities are located closer to the location of maximum exposure (i.e., residential receptor to the south of the project site, as shown on Figure 4-4, which is approximately 4,000 feet from the processing plants). The maximum cancer risk contribution during Phases 4 and 5 would be lower because these phases are farther from the location of maximum exposure (i.e., residential receptor to the south of the project site). Thus, the cancer risk due to project operations would be below the significance threshold of 10 per million people and would have a less-than-significant health impact.

Table 4-12
PROPOSED PROJECT ESTIMATED HEALTH IMPACTS

Source	Cancer Risk	Acute Hazard	Chronic Hazard
Construction Activities	0.32	-	<0.01
Proposed Project (Phase 1)	0.68	0.79	0.08
Proposed Project (Phase 2)	0.68	0.79	0.12
Proposed Project (Phase 3)	0.68	0.79	0.19
Proposed Project (Phase 4)	0.66	0.79	0.19
Proposed Project (Phase 5)	0.56	0.79	0.19
Proposed Project (Maximum)	**1.00**	**0.79**	**0.19**
Significance Threshold	10	1.0	1.0

Source: RCH Group, 2024.

Both acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) adverse health impacts unrelated to cancer are measured against a hazard index (HI), which is defined as the ratio of the predicted incremental pollutant exposure concentration from the proposed project to a reference exposure level (REL) that could cause adverse health effects. The REL are published by OEHHA based on epidemiological research. The ratio (referred to as the Hazard Quotient [HQ]) of each noncarcinogenic substance that affects a certain organ system is added to produce an overall HI for that organ system. The overall HI is calculated for each organ system. The impact is considered to be significant if the overall HI for the highest-impacted organ system is greater than 1.0.

The acute HI would be 0.79, mostly due to H_2S emissions from the asphalt plant. Notably, the acute hazards index for H_2S is somewhat related to odor impacts, and the less-than-significant acute health impacts suggest less-than-significant odor impacts (see Impact 4.4-3). The chronic HI would be 0.19. The acute and chronic HI would be below the significance threshold of 1, and the impact of the proposed project would therefore be a less-than-significant health impact.

A majority of the cancer risk impacts are due to DPM emissions (approximately 85 percent of the total cancer risk), with the remaining risk due to various air toxics such as benzene, formaldehyde, and naphthalene. A majority of the acute health impacts are due to H_2S emissions (approximately 50 percent of the total acute health impacts), with the remaining acute health impacts due to

various air toxics. A majority of the chronic health impacts are due to crystalline silica emissions (approximately 95 percent of the total chronic health impacts).

Based on the results of the HRA, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, and the health impacts of the project would be less than significant.

Impact 4.4-3: Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

Though offensive odors from stationary and mobile sources rarely cause any physical harm, they still remain unpleasant and can lead to public distress, generating citizen complaints to local governments and air districts. The occurrence and severity of odor impacts depend on the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source; wind speed and direction; and the sensitivity of receptors.

Potential localized odor sources associated with proposed project operation-related activities could originate from fumes from the asphalt plant, asphalt silo, diesel exhaust from off-road haul equipment, and diesel exhaust from incoming and outgoing diesel-fueled heavy-duty transport vehicles. Odor emissions are highly dispersive, especially in areas with higher average wind speeds. However, odors disperse less quickly during inversions or during calm conditions, which hamper vertical mixing and dispersion.

Due to the subjective nature of odor impacts, the number of variables that can influence the potential for an odor impact, and the variety of odor sources, there are no quantitative or formulaic methodologies to determine the presence of a significant odor impact. Rather, often air districts recommend that odor analyses strive to fully disclose all pertinent information. The intensity of an odor source's operations and its proximity to sensitive receptors influence the potential significance of odor emissions. For example, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (SJVUAPCD) has identified some common types of facilities that have been known to produce odors (SJVUAPCD, 2015).

Land uses and industrial operations that are typically associated with odor complaints include agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, food processing plants, chemical plants, composting, asphalt plants, refineries, landfills, solid waste transfer stations, rendering plants, dairies, and fiberglass molding.

Per the SJVUAPCD's Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts, asphalt batch plants are considered to have potentially significant impacts on receptors located within one mile. The project site is located in a generally rural area surrounded by open space. The nearest residence is approximately 4,000 feet or 0.8 miles (to the south of the project site) from the proposed aggregate, concrete, and asphalt plants and 2,300 feet (to the west) from the quarry area. Although the acute impacts due to H_2S are less than significant, it suggests but does not specifically result in less-than-significant odor impacts.

Notably, the primary wind direction is from the west. Therefore, the primary wind direction is from the residences towards the project site (i.e., the nearby residences are not downwind from the proposed project).

Generally, an odor source with five or more confirmed complaints per year, averaged over three years, could be considered to have a significant impact. However, it should be recognized that there is not one piece of information that can solely be used to determine the significance of an odor impact. For example, a project that would be located near an existing odor source may not discover any odor complaints for the existing odor source. It is possible that factors such as a small number of existing nearby receptors, predominant wind direction blowing away from the existing receptors, and/or seasonality of the odor source have prevented any odor complaints from being filed about the existing odor source.

The applicant has an existing facility in Ward Lake Quarry in Lassen County that has similar equipment (including asphalt plant, off-road equipment, and haul trucks) with higher daily and annual throughput levels. That facility also has residences nearby and a predominant wind direction that blows from the nearby residences towards the facility (also similar to the proposed project). Based on information obtained from the Lassen County APCD, in which the Ward Lake Quarry is located, no complaints were filed related to odor issues in the past five years.

Based on the previous information, especially wind direction, distance to and limited number of nearby residences, and history with an applicant's existing facility, as well as the implementation of the OIMP (Mitigation Measure 4.4-9), the odor impacts would be less than significant. Nevertheless, a quantitative modeling analysis was conducted to further assess the odor impacts.

AERMOD (Version 24142)[1] was used for the odor dispersion analysis. AERMOD is the USEPA-preferred atmospheric dispersion modeling system for general industrial sources. The model can simulate point, area, volume, and line sources. AERMOD is the appropriate model for this analysis based on the coverage of simple, intermediate, and complex terrain. It also predicts both short-term and long-term (annual) average concentrations. The model was executed using the regulatory default options (stack-tip downwash, buoyancy-induced dispersion, and final plume rise), default wind speed profile categories, default potential temperature gradients, and assuming no pollutant decay. AERMOD odor printouts contain the predicted concentrations of odor at specific locations around a source, calculated from the AERMOD dispersion model. The information is used in odor impact assessments and typically includes information on odor concentration (ou/m3 or "odor units" per cubic meter), which can be used to determine annoyance or nuisance levels, as well as compare odor thresholds and impact criteria. Modeling results require source data, meteorological data, and receptor locations as inputs. Notably, the same information is used for health risk assessment. The predicted concentrations are compared to established odor threshold values to see if they are likely to be detected or cause a nuisance.

An OU is a measure of odor concentration, where 1 ou/m3 (or 1 dilution-to-threshold or 1 D/T) is the concentration at which 50 percent of people can detect an odor and 50 percent of people cannot detect an odor. This is the defined odor threshold, meaning that the air sample has been diluted with odor-free air by a factor equal to the OU concentration to reach a barely perceptible smell (also known as 1 dilution/threshold or 1 D/T). On the other hand, odors become more aware at a concentration around 5 ou/m3 and may start to evoke complaints at concentrations between 5 and 10 ou/m3 (or 5 to 10 D/T). Therefore, a value of 5 D/T was chosen as the more conservative significance threshold.

For an odor index standpoint:

1 D/T is ambient air in a community with "no odor" noticeable
2 D/T is ambient odor level usually considered "just noticeable"
4 D/T is ambient odor level common in a city
5 D/T is a design value sometimes used in odor modeling
7 D/T is ambient odor level sometimes considered a nuisance
10 D/T is a design value sometimes used in odor modeling

In the case of "traditional" contaminants, pollutant concentrations are typically based on average or maximum concentrations over a period of one hour, eight hours, or a year. However, with odor, given the instantaneous perception of the human nose, it is necessary to refer to short-term peak concentrations (for example, a period of three minutes). A factor of 2.3 is multiplied by the modeled hourly maximum concentration to estimate the short-term peak concentration (in ou/m3 or D/T).

The dispersion modeling results in a short-term peak odor concentration of 3.0 D/T predicted to occur at a residence to the northwest of the asphalt plant, and a maximum odor concentration of 2.3 D/T predicted to occur at Lassen College. The modeling analysis found that a value of greater than 2 D/T, a value which is barely noticeable and not likely to garner a complaint, would occur one or two times per year. Therefore, the odor modeling shows that five or more confirmed complaints per year, averaged over three years, would not be exceeded.

In environmental and community noise or odor assessments, the 98th percentile is a common metric to define a limit for annoyance. It is the hourly average concentration that is exceeded for only 2 percent of the hours in a year. A 98th percentile short-term peak odor concentration of 2.1 D/T is estimated at a residence to the northwest of the asphalt plant and 2.0 D/T at Lassen College. Short-term peak odor concentrations at residences to the west of the project site are all less than 1 D/T.

In conclusion, the predicted short-term peak odor concentrations are less than the threshold value of 5 D/T. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant odor impact.

4.4.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures shall be implemented to reduce exhaust and fugitive dust emissions during construction and operations, and are accounted for within the air quality analysis calculations of mitigated emissions:

4.4-1: The proposed project shall include the use of off-road diesel-powered equipment with 25 horsepower or greater that meets the USEPA's and CARB's Tier 4 engine emissions standards, for all phases of construction activity and during operations, as specified in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts.

4.4-2: The applicant shall implement the following mitigation measures to further reduce fugitive dust emissions:

i. Increased water frequency is required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 miles per hour (mph).

j. All material excavated, stockpiled, or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard.

k. All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.

l. All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph.

m. All onsite vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads.

n. All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded, or watered until a suitable cover is established.

o. All material transported offsite shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance.

To address fugitive dust emissions, the proposed project will require a well capable of meeting the anticipated water demand for mining uses at the site. This demand is expected to be up to 16,000 gallons for aggregate washing and dust suppression per day, with an estimated total annual demand of 3,180,000 gallons (9.76 acre-feet). Water will also be recycled from the wash water and used for dust suppression. The well is anticipated to be located near the southern parcel boundary.

4.4-3: Require construction of three-sided enclosures with 50 percent porosity for storage piles, and/or plant tree windbreaks on the windward (southwest) perimeter of project site, and/or water the storage piles or apply cover when wind events exceed 25 mph.

4.4-4: The applicant shall use alternative methods to open burning for vegetation disposal. The open burning of site-cleared vegetation shall be prohibited. Among suitable alternatives to be used shall be chipping, grinding, hauling to an approved disposal site, cutting for firewood, and conversion to biomass fuel.

4.4-5: Install and maintain track out control devices in effective condition at all access points where paved and unpaved access or travel routes intersect (e.g., install wheel shakers, wheel washers, and limit site access).

4.4-6: When materials are transported offsite, all material shall be covered, effectively wetted to limit visible dust emissions, and at least six inches of freeboard space from the top of the container shall be maintained.

4.4-7: All streets located within the project site area shall be swept periodically using Air District certified street sweepers if visible soil materials are carried to adjacent streets.

4.4-8: The applicant will implement the following operational equipment requirements and operation protocols for generators operating at the proposed project. These features would be included in applicable bid documents, and successful contractor(s) must demonstrate the ability to supply such equipment and comply with such protocols. Operational features would include the following:

- All backup generators used for proposed project operations shall be selected from the Lassen County APCD certified generators list and meet applicable federal standards for diesel emissions. For after-treatment of engine exhaust air, a diesel particulate filter

shall be provided to meet the emission level requirements of the Lassen County APCD. The proposed project would have three backup generators, each could operate up to two hours per day and a total of 500 hours per year for testing and maintenance to ensure reliability in the case of a power outage.

- The backup generators shall meet the USEPA's and CARB's Tier 4 engine emissions standards, as specified in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts.
- The applicant shall conduct maintenance and/or testing on the three backup generators on separate days (i.e., one generator on the 5th day of the month, one generator on the 15th day of the month, and one generator on the 25th day of the month).

4.4-9: To reduce the opportunity for odor impacts, the applicant shall develop an Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP), which will provide a toolbox for the proposed project to properly monitor, assess, and mitigate odor impacts resulting from the operation of the asphalt plant. In general, the OIMP shall be used to accomplish the following objectives: 1. Monitor site conditions and resulting odor emissions using accepted techniques. 2. Eliminate origins of odor from the facility, as feasible. 3. Implement corrective actions as required to mitigate odor impacts resulting from facility operation. The OIMP would be triggered if five or more confirmed complaints per year, averaged over three years, are made to and verified by the Lassen County APCD. The OIMP would establish a protocol for responding to odor events.

4.4.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impacts of the Project to regional air quality (Impact 4.1-1) will be potentially significant. The daily unmitigated operational emissions of No_x (due mainly to the asphalt plant) and PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ (due mainly to the asphalt and concrete plants) would potentially exceed the significance thresholds. The annual unmitigated operational emissions of PM_{10} would potentially exceed the significance thresholds. Mitigation measures 4.4-1 through 4.4-8 would reduce daily and annual exhaust and fugitive dust emissions from operations to less than significant. Impact 4.1-2 (health impacts) on nearby sensitive receptors would be less than significant, and Impact 4.1.3 (odor impacts) would be less than significant on nearby sensitive receptors with mitigation incorporated (Mitigation Measure 4.4-9).

4.5 Biological Resources

This section describes the existing biological setting of the project site, including existing vegetation and habitat types and potentially occurring special-status species within the project site. This section also summarizes the applicable regulations that govern those resources and includes an analysis of the potential biological resources impacts of the Project, as well as mitigation measures to reduce the biological resource impacts of the Project. The analysis is based on information contained in the Biological Resource Assessment prepared for the Project by VESTRA in April 2023 and updated in December 2025.

4.5.1 Environmental Setting

A Biological Resource Assessment (BRA) was prepared for the Project in April 2023 and updated in December 2025 by VESTRA Resources. The environmental information in this section is based on information contained in the BRA (refer to Appendix E, Biological Resource Assessment).

Site Vegetation
Vegetation at the project site has been identified via the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP) data and field surveys, which identify vegetation communities on a small scale using definitions published in A Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer et al. 2009). The vegetation alliances identified onsite in order of dominance onsite are *Artemisia arbuscula* ssp. *arbuscula* Shrubland Alliance, *Juniperus occidentalis* Woodland Alliance, *Bromus tectorum - Taeniatherum caput-medusae* Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance, and *Artemisia tridentata* Shrubland Alliance. Vegetation communities onsite are shown on Figure 3-7. Areas onsite that lack vegetation are considered "barren" habitat. Natural volcanic boulder fields that lack vegetation entirely span the landscape. Few areas onsite have been previously disturbed by human activities. All vegetation was removed from these areas during evident historic grading.

Soils
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (2019) identified six soil types within the project property: Horsecamp Cobbly Silty Clay, Lakeview Loam Warm, Searles-Or hood-Nevada association, Springmeyer Sandy Loam, Tunnison Very Cobbly Clay, and Tunnison-Devada association. These soils onsite exhibit a range from "low" to "moderate" permeability. The dominant soil type in the parcel is the Tunnison-Devada association. The dominant soil types within the proposed mine area are Searles-Orhood-Devada association, 5 to 30 percent slopes, and Tunnison-Devada association, 2 to 9 percent slopes. Both soil types exhibit high percentages of stone and cobble and have a depth to bedrock of less than 40 inches.

Hydrology
The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) shows a stream and wetland features that are located within the parcel. These features are shown on Figure 4-5.

The stream flows in a ravine along the eastern parcel boundary. Approximately 0.5 miles of this stream occur within the proposed mining boundary. A buffer will be maintained around the stream, which will range from 175 feet to 550 feet throughout the life of the mine. No disturbance to the stream will occur. Three stock ponds (~0.05 acres) are mapped within the subject parcel. One isolated wetland area is located near the utility corridor.

A freshwater emergent wetland system is located adjacent to the mine parcel; this occurs outside of the reclamation boundary, is not owned by the applicant, and will not be disturbed. The wetland system is comprised of Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough, which flow across the adjacent parcel in a series of braided shallow channels. The slough is fed by a side channel from the Susan River, which flows through adjacent agricultural fields, and then follows the proposed mine property's southern border before flowing into the slough (refer to Figure 3-4). Water flows from the slough ultimately back into the Susan River approximately 3.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the slough.

Special-Status Wildlife Species
An assessment of special-status species was conducted for the project site to examine potential effects of expanding the mining area. Special-status species considered in the assessment meet one of the following criteria:

- Listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 17.12 [listed plants], 50 CFR Part 17.11 [listed animals], 67 Federal Register [FR] 40657 [candidate species]);
- Listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW], 2017a);
- Identified by the CDFW as fully protected species, including fish and wildlife that do not have State or Federal threatened or endangered status but may still be threatened with extinction (CDFW, 2017b); and
- California Species of Special Concern: vertebrate species that have been designated as "species of special concern" by the CDFW because declining population levels, limited range, and/or continuing threats have made them vulnerable to extinction (CDFW, 2017b).

Table 4-13 lists the wildlife species identified by a California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) search within five miles of the project site, CWHR analysis or literature review regarding preferred habitats for these species, and an evaluation of their potential to occur within the Project area. A list of federally listed species that may occur in the project area was obtained from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); these species are also addressed in Table 4-13.

Species with habitat requirements that are not present within the project area were determined to be unlikely to occur and are not discussed further. Based on this assessment, the following special-status species may occur onsite:

- Greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*)
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)
- North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)
- Gray wolf (*Canis lupus)*
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)
- Morrison's bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*)
- Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee *(Bombus suckleyz)*
- Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae var. pulsiferae)*
- Susanville beardtounge *(Penstemon sudans)*

Impacts of the proposed Project to species determined to have potential to occur within the project area are discussed under Impact 4.5-1 and 4.5-2 below, while species that were determined to be absent are not discussed further.

Table 4-13
POTENTIALLY OCCURRING SPECIAL-STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	Fed Status	State Status	Habitat	Habitat Present in Action Area? (Y/N)	Project Impact Determination
Birds						
Accipiter gentilis	Northern goshawk	--	CDFW SSC	Nest in mature and old-growth forest stands	No	No Impact
Antigone canadensis tabida	Greater sandhill crane	--	T CDFW FP	Emergent wetlands, wet meadows, irrigated pasture	Yes – site lacks adequate wet meadow habitat for nesting or foraging but nesting habitat on adjacent property	No Impact
Falco mexicanus	Prairie falcon	USFWS BSC	CDFW WL	Nest on cliff ledge overlooking open meadows in grasslands and forests	Yes	Less than Significant
Agelaius tricolor	Tricolored blackbird	--	T	Wetlands or streams with dense emergent vegetation; nest in colonies	No – site lacks dense emergent vegetation	No Impact
Athene cunicularia	Burrowing owl	--	CDFW SSC	Grassland, shrub steppe, desert; habitat typified by short, sparse vegetation, level to gentle topography and well-drained soils. Require burrows; often use existing badger, coyote, or ground squirrel burrows.	No – site lacks suitable soils for burrowing	No Impact
Centrocercus urophasianus	Greater sage grouse	--	CDFW SSC	Sage grouse use big sagebrush (*A. tridentata*) cover type and mixed shrubs with adequate cover. Hens may forage in low sagebrush (*A. arbuscula*).	No – *A. arbuscula* onsite lacks shrubs with adequate cover. Patches of *A. tridentata* too small to support lek. Outside of species range (CNDDB 2023).	No Impact
Riparia	Bank swallow	--	T	Sandy vertical cliffs and stream banks	No – site lacks sandy vertical banks/cliffs	No Impact
Gymnogyps californianus	California condor	E	E CDFW FP	Roosts on cliffs, rocky outcrops, large trees, and snags. Foraging can take place on grasslands, oak savanna foothills, and beaches with coastal mountains	No - site lacks large trees or cliffs needed for nesting	No Impact
Mammals						
Taxidea taxus	American badger	--	CDFW SSC	Dry open stages of most shrub and forest habitats, denning requires deep, friable soils	Yes – site lacks suitable soils for denning but potential for dispersing individual	Less than Significant
Erethizon dorsatum	N. American porcupine	--	--	Montane conifer and wet meadows	Yes – site lacks meadow and conifer habitat but potential for dispersing individual.	Less than Significant

Table 4-13
POTENTIALLY OCCURRING SPECIAL-STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	Fed Status	State Status	Habitat	Habitat Present in Action Area? (Y/N)	Project Impact Determination
Canis lupas	Grey Wolf	E	E	Temperate forests, mountains, tundra, taiga, grasslands, and deserts	Yes- site lacks denning areas	Less than Significant
Invertebrates						
Bombus morrisoni	Morrison bumble bee	--	CE	Nest in underground cavities (i.e., squirrel burrow)	Yes	Less than Significant with Mitigation
Bombus suckleyi	Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee	PE	CE	Prairies, grasslands, meadows, urban and agricultural areas, and woodlands. Requires the presence of another species to act as a host	Yes – there is potential for host bumble bee species to be present	Less than Significant
Danaus plexippus	Monarch butterfly	T	--	Widespread, migratory.	Yes	Less than Significant
Pseudocopaeodes eunus obscurus	Carson's wandering skipper	E	--	Salt bush-greasewood community	No	No Impact
Reptiles						
Actinemys marmorata	Northwestern pond turtle	PT	CDFW SSC	Streams, pons, lakes, and permanent and ephemeral wetlands. Dry uplands are needed for nesting	No	No Impact

FED - **USFWS BSC**: US Fish and Wildlife bird species of special concern; **STATE – CDFW SSC: California** Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern; **CDFW FP**: Fully Protected; **CDFW WL:** watch list; **T:** threatened**; E:** endangered; **CE:** candidate for listing as endangered;

Special-Status Plants
Special-status plant species include plants that are:

- Designated as rare by CDFW or USFWS or are listed as threatened or endangered under the CESA or ESA;
- Proposed for designation as rare or listing as threatened or endangered;
- Designated as state or federal candidate species for listing as threatened or endangered; and/or
- Ranked as California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, or 3.
- A list of regionally occurring special-status plant species was compiled based on a review of pertinent literature, the results of the field surveys, and a review of the USFWS species list and CNDDB, and a search of California Native Plant Society (CNPS) database records for the Litchfield quadrangle.

Consultations found no records of federally or State-listed threatened or endangered plant species within five miles of the project area. Five plants ranked 1B or 2B by the CNPS are recorded in the CNDDB within five miles of the proposed development area. For each special-status plant species, habitat and other ecological requirements were evaluated and compared to the habitats in the study area and immediate vicinity to assess the presence of potential habitat. The habitat assessment is provided in Table 4-14.

Table 4-14
POTENTIALLY OCCURRING SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	Fed Status	State Status	CRPR Status	Habitat	Habitat Present in Action Area? (Y/N)	Project Impact Determination
Plants							
Astragalus pulsiferae var. *pulsiferae*	Pulsifer's milk-vetch	--	--	1B.2	Sandy or rocky soils in pine or sagebrush communities	Yes	Less than Significant
Penstemon sudans	Susanville beardtongue	--	--	4.3	Open, rocky soils in pine or sagebrush communities	Yes	Less than Significant
Alisma gramineum	Grass alisma	--	--	2B.2	Wetlands; "obligate" wetland indicator plant	No	No Impact
Mertensia longiflora	Long bluebells	--	--	2B.2	Yellow pine forest; seasonally moist plains and foothills	No	No Impact
Carex sheldonii	Sheldon's sedge	--	--	2B.2	Wetlands; "obligate" wetland indicator plant	No	No Impact

FED - **USFWS BSC**: US Fish and Wildlife bird species of special concern; **STATE – CDFW SSC: California** Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern; **CDFW FP**: Fully Protected; **CDFW WL:** watch list; **T:** threatened**; E:** endangered; **CE:** candidate for listing as endangered; **CRPR** - **1B.2:** rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere; **2B.2:** rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere.

Species with habitat requirements that are not present onsite were determined to be unlikely to occur and are not discussed further. Based on this assessment, the following species may occur onsite:

- Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*)
- Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*)

Potential impacts to these plants with potential to occur at the project site are discussed under Impact 4.5-1. Plants with no potential to occur are not discussed further. Consultations found no records of Federally or State-listed threatened or endangered plant species within five miles of the project area.

Critical Habitat
The project site is not located within a designated critical habitat for any special-status species.

Resident or Migratory Wildlife Corridors and Nursery Sites

Nesting Songbirds and Raptors
Migratory birds may nest in trees and other vegetation located within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area. All raptors and migratory birds, including common species and their nests, are protected from "take" under the California Fish and Game Code Section 3503 and 3503.5, and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Onsite activities that result in tree removal or new noise generation during the nesting season could result in impacts to nesting birds. A point-count survey was completed in April 2023. No raptors were observed onsite, but many passerines were observed onsite. Tree removal will be conducted outside of avian nesting season when feasible to avoid impacts to nesting birds. Otherwise, a site survey will be completed. Should a site survey

detect active nests near the project area, appropriate spatial and temporal buffers will be implemented.

Bat Maternity Roosts

Potentially occurring bat species in the area include long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), according to CNDDB. Ecological requirements for bat roosts, including maternity roosts, include an appropriate thermal gradient, shelter from predators, and proximity to foraging sites. During the summer, when bats are most active and raising their young, they frequently use one roost during the day where they sleep and feed their young, and another roost at night for resting and digesting food. Long-eared myotis individuals, like many bats, can roost in tree cavities and beneath exfoliating bark in both living and dead trees. Pregnant long-eared myotis often roost at ground level in rock crevices, fallen logs, and sometimes in tree stumps, but they are not able to rear their young in such vulnerable locations.

A recent study found that lactating females selected rock crevices (i.e., vertical crevices and boulder fields) as maternity roosts more frequently than tree cavities, whereas males used tree cavity roosts and rock roosts more evenly. Trees were selected for roosts at sites where rock crevices were relatively less abundant. Proximity to at least one perennial water source was found to be a priority for long-eared myotis roost selection. Bats were found to select roosts that were an average of 600 feet from a water source (Snider 2013).

According to the CNDDB, the project site is characterized as "Low" quality habitat, and the surrounding several thousand acres to the north is considered "High" quality habitat for long-eared myotis. The surrounding area includes Susanville Peak and several perennial water bodies, which are indicators of high-quality habitat for individual bats as well as maternity roosts. These areas are not to be disturbed by project activities.

There are no vertical rock outcrops onsite that would be disturbed by project activities. Trees onsite lack crevices adequate for bat maternity roosts. Although the occasional male day roost could occur underneath exfoliating bark, this is not considered roost habitat for maternity roosts or pregnant females.

There are boulder fields onsite, which consist of a fissure in the ground that is filled with volcanic boulder-sized rocks, creating many horizontal rock crevices. The south-facing slope onsite may generate adequate thermal gradients within these crevices that could be appealing to individual long-eared myotis, including pregnant females. Long-eared myotis reproduction is assumed to be comparable to similar *Myotis* species; copulation occurs in the fall prior to hibernation, and the female becomes pregnant in the spring, then gives birth to pups in the lightspring/early summer. Once young are born, long-eared myotis select vertical rock crevices which provide greater protection and thermal stability for pups (Manning 1993, Chruszcz 2002). Vertical rock crevices do not occur within the project area; therefore, any long-eared myotis likely migrate offsite to establish maternity roosts. Therefore, the boulder fields are most likely to be occupied by pregnant females following winter hibernation and before females give birth to their young in the spring/early summer.

The rocks in these areas would be removed by mining activities and processed for aggregate material. Boulders would be removed during the initial ground disturbing activities since they are near the surface. This would occur over time across the landscape as mining progresses. Once the

mining has begun in an area, the thermal and physical characteristics of the site would no longer be likely to support bats. Throughout the life of the mine, bats are likely to avoid disturbed areas and select roosting habitat in the surrounding landscape where high-quality habitat exists.

Long-eared myotis feed primarily on moths, and their diet also includes beetles, flies, and spiders. There is potential to create foraging opportunities for bats during the occasional nighttime work. Lighting would be directed downward to reduce light pollution, but increased lighting at night may draw in moths and other potential bat prey items to localized work areas where lighting occurs.

American Pronghorn

American pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) is a North American mammal in the Order Artiodactyla that inhabits wide-open habitats, including prairie and sagebrush plant communities. Pronghorn migrate seasonally between summer and winter ranges, depending on food availability and climate. The Susanville-Litchfield area comprises the southernmost habitat for pronghorn that remains in Northeastern California (Duquette 2015); few isolated populations occur where habitat remains in the Central Valley. The proposed mine site overlaps with approximately 385 acres of winter range for American pronghorn (Figure 4-6). The site does not overlap with kidding grounds for pronghorn.

Pronghorn abundance in California once exceeded 500,000 animals, but habitat loss largely reduced this number over time. In 1942, CDFW began conducting winter surveys to count the number of pronghorn annually. From 1956 to 1970, the estimated population was between 1,800 and 3,000 animals, and then increased through the early 1990s. During a severe winter in 1992/1993, the population in the northeastern corner of the state decreased by almost half, and its abundance remains near that number today (Duquette 2015). Habitat has been depleted due to agriculture, fire suppression, plant succession, invasive plants, and human development. Habitat loss has restricted the range of pronghorn to small, isolated populations in the Central Valley and northeastern corner of the state (Duquette 2015).

Pronghorn in Lassen County migrate seasonally and require suitable habitat and minimal obstructions to their movement during migration. Individuals from the Lassen herd were tracked from 2014-2016; data showed that the herd winters in lower elevations in the Secret Valley, Bull Flat, and Mud Flat north of the Skedaddle Mountains and east of Shaffer Mountain, as well as in the Dry Valley Rim Wilderness Study Area. Summer ranges are spread out, with some individuals migrating north to the Five Springs Wilderness Study Area and others heading east to Tunnison Mountain Wilderness Study Area and Eagle Lake (CDFW 2023). The project site is located well outside of any migration corridors between these locations.

According to CNDDB, the nearest known pronghorn kidding grounds are over 1.5 miles away from the site. There are documented migration corridors located approximately 6.25 miles north of the project site on the other (north) side of Antelope Mountain. These extend between Horse Lake and Eagle Lake and continue north to Modoc County. The project site does not overlap with any kidding grounds or migration corridors.

In winter, shrubs are high in protein relative to other forage, and shrubs comprise most of the pronghorn diet. A comparison of vegetation at occupied and reference locations found that adult females select habitats that provide greater visibility and food availability. Sagebrush (*Artemisia*

spp.), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), and bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) are important pronghorn habitat throughout the Great Basin.

Mule Deer

Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) inhabits a wide range of habitats, including forest, chaparral, oak woodland, sagebrush and high desert, and grasslands. In California, most mule herds migrate from summer range to winter range. Migration routes can be well over 100 miles in length, and function not only as travel corridors, but also as important foraging habitats. During the spring and summer, mule deer select food items available during 'green up', such as herbaceous flowering plants and grasses. During the winter, when herbaceous plants die off, mule deer switch to the nutritious buds and leaves of woody vegetation (Sawyer 2011).

Summer range is typically high elevation and utilized for its nutritious green forage and fawning areas. These high-elevation areas are covered in snow during the winter, so prior to deep snow, deer migrate to lower elevations. Winter ranges are generally at lower elevations and are far less abundant than summer ranges, making them vulnerable to human impacts and often a limiting factor in populations. Deer from different summer ranges may share a common winter range where breeding typically occurs. This mixing of genes on winter ranges contributes to genetically diverse and healthy populations. As knowledge of mule deer migration patterns has increased over many decades, more refined terms such as Critical Winter Range, Key Winter Range, Critical Summer Range, holding area, fawning area, and migration corridor have been defined to describe the landscape for deer. Critical Winter Range can include corridors essential for movement, staging areas where deer temporarily congregate, habitats containing high-quality winter forage, or other elements important to the survival of deer in winter.

The project area does not overlap with any Critical Winter Range areas for mule deer. The City of Susanville is surrounded by several known Critical Winter Range areas (CNDDB 2023). The nearest to the project area is 0.75 miles north of the mining boundary near Antelope Mountain and the Tunnison Mountain Wilderness Study Area, which encompasses nearly 20,000 acres of mountains and canyons that would not be disturbed by project activities. Existing agricultural developments and natural topography separate the mine site from this Critical Winter Range for mule deer. Mule deer habitat and winter range are illustrated on Figure 4-7.

4.5.2 Regulatory Setting

This section describes the federal and state regulation of special-status botanical and wildlife species and critical habitats, federally jurisdictional Waters of the United States, and other sensitive biological resources.

Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act

Section 9 of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) prohibits acts that result in the "take" of threatened or endangered species. As defined by the federal ESA, "endangered" refers to any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its current range. The term "threatened" is applied to any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its current range. "Take" is defined as

"harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." Sections 7 and 10 of the federal ESA provide methods for permitting otherwise lawful actions that may result in "incidental take" of a federally listed species. Incidental take refers to the take of a listed species that is incidental to, but not the primary purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. Incidental take is permitted under Section 7 for projects on federal land or involving a federal action; Section 10 provides a process for non-federal actions. The act is administered by the USFWS for terrestrial species.

Clean Water Act

The objective of the Clean Water Act (1977, as amended) is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including jurisdictional wetlands, is regulated by the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251-1376) under a permitting process. Applicants for Section 404 permits are also required to obtain water quality certification or waiver through the local Regional Water Quality Control Board under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341).

Army Corps regulations implementing Section 404 define waters of the United States to include intrastate waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and natural ponds, the use, degradation, or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce. Wetlands are defined for regulatory purposes as "areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (33 CFR 328.3; 40 CFR 230.3). To comply with the Corps policy of no net loss of wetlands, discharge into wetlands must be avoided and minimized to the extent practicable. For unavoidable impacts, compensatory mitigation is typically required to replace the loss of wetland functions in the watershed.

Because the Project will not result in impacts to waters of the United States, which would require authorization under Section 404, an Army Corps 404 permit and Section 401 water quality certification will not be required.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (16 USC 703-711). The MBTA makes it unlawful to take, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird listed in 50 CFR Part 10, including feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or products, except as allowed by implementing regulations (50 CFR 21).

State

California Endangered Species Act

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) lists species of plants and animals as threatened or endangered. Projects that may have adverse effects on state-listed species require formal consultation with CDFW. "Take" of protected species incidental to otherwise lawful activities may be authorized under Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code. Authorization from the CDFW is in the form of an Incidental Take Permit, and measures can be identified to minimize take. CDFW Species of Special Concern are considered under the CESA.

Streambed Alteration Agreement
A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (Sections 1600-1616 of the California Fish and Game Code) requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may substantially obstruct the natural flow or use any material from a river, stream, or lake, or deposit or dispose of debris where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake. The notification requirement applies to any ephemeral or perennial river, stream, or lake in California. The Project will not occur within any river, stream, or lake and is not subject to a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement.

Birds of Prey
Under Section 3503.5 of the California Fish and Game Code, it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders of Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds of prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto.

Migratory Birds
The California Fish and Game Code Section 3513 states that it is unlawful to take or possess any migratory nongame bird as designated in the MBTA or any part of such migratory nongame bird except as provided by rules and regulations adopted by the Secretary of the Interior under provisions of the MBTA.

Fully Protected Species
California statutes also accord "fully protected" status to several specifically identified birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. These species cannot be "taken," even with an incidental take permit (California Fish and Game Code, Sections 3505, 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515).

California Native Plant Protection Act
The California Native Plant Protection Act (California Fish and Game Code Section 1900-1913) prohibits the taking, possessing, or selling within the State of any plants with a state designation of rare, threatened, or endangered, as defined by the CDFW. An exception to this prohibition allows landowners, under specified circumstances, to take listed plant species, provided that the owners first notify the CDFW and give the agency at least 10 days to retrieve (and presumably replant) the plants before they are plowed under or otherwise destroyed. Fish and Game Code Section 1913 exempts from the "take" prohibition "the removal of endangered or rare native plants from a channel, lateral ditch, building site, or road, or other right-of-way."

State CEQA Guidelines
Although threatened and endangered species are protected by specific federal and state statutes, CEQA Guidelines §15380(d) provides that a species not listed on the federal or state list of protected species may be considered rare or endangered if the species can be shown to meet certain specified criteria. These criteria have been modeled after the definition in the FESA and the Section of the California Fish and Game Code dealing with rare or endangered plants and animals. Section 15380(d) allows a public agency to undertake a review to determine if a significant effect on species that have not yet been listed by either the USFWS or the CDFW (e.g., candidate species, species of concern) would occur. Thus, CEQA provides an agency with the ability to protect a species from a project's potential impacts until the respective government agencies have an opportunity to designate the species as protected, if warranted.

Section 1801 of the Fish and Game Code

It is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission to encourage the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of wildlife resources under the jurisdiction and influence of the state. This policy shall include the following objectives: (a) To maintain sufficient populations of all species of wildlife and the habitat necessary to achieve the objectives stated in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d); (b) To provide for the beneficial use and enjoyment of wildlife by all citizens of the state; (c) To perpetuate all species of wildlife for their intrinsic and ecological values, as well as for their direct benefits to all persons; (d) To provide for aesthetic, educational, and non-appropriative uses of the various wildlife species; (e) To maintain diversified recreational uses of wildlife, including the sport of hunting, as proper uses of certain designated species of wildlife, subject to regulations consistent with the maintenance of healthy, viable wildlife resources, the public safety, and a quality outdoor experience; (f) To provide for economic contributions to the citizens of the state, through the recognition that wildlife is a renewable resource of the land by which economic return can accrue to the citizens of the state, individually and collectively, through regulated management. Such management shall be consistent with the maintenance of healthy and thriving wildlife resources and the public ownership status of the wildlife resources; and (g) To alleviate economic losses or public health or safety problems caused by wildlife to the people of the state, either individually or collectively. Such resolution shall be in a manner designed to bring the problem within tolerable limits consistent with economic and public health considerations and the objectives stated in subdivisions (a), (b), and (c).

Local

Lassen County General Plan Land Use Element

The *Lassen County General Plan* was adopted in September 1999. The General Plan contains a Land Use Element, Natural Resources Element, Agriculture Element, Wildlife Element, Open Space Element, Circulation Element, and Safety and Seismic Safety Element. The General Plan Land Use Element and Wildlife Element contain the following goals and policies related to biological resources:

GOAL L-22: Protection and enhancement of important wildlife habitats to support healthy, abundant, and diverse wildlife populations.

- Policy LU-49: The County supports the management and enhancement of wildlife resources in ways that enhance the health and abundance of wildlife populations and the diversity of species and their habitats, and which, at the same time, balance management policies and program objectives with the range of social and economic needs for which the County is also responsible.

GOAL N-7: To maintain diverse and healthy vegetation communities in order to sustain natural and economic benefits, including watershed, soil stabilization, wildlife, fisheries, timberland, grazing, and scenic values.

- Policy NR25: The County recognizes that there are vegetation communities that warrant special consideration and protection, and that these areas may be regarded as important or significant vegetation communities or areas of special biological importance. These

areas include, but are not limited to, bitterbrush plant communities, wetlands, and riparian areas.

- Policy NR26: In order to avoid or reduce the extent of potential adverse impact to important vegetation communities which may result from projects and land use decisions within its jurisdiction, the County shall consider the potential extent of such impacts in the course of project review.
- Policy NR27: Projects subject to County approval, which will result in significant disturbance of a site's vegetative cover, shall be required to prepare and implement an effective plan to revegetate disturbed, undeveloped areas of the site.
    - Implementation Measure NR-J: Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, the County shall review the potential for impacts of proposed projects on vegetation resources and shall require appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or compensate for the extent of significant adverse impacts. Such mitigation measures may include the clustering of housing and development to conserve natural vegetation and the implementation of revegetation plans. Plans and revegetation measures shall also include provisions to avoid the introduction of noxious weeds.

GOAL N-8: Protection of rare and endangered plant species balanced with the need to sustain productive, multiple land uses when possible.

- Policy NR28: The County recognizes the need to identify and provide reasonable measures for the protection of rare and endangered plant species in the consideration of projects and land use decisions.
    - Implementation Measure NR-K: Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, the County shall consider the impacts of proposed projects on rare and endangered plant resources and shall require necessary mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or compensate for the extent of significant disturbance.

GOAL N-9: Control invasive weeds and plant species.

- Policy NR29: The County supports strong measures to eliminate or prevent the spread of invasive and noxious weeds and plant species, including, but not limited to, medusahead, yellow starthistle, and perennial pepperweed (whitetop), and to control the adverse effects from the excessive spreading of such species as juniper and cheatgrass.

GOAL N-13: To improve and diversify the County's industrial base by encouraging development of mineral resources in ways that avoid or minimize unacceptable levels of land use conflict and significant environmental damage.

- Policy NR47: In the consideration of proposed mining activities, the County shall balance goals of protecting and managing wildlife, vegetation, and other resources with the economic and social need to diversify the County's industrial base.

GOAL N-16: To prevent significant long-term environmental damage and damage to other natural resource values in areas that have been, or which may be, disturbed by mineral extraction.

- Policy NR58: Reclamation plans shall include a monitoring program to ensure successful compliance with reclamation criteria. Reclamation plans that include revegetation shall be monitored to ensure that planted vegetation successfully satisfies the objectives of the reclamation plan.
- Policy NR59: An adequate performance guarantee shall be required of a type and in an amount acceptable to the County to cover the costs of reclamation should the permittee fail to complete successful reclamation of a mined site. Performance guarantees shall be determined based on reclamation cost estimates prepared by a qualified professional.

GOAL O-3: To protect vital natural habitats and special natural resource areas.

- Policy OS-8: The County recognizes that some areas, which are designated and zoned for development, including but not limited to rural residential lands and areas indicated for planned development, have natural resource and open space values that need to be addressed in the consideration of land use and development decisions and proposed development projects.
    - Implementation Measure OS-D: When the resource value of wildlife habitat on lands proposed for development necessitates additional protection measures, the County may utilize a "Natural Habitat Combining District" to include specific provisions for special building site area requirements, building exclusions areas, retention of habitat in designated areas, requirements for special review and approval of site development plans prior to issuance of development and building permits, and other provisions which, in the County's judgement, are necessary to allow development while providing appropriate levels of protection for the identified habitat.
    - Implementation Measure OS-E: The County will participate with resource management agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, in considering the scientifically documented need to protect specified open space resources, wildlife and plant species, and natural habitats, and in supporting effective and socially equitable measures to address those needs.

GOAL W-1: To protect and enhance the overall health of wildlife habitats and special resource areas to maintain healthy, abundant, and diverse wildlife populations.

- Policy WE-1: The County supports the management of wildlife resources in ways that enhance the health and abundance of wildlife populations and the diversity of species and their habitats, and which, at the same time, balance management policies and program objectives with the range of social and economic needs for which the County is also responsible.
- Policy WE-2: The County supports the cooperative identification of "areas of significant wildlife value" or similar designations for areas where it is demonstrated by sound

biological science and the habitat values are of significant importance to the health and/or survival of one or more species of wildlife. The county may apply a special designation to these areas, and/or agree to support specific resource management objectives, policies, and voluntary programs to protect wildlife resources within these areas.

- Policy WE-5: Prior to the imposition of substantial wildlife-related mitigation measures by the County, the County shall review evidence demonstrating that the proposed action or project could otherwise have potentially significant adverse impacts to wildlife and that the proposed measures will, in fact, help to accomplish practical and necessary mitigation objectives.
- Policy WE-6: Funding for wildlife habitat programs (e.g., wildlife mitigation funds), should be directed to protect and enhance wildlife resources in the county, especially when funds are generated in Lassen County.

GOAL W-2: Protection of rare, threatened, and endangered wildlife species with an ecosystem approach to habitat management, which also supports multiple land uses.

- Policy WE-10: Through local coordination, the County encourages programs and actions to remove and avoid the listing of additional wildlife species as threatened or endangered by the state or Federal government. When listings are proposed, sound biology needs to be applied to the preparation of habitat management plans and/or recovery plans, and the related social and economic impacts of such plans and related measures need to be considered and mitigated.

GOAL W-5: Protect and enhance important upland habitat areas, which include bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, and aspen.

- Policy WE-17: The County supports cooperative efforts to protect and enhance the wildlife habitat values of upland vegetation communities of bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, and aspen.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* was adopted in 1984 and was intended to guide decisions regarding land use for an approximate 20-year timeframe. The Area Plan contains three categories: Environmental Safety, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Community Development. The Area Plan contains the following goals, objectives, and policies related to biological resources:

GOAL: 11.1A Lassen County shall conserve and enhance the wildlife and fisheries of the area and preserve and restore the ecological, recreational and aesthetic benefits of the Susan River and its tributaries.

GOAL: 11.1B Areas along the Susan River and Paiute Creek, west of Susanville, are designated as conservation.

- Policy 11.11 Review all proposed projects for their possible adverse or beneficial impacts to fish and wildlife habitats.

- Policy 11.12 Land designated conservation shall be zoned "O-S", open space, "F-R", forest recreation, or other appropriate zoning districts which further the intent of policy 11.1A.

Lassen County Code

Chapter 9.60 of the *Lassen County Code* (Surface Mining and Reclamation Plan Regulations) includes performance standards for reclamation plans, findings for approval of mining operations in the County, requirements for annual inspections, and penalties for non-compliance with the use permit and/or reclamation plan. Section 9.60.090 of the *Lassen County Code* requires the following findings to be made prior to approving a reclamation plan:

a. That the reclamation plan complies with Sections 2772, 2773, and 2773.1 of SMARA and any other applicable provisions;

b. That the reclamation plan complies with applicable requirements of State regulations; (14 Cal. Admin., Sec. 3500 et seq.);

c. That the reclamation plan and potential use of reclaimed land pursuant to the plan are consistent with County Code Chapter 9.60 and the County's general plan and any applicable resource plan or element;

d. That, through the reclamation plan, all significant adverse impacts on lands to be reclaimed as a result of the surface mining operations are mitigated to the maximum extent feasible;

e. That the land and/or resources, such as water bodies, to be reclaimed will be restored to a condition that is compatible with and blends in with the surrounding natural environment, topography, and other resources, or that suitable offsite development will compensate for related disturbances to resource values;

f. That the reclamation plan will restore the mined lands to a usable condition which is readily adaptable for alternative land uses consistent with the general plan and applicable resource plan;

g. That a written response to the State Geologist has been prepared, describing the disposition of major issues raised by the State Geologist. Where the County's position is at variance with the recommendations and objections raised by the State Geologist, said response shall address, in detail, why specific comments and suggestions were not accepted. (SMARA, Sec. 2772(d)) (Ord. 509 § 2, 1992).

4.5.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the Project. The following significance thresholds related to *Biological Resources* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).*

- *Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or USFWS.*
- *Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.*
- *Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.*
- *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.*
- *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan.*

4.5.4 Impact Analysis

Potential effects to biological resources that could result from the Project include direct impacts from mining and reclamation activities. The project includes the phased removal of vegetation and excavation of material from the 460-acre mining area of the project site. Mining and reclamation activities will result in human presence as well as noise and dust from haul trucks, mobile equipment, and stationary processing equipment. Nighttime lighting will also be required for night operations up to 150 days each year. Following mining activities, the proposed end use for the mining area will be open space.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to Biological Resources based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. Significant, unavoidable impacts are also identified. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to Biological Resources.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed Project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed Project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed Project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

- *Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.*

Based on the BRA (Appendix E), the proposed quarry area does not include any wetlands or other potential waters of the U.S. or State; therefore, the proposed Project will not result in impacts to riparian areas or result in removal, filling, or hydrological interruption of wetlands or potentially jurisdictional waters. Removal of two stock ponds will occur; these ponds do not meet the definition of State or federally protected wetlands.

- *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.*

As discussed above under the Regulatory subsection, the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* address the need to preserve unique and important plant communities as well as aquatic, fish, and wildlife habitats, for their biological resource and ecological values. The proposed project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources or a tree preservation policy or ordinance.

- *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan.*

There are no habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or related documents for the area for which the proposed Project could conflict.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.5-1: Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The BRA prepared for the proposed quarry identified five special-status wildlife species as having the potential to occur within the project area. Two special-status plant species could also potentially be present. Potential effects to these species, as well as raptors and migratory birds protected by federal and State regulations, are discussed below.

Impacts to Special-Status Bird Species

Greater Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis tabida*
The greater sandhill crane is recognized as a threatened species by the State of California and is "Fully Protected" by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife – meaning that permits to allow incidental "take" of the species are not available in California. This species historically wintered in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys from Tehama County south to Kings County and spent the summer season breeding in northeastern California. Numbers in California have been greatly reduced, and this species now only breeds in the counties of Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, and Sierra.

Greater sandhill cranes utilize shortgrass plains, agricultural fields, and shallow open wetlands for foraging, and they nest in remote areas of extensive wetlands. The species can utilize certain croplands for foraging, but they rely heavily on large expanses of wetland habitat for reproduction.

Breeding pairs return to the same breeding territory annually but will not nest if nesting conditions are unfavorable. They are highly sensitive to human disturbance during the nesting period (April through August). With a few exceptions, most pairs select sites rather isolated from human activity (NW Council 2004).

Greater sandhill crane nesting in their summer range generally begins in April/May and extends through July/August. By September, the Central Valley greater sandhill crane population begins their southwestern migration and arrives on the wintering grounds of the Central Valley by late September, where they remain until approximately late February/early March, when they begin their northward migration back to the breeding grounds (Butte County Conservation Plan 2019). Sandhill cranes select sites that are isolated from human activity.

Greater sandhill cranes were observed adjacent to the site during the survey completed on April 16, 2020. Two sandhill cranes were heard in the nearby slough, located approximately 0.25 miles south of the property. The emergent wetland and slough system south of the property provides foraging habitat and possible nesting habitat for the species, which has been utilized by greater sandhill cranes previously. According to the CNDDB, a pair of greater sandhill cranes was recorded nesting approximately 0.75 miles south of the property at Bartley's Flying B Ranch in 2000 (Appendix E). Cranes and other birds may fly overhead, but it is unlikely that a sandhill crane would enter the project area because the site itself lacks habitat for cranes.

A sub-grade processing area will be developed such that the asphalt plant, lime plant, crusher, and stockpiles will be approximately 50-feet below the surrounding. This will prevent noise pollution from reaching the slough system landscape during long-term operations. Initial mine activities may cause increased noise levels until the ultimate grade is achieved. The proposed mine site is 1,320 feet (0.25 miles) away from the potential nesting habitat. The standard nest buffer for sandhill cranes is 500 feet (0.09 miles) (PG&E 2015). Therefore, mitigation measures to reduce noise emissions are adequate to ensure the project would not cause a substantial adverse effect to sandhill crane habitat modification and would therefore be less than significant with mitigation.

Impacts that could occur to greater sandhill cranes from the proposed project include loss of available nesting and foraging habitat in adjacent wet meadows that could result from human presence or noise and light pollution (during occasional nighttime operations) at the mine site. Mitigation Measures 4.5-1, 4.5-5, and 4.5-6 will be implemented to reduce direct and indirect impacts. Light generated by the mine during nighttime operations can disrupt migration and site selection by disorienting or deterring birds. Light exposure to offsite areas will be minimized with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-1, requiring shielded directional lighting pointing down and onsite. Measure 4.5-5 requires that the site be kept clean to avoid attracting scavenging wildlife that could predate a crane nest. This will avoid any incidental increase in potential predators in the area that could reduce the success of sandhill crane nests by leading to the mortality of eggs or chicks.

Noise generated from mine processing will be minimized through project design and implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-6, which ensures that activities that produce high noise levels are either completed outside of the nesting season or follow targeted nesting surveys for active sandhill crane nests, plus additional measures if needed. The noise generated from the site would not cause nest abandonment, nor would it lead to the mortality of eggs or chicks. Because

the project would not cause a substantial adverse effect to sandhill cranes, either directly or through habitat modifications, the project would maintain a less-than-significant impact.

Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus*
Prairie falcons are raptors that are distributed from annual grasslands to alpine meadows, but are associated primarily with perennial grasslands, savannahs, rangeland, some agricultural fields, and desert scrub areas. This species usually nests in a scrape on a sheltered ledge of a cliff overlooking a large, open area. Foraging behavior includes diving from a perch or from searching flight 15-90 m (50-300 feet) above ground with rapid pursuit of the prey item. According to the CNDDB, prairie falcons have been documented in the general vicinity of the town of Susanville.

Although rock outcrops exist onsite, they do not meet the requirements of nesting habitat for prairie falcons. Onsite rock outcrops are low-lying boulder fields which lack any vertical cliff structure that could provide perching opportunities or nesting habitat. No prairie falcon nesting habitat will be disturbed as a result of the proposed mine operations. There is high quality foraging habitat onsite, and in the sagebrush, grassland, and agricultural fields surrounding the site.

There is potential for prairie falcons to fly overhead while searching for prey in the general area. Due to the potential project impacts to songbirds, which are an important food source for prairie falcons, the removal of habitat would potentially result in loss of foraging opportunities for prairies falcon. Prairie falcons in flight will likely avoid the project area while the site is operating and will select alternate foraging habitat in the surrounding area. Direct impacts to Prairie Falcon would be less than significant.

Impacts to Special-Status Mammal Species

American badger *Taxidea taxus*
American badgers inhabit dry, open stages of shrub-dominant and forest habitats, as well as riparian corridors. In California American badgers are occasionally found in open chaparral (with less than 50 percent plant cover) and riparian zones with varying canopy cover. The burrowing behavior of American badgers requires that their habitat have deep, friable soils. This species is nocturnally active and preys primarily on fossorial rodents but may opportunistically eat other prey items depending on food availability.

The home range of an American badger is variable throughout the year. Site utilization changes between seasons and is usually related to prey availability. Males generally have larger home ranges than females. Radio-transmitter tagged American badgers were found to have an average annual home range of 2,100 acres (850 ha). The home range of one female was 1,790 acres (725 ha) in summer, 131 acres (53 ha) in fall, and 5 acres (2 ha) in winter. During the summer, home ranges are largest so a badger may use a different burrow each day (Sullivan 1996).

Potential "high" quality habitat for American badger occurs along the western perimeter of the proposed mine area and extends westward, away from the project area. The surrounding several thousand acres are mapped as "moderate" habitat with several patches of "high" quality habitat, based on the vegetation present (CDFW 2018). Soils mapped within the project site are "very cobbly" with a high clay component. This was confirmed during pedestrian surveys of the site;

the soils onsite largely consist of shallow volcanic rock and boulder fields that would not support burrowing behavior. Therefore, the site is not likely to support badgers or their burrows.

According to CNDDB, one adult American badger was observed within one mile of the City of Susanville in 1991. This occurrence is located at a lower elevation along the Susan River. Soils in this area differ in composition from soils that occur within the proposed mining boundary; the high silt and loam content in soils along the river are deep, friable soils that are more likely to support badgers and other burrowing mammals. However, these soils do not occur within the project area. Due to the lack of available habitat on site individuals are likely to only disperse through the site and would avoid active operations. Impact to American badgers is less than significant.

North American porcupine *Erethizon dorsatum*
The North American porcupine has been found throughout the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Cascades, although it is thought to be extirpated from the historical range in the southern Sierra Nevadas. The North American porcupine is most common in montane conifer habitats, including wet meadows. Porcupines consume a varied diet of grasses, forbs, shrubs, wetland plants, and some agricultural crops. In winter, their diet consists largely of twigs, bark, and the cambium of hardwood and conifers trees. Most common in montane conifer, Douglas-fir, alpine dwarf-shrub, and wet meadow habitats. Less common in hardwood, hardwood-conifer, montane and valley-foothill riparian, aspen, pinyon-juniper, low sage, sagebrush, and bitterbrush (Taylor 1935, Woods 1973, Dodge 1982). An individual porcupine's home range varies from a few acres to over 250 acres. Summer home ranges are larger than winter ranges and may include a variety of habitats.

According to the CNDDB, the species has been previously documented within five miles of the project site. These records are several decades old (the nearest record is from 1991 and the next nearest is from 1951). The location of porcupine observation data suggests a strong preference for annual grasslands and Sierran Mixed Conifer habitat types compared to juniper and sagebrush habitats (Appel 2017). Porcupines in the area likely inhabit higher elevations and/or riparian corridors outside of the proposed mine site, where a mixed conifer canopy and presence of wet meadows provides high-quality habitat. The mine area does not provide quality habitat and would most likely be avoided due to preference for higher quality habitat closer to coniferous-hardwood habitat borders. The porcupine would likely select an alternate habitat due to the relatively poor habitat quality onsite, and direct impacts to the porcupine will be less than significant.

Impacts to Special-Status Invertebrate Species

Morrison's bumble bee *Bombus morrisonii*
This species inhabits open dry scrub where it nests underground as well as in structures and grass hummocks (Xerces 1994). Example food plants include milkweed (*Astragalus* spp.), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus*), thistle (*Cirsium*), and sunflowers (*Helianthus*). Colonies are annual and only the new, mated queens overwinter. These queens emerge from hibernation in the early spring and immediately start foraging for pollen and nectar and begin to search for a nest site. Nests are often located underground in abandoned rodent nests, or above ground in tufts of grass, old bird nests, rock piles, or cavities in dead trees. Initially, the queen does all foraging and care for the colony until the first workers emerge and assist with these duties. Bumble bees collect both nectar and pollen of the plants that they pollinate (Xerces 1994).

Ground disturbance and vegetation removal wherever potential bumble bee nesting habitat is present could potentially cause significant impacts if a colony were present during the disturbance. Direct impacts that could cause a significant impact to the species by having an adverse affect on local populations or by impeding the use of native wildlife nursery site would be avoided through implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-14.

The removal of vegetation would reduce the food availability for bumble bees. Ground disturbance associated with the Project would cause loss of forbs that provide food for bees and would remove grasses that can provide nesting habitat for bumble bees. The area of foraging habitat loss is relatively small compared to the public land surrounding the site. Therefore, the loss of foraging habitat is not a significant impact to the species survival in the area. The Project is not likely to cause a decrease in nesting habitat onsite since common fossorial rodents, such as ground squirrels, are tolerant of human development and routinely inhabit disturbed areas. Bumble bees will readily occupy new rodent burrows due to their fluid migratory, colony and residential nature. Direct impact and impacts to foraging and nesting habitat for bumble bees are less than significant.

Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus plexippus*
The western migratory monarch butterfly population has declined by more than 99 percent since the 1980s. An estimated 4.5 million monarchs overwintered on the California coast in the 1980s, whereas in 2020, the population estimate for overwintering monarchs was less than 2,000 butterflies. The western monarch butterfly is a Federal Candidate species for this reason. Monarch butterflies migrate hundreds or thousands of miles from their breeding grounds found across the U.S. and southern Canada to overwintering grounds in both Mexico and California. Species may occur in Lassen County between July and September. Breeding habitat consists, at a minimum, of milkweed, but often includes other flowers for nectar and trees or shrubs for shade and perching (Xerces 2018). Therefore, any milkweed present when adults are migrating through the region could serve as breeding and development habitat for monarchs.

The obligate host plant for monarch butterflies, milkweed, was observed onsite during surveys growing along the margins of a stockpond. The observed milkweed would not be disturbed, since the stockpond is outside of the proposed mining area. Ground disturbance onsite could result in the removal of milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.). Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-12 would minimize direct impacts to monarch butterflies to a less than significant level. Direct impacts to monarch butterflies would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*) CRPR 1B.2
Pulsifer's milk-vetch is a perennial herb native to California. It grows in granitic, rock, and sandy soils found with in Great Basin scrub Lower montane coniferous forest, and Pinyon and juniper woodland between 1300 and 1800 meters in elevation. The species is ranked by CDFW as 1B.2 rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. According to the CNDDB, occurrences of Pulsifer's milk-vetch are concentrated in southern Lassen County. There is one occurrence within five miles of the project site.

Direct impacts to Pulsifer's milk-vetch include the removal of individual plants during ground-disturbing activities. Implementation of protocol-level survey conducted by a qualified botanist or biologist as detailed in Mitigation Measure 4.5-10 would minimize direct impacts to Pulsifer's milk-vetch to a less-than-significant level Pulsifer's milk-vetch is listed by the CRPR as 1B.2, which means it is "rare, threatened, or endangered in CA and elsewhere." Occurrences of Pulsifer's milk-vetch occurs throughout Lassen County, and its range extends into Nevada, where it is listed as "sensitive." According to the CNDDB, occurrences of Pulsifer's milk-vetch are concentrated in southern Lassen County. There is one occurrence within five miles of the project site. Because suitable habitat remains where this species is most abundant, loss of habitat within the project area would be less than significant for Pulsifer's milk-vetch. Impacts to Pulsifer's milk-vetch will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*) CRPR 4.2
Susanville beardtongue is a perennial herb native to California. It grows along roadsides, or in rocky and volcanic soils within Great Basin scrub Lower montane coniferous forest, and Pinyon and juniper woodland between 1200 and 2200 meters in elevations. The species is ranked by CDFW as 4.3-Uncommon in California, plants are of a limited distribution and on a watchlist.

Impacts to Susanville beardtongue include the removal of individual plants during ground-disturbing activities. Implementation of protocol-level survey conducted by a qualified botanist or biologist as detailed in Mitigation Measure 4.5-10 would minimize direct impacts to Susanville beardtongue to a less-than-significant level. Susanville beardtongue is listed by the CRPR as 4.2, which means is it "limited in distribution." However, this species is locally abundant. According to the CNDDB, there are over twenty known occurrences of this species within five miles of the project area. This loss of habitat within the project area would be less than significant for Susanville beardtongue. Impacts Susanville beardtongue species will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Impact 4.5-2: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Pronghorn & Mule Deer Wintering Range and Migration Corridor
The proposed Project is partially located within the CDFW-designated winter-range habitat for mule deer and winter-range habitat for pronghorn antelope (see Figure 4-6 and Figure 4-7). The project area falls within Deer Hunt Zone X4, which is a zone within the greater Deer Assessment Unit (DAU) 2- Northeastern California. In 1996, the population for DAU 2 was estimated to be 25,000; in 2017, the estimated population was 29,289 (CDFG et al. 1998; CDFW 2017). More specific to the project location, the mule deer population within Hunt Zone X4 has increased, with an estimated 3,135 animals in 2013 and 7,040 in 2017.

The Project is within Pronghorn Hunt Zone 4-Lassen. The estimated population size of pronghorn in northeastern California ranged between approximately 1,800 and 3,000 individuals for the period between 1956 and 1970 and then grew to almost 6,000 animals between 1971 and 1978, with the largest numbers of animals found in the Likely Table, Clear Lake and Lassen herds. By 1992, the population had grown to an estimated 8,000 animals before undergoing a decline of nearly 50 percent after the winter of 1992. The population continued to decline over the next 10 years and has not been able to recover over the past 20 years (Hudgens et al., 2016).

American pronghorn and mule deer are known to inhabit a portion of the site during the winter season (Figures 4-6 and 4-7). These species are both ungulates that require sagebrush community vegetation and migrate between summer and winter grounds. Direct impacts that could occur to these species from the proposed Project include injury or mortality of an animal. This can occur from direct contact with mine operations, vehicle collisions, or entrapment onsite due to impassable fencing. Pronghorn are susceptible to entrapment or injury from fencing because they are poorly adapted to jumping over obstacles. Juvenile pronghorn and mule deer are commonly killed from becoming entangled in fencing, or, most commonly, from starving due to being separated from their mother by an impassable fence.

Operation areas will be concentrated in the southern portion of the site, such that the access road distance is minimized within the pronghorn habitat. As with any local wildlife, there is a small chance of encountering an animal onsite. Traffic onsite will adhere to Mitigation Measure 4.5-4, which require maximum speed limits onsite of fifteen miles per hour when pronghorn could potentially be present (fall through early spring).

Pronghorn occupy their winter grounds starting in the fall and remain in these low-elevation areas until spring migration occurs, typically in April. Operations would be limited during the winter months because of snowpack and wet weather but may still overlap with pronghorn presence in their winter grounds. The site occupies a small percentage of the winter grounds in the area and majority of winter grounds occur on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The BLM land would remain available throughout the life of the mine. Prominent migration corridors are six miles north of the project area (Figure 4-6). Therefore, pronghorn would be able to avoid the project site when it is operating while remaining within appropriate habitat through winter and pronghorn migration would not be affected.

The project site does not bisect any migratory routes for mule deer. The Project will have no impact on mule deer Critical Winter Range, migratory routes, fawning grounds, or other mule deer habitat. Because of the proximity to the mine site, and the migratory nature of mule deer, there is low potential for mule deer to disperse through the site. Deer may forage the surrounding landscape but would likely avoid disturbed areas and any active mining operations.

As required by Mitigation Measure 4.5-5, to reduce the direct and indirect impacts of fencing on pronghorn and mule deer populations, deer-friendly fencing will be installed wherever feasible to preserve habitat availability. Specifications for such fencing include use of barbed wire (woven hog-wire is prohibited), with wire spacing as follows: the first (bottom) strand should be eighteen inches above the ground, smooth, not barbed; the second strand should be eight inches above the first strand; the third strand should be ten inches above the second strand; an optional fourth strand can be twelve inches above the third strand. Impacts to pronghorn and mule deer would be less than significant.

Bat Maternity Sites

Based on the life history of the long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), pregnant females have the potential to occur in boulder fields throughout the site. While these do not constitute maternity roosts, the specialty roost type selected by pregnant females should be considered since impacts to pregnant females could potentially reduce the local population. Removing rocks from boulder fields while pregnant females are present could cause direct mortality or unnecessary stress and

wasted energy reserves, which can also lead to mortality of the female and her litter; therefore, impacts to a single pregnant bat could have localized impacts on the long-eared myotis population by reducing reproductive success.

Long-eared myotis are known to utilize separate types of habitats throughout their reproductive stages. Pregnant females inhabit horizontal rock crevices, such as boulder fields. Then, following the birth of their young in spring/early summer, long-eared myotis will migrate to raise the non-volant juveniles in vertical rock faces that are adjacent to water. No disturbance to vertical rockface habitats will occur due to their distance from the Project area.

The project will avoid impacts to boulder fields onsite from November through June when females are pregnant and could potentially inhabit the site. Boulders in "myotis habitat" areas, will be removed from the proposed disturbance areas between July and November of each year and stockpiled near processing areas. As a result, no direct disturbance to bat nursery sites would occur. Stockpiled rocks will lack the thermal and protective quality of in-situ boulder fields such that bats are unlikely to roost in the above-ground stockpiles. Because the Project will include mitigation measures to avoid substantial adverse effects to long-eared myotis, either directly or through habitat modifications, impacts to bats will be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-12.

Nesting Birds

The potentially occurring special-status birds are the greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*), and prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). Nesting habitat requirements for prairie falcons are absent from the site; therefore, the Project will not impede use of falcon nest sites. Indirect impacts could reach potential nesting habitat for sandhill cranes due to the proximity of Jensen Slough to the Project area. Impacts to sandhill cranes, as discussed above, will be reduced with implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.5-1, 4.5-5, and 4.5-6.

Many passerines (a.k.a. songbirds) occur within the project area. Project implementation will require site preparation, which involves removal of vegetation prior to mining. Removal of vegetation during the nesting season for songbirds or raptors could result in disturbance to bird nest structures within the mining area. Additionally, bird nest abandonment can occur because of exposure to new or increased noise that can result from mining activities. These can lead to nest failure by either physically destroying the nest or stressing the parent bird to the point that they vacate the nest. Direct impacts to nesting birds will be mitigated to less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-8 by surveying prior to site preparation and then creating buffers around any active nests.

The project would result in the permanent loss of potential nesting and foraging habitat for many songbird species. As mining progresses, vegetation will be removed from within the Project area, which will reduce nesting and foraging habitat availability for many bird species. Indirect impacts from the removal of vegetation from the mine footprint will be significant.

Impact 4.5-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or USFWS.

The results of the BRA showed the project area contained no sensitive habitats. The project is designed to maintain a 175-foot buffer from the nearby stream to the east of the project boundary as shown on Figure 3-14. While mining has been designed to avoid all riparian features and have less-than-significant impact on riparian habitat onsite, Mitigation Measure 4.5-9 requires the maintenance of the 175-foot buffer for all onsite mining or development activities. The project's utility extensions may cross riparian or wetland areas. There are no mapped stream or wetland areas within the proposed wetland corridor. Several culverts exist along the Skyline Road utility corridor, which may be intermittent or ephemeral waterways during the wet season. If wetland or riparian vegetation is determined to exist at the time of the utility extension, Mitigation Measure 4.5-9 requires that any work below the Ordinary High-Water Mark of a stream or within a wetland boundary shall acquire the necessary permits from regulatory agencies, including ACOE, the Regional Water Board, and/or CDFW. This measure will ensure that the less-than-significant impact to the riparian habitat is maintained throughout mining and reclamation of the site.

4.5.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures are proposed for the significant project impacts to special-status species as well as pronghorn and mule deer:

4.5-1: Impacts of nighttime lighting shall be minimized by using shielded directional lighting that is pointed downward thereby avoiding illumination to adjacent natural areas and the night sky.

4.5-2: Equipment shall be visually inspected each day for the presence of wildlife to prevent injury or harm to an animal.

4.5-3: Wildlife-friendly slopes of 2:1 or less shall be maintained on the south and east mine boundaries to prevent injury or entrapment of wildlife.

4.5-4: A maximum speed limit of fifteen miles per hour shall be implemented onsite when pronghorn could potentially be present (fall through early spring). Speed limit signs shall be posted along access roads. If a pronghorn is present within a roadway anywhere onsite, then vehicles shall stop until the animal(s) are no longer on the path of travel. If the presence of vehicles causes pronghorn to move toward Skyline Road, then vehicles shall remain stopped until the pronghorn are at least 50-feet away from the road to avoid driving pronghorn toward higher traffic areas.

4.5-5: The use of deer-friendly perimeter fencing shall be installed wherever feasible to preserve habitat availability for American pronghorn, mule deer, and other migratory wildlife. Specifications for such fencing include the use of barbed wire (woven hog-wire is prohibited), with wire spacing as follows:

- The first (bottom) strand shall be eighteen inches above the ground, smooth, not barbed;
- The second strand shall be eight inches above the first strand;
- The third strand shall be ten inches above the second strand;
- An optional fourth strand shall be twelve inches above the third strand.

4.5-6: The mine site will be kept clean and free of loose garbage, food scraps, or any materials that could attract raccoons, skunks, ravens, or crows, as these are known predators of crane nests.

4.5-7: Until the final grade in the Phase 1 area is achieved, blasting and processing will adhere to one of the following:

- Blasting and processing operations shall be initiated outside of the sandhill crane nesting season (April-August) to avoid disturbing active sandhill crane nests.
- If blasting or processing must be initiated during the sandhill crane nesting season, or if operations cease for more than 14 days and then are reinitiated within the sandhill crane nesting season, then a qualified biologist shall complete a survey to determine if any sandhill cranes are nesting within 0.25 miles south of the project area boundary. The survey can be supplemented by using binoculars to view all sandhill crane habitat as thoroughly as possible without disturbing any potential nests. If nesting sandhill cranes are found, then one of the following shall occur:
  A. Operations noise levels will be reduced to less than 10 dB above ambient at the slough, or
  B. A qualified biologist shall monitor the nest on the first day of activities to determine if the nesting cranes exhibit behavior that suggests they are disturbed by the activities. If operations appear to disturb the nesting cranes, then a buffer or other noise-reducing activity shall be implemented. The distance of the buffer will be based on the location of the nest and onsite conditions such as topography and existing vegetation. The buffer shall remain in place until the chicks have fledged or the nest is deemed to be no longer active by the qualified biologist.

4.5-8: If vegetation removal will occur during the bird nesting season (February 1 to August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within seven days before construction activities. The survey area shall include the proposed disturbance area and the surrounding 500 feet. If nesting birds or raptors are found, CDFW will be consulted. An appropriate buffer based on species and conservation status will be placed around the nest until the young have fledged. If an appropriate buffer distance is not achievable, then alternate compliance measures may be implemented instead, such as noise attenuation measures or project activities monitoring by a qualified biologist until the nest is no longer active.

4.5-9: A non-disturbance buffer of 175 feet or more shall be implemented around the stream onsite for any mining or other industrial activities. Any work below the Ordinary High-Water Mark of a stream or within a wetland boundary shall acquire the necessary permits from regulatory agencies, including ACOE, the Regional Water Board, and/or CDFW.

4.5-10: A protocol-level survey shall be completed by a qualified botanist or biologist for potentially occurring special-status plant species, Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*) and Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*) prior to each phase of ground disturbance, and prior to any other new ground disturbance, throughout the life of the mine. Surveys will be completed during the appropriate time of year when the target species are flowering: Pulsifer's milk-vetch flowers between May and August, and Susanville beardtongue flowers between June and July. The purpose of the surveys shall be to assess the presence or absence of the potentially occurring species. If none of the target species are found in the impact area or the surrounding 50-foot buffer, then no further mitigation measures shall apply. If a target species is found, then the location(s) will be mapped, and data will be submitted to the CNDDB. Plants shall be avoided by

implementing a non-disturbance buffer or will otherwise be preserved through collecting seeds and spreading in a designated non-disturbance area onsite where habitat for the species occurs. The non-disturbance area shall be designated in consultation with CDFW.

- Within the utility corridor: If ground disturbance occurs within wetland habitat, then a protocol-level survey shall be completed by a qualified botanist or biologist for potentially occurring special-status plant species Sheldon's sedge (*Carex sheldonii*) and grass alisma (*Alisma gramineum*) prior to ground disturbance. The survey shall be completed between June and August, when the species are flowering and identifiable. If neither of the target species is found in the impact area, then no further mitigation measures shall apply. If a target species is found, then the location(s) will be mapped, and data will be submitted to the CNDDB. Plants shall be avoided by implementing a 25-foot non-disturbance buffer or will otherwise be preserved through collecting seeds and spreading in a designated non-disturbance area onsite where habitat for the species occurs in consultation with CDFW.

4.5-11: To prevent the spread of invasive species, including medusahead and cheatgrass, equipment tracks that have come into contact with these species shall be thoroughly washed or otherwise cleaned of all vegetation materials prior to being removed from the site. No measure is required for vehicles that remain on access roads, processing areas, and parking lots.

4.5-12: Initiation of vegetation removal would follow Recommended Management Timing, according to the Xerces Society's "Managing for Monarchs in the West: Best Management Practices for Conserving the Monarch Butterfly and Its Habitat," which states that new vegetation disturbance should occur between September 30 and June 1 annually when it is least likely to disturb monarch development. If vegetation disturbance occurs between June 1 and September 30, milkweed species would be included on the target list for pre-disturbance surveys and, if found, disturbance to the plant would be avoided until the following year's management period (June 1 to September 30). If avoidance is not possible, then conditional mitigation requirements for the monarch butterfly would apply. Mitigation for the monarch butterfly would be determined through consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

4.5-13: Initial disturbance of boulder fields will occur when pregnant long-eared myotis females are least likely to occur (between July and November). Boulders will be removed from the boulder field and stockpiled in preparation for mining for the following year.

4.5-14: Surveys for Morrison's bumble bee should be performed by a qualified entomologist or biologist familiar with the species' behavior and life history to determine the presence/absence of bumble bee nests within one year prior to vegetation removal and/or grading. Surveys shall be conducted during flying season when the species is most likely to be detected above ground, between March 1 to September 1. If "take" or adverse impacts to a bumble bee nest cannot be avoided either during Project activities or over the life of the Project, then consultation with CDFW shall occur to determine if a CESA Incidental Take Permit is required (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq.).

4.5.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impact 4.5-1: Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by DFG or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is potentially significant. With the incorporation of Mitigation Measures 4.5-1, 4.5-2, 4.5-3, 4.5-6, 4.5-7, 4.5-8, 4.5-10, 4.5-11, 4.5-12, 4.5-13, and 4.5-14, this impact will be reduced to less than significant.

Impact 4.5-2: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites is potentially significant. With the incorporation of mitigation measures 4.5-4, 4.5-5, 4.5-7, 4.5-8, and 4.5-13, this impact will remain significant for loss of forging and nesting habitat for songbird species.

Impact 4.5-3: Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or USFWS is less than significant. Mitigation Measure 4.5-9 is incorporated to ensure this impact level is less than significant throughout the direction of the mining operation.

4.6 Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

This section provides a summary of the cultural resource setting of the project site, a summary of applicable cultural resource and tribal cultural resource regulations, and a discussion of the potential cultural resource and tribal cultural resource impacts of the proposed project. The primary source of information in this section is derived from the *Archaeological Survey Report, Hat Creek Construction and Materials, Inc. Rock Quarry Development Project,* attached as Appendix J (ALTA, 2020), and *Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report for the Hat Creek Construction Rock Quarry Development Project* attached as Appendix K (ALTA, 2024).

Information contained in the *Archaeological Survey Report, Hat Creek Construction and Materials, Inc. Rock Quarry Development Project* and *Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report for the Hat Creek Construction Rock Quarry Development Project*, related to the specific locations of prehistoric and historic sites, is confidential and exempt from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the California Public Records Act (CPRA); therefore, site-specific cultural resource investigations are not included as an appendix to this environmental document. Professionally qualified individuals, as determined by the California Office of Historic Preservation, may contact the Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services directly to inquire about its availability.

4.6.1 Environmental Setting

The project area is situated on the southwest-facing slope of the Susanville River watershed. Elevations within the project site range between 4160 to 4330 feet above mean sea level. A branch of Jenson Slough, a seasonal water source, is located along the eastern portion of the project area. During the historic period, the bottomlands of the Susanville River were converted extensively to agriculture and pasture. The foothill areas of the project area were used for grazing cattle as evidenced by dirt roads, cattle trails, water reservoirs, and livestock fencing.

The project area is situated at the southern end of the Modoc Plateau geologic province. The Modoc Plateau is a volcanic tableland that lies at the southern end of the Cascade Range of Mountains in Northeastern California. The Modoc Plateau constitutes the southernmost extension of a large volcanic plateau that formed about 25 million years ago and expands north into eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington, and Southern Idaho (Schoenheer, 1992:11). This tableland consists of block-faulted Cenozoic basalt flows, smaller rhyolitic domes, shield volcanoes, lake basins, and river drainages.

The local vegetation community consists primarily of Great Basin Sage Brush (*Artemisia tridentata*), pinyon pine, and junipers. Perennial bunch grasses, including wheat grass (*Agrophyron* spp.) and fescues (*Festucac* spp.), were noted along the margins of the Jenson Slough drainage at the east end of the project area.

Prehistory
Over half a century of archaeological investigations in the Southern Cascade and Sierra Nevada has revealed a record of hunter-gatherer occupation spanning over 12,000 years (Baumhoff 1957, Elsasser 1960, 1978, Elston 1971, 1982, 1986, Elston et al. 1977, 1994, 1995, Heizer and Elsasser 1953, Moratto 1984, Kowta 1988, Prichard et al. 1966, Ritter 1968, 1970, Olsen and Riddell 1963). The cultural chronology of the project area is best described as part of the overall cultural chronology for the Southern Cascade Range (Baumhoff ,1957; Delacorte, 1997; and Kowta, 1988).

The earliest documented evidence of occupation in the region began about 11,000 to 8,000 years BP, referred to as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition (Kowta, 1988). Early Holocene +(7,000BP) archaeological sites tend to be situated along the margins of large pluvial lakes, indicating non-intensive or temporary occupation, suggesting a nomadic settlement system with an emphasis on hunting of large terrestrial mammals and waterfowl. A diagnostic artifact of this time is the "crescent stone" that is associated with lacustrine adaptation and exploitation, possibly water fowling (Kowta, 1988).

During the Post-Mazama Period (7,000 to 5,000 BP), the climate shifted to warmer conditions, giving way to a new adaptation known as the Great Basin Archaic Tradition, a lifeway that lasted well over 3,000 years. This period is characterized by a focus on seed processing (milling slabs and handstone) and big game hunting (atlatl), mostly at high elevation (Kowta, 1988). Diagnostic artifact types of this period include Northern Side-Notched and Pinto projectile points, which have been documented at Bucks Lake (Kowta, 1988). Northern Side-Notched points may serve as an ethnic marker for a northern population that was distinct from adjacent southern groups who relied on Gatecliff and other typically Great Basin projectile point types (Delacorte, 1997b:168-171; Layton, 1985; O'Connell, 1975).

The Early Archaic Period (ca. 5,000 to 3,500 years BP) shows populations increased dramatically as suggested by the frequency of sites in conifer and oak woodland zones. This time period is known locally as the Martis Tradition, a widespread adaptation present along the western Sierra and Southern Cascade Range (Elston, 1971,1979; Elston et al., 1977; Riddell and Pritchard, 1971; Johnson, 1980). A characteristic feature of this tradition is the prevalence of stone tools from locally available tool stone, primarily basalt (Kowta, 1988). Projectile points (contracting stem and corner notch) are found in high ratios to milling slabs and handstones, suggesting an emphasis on hunting. Gatecliff Split-stem and Humboldt Concave Base projectile points offer the primary diagnostic artifacts for this period (Delacorte et al., 1997). Associated assemblage constituents

include plentiful flake tools, bifacial knives, heavy core implements, and a wide array of ground stone milling tools.

The Middle Archaic Period (3500-1300 BP) demonstrates a florescence of sites and a dramatic increase in archaeological site visibility in the region. Extensive habitations, middens, grave lots, and house structures tend to characterize this period, indicating an increase in settlement size, duration of settlement, and an increase in obsidian procurement and intensive biface reduction. Projectile points typical of this period include Martis series projectile points of the northern Sierra Nevada and Elko Series projectile points of the Great Basin.

The Late Archaic Period (1300-600 BP) is marked by major changes in land use. The elaboration of archaeological assemblages noted in the Middle Archaic Period abruptly ceases at approximately 1000 BP as obsidian production falls off, archaeological visibility is lower, and cultural accumulations become more focused on specific subsistence pursuits. The beginning of the Late Archaic Period is marked by technological shifts associated with the advent of bow-and-arrow (Bettinger and Taylor, 1974; Delacorte et al., 1997). The advent of bow-and-arrow technologies marks a shift to expedient flake-based tools and smaller residential settlements (Delacorte et al., 1995, 1997). The Rose Spring and Gunther Barb series are diagnostic of this period. Higher frequencies of milling equipment in Late Archaic assemblages suggest increased reliance on seed resources (Delacorte et al., 1995), despite a diet breadth focused on both vegetal and animal resources (Basgall and McGuire, 1988). Flaked-stone assemblages reveal a shift from the highly curated and worked bifaces of ground stone accumulations dating to this period, suggesting a fundamental reorganization of settlement-subsistence adaptation focused on intensive exploitation or epos root and other plant resources (McGuire, 2000:30). This shift co-occurs with a dramatic falling off of obsidian biface production and increased use of local tool stone. These changes suggest a decrease in foraging mobility and territoriality as indicated by semi-permanent lowland settlements with well-built house structures, cache pits, and other domestic facilities. In the Sierra Nevada, intensified use of local plant resources is indicated by the introduction of shallow bedrock mortar and stone hullers (Elston et al., 1994).

During the Terminal Prehistoric (600 BP-Historic-era), prehistoric components tend to be comparatively smaller, more ephemeral in nature, and usually represented by isolated ground stone concentrations or hearths with limited debris scatters. The Desert Side-Notched and Cottonwood Triangular series are dominant projectile point types. Milling equipment tends to occur at higher ratios during these periods and is dominated by large, unshaped blocks with more ephemeral surface wear. Reduction trajectories for obsidian shift from biface reduction to a core/flake technology. The size and relative frequency of obsidian bifaces decrease. In general, this pattern has been interpreted as a response to increased territorial circumscription, which limited access to tool stone material sources, and increasing inter-group competition and conflict (McGuire, 2000:32).

Ethnography

The Maidu inhabited the region of the Sierra Nevada foothills and Southern Cascades prior to Euro-American intrusion (Riddell ,1978:370-386). They are represented locally by the Mechoopda Band of Konkow Indians (Dixon 1905). Primary sources of ethnographic information include Dixon (1905), Powers (1877), and Kroeber (1925). In this section, the past tense is sometimes used when referring to native peoples because this is a historical study. This convention is not

intended to suggest that Maidu people only existed in the past. To the contrary, many Maiduan groups have strong cultural and social identities today.

Linguistically, the Madiu are divided into three groups: the Northeastern, Northwestern, and Southern. Maidu were never a single consolidated tribe, but instead were represented by numerous politically independent bands and tribelets. Each tribelet consisted of one or more villages and a number of camps within the tribelet's territory. The central village was usually the most populous and the residence of the community leader, who served as the primary advisor and spokesman (Kroeber, 1925:397). Individual villages were autonomous and self-sufficient, not politically bound under any strict control of the community leader. The Maidu, like many neighboring groups, followed a yearly gathering cycle, traveling seasonally from winter villages on the river into the Sierra foothills to hunt and gather. They primarily subsisted on freshwater fish, acorns, and terrestrial game (Riddell, 1978:370-386). Any member of a community could procure food from the territory; fishing, hunting, and gathering areas were held in common. Within the common lands, certain families could claim fishing holes as their own, and permission was required for other tribal members to use these areas (Dixon, 1905:224-227).

Local History

The Gold Rush (1848-9) brought a wave of immigrants to California. The Nobles Emigrant trail, a branch of the California Trail, was situated north of present-day Susanville. Between 1841 and 1869, more than 200,000 emigrants traversed the California Trail. In 1854, Isaac Roop and Company built a trading post along the Nobles Emigrant Trail. Susanville was named after Susan Roop, the daughter of Isaac Roop. The area was originally called Rooptown until 1857, when the present name was adopted (Purdy, 2005). The area's unique location, on the crest of the Sierra Nevada, and having dense timber and lush farmlands along the headwaters of the Susan River, made the area an ideal location for settlement, and the town quickly developed.

Lassen County was officially recognized in 1864 with Susanville as the county seat. Fire was a persistent problem for the town. In 1893, the entire business district was leveled by fire, and residents endured several more blazes until 1900, when Susanville was incorporated as a means to provide fire protection. As a fire preventive measure, the City passed a controversial ordinance in 1902 that prohibited the construction of wooden buildings in the town's business district. In 1913, the arrival of the Fernley & Lassen Railroad ushered in a new era of commerce that forever changed the community. The establishment of the lumber mills associated with the Lassen Lumber & Box Company and the Fruit Growers Supply Company provided an economic boom. The local economy declined as the lumber industry faded in the late 1950s and 1960s (Purdy, 2005). Susanville experienced an economic resurgence in 1963 when the California Correctional Facility Center was constructed.

Cultural Resources within Development

The *Archaeological Survey Report, Hat Creek Construction and Materials, Inc. Rock Quarry Development Project Lassen County, California* (ALTA, 2020) (ASR) was prepared to identify any archaeological, historical, or cultural resources located in the project site and utility corridors. The ASR included records search, historic map review, literature review, an archaeological field survey, and Native American communications.

The records search conducted at the Northeast Information Center of the California Office of Historic Resources Information System identified two previously identified historic-era or

prehistoric cultural resources documented within the ¼ mile search radius of the Project site. Historic maps of the project site were also reviewed. General Land Office Plat maps dating to 1864 and 1879 show the project area as unimproved land. The earliest topographic maps of the areas (1886-1893) depict a road as present within the project area. No historical maps were available for the 60-year period between 1893 and 1954. Topographic maps dating from 1954 through 1968 do not depict any infrastructure on the parcel, and the road noted on earlier maps is no longer present. The 1975 orthographic photo shows that a linear utility pipeline was constructed through the northeast portion of the project site. Available ethnographic literature was reviewed to identify cultural resources in the project vicinity, and there are no ethnographic resources documented within 2 miles of the project area.

The archaeological field survey identified eighteen isolated finds and ten cultural resources (six prehistoric, four historic) within the mining area and one cultural resource within the utility corridor. These resources are fully described in the Cultural Resources Report and utility addendum. Isolated finds are artifacts that occur as a single item and are not clearly associated with a cultural resource. Such finds do not merit formal recordation and are not considered cultural resources. Eighteen isolated finds (ten prehistoric and eight historic) were noted within the project area.

The cultural resources discovered onsite have been evaluated for the potential to be eligible for inclusion on the CRHR. Two resources were identified as potentially eligible for inclusion on the CRHR, and further study detailed in *Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report for the Hat Creek Construction Rock Quarry Development Project* (Appendix K) was conducted.

SKYLINE-PRE-04 is a prehistoric site that consists of a series of Native American stacked rock hunting blinds. The blinds likely date to the Late Period (circa A.D. 1300-1850) and retain a high level of integrity, showing minimal disturbance by historic-era or modern activities. SKYLINE-HIS-04 is a series of historic-era stacked stone and barbed wire fences built in the late 1910s, most likely by local rancher Fritz Brockman.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Assembly Bill 52, which went into effect in July 2015, is an amendment to CEQA §5097.94 of the Public Resources Code. AB 52 established a proactive consultation process with all California Native American tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) with cultural ties to an area. This process is implemented on projects that file a notice of preparation for an EIR or notice of intent to adopt a negative or mitigated negative declaration. Under AB52, the Lead Agency is required to consult with tribes at tribal request. The bill further created a new class of resources under CEQA known as tribal cultural resources.

Non-AB 52 Consultation

ALTA archaeologist Alex DeGeorgey contacted the NAHC on August 28, 2020, to request a review of the Sacred Lands file for information on Native American cultural resources in the study area and to request a list of Native American contacts in this area. The NAHC replied on March 30, 2020, indicating that no Sacred Sites are known within the project area. Additional outreach was conducted by Alex DeGeorgey between January 17, 2024, and February 21, 2024, with the Susanville Rancheria to coordinate the evaluation of the identified onsite resources and tribal monitoring and study participation during excavation.

AB 52 Consultation
On October 26, 2023, the County initiated environmental review under CEQA for the proposed Project. The County notified Chris LaMarr, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Susanville Indian Rancheria, a federally recognized Native American Tribe which is comprised of four distinct tribes Mountain Maidu, Norther Paiute, Pit River, and Washoe that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, pursuant to PRC §21080.3.1, notifying that the project was under review and to provide the Tribe 30 days from the receipt of the letter to request consultation on the proposed project in writing. The letter included a brief description of the proposed project, project location, and a request for any information about tribal cultural resources in the project vicinity. A response was received by the County on October 31, 2024, requesting initiation of consultation under the provisions of AB 52. The Susanville Indian Rancheria was consulted by the project archaeologist during the evaluation of onsite cultural resources.

4.6.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of State and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

State

California Environmental Quality Act
Under CEQA, public agencies must consider the effects of their actions on both historical resources and unique archaeological resources. Pursuant to PRC §21084.1, a "project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment." Section 21083.2 requires agencies to determine whether proposed projects would have effects on unique archaeological resources.

"Historical resource" is a term with a defined statutory meaning (PRC §21084.1). Under CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(a), historical resources include the following:

- A resource listed in or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the CRHR (PRC §5024.1).
- A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in PRC § 5020.1(k) or identified as significant in a historical resource survey meeting the requirements of PRC §5024.1(g), will be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.
- Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource will be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (PRC §5024.1), including the following:

a) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;

b) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;

c) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or

d) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC §5020.1(k)), or identified in a historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC §5024.1(g)) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be an historical resource as defined in PRC §§5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

Historical resources are usually 45 years old or older and must meet at least one of the criteria for listing in the CRHR, described above (such as association with historical events, important people, or architectural significance), in addition to maintaining a sufficient level of integrity.

Properties of local significance that have been designated under a local preservation ordinance (local landmarks or landmark districts) or that have been identified in a local historical resources inventory may be eligible for listing in the CRHR and are presumed to be historical resources for purposes of CEQA unless a preponderance of evidence indicates otherwise (PRC §5024.1 and California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, §4850). Unless a resource listed in a survey has been demolished, lost substantial integrity, or there is a preponderance of evidence indicating that it is otherwise not eligible for listing, a lead agency should consider the resource to be potentially eligible for the CRHR.

CEQA also requires lead agencies to determine if a proposed project would have a significant effect on unique archaeological resources. If a lead agency determines that an archaeological site is a historical resource, the provisions of PRC §21084.1 and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 would apply. If an archaeological site does not meet the CEQA Guidelines criteria for a historical resource, then the site may meet the threshold of PRC §21083.2 regarding unique archaeological resources. A unique archaeological resource is an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria.

"Unique archaeological resource" means an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

- Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions, and there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.
- Has a special and particular quality, such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.

- Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person."

The CEQA Guidelines note that if a resource is neither a unique archaeological resource nor a historical resource, the effects of the project on that resource shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR §15064[c][4]).

If the project would result in a significant impact to a historical resource or unique archaeological resource, treatment options under PRC §21083.2 include activities that preserve such resources in place in an undisturbed state. Other acceptable methods of mitigation under §21083.2 include excavation and curation or study in place without excavation and curation (if the study finds that the artifacts would not meet one or more of the criteria for defining a unique archaeological resource).

Section 7050.5(b) of the California Health and Safety Code specifies protocol when human remains are discovered, as follows:

> *"In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the coroner of the county in which the human remains are discovered has determined, in accordance with Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 27460) of Part 3 of Division 2 of Title 3 of the Government Code, that the remains are not subject to the provisions of Section 27492 of the Government Code or any other related provisions of law concerning investigation of the circumstances, manner and cause of death, and the recommendations concerning treatment and disposition of the human remains have been made to the person responsible for the excavation, or to his or her authorized representative, in the manner provided in Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code."*

CEQA §15064.5(e) requires that excavation activities stop whenever human remains are uncovered and that the county coroner be called in to assess the remains. If the county coroner determines that the remains are those of Native Americans, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) must be contacted within 24 hours. At that time, the lead agency must consult with the appropriate Native Americans, if any, as timely identified by the NAHC. Section 15064.5 directs the lead agency (or applicant), under certain circumstances, to develop an agreement with the Native Americans for the treatment and disposition of the remains.

In addition to the mitigation provisions pertaining to accidental discovery of human remains, the CEQA Guidelines also require that a lead agency make provisions for the accidental discovery of historical or archaeological resources, generally. Pursuant to §15064.5(f), these provisions should include "an immediate evaluation of the find by a qualified archaeologist. If the find is determined to be a historical or unique archaeological resource, contingency funding and a time allotment sufficient to allow for implementation of avoidance measures or appropriate mitigation should be available. Work could continue on other parts of the building site while historical or unique archaeological resource mitigation takes place."

California Native American Heritage Commission

The NAHC is the primary State agency responsible for identifying and cataloging Native American cultural resources. It works to prevent irreparable damage to designated sacred sites and

interference with expressions of Native American human remains found outside of a dedicated cemetery, who can then make recommendations on the treatment and disposition of the remains. The NAHC is also responsible for mediating disputes that may arise during the disposition of any remains. The guidelines also establish the NAHC to identify the most likely descendant of any remains and to mediate disputes regarding the disposition.

California Public Resources Code

The California PRC, §5097.5, prohibits the excavation or removal of any "vertebrate paleontological site, or any other archaeological, paleontological, or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction of such lands." Public lands are defined as lands owned by or under the jurisdiction of the State, or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation. Any unauthorized disturbance or removal of archaeological, historic, or paleontological materials or sites located on public lands is considered a misdemeanor.

California Health and Safety Code

Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code makes it a misdemeanor to intentionally disturb, mutilate, or remove interred human remains. It also requires that if human remains are discovered outside of a dedicated cemetery, any excavation or disturbance of the site stop until the county coroner makes a report. Under this section, if the county coroner determines the remains to be Native American, the coroner must contact the NAHC within 24 hours. Additionally, §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, §5097.98 of the California PRC, §15064.5(d) of the CEQA Guidelines outline the procedures to be used if Native American human remains are unexpectedly found on non-federal land. The guidelines protect the remains from accidental or deliberate destruction or disturbance and establish procedures to appropriately and sensitively address such a discovery.

California Public Records Act

Sections 6253 and 6254.10 of the California Code of Regulations authorize State agencies to exclude archaeological site information from public disclosure under the CPRA. In addition, the CPRA (Government Code §6250 et seq.) and California's open meeting law (The Brown Act, Government Code §56950 et seq.) protect the confidentiality of Native American cultural place information. The CPRA (as amended, 2005) contains two exemptions that aid in the protection of records relating to Native American cultural places by permitting any State or local agency to deny a CPRA request and withhold from public disclosure:

- Records of Native American graves, cemeteries, and sacred places and records of Native American places, features, and objects described in §5097.9 and §5097.993 of the Public Resources Code maintained by, or in the possession of, the Native American Heritage Commission, another state agency, or local agency (GC §6254(r)); and
- Records that relate to archaeological site information and reports maintained by, or in the possession of, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Historical Resources Commission, the State Lands Commission, another state agency, or local agency, including the records that the agency obtains through a consultation process between a California Native American tribe and a state or local agency (GC §6254.10).

Likewise, the Information Centers of the CHRIS maintained by the OHP prohibit public dissemination of records search and site location information. In compliance with these requirements, and those of the Code of Ethics for the Society of California Archaeology and the Register of Professional Archaeologists, the locations of cultural resources are considered restricted information with highly restricted distribution and are not publicly accessible.

Assembly Bill 52

In September of 2014, the California Legislature passed AB 52, which added provisions to the PRC regarding the evaluation of impacts on tribal cultural resources under CEQA, and consultation requirements with California Native American tribes. In particular, AB 52 now requires lead agencies to analyze project impacts on "tribal cultural resources" separately from archaeological resources (PRC §21074; §21083.09). The Bill defines "tribal cultural resources" in a new section of the PRC §21074. AB 52 also requires lead agencies to engage in additional consultation procedures with respect to California Native American tribes (PRC §21080.3.1, §21080.3.2, §21082.3). Specifically, PRC §21084.3 states:

a) Public agencies shall, when feasible, avoid damaging effects to any tribal cultural resource.

b) If the lead agency determines that a project may cause a substantial adverse change to a tribal cultural resource, and measures are not otherwise identified in the consultation process provided in Section 21080.3.2, the following are examples of mitigation measures that, if feasible, may be considered to avoid or minimize the significant adverse impacts:

1) Avoidance and preservation of the resources in place, including, but not limited to, planning and construction to avoid the resources and protect the cultural and natural context, or planning greenspace, parks, or other open space, to incorporate the resources with culturally appropriate protection and management criteria.

2) Treating the resource with culturally appropriate dignity taking into account the tribal cultural values and meaning of the resource, including, but not limited to, the following:
   a) Protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource.
   b) Protecting the traditional use of the resource.
   c) Protecting the confidentiality of the resource.

3) Permanent conservation easements or other interests in real property, with culturally appropriate management criteria for the purposes of preserving or utilizing the resources or places.

4) Protecting the resource.

AB 52 required the Office of Planning and Research to update Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines to provide sample questions regarding impacts on tribal cultural resources (PRC §21083.09).

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* contains the following policies and implementation measures related to cultural resources:

Policy 10.1: The County shall, within its authority, preserve and protect the cultural resources of the Planning Area.

Implementation:

- 10.11: Development project shall be designed to minimize its impact on cultural resources. Any discoveries of archeological resources during construction shall be reported for mitigation.
- 10.12: A Cultural resources map should be maintained by the County Planning Department and used in the review process of land development projects.
- 10.13: Archaeological reconnaissance should be conducted whenever it appears the cultural resources may be disrupted by a proposed development project.

4.6.3 Thresholds of Significance

Following PRC §§ 21083.2 and 21084.1, and § 15064.5 and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, historical resource impacts are considered to be significant if the project would result in a positive response to any of the following questions:

- *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Historical Resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?*
- *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?*
- *Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?*

CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 defines substantial adverse change as physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of a historical resource is materially impaired. CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(b)(2) defines materially impaired for purposes of the definition of substantial adverse change as follows: The significance of a historical resource is materially impaired when a project:

a) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or

b) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to §5020.1(k) of the PRC or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of §5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

c) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a Historical Resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA.

CEQA requires that if a project would result in an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource or would cause significant effects on a unique

archaeological resource, then alternative plans or mitigation measures must be considered. Therefore, prior to assessing effects or developing mitigation measures, the significance of cultural resources must first be determined. The steps that are normally taken in a cultural resources investigation for CEQA compliance are as follows:

- Identify potential historical resources and unique archaeological resources;
- Evaluate the significance of the potential historical resources; and
- Evaluate the effects of the project on eligible (significant) historical resources and unique archaeological resources.

The following significance thresholds related to tribal cultural resources have been derived from PRC §21084.2:

- *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, or cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:*
- *Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k).*
- *A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.*

AB 52 established that a substantial adverse change to a tribal cultural resource has a significant effect on the environment. In assessing substantial adverse change, Lassen County must determine whether or not the project will adversely affect the qualities of the resource that convey its significance. The qualities are expressed through integrity. Integrity of a resource is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association [California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, §4852(c)].

Impacts are significant if the resource is demolished or destroyed or if the characteristics that made the resource eligible are materially impaired [CCR Title 14, §15064.5(a)]. Accordingly, impacts to a tribal cultural resource would likely be significant if the project negatively affects the qualities of integrity that made it significant in the first place. In making this determination, Lassen County needs only to address the aspects of integrity that are important to the significance of tribal cultural resources.

4.6.4 Impact Analysis

Potential project effects to cultural and tribal cultural resources could occur during mining and reclamation activities that will result in ground disturbance from excavation within the mining boundary of the site. Ground disturbance will also be required for initial site improvements, including extension of utilities to the project site, construction of the access road, and construction of the stormwater basin. Ground disturbance within the project site could result in the demolition, destruction or relocation of cultural or tribal cultural resources.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.6-1: The project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5.

Significant cultural resources, such as buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, must meet the criteria described in Subsection 4.6.2, *Regulatory Setting*, above. If no eligible resources are identified within the project area, then the subject project is not considered to have a significant impact on cultural resources. In addition, State regulations require that measures be taken to protect any resources that are uncovered during construction, and compliance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(f) requires that construction activities halt if potentially significant resources are discovered until the resources can be assessed by a qualified person.

The proposed project could potentially result in a significant impact if it caused a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. The archaeological field survey determined that SKYLINE-PRE-04, a prehistoric site that consists of a series of eight Native American stacked rock hunting blinds, and SKYLINE-HIS-04, a series of historic-era stacked stone and barbed wire fences built in the late 1910s, are within the mining area. These resources were considered potentially eligible for the CRHR and were evaluated further in the *Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report for the Hat Creek Construction Rock Quarry Development Project* (Appendix K). Other finds, such as Isolated finds, do not merit formal recordation and are not considered cultural resources regardless of potential disturbance. Other resources found on the parcel are also eligible for the CRHR. These additional resources are outside of any proposed development or impacted project areas and will be unaffected by project approval.

Mining activities within the project area will result in a substantial adverse change to the cultural resources SKYLINE-HIS-04 and SKYLINE-PRE-04 These resources were subject to further onsite study to determine listing eligibility for the CRHR. The Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report determined that SKYLINE-HIS-04 was ineligible for listing on the CRHR and was released from further management considerations. SKYLINE-PRE-04 was evaluated and was deemed eligible for listing in the CRHR. However, as the collection of artifacts for offsite analysis was prohibited by tribal monitors the Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report determined that all avenues of analysis for this resource have been exhausted and that the completion of the study has mitigated impacts to the resource to below the threshold of significance (ALTA 2024). Therefore SKYLINE-PRE-04 has been released from further management consideration (ALTA 2024). Impacts to known cultural or archaeological resources are therefore less than significant with incorporated mitigation.

One resource was identified within the utility corridor as described in the Utility Corridor Addendum to the Archaeological Survey Report. This resource consists of a historic refuse dump and has previously been heavily impacted by the construction of Skyline Road and surrounding development. This resource may be impacted by the installation of the natural gas line and will be avoided by placing the line within the road fill. If installation of the natural gas line is not feasible within the road fill, the site will be evaluated for listing in the CRHR. If found to be significant, the site will be avoided, and an alternative path will be identified and evaluated as described in Mitigation Measure 4.6-3.

Mining activities within the project area could result in the inadvertent discovery of unknown cultural or archaeological resources. To minimize potential impacts to undiscovered prehistoric and historic resources within the project site, Mitigation Measure 4.6-1 will be implemented. This measure consists of halting work within 50 feet of a potential discovery and retaining a qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for prehistoric and historic archaeology to evaluate the significance of the find. Impacts related to the discovery of unknown cultural or archaeological resources are considered less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.6-1.

Impact 4.6-2: The project would disturb human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

The Project site does not contain any known human remains, and no evidence of human remains or burial sites was discovered by the Archaeological Resources Report (ALTA 2020). Buried human remains could be inadvertently unearthed during excavation activities, which could result in damage to these human remains. The project would comply with California Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and §5097.98 of the PRC (as amended by Assembly Bill 2641) should human remains be encountered. Pursuant to the codes, all work in the immediate vicinity of the burial must cease, and any necessary steps to ensure the integrity of the immediate area must be taken, as required by Mitigation Measure 4.6-2. Impacts would therefore be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Impact 4.6-3: Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource.

ALTA Archaeologist Alex DeGeorgey contacted the NAHC on August 28, 2020, to request a review of the Sacred Lands file for information on Native American cultural resources in the study area and to request a list of Native American contacts in this area. No response was received from NAHC. Consultation in accordance with AB52 was conducted by the County, which notified Chris LaMarr, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Susanville Indian Rancheria, a federally recognized Native American Tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project. The Susanville Indian Rancheria was consulted by the project archaeologist during the evaluation of onsite cultural resources.

One tribal cultural resource was found and evaluated onsite SKYLINE-PRE-04 a prehistoric site that consists of a series of eight Native American stacked rock hunting blinds. This resource was subject to further onsite study to determine listing eligibility for the CRHR. The Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report determined that SKYLINE-PRE-04 was eligible for listing in the CRHR. However, as the collection of artifacts for offsite analysis was prohibited by tribal monitors, the Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report determined that all avenues of

analysis for this resource have been exhausted and that the completion of the study has mitigated impacts to the resource to below the threshold of significance (ALTA 2024). Therefore, SKYLINE-PRE-04 has been released from further management consideration (ALTA 2024). Impacts to Tribal cultural resources are therefore less than significant with incorporated mitigation.

4.6.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures are included for potentially significant impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources.

4.6-1: If subsurface deposits believed to be cultural or human in origin are discovered during construction, then all work must halt within a 50-foot radius of the discovery. A qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for prehistoric and historic archaeology, shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does not represent a cultural resource, then work may resume immediately, and no agency notifications are required. If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does represent a cultural resource from any time period or cultural affiliation, then he or she shall immediately notify the County, which shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures, if the find is determined to be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP or CRHR. Work cannot resume within the no-work radius until the County, through consultation as appropriate, determines that the site either: 1) is not eligible for the NRHP or CRHR; or 2) that the treatment measures have been completed to its satisfaction.

4.6-2: In the event of the discovery of human remains, or remains that are potentially human, the contractor shall ensure reasonable protection measures are taken to protect the discovery from disturbance (Assembly Bill [AB] 2641). The archaeologist shall notify the Lassen County Coroner (as per §7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code). The provisions of §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, §5097.98 of the California PRC, and AB 2641 will be implemented. If the Coroner determines the remains are Native American and not the result of a crime scene, the Coroner will notify the NAHC, which then will designate a Native American Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for the project (§5097.98 of the PRC). The designated MLD will have 48 hours from the time access to the property is granted to make recommendations concerning the treatment of the remains. If the landowner does not agree with the recommendations of the MLD, then the NAHC can mediate (§5097.94 of the PRC). If no agreement is reached, the landowner must rebury the remains where they will not be further disturbed (§5097.98 of the PRC). This will also include either recording the site with the NAHC or the appropriate Information Center; using an open space or conservation zoning designation or easement; or recording a reinternment document with the county in which the property is located (AB 2641). Work cannot resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.

4.6-3 Impacts to historic cultural resources within the Natural Gas Utility Corridor will be avoided by placing the line within the Skyline Road fill. If installation of the natural gas

line is not feasible within the road fill, the site will be evaluated by a qualified archologist for listing with the CRHR and the limits of the resource delineated. If the resource is found to be significant, an alternative utility path will be identified and evaluated to avoid significant impacts.

4.6.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.6-1, 4.6-2, and 4.6-3, impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

4.7 Energy

This section describes the existing energy setting of the project site, includes a summary of applicable energy regulations, and evaluates the potential impacts that could occur as a result of the proposed development related to the project's energy consumption in the form of electricity, natural gas, propane, gasoline, and diesel.

State CEQA Guidelines Appendix F is an advisory document that assists EIR preparers in determining whether a project will result in the inefficient, wasteful, and unnecessary consumption of energy. For the reasons set forth below, this EIR concludes that the proposed project would not result in this type of energy consumption and therefore would not create a significant impact on energy resources.

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

The project area is currently undeveloped and has no energy demand or consumption.

State of California
Transportation accounted for nearly 34.1 percent of California's total energy consumption in 2020 (U.S. EIA, 2023). In 2022, California consumed 13.9 billion gallons of gasoline and 3.17 billion gallons of diesel fuel (BOE, 2022). The State is now developing strategies to reduce petroleum use. Over the last decade, California has implemented several policies, rules, and regulations to improve vehicle efficiency, increase the development and use of alternative fuels, reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gases (GHGs) from the transportation sector, and reduce vehicle miles travelled. The California Energy Commission (CEC) has also developed plans and policies to expand the infrastructure of alternative fuel refueling stations to encourage the use and reliability of alternatively fueled vehicles.

Electricity is quantified using kilowatts (kW) and kilowatt-hours (kWh). A kW is a measure of 1,000 watts of electrical power and a kWh is a measure of electrical energy equivalent to a power consumption of 1,000 watts for 1 hour. The kWh is commonly used as a billing unit for energy delivered to consumers by electric utilities. Electricity and natural gas in California are generally consumed by stationary users such as residences and commercial and industrial facilities, whereas petroleum consumption is generally accounted for by transportation-related energy use. Californians consumed 280,738 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity in 2020 (CEC, 2021). Natural gas energy usage is typically quantified using the British Thermal Unit (Btu). Total natural gas usage in California was approximately 1.10 trillion Btu in 2020 (US EIA, 2021). Total propane usage in California for 2018 was estimated to be 590 million gallons (Argonne 2020).

Lassen County

The electricity consumption attributable to non-residential land uses in Lassen County from 2017 to 2021 is shown in Table 4-15, *Non-Residential Electricity Consumption in Lassen County 2017-2021*. As indicated, the demand for non-residential electricity has remained relatively constant, with no substantial increase.

Table 4-15
NON-RESIDENTIAL ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION
LASSEN COUNTY 2017-2021

Year	Nonresidential Electricity Consumption (in millions of kilowatt hours)
2017	283.5326
2018	274.4072
2019	264.0367
2020	265.2748
2021	279.0718

Source: California Energy Consumption Data Management System. *Electricity and Natural Gas Consumption by County*. [Online]: http://ecdms.energy.ca.gov/. Accessed: March 16th, 2023.

The natural gas consumption attributable to nonresidential land uses in Lassen County from 2017 to 2021 is shown in Table 4-16, *Non-Residential Natural Gas Consumption in Lassen County 2017-2021*. Similar to electricity consumption, the demand for non-residential gas has remained relatively constant, with no substantial increase, even with an increase in population.

Information regarding the propane consumption within Lassen County is not available.

Table 4-16
NON-RESIDENTIAL NATURAL GAS CONSUMPTION
LASSEN COUNTY 2016-2021

Year	Nonresidential Natural Gas Consumption (in million British Thermal Units)
2017	1,147,145
2018	1,092,882
2019	1,122,411
2020	1,112,566
2021	1,063,303

Source: California Energy Consumption Data Management System. *Electricity and Natural Gas Consumption by County*. [Online]: http://ecdms.energy.ca.gov/. Accessed: March 16, 2023.

4.7.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of State and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

State of California

Public Resources Code (PRC) §21100(b)(3) and CEQA Guidelines §15126.4 require EIRs to describe, where relevant, the wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy caused by a project. In 1975, largely in response to the oil crisis of the 1970s, the California legislature adopted Assembly Bill (AB) 1575, which created the California Energy Commission (CEC). The statutory mission of the CEC is to forecast future energy needs, license thermal power plants of 50 megawatts or larger, develop energy technologies and renewable energy resources, plan for and direct state responses to energy emergencies, and – perhaps most importantly – promote energy efficiency through the adoption and enforcement of appliance and building energy efficiency standards. AB 1575 also amended PRC §21100(b)(3) to require EIRs to consider the wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy caused by a project.

California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Non-Residential Buildings

Title 24, California's energy efficiency standards for residential and non-residential buildings, was established by the CEC in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to create uniform building codes to reduce California's energy consumption and provide energy efficiency standards for residential and non-residential buildings. California's energy efficiency standards are updated on an approximate three-year cycle. On January 1, 2023, the 2023 Title 24 standards became effective with more stringent requirements. The 2022 standards are expected to substantially reduce reliance on natural gas use and improve electric-readiness in new buildings. The 2022 standards include encouraging electric heat pump technology for space and water heating, establishing electric-ready requirements to facilitate electric heating, cooking, and electric vehicle charging options, expansion of solar photovoltaic system and battery storage standards, and strengthening ventilation standards to improve indoor air quality.

California Green Building Standards

The California Green Building Standards Code (California CCR, Title 24, Part 11), commonly referred to as the CAL Green Code, is a statewide mandatory construction code that was developed and adopted by the California Building Standards Commission and the California Department of Housing and Community Development. The CAL Green standards require new residential and commercial buildings to comply with mandatory measures under the topics of planning and design, energy efficiency, water efficiency and conservation, material conservation and resource efficiency, and environmental quality. CAL Green also provides voluntary tiers and measures that local governments may adopt that encourage or require additional measures in the five green building topics. The most recent update to the CAL Green Code was adopted in 2022 and went into effect January 1, 2023.

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The *Lassen County General Plan* contains the following goals, policies, and implementation measures related to energy resources:

GOAL N-17: Conservative management of Lassen County's energy resources so that those resources can be developed and utilized for the benefit of County residents with a high degree of efficiency and productivity.

- Policy NR-6: The County advocates and encourages Federal and state agencies to conduct to or help fund resource assessments and other studies to evaluate the availability of energy resources, and to facilitate efficient and well-designed projects which can capitalize on those resources with acceptable levels of environmental impact and compatibility with other land uses and resource values.
- Policy NR-62: In the course of adopting policies pertaining to energy resources in other County planning elements and area plans, the County may consider additional and more specific policies and measures to manage those resources.
- Policy NR-63: The Energy Element of the Lassen County General Plan shall provide specific policies and measures pertaining to the conservation and management of energy resources, as well as the siting and development standards of projects proposing to utilize those resources.

4.7.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. According to Public Resources Code §21100(b)(3) and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed Project would have a significant impact related to Energy if it would:

- *Result in wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operations.*
- *Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.*

According to Appendix F of the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would have a significant impact related to energy if it would:

- *Develop land uses and patterns that cause wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy or construct new or retrofitted buildings that would have excessive energy requirements for daily operation.*

And requires evaluation of:

1. The project's energy requirements and its energy use efficiencies by amount and fuel type for each stage of the project, including construction, operation, maintenance and/or removal. If appropriate, the energy intensity of materials may be discussed.
2. The effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies and on requirements for additional capacity.
3. The effects of the project on peak and base period demands for electricity and other forms of energy.
4. The degree to which the project complies with existing energy standards.
5. The effects of the project on energy resources.

6. The project's projected transportation energy use requirements and its overall use of efficient transportation alternatives.

4.7.4 Impact Analysis

There is currently no energy consumption within the project site as the area is undeveloped. As mining operations begin onsite, energy demands will commence. Mine production for the site is estimated to be up to 450,000 tons of aggregate material per year and 39,864,900 cubic yards over the lifetime of the project. Onsite operations will consume diesel, natural gas, propane, and electricity for onsite power needs. It is estimated that the project will require approximately 137,220 gallons of diesel fuel annually to operate off-road equipment, generators, and haul trucks, and 1.076 million gallons of propane or 128 million cubic feet of natural gas annually. Natural gas will be provided by the City of Susanville if a utility connection is established through annexation. Commercially available propane will be used in the interim to operate the asphalt plant. An estimated 11,787 MWh of electricity would be provided by Lassen Municipal Utilities District annually to meet remaining onsite power needs (RCH 2024). Energy needs for the asphalt plant will be met with the use of propane until such a time when a connection to the natural gas infrastructure can be established. Propane will be supplied by Amerigas or other local propane provider. Energy needs for employee transportation will be met with gasoline consumption estimated at 5,945 gallons annually. The estimates of energy use by the project are found in Appendix D, *Air Quality Technical Report* (RCH, 2024).

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to Energy based on Appendix G and Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to Energy.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.7-1: Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.

The proposed project will create energy demand for mining operations for the 50-year life of the project. The proposed quarry would consume energy, the fuel consumed by off-road vehicles, and equipment. The energy use will be proportionate to the volume of material produced from the mine. Fossil fuels used for off-road vehicles and other energy-consuming equipment would be used during mine operations. Implementation of energy conservation measures would also serve to increase the Project's overall energy conservation and reduce energy consumption. Due to the short duration, energy consumed during construction would not represent a significant demand on energy resources.

Equipment use will result in diesel fuel, natural gas, propane, electricity, and gasoline consumption. The project will require approximately 137,220 gallons of diesel fuel annually; 1.076 million gallons

of propane or 128 million cubic feet of natural gas, respectively; 11,787 MWh of electricity annually; and 5,945 gallons of gasoline annually (RCH 2024). This increase in consumption is not anticipated to trigger the need for additional capacity or result in a significant reduction in local energy resource availability during operation.

Project equipment would be required to comply with the latest U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) engine emissions standards. These emissions standards require highly efficient combustion systems that maximize fuel efficiency and reduce unnecessary fuel consumption. The operator's existing truck fleet is in a change-out period to more energy-efficient vehicles and has a scheduled goal of phasing out and replacing generators with new and more energy-efficient engines by 2025. Due to increasing transportation costs and fuel prices, the mine operator has a strong financial incentive to avoid wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy during the life of the mine.

The proposed 460-acre quarry would include an average of 60 truck round-trips daily, with a maximum of 400 round-trips daily. It should be noted that, given the diverse locations and distances of projects that could be served by the proposed project, alternative transportation modes (e.g., rail lines) are generally unavailable or infeasible. Construction projects requiring materials from sources such as the proposed project will continue to occur with or without the proposed development. As a result, the proposed development would facilitate reduced vehicle miles traveled and fuel consumption by creating a regional material source that serves projects in the Susanville area. Alternatively, materials would be required to come from the Susanville Rock Pit, 10 vehicle miles from Susanville; the Standish Pit, 13 vehicle miles from Susanville; or the Ward Lake Quarry, approximately 15 vehicle miles outside of Susanville as the next closest material source.

Following reclamation of the site after mining ends in 2075, the end use for the site will be agricultural use for open space, and energy demand will decrease significantly. There are no unusual project characteristics that would necessitate the use of mobile or stationary equipment that would be less energy-efficient than at comparable quarry sites in the region or State. Therefore, it is expected that fuel consumption associated with the proposed project would not be any more inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary than other similar projects of this nature. A less-than-significant impact would occur in this regard.

Impact 4.7-2: Conflict or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy standards.

As discussed above in Impact 4.7-1, implementation of the proposed project would not cause inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary energy use, and impacts would be less than significant. Lassen County does not have a stand-alone Climate Action Plan but includes policies for energy resources within the *Lassen County General Plan* Energy Element. The objective of the Energy Element is to promote energy efficiency and the reduction of energy waste. The project does not conflict with or obstruct these goals or policies. Chapter 12.17 (Energy Conservation) of the Lassen County Building Code specifically requires compliance with Title 24. The project does not include the construction of additional permanent buildings at the project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with policies of the Lassen County General Plan or obstruct their implementation.

Renewable resources, including biomass and solar, make up 34.6 percent of the power mix for Lassen Municipal Utility District (CEC, 2021) (LMUD). Because the proposed quarry will obtain all of its electricity from LMUD or another supplier that must comply with the California Renewable Portfolio Standard, a substantial portion of the energy used by the proposed project would be generated from renewable sources. It is also important to note that during the period in which the Project would operate, mining equipment and energy sources could change because of factors such as the availability of alternative equipment technologies and regulatory requirements, thus further reducing energy demand over the life of the proposed project.

Additionally, the proposed project is located along Skyline Road, which provides access to Highway 36, Highway 139, and other regional roadways, providing efficient transportation options for delivering products throughout Susanville and Lassen County. By siting the project at this location, in an area where long-term demand for aggregate is anticipated, and with easy access to major roadways and the City of Susanville, energy used to transport aggregate materials to end-use locations would be less because of shorter haul distances as compared to energy use for transport of aggregate from more distant sources described above. As a result, the proposed development would facilitate reduced vehicle miles traveled and fuel consumption by proposing a regional material source that serves local projects.

Based upon the above, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.7.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.7.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.8 Geology and Soils

This section provides a summary of the geology and soil setting of the project site and applicable regulations related to geology and soils and includes a discussion of the geology and soil impacts of the proposed project. Some of the information in this section was obtained from the *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry Development* (Bajada, 2023) (refer to Appendix F).

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

Regional Geology
The project site is located outside of the City of Susanville. It is located in Hidden Valley, just southwest of Antelope Mountain, in Lassen County, California. Elevations on the site range from 4150 feet above mean sea level on the southern end of the parcel to 4300 feet above mean sea level along the northern project site boundary.

The project site is located within the Basin and Range physiographic province and is also near the Modoc Plateau physiographic province of California. The Basin and Range province is characterized by interior drainage with lakes and playas, and the typical horst and graben structure (subparallel, fault-bounded ranges separated by down-dropped basins). In these basins, moderate to extensive thicknesses of lacustrine (lake) and alluvial deposits are present. Death Valley, the lowest area in the United States (280 feet below sea level at Badwater), is one of these grabens. The province is bounded to the west by the Modoc and Cascade provinces, to the south by the Sierra Nevada province, and to the east by the Basin and Range province of Nevada.

The Modoc Plateau physiographic province is a volcanic peneplain (elevation 4000 to 6000 feet above MSL) consisting of a thick accumulation of lava beds along with many small volcanic cones. It is the southernmost extent of the Colombian Plateau Flood Basalts and is the youngest physiographic province of California (Jenkins, 1938). The plateau is bounded to the east by the Basin and Range province, to its west it is bounded by the Cascade province, to the south by the Sierra Nevada province, and to the north by the Columbia Basin province of Oregon. The Modoc Plateau itself is cut by many north-south striking faults and is underlain by much thicker crust than is found in the Klamath Mountains and Cascade Range to the west.

Site Geology
The proposed quarry area is underlain by Pliocene to Pleistocene-age volcanic rocks mapped as the Basalt of Susanville (Grose et al., 2014). Overlaying the Susanville Basalt are colluvium, alluvium, paleo-lake shore deposits, and artificial fill material. These materials consist of fine silty sands, sandy silts, and fine-grained soils containing few to abundant gravels, cobbles, and boulders.

Onsite Soils
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS, 2019) identified seven primary soil types within the project area:

- Tunnison-Devada association, 2 to 9 percent slopes. This is the most common soil group within the project area and is comprised of very stony clay and clay. This soil group is well-drained with a very high runoff classification.
- Cleghorn sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes. This soil group is well drained with a high runoff classification, and is primarily comprised of sandy loam, clay loam, and loam.
- Horsecamp cobbly silty clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes. This soil group is well drained with a very high runoff classification and is primarily comprised of cobbly silty clay and silty clay.
- Lakeview loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes. This soil group is moderately well drained with a medium runoff classification and is comprised of loam and clay loam.
- Searles-Orhood-Devada association, 5 to 30 percent slopes. This soil group is well drained with a high runoff classification and is comprised of very stony loam and very cobbly clay loam.
- Springmeyer sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes. This soil group is well drained with a medium runoff classification and is comprised of sandy loam, clay loam, and stratified gravelly loamy sand to sandy clay loam.
- Tunnison very cobbly clay, 2 to 9 percent slopes. This soil group is well-drained and has a very high runoff classification. It is primarily comprised of very cobbly clay and clay.

Existing onsite soils are illustrated in Figure 3-6. The NRCS Soil Report is included as Appendix G. Based on the geotechnical observations at the existing quarry site, rock materials associated with naturally occurring asbestos are not present within the proposed mining and reclamation area (Bajada, 2023).

Seismicity
Geological mapping of the Susanville area by C. Wills (Wills, 1990) identified two faults within the subject property. One fault defines a drainage running north-south through the approximate center of the property, while the other defines a steeply incised drainage along the eastern margin of the property. The age and sense of motion of both faults are poorly constrained. Wills interpreted them to be Quaternary in age as they cut and displace the Susanville Basalt but are deeply weathered and partly overlain by Holocene alluvium, constraining their ages. Neither fault is believed to be recently active. Sense of displacement is similarly poorly constrained due to the weathering of the fault lineaments, but is believed to be predominantly dextral strike-slip with a down-to-the-east dip-slip component. These faults are roughly perpendicular to the northwest-striking dextral slip faults of the Honey Lake Fault Zone that dominate local tectonics (Jennings and Saucedo, 2002).

The quarry site is not within a special studies zone associated with the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (AP). Thermal wells and springs exist in the Wendel and Susanville areas; however, there are no known thermal wells or springs on the Project site or adjacent lands.

4.8.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies related to geology and soils that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

Federal

Federal Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act
Passed by Congress in 1977, the Federal Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act is intended to reduce the risks to life and property from future earthquakes. The Act established the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). The goals of NEHRP are to educate and improve the knowledge base for predicting seismic hazards, improve land use practices and building codes, and reduce earthquake hazards through improved design and construction techniques.

State

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act
The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was passed in 1972 (originally enacted as the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zones Act and renamed in 1994) and is intended to reduce the risk to life and property from surface fault rupture during earthquakes. The main purpose of the law is to prevent the construction of buildings used for human occupancy on the surface trace of active faults. The law addresses only the hazard of surface fault rupture and is not directed toward other earthquake hazards. The Alquist-Priolo Act requires the State Geologist to establish regulatory zones known as "Earthquake Fault Zones" around the surface traces of active faults

and to issue appropriate maps. The maps are distributed to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies for this use in planning efforts. Local agencies must regulate most development projects within the zones. Projects include all land divisions and most structures for human occupancy. No Earthquake Fault Zones subject to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act occur within the project site. Faults close to the project area were discussed in Section 4.8.1.

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975

The principal legislation addressing mineral resources in California is the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) (Public Resources Code 2710-2719), which was enacted in response to land use conflicts between urban growth and essential mineral production. The stated purpose of SMARA is to provide a comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy that will encourage the production and conservation of mineral resources while ensuring that adverse environmental effects of mining are prevented or minimized; that mined lands are reclaimed and residual hazards to public health and safety are eliminated; and that consideration is given to recreation, watershed, wildlife, aesthetics, and other related values.

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The *Lassen County General Plan* contains the following goals, policies, and implementation measures regarding soil resources and geologic hazards:

> GOAL N-2: To protect and maximize the present and future productive, economic, and environmental values of the County's soil resources.
>
> - Policy NR-8: The County recognizes the need to protect and conserve areas where soils have high resource values, especially in terms of potential agricultural productivity.
> - Policy NR-9: The County discourages the development of land having soils of significant agricultural value for purposes other than agriculture or land uses directly related to agriculture.
> - Policy NR-10: The County shall exercise an appropriate degree of regulation designed to minimize soil erosion, including the administration of standards for grading and site clearance related to development projects.
> - Policy NR-11: The County encourages state and federal programs and projects designed to reduce soil erosion and to repair areas damaged by erosion.
> - Policy NR-12: The County encourages sound soil management and erosion prevention and control programs and projects, including the use of windbreaks, minimum tillage practices, grazing management, and riparian area rehabilitation.
> - Policy OS-19: The County shall consider documented evidence of geologic hazards, including but not limited to Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones, in review of proposed development projects or proposed land use designations and zoning which would facilitate residential and community development, and shall determine how the safety of the public may be advanced by the use of open space provisions relative to those hazards.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* contains the following goals, policies, and implementation measures regarding soil resources and geologic hazards:

> Policy 4.1: New development shall be protected from seismic/erosion-slope stability hazards by locating them away from potentially dangerous sites or by incorporating measures that will mitigate the danger.
>
> - Implementation 4.11: Large, high-density, or critical structures such as schools and hospitals shall not be allowed to locate directly over a known active fault. Proposals to locate these types of structures within one-half mile of a quaternary fault should include an engineering study to determine if any special construction techniques or engineering requirements beyond those included in the Uniform Building Code are necessary.
> - Implementation 4.12: The Planning Department should maintain information, as made available by other public agencies, regarding faults and areas of landslide potential, update it regularly, and share it with project sponsors.
> - Implementation 4.13: All development proposals for areas near steep slopes, including those along the Susan River and Paiute Creek, shall be required to minimize the disturbance to soil, rock, or vegetative cover and show the mitigation measures that will be taken to reduce the potential for a landslide.

4.8.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Geology and Soils* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury, or death involving:*
  - *i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault.*
  - *ii. Strong seismic ground shaking.*
  - *iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.*
  - *iv. Landslides.*
- *Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.*
- *Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the Project, and potentially result in on- or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.*
- *Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.*

- *Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.*
- *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.*

4.8.4 Impact Analysis

Mining at the project site will occur as described in the Reclamation Plan and in accordance with the recommendations contained in the *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023) (refer to Appendix F). Mining operations are anticipated to remove 450,000 tons of aggregate material per year and up to 39,864,900 cubic yards over the lifetime of the mine. The mining operation will remove material from 460 acres of land, and mine to a depth of 50 to 65 feet below the existing topography. This will result in the temporary removal of topsoil and could introduce instability along mining faces.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Geology and Soils* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion includes not only the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts, but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to Geology and Soils.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the City of Susanville issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the City's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

- *Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.*

Soils found on the project site were described previously under Section 4.8.1, *Environmental Setting.* The most common soil group within the project area is the Tunnison-Devada association, 2 to 9 percent slopes, comprised of very stony clay and clay. This soil group is well-drained with a very high runoff classification. The soils onsite are listed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as well-drained with no flooding or ponding concerns. The proposed quarry area does not contain expansive soils as defined in Table 18-1 B under the Uniform Building Code of 19941994, and the project does not propose any permanent structures or improvements that could be damaged by expansive soils. The proposed end use after mining activity is open space, which does not have the potential to be significantly impacted by expansive soils. The risks of injury, loss of life, or property would not be considered substantial, and no impact would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.8-1: Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?

Active faults are defined by the Alquist-Priolo Act as faults that exhibit evidence of surface rupture occurring within the last 11,000 years (SMGB, 1972). The quarry is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone established by the State. Because of this, the likelihood of faulting occurring across the quarry site is low (Bajada, 2023). A number of regional faults are present in the project area. The closest mapped fault to the site is the Holocene-Active and State-zoned Honey Lake Fault Zone, located approximately 8 miles southwest of the quarry site. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?

The Geotechnical Report (Bajada, 2023) prepared for the project contained probabilistic evaluations of horizontal strong ground motion that could affect the site (see Appendix F). Evaluations were performed using attenuation evaluation methods provided by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS, 2019). The evaluations were performed using an estimated shear wave velocity of 1,150 meters per second in the upper 100 feet of the profile. Evaluations were performed for upper-bound (UBE) and design-basis (DBE) probabilistic exposures. The UBE corresponds to horizontal ground accelerations having a 10 percent probability of exceedance in a 100-year exposure period, with a statistical return period of 949 years. The DBE corresponds to horizontal ground accelerations having a 10 percent probability of exceedance in a 50-year exposure period with a statistical return period of 475 years. Therefore, there is a 10 percent chance of strong seismic ground shaking during the lifetime of the project. The results of these evaluations are presented in Table 4-17. The proposed quarry area is not within a special studies zone associated with the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (AP). The project does not propose any permanent structures and would not be at any greater risk for strong seismic ground shaking than other similarly situated properties in the region. Therefore, the impact related to the risk of loss, injury, or death due to strong seismic ground shaking would be less than significant.

Table 4-17
PROBABILISTIC GROUND MOTION DATA

Earthquake Level	Probabilistic Estimate Exposure Period (years)	Probability of Exceedance (%)	Return Period (Years)	Estimated Peak Horizontal Ground Acceleration
Upper-Bound Ground-Motion	100	10	949	0.25
Design-Basis Ground-Motion	50	10	475	0.18

Source: Bajada, 2020.

iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Liquefaction is described as the sudden loss of soil shear strength due to a rapid increase in soil pore water pressures caused by cyclic loading from a seismic event. Liquefied soils act more like a fluid than a solid when shaken during an earthquake. For liquefaction to occur, a granular solid high groundwater table, and a low density in the granular soils underlying the site need to be present. If these factors are present, there is a potential that soils could liquefy during a seismic event. Most materials located within the proposed quarry area consist of volcanic rock. The volcanic rock materials are not subject to liquefaction. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

iv. Landslides?

Landslides are a movement of rock, earth, or debris down a sloped section of land, affecting the natural stability of the land. Landslides are caused by unstable slopes. Unstable slopes are caused by earthquakes, rain, volcanoes, and other factors. Areas that are prone to landslides include areas of old or existing landslides, the base of slopes, in drainage hollows, and at the base or top of steep cut slopes. The California Department of Conservation has created landslide maps for areas throughout California, and the proposed mine area is not within any of the mapped landslide areas. Soils in the project area are not prone to landslides, and the chances of a landslide are very low. No existing, past, or incipient landslides were observed within the project site.

The *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023) includes maximum recommended slope inclinations, slope heights, as well as bench recommendations for the quarry. As discussed in the Reclamation Plan, the upper quarry slope of the proposed mining area will be 1.5:1 (H:V) when exposing soil and 1:1(H:V) when exposing weathered bedrock. Remaining areas are to be sloped at 3:1 (H:V). Bench geometries for the quarry headwall will be limited to a maximum bench height of 40 feet, a minimum bench width of 23 feet, a maximum design bench face angle of 80 degrees, and a maximum overall slope angle of 53 degrees. Mining at the project site will be conducted per the recommendations contained in the *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023), prepared for the project area (refer to Appendix F), which will minimize the risk of landslides on cut faces. Impacts are considered less than significant with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

Impact 4.8-2: Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

The project site generally consists of rock at the surface with little topsoil. Topsoil that is present will be removed from mining areas as a separate layer and stockpiled. Topsoil removal will not precede mining by more than one year. Topsoil stockpiles will be maintained, identified, signed, and seeded or covered prior to reclamation.

The proposed project has the potential to cause localized erosion through actions such as excavation, vegetation clearing, and disturbing upland areas. Erosion control measures will be included in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) required for coverage under the Industrial General Permit. The SWPPP will be updated and amended based on operations and evolving site conditions. The SWPPP will include a minimum of the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce topsoil erosion:

- Diverting run-on from stockpile areas
- Planting vegetation/installing stabilizers as necessary

As described in the Reclamation Plan, the topsoil stockpiles will be protected from wind and water erosion by planting with an erosion control mix. BMPs for the control of dust included in the Reclamation Plan will also reduce erosion at the site. These include keeping stockpiles, work surfaces, and unpaved roads moist, providing earthen wind breaks, and placing fine aggregate stockpiles between coarse aggregate piles to screen from wind. The mining protocols and BMPs included in the Reclamation Plan and SWPPP will minimize soil erosion and loss of topsoil at the site. In compliance with the Mining and Reclamation Plan and regulatory requirements (e.g., Industrial General Permit), this impact will be less than significant.

Impact 4.8-3: Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

Liquefaction is described as the sudden loss of soil shear strength due to a rapid increase in soil pore water pressures caused by cyclic loading from a seismic event. In simple terms, it means that a liquefied soil acts more like a fluid than a solid when shaken during an earthquake. For liquefaction to occur, the following are needed:

- Granular soils (sand, silty sand, sandy silt, and some gravels);
- A high groundwater table; and
- A low density in the granular soils underlying the site.

If those criteria are present, then there is a potential that the soils could liquefy during a seismic event. The adverse effects of liquefaction include local and regional ground settlement; ground cracking and expulsion of water and sand; the partial or complete loss of bearing and confining forces used to support loads; amplification of seismic shaking; and lateral spreading. In general, the effects of liquefaction on the proposed project could include:

- Lateral spreading;
- Vertical settlement and/or the soils surrounding lifelines could lose their strength, and those lifelines can become damaged or severed.

Lateral spreading is defined as lateral earth movement of liquefied soils, or soil riding on a liquefied soil layer, downslope toward an unsupported slope face, such as a creek bank or an inclined slope face. In general, lateral spreading is observed on low to moderate gradient slopes but has been noted on slopes inclined as flat as one degree. Most materials located within the proposed quarry area consist of volcanic rock materials. As discussed above, the volcanic rock materials are not subject to liquefaction.

Onsite soils can be subject to collapse along mine faces as a result of excavation. The *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023), prepared for the project area (refer to Appendix F), included several operational considerations that will minimize the potential for collapse along mine faces. These measures have been adopted into the Mining and Reclamation Plan and are part of the project's current design. They include the following:

- Maximum vertical bench height: 40 feet
- Minimum bench width: 23 feet
- Maximum design bench face angle: 80 degrees
- Maximum overall slope angle: 53 degrees
- Presplitting all final rock faces
- Scaling of blasted rock faces to remove loose rocks
- Maintenance of a 25-foot wide offset barrier from all inactive rock faces
- Complete daily inspections of rock faces
- Controlled blasting
- Geotechnical monitoring, and
- Bench scaling

With the incorporation of the geotechnical recommendations into the project design and Reclamation Plan, Impact 4.8-3 will be less than significant.

Impact 4.8-4: Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.

Wastewater generated from industrial processes onsite, such as gravel washing, will be contained within the proposed 0.4-acre wash pond. This water will be allowed to infiltrate, be recycled onsite for dust control, or be discharged under *State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ XXXX-XXXX-DWQ General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities*. Onsite soils are well-drained and will allow infiltration of wastewater from the wash pond. The pond will be permitted to discharge to the adjacent pasture if unable to infiltrate in accordance with all SWRCB requirements.

The operation will use a combination of portable chemical toilets and an installed septic system for wastewater generated by employees. An onsite septic system will be designed and installed in accordance with Lassen County Liquid Waste Program septic requirements and approvals. The mine operator will apply for and receive a sewage disposal permit from the Lassen County Environmental Health Department for any septic systems installed. Impacts will be less than significant in this regard.

Impact 4.8-5: Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

The proposed quarry would result in a significant impact to paleontological resources if it would directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or a unique geologic feature. There are no known paleontological resources or unique geologic features present in the proposed mining and reclamation area. However, there is a chance that unknown paleontological resources may exist below the ground surface and could be encountered during mining and reclamation activities. Site bedrock consists entirely of the Antelope Mountain Andesite. This is a Miocene-age mixed flow and pyroclastic unit of andesitic composition. The upper portion is primarily composed of monolithic brecciated andesite flows with intercalated polylithic lahars and minor tuff interbeds. The lower portion of the unit consists of platy to massive andesite flows. Total

thickness is estimated at greater than 2,000 feet (Grose et al, 2014, and references therein). Because the site lithology consists entirely of extrusive andesitic rocks, primarily massive flows, the potential occurrence of fossils or other paleontological resources is unlikely. No probable host units for paleontological resources occur in the site vicinity, and because of the thickness of the andesite bedrock, none are likely to be exposed over the course of mining operations (Grose and Porro, 1989).

Project implementation would result in a significant impact if paleontological resources were directly or indirectly destroyed during activities at the Project site. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.8-1, which requires the suspension of work if any paleontological resources are found onsite, followed by evaluation by the county, would reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

4.8.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measure is included for potentially significant impacts to unique paleontological resources:

4.8-1: If any potentially unique paleontological resources (fossils) are encountered during development activities, work shall be suspended, and the County shall be immediately notified. At that time, the County will coordinate any necessary investigation of the discovery with a qualified paleontologist. The mine operator shall be required to implement the mitigation necessary for the protection of paleontological resources. Such measures may include avoidance, preservation in place, excavation, documentation, curation, data recovery, or other appropriate measures.

4.8-2: During mining and reclamation, the operator shall conduct all mining operations and implement slope design as set forth in *The Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023), found at Appendix F of this DEIR, to reduce the likelihood of slope failure along working and final slopes. Any changes to the operational or final faces or slopes shall be evaluated by a qualified geotechnical engineer who shall produce an amended geotechnical report, which shall be submitted to the county for approval.

4.8.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

4.9 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This section provides a summary of the greenhouse gas (GHG) setting and regulations, and an analysis of the potential GHG impacts of the proposed project. Much of the information in this section is based on the Greenhouse Gas Analysis contained in the *Air Quality Technical Report for the Hat Creek Skyline Aggregates,* prepared by RCH Group in November 2025 (refer to Appendix D, *Air Quality Technical Report*).

4.9.1 Environmental Setting

"Global warming" and "global climate change" are the terms used to describe the increase in the average temperature of the Earth's near-surface air and oceans since the mid-20th century and its projected continuation. Warming of the climate system is now considered to be unequivocal, with global surface temperature increasing approximately 1.33 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) over the last 100 years. Continued warming is projected to increase global average temperature between 2 and 11°F over the next 100 years.

Natural processes and human actions have been identified as the primary causes of this warming. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that variations in natural phenomena such as solar radiation and volcanoes produced most of the warming from pre-industrial times to 1950 and had a small cooling effect afterward (IPCC, 2014). After 1950, however, increasing GHG concentrations resulting from human activity such as fossil fuel burning and deforestation, have been responsible for most of the observed temperature increase. These basic conclusions have been endorsed by more than 45 scientific societies and academies of science, including all of the national academies of science of the major industrialized countries. Since 2007, no scientific body of national or international standing has maintained a dissenting opinion.

Potential global warming impacts in California may include, but are not limited to, loss in snowpack and water supply, sea level rise, coastal flooding, and coastal erosion, higher risk of wildfires, damage to agriculture, increased demand for electricity, habitat destruction and loss of ecosystems, and public health impacts (increased smog generation and rise in extreme heat events) (State of California Department of Justice, 2023).

Increases in GHG concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere are thought to be the main cause of human-induced climate change. The IPCC is now 95 percent certain that humans are the main cause of current global warming (IPCC, 2014). GHG naturally traps heat by impeding the exit of solar radiation that has hit the Earth and is reflected back into space. Some GHG occur naturally and are necessary for keeping the Earth's surface habitable. However, increases in the concentrations of these gases in the atmosphere during the last 100 years have decreased the amount of solar radiation that is reflected back into space, intensifying the natural greenhouse effect and resulting in the increase of global average temperature.

Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are referred to as GHG because they capture heat radiated from the sun as it is reflected back into the atmosphere, much like a greenhouse does. The accumulation of GHG has been implicated as the driving force for global climate change. The primary GHGs are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), ozone, and water vapor.

While the presence of the primary GHG in the atmosphere is naturally occurring, CO_2, CH_4, and N_2O are also emitted from human activities, accelerating the rate at which these compounds occur within Earth's atmosphere. Emissions of CO_2 are largely by-products of fossil fuel combustion, whereas methane results from off-gassing associated with agricultural practices, coal mines, and landfills. Other GHGs include hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride, which are generated in certain industrial processes.

CO_2 is the reference gas for climate change because it is the predominant GHG emitted. The effect that each of the aforementioned gases can have on global warming is a combination of the mass of their emissions and their global warming potential (GWP). GWP indicates, on a pound-for-pound basis, how much a gas is predicted to contribute to global warming relative to how much warming would be predicted to be caused by the same mass of CO_2. CH4 and N_2O are substantially more potent GHGs than CO_2, with GWP of 28 and 265 times that of CO_2, respectively (IPCC, 2014).

In emissions inventories, GHG emissions are typically reported in terms of pounds or metric tons (MT) of CO_2 equivalents (CO_2e). CO_2e is calculated as the product of the mass emitted of a given GHG and its specific GWP. While CH_4 and N_2O have much higher GWP than CO_2, CO_2 is emitted in such vastly higher quantities that it accounts for the majority of GHG emissions in CO_2e.

Greenhouse Gas Regional Emission Estimates

In 2022, the United States emitted about 6,343 million metric tons of CO_2e or 5,489 million metric tons of CO_2e after accounting for sequestration from the land sector. Emissions increased in 2022 by 1 percent. The increase in total GHG emissions was driven largely by an increase in CO_2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion. In 2022, CO_2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion increased by 1 percent compared to the previous year. This increase in fossil fuel consumption emissions was due in part to the continued rebound in economic activity after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (US EPA, 2024).

According to USEPA, net emissions were 17 percent below 2005 levels. The recent decline is mostly due to a shift to less CO_2-intensive natural gas for generating electricity and a rapid increase in the use of renewable energy in the electric power sector. Transportation activities accounted for 28 percent of total GHG emissions in 2022. Emissions from electric power accounted for the second largest portion (25 percent), while emissions from industry accounted for the third largest portion (23 percent) of total GHG in 2022 (US EPA, 2024).

In 2022, California emitted approximately 371 million metric tons of CO_2e, 9.3 million metric tons of CO_2e lower than 2021 levels and 60 million metric tons of CO_2e below the 2020 GHG limit of 431 million metric tons of CO_2e. The transportation sector represents 39 percent of the total GHG emissions. The industrial sector represents 23 percent of the total GHG emissions, followed by electricity (11 percent), and residential, agricultural, and commercial (8, 8, and 6 percent, respectively) (CARB, 2024).

4.9.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of State and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

California Environmental Quality Act and Climate Change
Under CEQA, lead agencies are required to disclose the reasonably foreseeable adverse environmental effects of projects they are considering for approval. GHG emissions have the potential to affect the environment because they contribute to global climate change. In turn,

global climate change has the potential to cause the sea level to rise, alter rainfall and snowfall patterns, and affect habitat.

California Code of Regulations, Title 24

Although not originally intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, Part 6: California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings, was first established in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to reduce California's energy consumption. The standards are updated periodically to allow for the consideration and possible incorporation of new energy efficiency technologies and methods. Energy-efficient buildings require less electricity, natural gas, and other fuels. Electricity production from fossil fuels and onsite fuel combustion (typically for water heating) results in GHG emissions. Therefore, increased energy efficiency results in decreased GHG emissions.

Accordingly, Title 24 in the CAL Green Building Code is now a part of the statewide strategy for reducing GHG emissions and is the only statewide plan for the reduction of GHG emissions that every local agency must adopt in a public hearing by adopting the state building code. Consistent with CAL Green, the state recognized that GHG reductions would be achieved through buildings that exceed minimum energy-efficiency standards, decrease consumption of potable water, reduce solid waste during construction and operation, and incorporate sustainable materials. Compliance with Title 24 of the CAL Green Building Code is thus a vehicle to achieve statewide electricity and natural gas efficiency targets and lower GHG emissions from waste and water transport sectors.

Pavley Standards

California AB 1493 (Pavley), enacted on July 22, 2002, required the CARB to develop and adopt regulations that reduce greenhouse gases emitted by passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks for model years 2009–2016, which are often referred to as the "Pavley I" standards. The CARB obtained a waiver from the USEPA that allows for implementation of these regulations notwithstanding possible federal preemption concerns.

Executive Order S-3-05

Governor Schwarzenegger established Executive Order S-3-05 in 2005, in recognition of California's vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Executive Order S-3-05 set forth a series of target dates by which statewide emissions of GHG would be progressively reduced, as follows:

- By 2010, reduce GHG emissions to 2000 levels;
- By 2020, reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels; and
- By 2050, reduce GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

The executive order directed the Secretary of CalEPA to coordinate a multi-agency effort to reduce GHG emissions to the target levels. The Secretary will also submit biannual reports to the governor and California Legislature describing the progress made toward the emissions targets, the impacts of global climate change on California's resources, and mitigation and adaptation plans to combat these impacts. To comply with the executive order, the secretary of CalEPA created the California Climate Action Team, made up of members from various state agencies and commissions. The report proposed to achieve the targets by building on the voluntary actions of California businesses, local governments, and communities, and through state incentive and regulatory programs.

Assembly Bill 32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006)
California passed the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32; California Health and Safety Code Division 25.5, Sections 38500 - 38599). AB 32 established regulatory, reporting, and market mechanisms to achieve quantifiable reductions in GHG emissions and establishes a cap on statewide GHG emissions. AB 32 required that statewide GHG emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020. This reduction was to be accomplished by enforcing a statewide cap on GHG emissions that was to be phased in starting in 2012. To effectively implement the cap, AB 32 directed CARB to develop and implement regulations to reduce statewide GHG emissions from stationary sources. AB 32 specified that regulations adopted in response to AB 1493 were used to address GHG emissions from vehicles. However, AB 32 also included language stating that if the AB 1493 regulations cannot be implemented, then CARB was to develop new regulations to control vehicle GHG emissions under the authorization of AB 32.

AB 32 required CARB to adopt a quantified cap on GHG emissions representing 1990 emissions levels and disclose how it arrived at the cap; institute a schedule to meet the cap; and develop tracking, reporting, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the state reduces GHG emissions enough to meet the cap. AB 32 also includes guidance on instituting emissions reductions in an economically efficient manner, along with conditions to ensure that businesses and consumers are not unfairly affected by the reductions. Pursuant to AB 32, CARB identified 427 million MT CO_2e as the total statewide aggregated 1990 GHG emissions level, which serves as the 2020 emissions limit. Using these criteria to reduce statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 represented an approximate 25 to 30 percent reduction in current emissions levels. However, CARB also had discretionary authority to seek greater reductions in more significant and growing GHG sectors, such as transportation, as compared to other sectors that are not expected to significantly increase emissions. The goals of AB 32 were achieved within the 2002 timeline.

Climate Change Scoping Plans
AB 32 also required CARB to develop a Scoping Plan that describes the approach California will take to reduce GHG to achieve the goal of reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The Scoping Plan was first approved by CARB in 2008 and must be updated every five years. The initial AB 32 Scoping Plan contains the main strategies California will use to reduce the GHG that cause climate change. The initial Scoping Plan has a range of GHG reduction actions, which include direct regulations, alternative compliance mechanisms, monetary and non-monetary incentives, voluntary actions, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade system, and an AB 32 program implementation fee regulation to fund the program. In August 2011, the initial Scoping Plan was approved by CARB.

The 2013 Scoping Plan Update builds upon the initial Scoping Plan with new strategies and recommendations. The 2013 Update identifies opportunities to leverage existing and new funds to further drive GHG emission reductions through strategic planning and targeted low-carbon investments. The 2013 Update defines CARB climate change priorities for the next five years and sets the groundwork to reach California's long-term climate goals set forth in Executive Orders S-3-05 and B-16-2012. The 2013 Update highlights California's progress toward meeting the near-term 2020 GHG emission reduction goals defined in the initial Scoping Plan. In the 2013 Update, nine key focus areas were identified (energy, transportation, agriculture, water, waste management, and natural and working lands), along with short-lived climate pollutants, green buildings, and the cap-and-trade program.

On May 22, 2014, the First Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan was approved by the Board, along with the finalized environmental documents. The First Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan identified the 2020 emissions limit as 431 million metric tons of CO_2e and the 2020 business-as-usual forecast as 509 million metric tons of CO_2e. Finally, the Updated Scoping Plan provided recommendations for establishing a mid-term emissions limit that aligns with the long-term (2050) goals of Executive Order S-3-05. The recommendations covered energy, transportation, agriculture, water, waste management, natural and working lands, short-lived climate pollutants, green building, and cap-and-trade sectors.

In 2017, CARB approved the Second Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan (2017 Scoping Plan). The 2017 Scoping Plan identified progress made to meet the near-term (2020) objectives of AB 32 and defined California's climate change priorities and activities for the next several years. The 2017 Scoping Plan identified the 2020 emissions limit as 431 million metric tons of CO_2e and the 2020 business-as-usual forecast as 509 million metric tons of CO_2e. The 2017 Scoping Plan provided strategies for meeting the mid-term 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target set by Senate Bill (SB) 32. The 2017 Scoping Plan also identified how the State can substantially advance toward the 2050 greenhouse gas reduction target of Executive Order S-3-05, which consists of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels. The recommendations covered the key sectors, including energy and industry, transportation, natural and working lands, waste management, and water.

In 2022, CARB approved the Third Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan (2022 Scoping Plan), which lays out a path to achieve targets for carbon neutrality and reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels no later than 2045, as directed by Assembly Bill 1279. The 2022 Scoping Plan:

- Identifies a path to keep California on track to meet its SB 32 GHG reduction target of at least 40 percent below 1990 emissions by 2030.
- Identifies a technologically feasible, cost-effective path to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 and a reduction in anthropogenic emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels.
- Focuses on strategies for reducing California's dependency on petroleum to provide consumers with clean energy options that address climate change, improve air quality, and support economic growth and clean sector jobs.
- Integrates equity and protecting California's most impacted communities as driving principles throughout the document.
- Incorporates the contribution of natural and working lands to the state's GHG emissions, as well as their role in achieving carbon neutrality.
- Relies on the most up-to-date science, including the need to deploy all viable tools to address the existential threat that climate change presents, including carbon capture and sequestration, as well as direct air capture.
- Evaluates the substantial health and economic benefits of taking action.
- Identifies key implementation actions to ensure success.

The recommended measures in the 2022 Scoping Plan and previous Scoping Plans are broad policy and regulatory initiatives that will be implemented at the State level and do not relate to the construction and operation of individual projects.

Federal Vehicle Standards
In 2011, the USEPA announced fuel economy and GHG standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks for model years 2014 through 2018. The standards for CO_2 emissions and fuel consumption are tailored to three main vehicle categories: combination tractors, heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans, and vocational vehicles. According to the USEPA, this regulatory program will reduce GHG emissions and fuel consumption for the vehicles affected by 6 to 23 percent over the 2010 baselines.

In August 2016, the USEPA announced the adoption of the phase two program related to the fuel economy and GHG standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks. The phase two program will apply to vehicles with model year 2018 through 2027 for certain trailers, and model years 2021 through 2027 for semi-trucks, large pickup trucks, vans, and all types and sizes of buses and work trucks. The final standards are expected to lower CO_2 emissions by approximately 1.1 billion metric tons and reduce oil consumption by up to 2 billion barrels over the lifetime of the vehicles sold under the program. On September 27, 2019, the USEPA and the NHTSA published the "Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule Part One: One National Program." (84 Fed. Reg. 51,310 (Sept. 27, 2019.) The Part One Rule revokes California's authority to set its own GHG emissions standards and set zero-emission vehicle mandates in California. On March 31, 2020, the USEPA finalized rulemaking for SAFE Part Two, which sets CO_2 emissions standards and corporate average fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks, covering model years 2021 through 2026.

Lassen County Climate Changes and Health Profile Report
Lasses County and the California Department of Public Health have developed a Climate Change and Health Profile Report which seeks to provide a county-level summary of information on current and projected risks from climate change and potential health impacts. The report represents a synthesis of information on climate change and health for California communities based on recently published reports of state agencies and other public data. The report presents projections for county and regional climate impacts, the climate-related health risks, and local populations that could be vulnerable to climate effects. The goal of public health adaptation strategies is to minimize the negative health impacts of climate change, including the promotion of community resilience to climate change to reduce vulnerability, identification and promotion of mitigation and adaptation strategies with public health co-benefits, and the conducting of applied research to enable enhanced promotion and protection of human health. The report does not include specific measures to reduce GHG emissions.

4.9.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the

nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Greenhouse Gases* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.*
- *Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.*

At this time, neither the Lassen County APCD nor Lassen County itself has adopted numerical thresholds of significance for GHG emissions that would apply to the proposed project. Additionally, neither Lassen County APCD nor Lassen County has an adopted regional-specific plan for reducing GHG emissions. Lassen County recommends that all projects subject to CEQA review be considered in the context of GHG emissions and climate change impacts, and that CEQA documents include a quantification of GHG emissions from all project sources, as well as minimizing and mitigating GHG emissions as feasible.

In light of the lack of established GHG emissions thresholds that would apply to the proposed project, CEQA allows lead agencies to identify thresholds of significance applicable to a project that are supported by substantial evidence. Substantial evidence is defined in the CEQA statute to mean "facts, reasonable assumption predicated on facts, and expert opinion supported by facts" (14 CCR 15384(b)). Substantial evidence can be in the form of technical studies, agency staff reports or opinions, expert opinions supported by facts, and prior CEQA assessments and planning documents. Therefore, to establish additional context in which to consider the order of magnitude of the proposed project's GHG emissions, this analysis accounts for the following considerations by other government agencies and associations about what amount of project-level GHG emissions constitutes a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution to climate change:

- Bay Area Air Quality Management District's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines, Appendix A: Threshold of Significance Justification, provides further background for a threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO2e per year for stationary source/industrial operations (BAAQMD, 2023).
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD) established thresholds, including 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year for construction, 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year for non-industrial operations, and 10,000 direct metric tons of CO_2e per year from stationary source/industrial operations (SMAQMD, 2020).
- Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCAPCD) recommends a tiered approach to determine if a project's GHG emissions would result in a significant impact. First, project GHG emissions are compared to the de minimis level of 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year. If a project does not exceed this threshold, it does not have significant GHG emissions. If the project exceeds the de minimis level and does not exceed the 10,000 metric tons of CO_2 per year bright line threshold, then the project's GHG can be compared to the efficiency thresholds. These thresholds are 4.5 metric tons of CO_2e per capita for residential projects in an urban area, and 5.5 metric tons of CO2e per capita for residential projects in a rural area. For nonresidential development, the thresholds are 26.5 metric tons of CO_2e per 1,000 square feet for projects in urban areas, and 27.3 metric tons

of CO_2e per 1,000 square feet for projects in rural areas. The PCAPCD bright-line GHG threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year is also applied to land use project's construction and operational phases. Generally, GHG emissions from a project that exceed 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year would be deemed to have a cumulatively considerable contribution to global climate change (PCAPCD, 2017).

- South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) formed a GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Working Group to work with SCAQMD staff on developing GHG CEQA significance thresholds until statewide significance thresholds or guidelines are established. The SCAQMD adopted an interim 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per-year screening level threshold for stationary source/industrial projects for which the SCAQMD is the lead agency (SCAQMD Resolution No. 08-35, December 5, 2008).
- USEPA's Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gases rule generally applies to facilities emitting 25,000 metric tons of CO_2e or more annually. California's Mandatory GHG Emissions Reporting requires major emitters that exceed 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e annually to report.
- Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District *CEQA and Federal Conformity Guidelines* contain a significance threshold of 100,000 short tons of CO_2e per year (90,718 metric tons of CO_2e per year) (MDAQMD, 2020).

As described, a 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year threshold for construction activities and a 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year threshold for stationary source/industrial operations are used by several air districts in the State (for example, SMAQMD, PCAPCD, and SCAQMD) for determining the significance of project-level industrial and/or stationary source GHG emissions. Therefore, the proposed project's GHG emissions were compared to the 1,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year for construction activities (i.e., off-road equipment and haul trucks) and the 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year quantitative threshold for operations (i.e., diesel generators, asphalt plant, mobile equipment, haul trucks, etc.). The substantial evidence for this GHG emissions threshold is based on the expert opinion of various California air districts, which have applied the 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year and 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year thresholds in numerous CEQA documents where those air districts were the lead agency.

CAPCOA's CEQA and Climate Change indicated that stationary source significance thresholds could be developed by establishing a threshold that ensures 90 percent of the GHG emissions from projects are reviewed and assessed to determine whether additional mitigation is necessary. The Bay Area, South Coast, and San Luis Obispo air districts utilized a minimum of 90 percent emissions rate to set their stationary source thresholds at 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year. Therefore, the use of this threshold is justified by other precedents.

4.9.4 Impact Analysis

The GHG analysis of this impact includes two primary areas of focus. The first area of focus in this impact analysis is the quantification and disclosure of the anticipated GHG emissions that would result from the operation of the proposed project. GHGs have been quantified to show the extent to which the proposed project may increase GHGs as compared to the existing environmental setting.

The second area of focus is the proposed project's consistency with applicable statewide regulations and programs adopted to achieve state and regional reductions in GHG emissions. As described previously in this section, a numerical threshold of significance for GHG emissions has not been established by Lassen County. Rather, Lassen County has determined that the appropriate threshold of significance for this Project is the current guidance of 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year for construction and 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year for operations and, in so doing, has determined that this value is consistent with applicable regulations and programs.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

Estimated annual diesel fuel usage for the proposed project (off-road equipment, generators, and haul trucks) is 137,220 gallons. The estimated annual gasoline fuel usage (employee vehicles) for the proposed project is 5,945 gallons. Estimated annual propane or natural gas fuel usage (City of Susanville) for the proposed project is 1.076 million gallons of propane or 128 million cubic feet of natural gas, respectively. The estimated annual electrical usage (Lassen Municipal Utilities District) for the proposed project is 11,787 megawatt-hours (MWh). An emission factor of 453 pounds of CO_2e per MW-hour (Lassen Municipal Utilities District via CalEEMod) was used in determining CO_2e production from electrical usage.

Impact 4.9-1: Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.

The Air Quality Technical Report (refer to Appendix D) includes estimates of the proposed project's estimated operational GHG emissions. The estimated annual GHG emissions are included in Table 4-18. The estimated proposed project construction GHG emissions are 613 metric tons of CO_2e. The 30-year amortized construction GHG emissions are 20 metric tons of CO_2e, which is below the significance threshold of 1,1000 metric tons of CO_2e. The estimated GHG operational mobile emissions would be approximately 1,032 metric tons of CO_2e, and the estimated GHG operational stationary source emissions would be approximately 8,824 metric tons of CO_2e. The estimated total GHG operational emissions would be approximately 9,856 metric tons of CO_2e. Therefore, the project's GHG emissions are below the significance threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e.

Emissions of GHG were quantified for both the construction and operation of the project. The project's GHG emissions would be below the significance threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year, which is consistent with the goals of AB 32 and SB 32, as stated previously. Therefore, the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable global climate change impact.

Table 4-18 ANNUAL OPERATIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (METRIC TONS)	
Emission Source	**Annual CO2e Metric Tons**
Onsite Equipment	207
Generators	414
Employee Vehicles	53
Haul Trucks	772
Electrical Usage	2,423
Propane or Natural Gas Usage	5,987
Grand Total	**9,856**
Total (Mobile)	**1,032**
Total Stationary Sources)	**8,824**
Significance Threshold	10,000
Exceeds Threshold?	**No**
Source: RCH Group, 2023.	

Impact 4.9-2: Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

As noted, neither Lassen County APCD nor Lassen County has adopted a regional-specific plan for reducing GHG emissions. As discussed under Impact 4.9-1, GHG emissions generated by the proposed project would not surpass the significance thresholds 1,100 metric tons of CO_2e per year for construction and 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year for operations, which is consistent with the goals of AB 32 and SB 32, as stated previously. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with any applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHG. Therefore, the impacts would be less than significant associated with GHG emissions.

The proposed project would not conflict with any applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHG. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact on GHG emissions, and the project would have no impact from conflict with regulations or the referenced plan for reducing GHG emissions.

While the proposed project is subject to compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill [AB] 32), the proposed project-generated GHG emissions would not surpass GHG significance thresholds, which were prepared with the purpose of complying with the requirements of AB 32. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with AB 32.

The 2022 Scoping Plan is implemented at the State level, and compliance at a specific plan or project level is not addressed in the Plan. The project would use vehicles and equipment that would meet current standards at the time of construction and operation and would not conflict with the statewide programs designed to address GHG emissions reduction goals. The project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions and would have a less than significant impact on GHG emissions.

CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan extends and expands upon earlier scoping plans with a target of reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions to 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The 2022

Scoping Plan's strategies that are applicable to the proposed project include reducing fossil fuel use, energy demand, and VMT. The actions and outcomes in the plan will achieve significant reductions in fossil fuel combustion by deploying clean technologies and fuels, further reductions in short-lived climate pollutants, support for sustainable development, increased action on natural and working lands to reduce emissions and sequester carbon, and the capture and storage of carbon.

Best Management Practice GHG-1
The applicant would incorporate the following best management practices to reduce GHG emissions as components of the project:

- Require all diesel-fueled off-road equipment to be equipped with USEPA Tier 4 Final-compliant engines or better.
- Minimize idling time either by shutting down off-road equipment when not in use or reducing the time of idling to no more than two minutes (A five-minute limit is required by the state airborne toxics control measure [Title 13, Sections 2449(d)(3) and 2485, CCR]). Provide clear signage that posts this requirement for workers at the entrances to the project site and develop an enforceable mechanism to monitor idling time to ensure compliance with this measure.
- Require all equipment to be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. Equipment shall be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.
- Develop a plan to efficiently use water for adequate dust control since substantial amounts of energy can be consumed during the pumping of water.
- Include all requirements in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts, with successful contractors demonstrating the ability to supply the compliant on- or off-road equipment for use prior to any ground-disturbing and construction activities.

Annual GHG Verification Report. The project applicant shall prepare an Annual GHG Verification Report, which shall be submitted to the Lassen County Planning Department, in the first quarter of each calendar year following the commencement of project operations. The Annual GHG Verification Report shall estimate the project's GHG emissions for the previous calendar year based on natural gas usage and operational data, and using appropriate emissions factors for that year, and determine whether additional offset credits or other measures are needed for the project to result in insignificant GHG emissions. The Annual GHG Verification Report shall be verified by a qualified, independent expert entity retained at the project applicant's expense. GHG offset credits to achieve insignificant GHG emissions for the previous calendar year, if necessary, shall be purchased with the submission of the Annual GHG Verification Report.

The proposed project would be consistent with the applicable strategies in the 2022 Scoping Plan, adopted for the purposes of reducing GHG emissions. These strategies address the project's incremental contribution to climate change, and thus, the project's incremental contribution is not cumulatively considerable. These standards are intended to encourage more sustainable and environmentally friendly building practices, including the conservation of natural resources and the use of energy-efficient materials and equipment. In addition, the proposed project would be served by Lassen Municipal Utility District, which is required to increase its renewable energy

procurement in accordance with SB 100 targets, and thus, the GHG emissions associated with electricity would be lower in the future.

In addition, the proposed project would co-locate an aggregate processing plant and asphalt, which provides for greater efficiency of production. The proposed project would also be located nearer to road construction projects than existing similar facilities, which also provides for lower haul truck trip distances. The project operations associated with the concrete plant and aggregate plant would be powered by electricity instead of primary diesel generators.

With the implementation of Best Management Practice GHG-1, project activities would utilize fuel-efficient equipment and trucks consistent with state regulations and would be consistent with state regulations intended to reduce the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy, such as anti-idling and emissions regulations.

As documented within this impact analysis, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions, and overall impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.9.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.10 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

This section provides a brief summary of hazards and hazardous materials at the project site, a summary of applicable regulations related to hazards and hazardous materials, and a discussion of hazards and hazardous materials impacts resulting from the implementation of the project.

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is currently undeveloped, and hazardous materials are not used or stored on the project site. Based on a search of: the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) *Envirostor database*, The State Water Boards *Geo Tracker Database*, The State Water *Board List of Sites Identified with Waste Constituents Above Hazardous Waste Levels Outside the Waste Management Unit*, The State Water board *List of "Active" CDO and CAO,* and The DTSC *List of hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action pursuant to Section 25187.5 of the Health and Safety Code*, no cleanup or permitted hazardous waste facilities or sites occur within the Project site or adjacent to the site. Nearby cleanup sites include a cleanup evaluation at a Chevron site at the intersection of Johnsonville and Commercial Road, and an inactive school cleanup at 55 South Weatherslow Street in Susanville. LUST (Leaking Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Sites) sites are common along Highway 36 and to the south along Commercial Road. No LUST sites are located within or directly adjacent to the project site.

The project site is located within a tax rate area (080-004), which falls under the jurisdiction of the Susan River Fire Protection District. Based on the map of *Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the State Responsibility Area in Lassen County,* adopted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) on November 7, 2007, the site is located in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Fire Hazard Severity Zones and State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) are illustrated in Figures 4-8 and 4-9.

4.10.2 Regulatory Setting

A hazardous material is a substance or combination of substances which, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics, may either (1) cause or significantly contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious, irreversible, or incapacitating irreversible illness; or (2) pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health and safety, or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, or disposed of (22 CCR 5 662.60.10).

Hazardous waste is a subset of hazardous materials that have been abandoned, discarded, or recycled and are not properly contained, including contaminated soil or groundwater with concentrations of chemicals, infectious agents, or toxic elements sufficiently high to increase human mortality or to destroy the ecological environment. If a hazardous material is spilled and cannot be effectively picked up and used as a product, it is considered to be hazardous waste. If a hazardous material site is unused, and it is obvious there is no realistic intent to use the material, it is also considered to be a hazardous waste. Examples of hazardous materials include flammable and combustible materials, corrosives, explosives, oxidizers, poisons, materials that react violently with water, radioactive materials, and chemicals.

Various federal and state agencies exercise regulatory authority over the use, generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous substances. The primary federal agencies that are responsible for overseeing regulations and policies regarding hazardous materials are the Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The primary California state agency with similar authority and responsibility is the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA), which may delegate enforcement authority to other local agencies with which it has agreements.

Several laws governing the transport, storage, and use of hazardous materials are enforced by these agencies, as well as oversight for contaminated cleanup sites. Federal laws and regulations, as well as specific legislation and policies related to hazards and hazardous materials are summarized below.

Federal

Code of Federal Regulations

Federal regulations applicable to hazardous substances are contained primarily in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Titles 29 (Labor), 40 (Protection of Environment), and 49 (Transportation). The applicable CFR titles include standards and provisions for the protection of

workers, the natural environment, and the general public from the effects associated with the use, storage, and transport of hazardous materials.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

The 1976 Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the 1984 RCRA Amendments regulate the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous wastes. The legislation mandated that hazardous wastes be tracked from the point of generation to their ultimate fate in the environment. This includes detailed tracking of hazardous materials during transport and permitting of hazardous material handling facilities.

The 1984 RCRA amendments provided the framework for a regulatory program designed to prevent releases from underground storage tanks (USTs). The program establishes tank and leak detection standards, including spill and overflow protection devices for new tanks. The tanks must also meet performance standards to ensure that the stored material will not corrode the tanks. Owners and operators of USTs had until December 1998 to meet the new tank standards. As of 2001, an estimated 85 percent of USTs complied with the required standards.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) introduced active federal involvement in emergency response, site remediation, and spill prevention, most notably the Superfund program. CERCLA was intended to be comprehensive in encompassing both the prevention of, and response to, uncontrolled hazardous substance releases. CERCLA deals with environmental response, providing mechanisms for reacting to emergencies and to chronic hazardous material releases. In addition to establishing procedures to prevent and remedy problems, it establishes a system for compensating appropriate individuals and assigning appropriate liability.

State

The primary state agencies that are responsible for overseeing regulations and policies regarding hazardous materials are the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES), California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA), CalRecycle (formerly the California Integrated Waste Management Board (IWMB), Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB), and the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Several laws governing the generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials are administered by these agencies. State laws and regulations that are applicable to hazards and hazardous materials are presented below.

Hazardous Materials Management

The Cal-EPA has established regulations governing the use of hazardous materials in the state. Within Cal-EPA, the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) has primary hazardous materials regulatory responsibility but can delegate enforcement responsibilities to local jurisdictions that enter into agreements with DTSC for the generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials under the authority of the Hazardous Waste Control Law (HWCL). State regulations applicable to hazardous materials are contained primarily in Title 22 of the CCR. Title 26 of the CCR is a compilation of those chapters or titles of the CCR that are applicable to hazardous materials management.

Also, within the "umbrella" of Cal-EPA, CalRecycle (formerly the California Integrated Waste Management Board (IWMB)) is responsible for protecting the public's health and safety and the environment through management of the solid waste generated in California. Solid waste regulations are generally enforced through local enforcement agencies (usually county agencies). CalRecycle works in partnership with local government, industry, and the public to reduce waste disposal and ensure environmentally safe landfills. Solid waste management provisions are outlined in the Public Resources Code (PRC), Division 30.

The CHP and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) are the enforcement agencies for hazardous materials transportation regulations. The California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) standards are more stringent than federal OSHA regulations. Cal/OSHA assumes primary responsibility for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations in Title 8 of the CCR.

Cal-OES is the State office responsible for establishing emergency response and spill notification plans related to hazardous materials accidents. In addition, Cal-OES regulates businesses by requiring specific businesses to prepare an inventory of hazardous materials and to prepare risk management plans through the California Accidental Release Prevention Program (Title 19 of the CCR).

The RWQCB regulates surface and groundwater quality according to the provisions of the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act, the Toxic Pits Cleanup Act, the Underground Tank Law, and the federal Clean Water Act. Generally, all petroleum-related sites are handled by the RWQCBs, and all underground tank sites are managed by County environmental management agencies. The project site is located within the jurisdiction of the Lahontan RWQCB (Region 6). The RWQCB can delegate responsibilities, such as underground tank permitting and monitoring, to local jurisdictions, such as Lassen County.

Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program

In January 1996, Cal-EPA adopted regulations implementing a "Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program" (Unified Program). The six elements of the Unified Program are as follows: 1) hazardous waste generators and hazardous waste onsite treatment; 2) underground storage tanks; 3) aboveground storage tanks; 4) hazardous material release response plans and inventories; 5) risk management and prevention programs; and 6) Unified Fire Code hazardous materials management plans and inventories. The Unified Program is implemented at the local level by a local agency – the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). The CUPA is responsible for consolidating the administration of the six program elements within its jurisdiction. The Lassen County Environmental Health Department is the designated CUPA in the County.

Emergency Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents

To coordinate emergency services provided by local, state, and federal agencies, California has developed an Emergency Response Plan pursuant to the Emergency Services Act. The Plan is administered by the state Office of Emergency Services. Local agencies are required to develop area plans for an organized response to releases of hazardous materials that are dependent on Business Plans submitted by handlers of hazardous materials and waste within that agency's area. Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code, Section 25503(a) and CCR Section 2729, any

business handling hazardous material must establish and implement a Hazardous Materials Business Plan. These Business Plans are then submitted to the local administering agency.

California Health and Safety Code

Cal-EPA has established rules governing the use of hazardous materials and the management of hazardous wastes. Many of these regulations are embodied in the California Health and Safety Code. The code includes regulations that govern safe drinking water, substance control, land reuse and revitalization, remediation, restoration, and methamphetamine-contaminated cleanups.

California Code of Regulations, Title 22 and Title 26

CCR Title 22 provides state regulations for hazardous materials, and CCR Title 26 provides regulations of hazardous materials management. In 1996, Cal/EPA established the "Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program" (Unified Program), which consolidated the six administrative components of hazardous waste and materials into one program.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CAL FIRE protects the people of California from fires, responds to emergencies, and protects and enhances forest, range, and watershed values, providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to rural and urban citizens. The Office of the State Fire Marshal supports CAL FIRE's mission by focusing on fire prevention. It provides support through a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities including by regulating buildings in which people live, congregate, or are confined; by controlling substances and products which may, in and of themselves, or by their misuse, cause injuries, death, and destruction by fire; by providing statewide direction for fire prevention in wildland areas; by regulating hazardous liquid pipelines; by reviewing regulations and building standards; and by providing training and education in fire protection methods and responsibilities.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC) is contained within Title 24, Chapter 9, CCR. Based on the International Fire Code, the CFC is created by the California Buildings Standards Commission and regulates the use, handling, and storage requirements for hazardous materials at fixed facilities. Similar to the International Fire Code, the CFC and CBC use a hazards classification system to determine the appropriate measures to incorporate to protect life and property.

4.10.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.*
- *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environmental through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.*

- *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.*
- *Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.*
- *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, the project would result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.*
- *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.*
- *Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized area or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.*

4.10.4 Impact Analysis

The proposed project will require the use of hazardous materials (fuel, concrete and asphalt additives) during operations. The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Hazards and Hazardous Materials.*

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the county issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

The proposed project is not located within a quarter mile of a school and will not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. The nearest school is Lassen Community College, located 0.5 miles from the edge of the mining and reclamation area. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.

Under Government Code Section 65962.5, both the DTSC and the SWRCB are required to maintain lists of sites known to have hazardous substances present in the environment. Both agencies maintain up-to-date lists on their websites. A search of the DTSC and SWRCB lists, as detailed above, identified no open cases of hazardous waste violations on the project site. Therefore, the site is not on a parcel included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (DTSC, 2021; SWRCB, 2021). As a result, implementation of the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or to the environment and would have no impact.

For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, the project would result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.

The proposed project is not in the vicinity of an airport and will not expose workers to safety hazards or excessive noise from airports. The closest airport is the Susanville Municipal Airport, 3.4 miles from the proposed Project site. No impact would occur in this regard.

Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

According to the T*ransportation Technical Study for Skyline Aggregates,* prepared by Headway Transportation (Appendix I). The project will not generate traffic volumes that would create delays on the affected roads or intersections that could impede emergency response or evacuation plans. The proposed project does not involve a use or activity that could interfere with long-term emergency responses or emergency evacuation plans for the area. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.10-1: Create a significant hazard to the public or environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through reasonable foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

Hazards are physical safety factors that can cause injury or death, and while by themselves in isolation may not pose a significant safety hazard to the public, when combined with the development of projects can exacerbate hazardous conditions. Hazardous materials are typically chemicals or processes that are used or generated by a project that could pose harm to people working at the site or in adjacent areas. Many of these chemicals can cause hazardous conditions to occur if improperly disposed of or accidentally spilled as part of project development or operations. Hazardous materials are also those listed as hazardous pursuant to Government Code §65962.5.

The proposed project will result in the use of hazardous materials for the mining operation in the 460-acre mining and reclamation area. The mining operation will involve the transport, use, storage, and offsite disposal of hazardous materials such as fuels, lubricants, and hydraulic fluids for vehicles and equipment onsite. Hazardous materials anticipated onsite also include materials used for cement and asphalt production, and explosives used for blasting. All fuel storage tanks onsite will have secondary containment structures. Explosives and detonators are not stored onsite. Materials will be brought to and used on the site by a third-party contractor.

The Lassen County Environmental Health Department is the administering agency and the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for Lassen County, with responsibility for regulating hazardous materials handlers, hazardous waste generators, underground storage tank facilities, aboveground storage tanks, and stationary sources handling regulated substances. A Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) is required of businesses in Lassen County that handle, use, generate, or store hazardous materials, and will be required for the project. The primary purpose of this plan is to provide readily available information regarding the location, type, and health risks of hazardous materials to emergency response personnel, authorized government officials, and the public.

The proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. The quarry and aggregate processing operation will utilize small amounts of fuel and lubricants and is subject to the County's HMBP program, which is regulated by the Lassen County Environmental Health Department as part of the Certified Unified Program. The program requires the preparation of a document that provides an inventory of hazardous materials onsite, emergency plans and procedures in the event of an accidental release, and training for employees on safety procedures for handling hazardous materials and in the event of a release or threatened release. In addition, a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC Plan) will be required if more than 1,320 gallons or more of petroleum are stored in 55-gallon containers or greater. This plan will detail the equipment, workforce, procedures, and steps to prevent, control, and provide adequate countermeasures to a discharge. These plans are routine documents that are intended to disclose the presence of hazardous materials and provide information on what to do if materials are inadvertently released. The HMBP and SPCC Plan will be filed with the Lassen County Environmental Health Department, which conducts periodic site inspections.

Blasting of quarry rock will be required for extraction. Blasting events will occur approximately five times per year. Explosives and detonators are not stored onsite. Materials will be brought to and used on the site by a third-party contractor. Less than significant impacts are anticipated in this regard.

The operation is required to have the necessary permits from Lassen County Environmental Health Department for storing hazardous materials. Operations will follow the applicable laws and regulations regarding hazardous material transport, as defined in Section 353 of the California Vehicle Code. Therefore, the level of risk associated with the accidental release of hazardous substances is not considered significant. Onsite operations would be required to use standard operational controls and safety procedures that would avoid and minimize the potential for accidental release of such substances into the environment. Standard practices would be observed such that any materials released are appropriately contained and remediated as required by local, State, and federal law. Implementation of the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts in this regard.

Impact 4.10-2: Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.

As previously described above, the project site is located within tax rate area (080-004) under the jurisdiction of Susan River Fire Protection District and is located in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (Figures 4-8 and 4-9).

Without controls, mining equipment and processes within the project site could increase the risk of fire if operated near vegetated areas during the dry season. Vegetation will be removed from mining areas prior to material extraction. Upon implementation, there will be a lack of dense vegetation within the immediate vicinity to ignite and pose an adverse risk. Landscaping and revegetation activities will be maintained annually as a control measure. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) requires implementation of Fire Prevention and Control Standards (30 CFR Part 36). These measures will be required for the proposed project. 30 CFR Part 36 requires fire and explosion prevention measures, including routine inspections, exhaust cooling and flame arrestor systems, engine cooling jackets, diesel fuel tanks with self-closing valves, fire extinguishers, and other measures to prevent fire risks. These measures will also be required for the proposed project. In compliance with the Mining and Reclamation Plan and 30 CFR Part 36 regulatory requirements, the proposed project will not expose people or structures to a significant risk or loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

4.10.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.10.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.11 Hydrology and Water Quality

This section provides a description of the existing hydrology and water quality setting of the project site and surrounding area, includes a summary of hydrology and water quality regulations applicable to the project, and contains an analysis of the hydrology and water quality impacts associated with the proposed project.

4.11.1 Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located within the Lower Susan River-Frontal Honey Lake HUC 10 watershed (HUC10 1808000307). An intermittent tributary to Jensen Slough flows through the Project site from the northeastern corner of the parcel and along the eastern parcel boundary. Three freshwater emergent wetland features totaling approximately 0.05 acres are mapped within the project site. A large freshwater emergent wetland system is located adjacent to the southern end of the project site. This system is comprised of Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough, which flow across the adjacent parcel in a series of meandering, interconnected shallow channels. The sloughs are fed by a side channel from the Susan River, which flows through adjacent agricultural

fields and then follows the proposed mine property's southern border before flowing into the sloughs. Water flows from the sloughs and ultimately back into the Susan River approximately 3.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the connected sloughs. The project site is not within a 100-year floodplain. Additionally, the project site is not located near waterbodies that would be subject to either a tsunami or a seiche. Hydrology of the project site is illustrated on Figure 3-4.

The southern section of the project site is located within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin, which has been identified as a "low priority basin" by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), signifying that it is not currently at risk for overdraft. Within this basin, *Bulletin 118* estimates the total volume of water stored in the upper 100 feet of saturated basin-fill deposits and volcanic-rock aquifers to be 10 million acre-feet. Estimates of groundwater extraction for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental wetland uses are 51,000 acre-feet, 15,000 acre-feet, and 3,800 acre-feet, respectively. Deep percolation from agricultural-applied water is estimated to be 14,000 acre-feet.

Groundwater data for the project region were collected from the California DWR Water Library (DWR, 2020a), through water well completion reports, and regional water basin boundaries (DWR, 2020b) available online. Well logs from the Public Land Survey Systems (PLSS) at the location designated Township 30N, Range 12E, Section 36, roughly 2.5 miles from the center point of the proposed quarry site, show the depth of the first water encounter at 80 feet below the surface. In addition, well completion reports (DWR, 2020b) for wells within about 1,500 feet of the site recorded static water levels at depths of roughly 100 to 137 feet below the surface. It is unlikely that static water tables will be encountered during mining of the quarry, provided that deepened pits are not created. However, seasonal and/or perennial water seepage could occur from perched water at the overburden/rock contact, and from discontinuities exposed within the quarry highwall.

4.11.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed development area.

Federal

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is a federal law that protects the nation's surface waters, including lakes, rivers, coastal wetlands, and "waters of the United States." The CWA specifies that discharges to waters are illegal unless authorized by an appropriate permit. The permits regulate the discharge of dredged and fill materials, construction-related stormwater discharges, and activities that may result in discharges of pollutants to waters of the United States. If waters of the United States are located on a site, a project is likely to discharge to them; and, if impacts on the waters are anticipated, the project must obtain a CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program is administered by the EPA, which delegated oversight in California to the Regional Water Quality Control Boards. The

NPDES program provides general permits and individual permits. The general permits are for construction projects that disturb more than one acre of land. The general permit requires the applicant to file a public Notice of Intent (NOI) to discharge stormwater and to prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP includes a site map, description of proposed activities, demonstration of compliance with applicable ordinances and regulations, and a description of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would be implemented to reduce erosion and discharge of construction-related pollutants.

Impaired Waterbodies

The CWA §303(d) and California's Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (described below) require the State to establish the beneficial uses of its State waters and to adopt water quality standards to protect those beneficial uses. Section 303(d) establishes a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which is the maximum quantity of a particular contaminant that a water body can maintain without experiencing adverse effects, to guide the application of State water quality standards. Section 303(d) also requires the State to identify "impaired" streams (water bodies affected by the presence of pollutants or contaminants) and to establish the TMDL for each stream.

State

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act acts in cooperation with the CWA to establish the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The SWRCB is divided into nine regions, each overseen by a Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The SWRCB, and thus each RWQCB, is responsible for protecting California's surface waters and groundwater supplies. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act develops Basin Plans that designate the beneficial uses of California's rivers and groundwater basins. The Basin Plans also establish narrative and numerical water quality objectives for those waters. Basin Plans are updated every three years and provide the basis for determining waste discharge requirements, taking enforcement actions, and evaluating clean water grant proposals. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act is also responsible for implementing CWA Sections 401-402 and 303(d) to SWRCB and RWQCBs.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

In 2014, California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA; Water Code Section 10720 et seq.). SGMA and related amendments to California law require that all groundwater basins designated as high or medium priority in the DWR California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) Program, and that are subject to critical overdraft conditions, must be managed under a new Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) or a coordinated set of GSPs by January 31, 2020. High- or medium-priority basins that are not subject to a critical overdraft must be regulated under one or more GSPs by 2022. Where GSPs are required, one or more local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) must be formed to implement applicable GSPs. A GSA has the authority to require registration of groundwater wells, measure and manage extractions, require reports, assess fees, and request revisions of basin boundaries, including establishing new subbasins. GSAs were required to be formed for high- and medium-priority basins by June 2017. As described above in the *Environmental Setting* section, the Project site is located within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin, which has been identified as a "low-priority basin" by the Department of Water Resources, signifying that it is not currently

at risk for overdraft. Therefore, a GSA is not in effect for the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin.

Local

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* contains a list of goals and objectives that guide the plan. The following water resource goal and objective applies to the Project:

- Goal and Objective: Protect and maintain resource quality and quantity and promote the appropriate use of surface and ground water resources.

Lassen County General Plan

The *Lassen County General Plan* contains the following goals, policies, and implementation measures regarding hydrology or water quality:

- OS27 POLICY: The County recognizes that its surface and groundwater resources are especially valuable resources which deserve and are in need of appropriate measures to protect their quality and quantity.
- OS 28 POLICY: The County shall, in conjunction with the Water Quality Control Board, adopt specific resource policies and development restrictions to protect specified water resources (e.g., Eagle Lake, Honey Lake, Special Recharge areas, etc.) to support the production of those resources from development or other damage which may diminish or destroy their resource value.
    - OS-N. When warranted, the County shall consider special restrictions to development in and around recharge areas of domestic water sources and other special water resource areas to prevent or reduce possible adverse impacts to the quality or quantity of water resources.

Lassen County Groundwater Management Plan

The *Lassen County Groundwater Management Plan* (GWMP) was adopted by the Lassen County Board of Supervisors on March 13, 2007. The GWMP follows the California Water Code (CWC) Sections 107450 et seq., by using plan components to support groundwater management objectives, which in turn meet a countywide groundwater management goal. The GWMP contains the required components from Senate Bill 1938, the voluntary components from Assembly Bill 3030, and suggested components from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118-2003.

The goal of the GWMP is to maintain or enhance groundwater quantity and quality, thereby providing a sustainable, high-quality supply for agricultural, environmental, and urban use into the future that remains protective of the health, welfare, and safety of residents. The GWMP seeks to achieve its goal through the following objectives:

- Maintain and protect historic groundwater uses;
- Minimize the long-term drawdown of groundwater levels;

- Protect groundwater quality;
- Prevent inelastic land surface subsidence from occurring as a result of groundwater pumping;
- Minimize changes to surface water flows and quality that directly affect groundwater levels or quality;
- Minimize the effect of groundwater pumping on surface water flows, quality, seeps and springs, and natural vegetation;
- Facilitate groundwater replenishment and cooperative management projects;
- Maintain springs, seeps, and riparian habitat; and
- Provide a mechanism for mutual management of interstate groundwater basins with Washoe County and the State of Nevada.

4.11.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Hydrology and Water Quality* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality.*
- *Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin.*
- *Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:*
  - *i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or offsite;*
  - *ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or offsite;*
  - *iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or*
  - *iv. Impede or redirect flood flows.*
- *Result in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation.*
- *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.*

4.11.4 Impact Analysis

The proposed project will alter the existing drainage pattern of the project site as mining and reclamation activities occur. The stream located on the project parcel is outside of the mining and reclamation area in the non-disturbance portion of the project site and will not be disturbed by

the proposed project. The project will require water for gravel washing and dust suppression that will be provided by a new onsite groundwater well and/or through collected stormwater or wash water.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Hydrology and Water Quality* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion includes not only the areas where there is potential for environmental impacts, but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the EIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

iv: Impede or redirect flood flows.

One intermittent stream is found on the project parcel; however, it is outside the mining and reclamation boundary and will not be impacted by the project. The proposed project is not located within or immediately adjacent to a designated floodplain and, as a result, the proposed quarry will not impede or redirect flood flows. No impact would occur in this regard.

Result in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation.

The project site and the immediate surrounding area are not located within a flood hazard zone, tsunami, or seiche zone. The proposed quarry will not be inundated by water from flooding, tsunamis, or seiche. There is no risk of release of pollutants due to inundation of the site. No impact would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.11-1: Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality.

Construction of project site improvements prior to operations (extension of utilities, stormwater retention pond, wash pond, roadway, landscape yard area, etc.), as well as mining activities, could result in surface water impacts if soil or pollutants from the project are exposed to precipitation

and conveyed by stormwater offsite. Construction could result in the transport of sediment or other construction-related pollutants in stormwater to offsite surface water. Initial mining activities will affect an area greater than one acre in size and are subject to the *General Permit for Discharges of Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity* (Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ). The Construction General Permit requires the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) by a certified Qualified SWPPP Developer (QSD). The SWPPP will include control measures, best management practices (BMPs), and inspection and monitoring requirements for stormwater discharges from project construction.

During operation, stormwater discharge from the project could include pollutants, including sediment from mining, material storage, and processing, as well as materials stored onsite for equipment maintenance and concrete and asphalt production. A stormwater pond will be constructed in the southern portion of the project site. All stormwater from the mining area will be directed to the retention pond. Water from the pond will be reused for dust suppression. The pond was designed for the 25-year, 24-hour storm event plus average annual precipitation, and will include an emergency spillway in the event that capacity is breached.

The stormwater pond will allow the settlement of solids. Discharge is not planned; however, if discharge were to occur, it would be directed to adjacent pastureland, not directly to surface water. The point of discharge is located 630 feet from the nearest point of the slough complex as mapped by the National Wetlands Inventory. The stormwater pond is unlikely to discharge and would indirectly discharge to a water of the State. All discharges will be covered and subject to the *General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities* (Industrial Stormwater General Permit Order 2014-0057-DWQ) or *General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities*. As discussed in the *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* section of the DEIR (Section 4.10), an HMBP and Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC) will be required for the storage of petroleum products and concrete and asphalt additives. Compliance with these plans will reduce the risks of leaks or spills of materials at the site.

Mining activities will be subject to the *General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities* (Industrial Stormwater General Permit Order 2014-0057-DWQ) as amended in 2015 and 2018. A Notice of Intent will be submitted to the Regional Water Board to obtain coverage under the Industrial General Permit prior to project operations. A SWPPP will be required for the industrial activities at the site and will include, but not be limited to, the following BMPs as detailed in Stormwater Best Management Practice Online Handbook: Industrial and Commercial (CASQA, 2019):

- SC-10 Non-Stormwater Discharges
- SC-11 Spill Prevention, Control and Cleanup
- SC-20 Vehicle and Equipment Fueling
- SC-22 Vehicle and Equipment Repair
- SC-30 Outdoor Loading and Unloading
- SC-31 Outdoor Liquid Container Storage
- SC-32 Outdoor Equipment Operations
- SC-33 Outdoor Storage of Raw Materials
- SC-34 Waste Handling and Disposal
- SC-40 Contained or Erodible Areas

The operation will include gravel/aggregate washing. Water discharged from the gravel/aggregate washing operations onsite will be retained in a 0.4-acre wash pond. The proposed quarry is subject to all necessary permits from the Lahontan RWQCB and/or the State Water Resources Board, which will include *General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities*. Therefore, impacts to surface and groundwater quality are considered to be less than significant.

Impact 4.11-2: Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin.

Water used on the project site will come from an onsite groundwater well and be recycled from the onsite retention pond. This water will be utilized for washing the aggregate and for dust suppression. The volume of water to be collected from stormwater will be variable and is not relied upon for impact analysis. Washing the aggregate will occur at the site about 30 days per year, using an estimated 6,000 gallons of water each day. An estimated 10,000 gallons per day would be used for dust suppression. Assuming an operational period of 300 days per year, the combined water usage of dust suppression and washing would result in approximately 3,180,000 gallons of water used per year (9.76 acre-feet annually or a total of 488 acre-feet over the 50-year lifespan of the project).

Water use estimates for dust suppression are based on water use at Ward Lake Quarry, a similar site owned and operated by Hat Creek Construction and Materials, where five applications of 2,000 gallons are used daily for dust suppression. Water used for washing is stored in the wash pond and reused; consumption of water is only the water that is retained by the material. Water retention is estimated at 1 percent to 5 percent of product weight, depending on product type, resulting in a maximum of 6,000 gallons per day of wash plant operation.

The project site is located within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin, which is not currently at risk for overdraft. The estimated total water stored in the upper 100 feet of the aquifer is 10 million acre-feet. Estimates of groundwater extraction for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental wetland uses are 51,000 acre-feet, 15,000 acre-feet, and 3,800 acre-feet, respectively. Deep percolation from agricultural-applied water is estimated to be 14,000 acre-feet. In comparison, the project proposes to use approximately 507 acre-feet over the 50-year lifespan of the project. As seen in the groundwater levels for monitored wells in the project area, found in the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Water Data Library, there is currently no trend or pattern indicating overdraft in the basin. Therefore, the proposed quarry will not substantially decrease groundwater supplies. In addition, the project does not include the creation of a large area of impervious surfaces that would substantially interfere with groundwater recharge. Impacts to groundwater supplies will be less than significant.

Impact 4.11-3: Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or offsite.

The proposed quarry site does not include alteration of the course of a stream or river or the addition of extensive impervious surfaces; however, the development will alter the existing

drainage pattern of the mining area. Impervious surfaces will be limited to the shop in the landscape yard and the paved road, which will allow drainage through culverts. Erosion control BMPs contained in the Reclamation Plan include the use of berms, water bars, or rolling dips; diverting run-on from stockpile areas; planting vegetation/installing stabilizers as necessary; and retention of stormwater runoff within the quarry or retention basin.

Stormwater within the mining and reclamation area will be conveyed to the proposed 30-acre-foot stormwater retention pond. The applicant will apply for coverage under the Industrial General Permit. Discharges will be monitored in accordance with the requirements of the Industrial General Permit to ensure erosion or siltation in excess of limits contained in the permit will not be conveyed offsite by stormwater. If any exceedances are detected, corrective action steps will be taken in accordance with the prepared SWPPP. In compliance with the Mining and Reclamation Plan and regulatory requirements, impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or offsite.

The existing condition of the project site is mostly barren with sparse vegetation. The project will result in the removal of overburden and the creation of steeper slopes within the mining area, which could increase the rate of surface runoff within the mining area. Stormwater from the mining area will be conveyed to the stormwater retention basin, which will contain stormwater prior to discharge (if any). Discharge would be to adjacent pastureland and, while unlikely, may indirectly discharge to Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough. The point of discharge is located 630 feet from the edge of the slough complex. The pond was designed for the 25-year, 24-hour storm event plus average annual precipitation. The proposed project does not propose significant areas of impermeable surfaces or structures that would increase runoff levels. Impervious surfaces will be limited to the paved portion of the haul road. With the proposed stormwater retention basin, the project will not result in flooding on- or off-site. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

The project will retain stormwater flows from the mining area. Most stormwater from the site will infiltrate into the ground within the mining area. Otherwise, stormwater flows significant enough to run off will be captured in the stormwater retention pond. Discharge from the pond is not planned; however, if discharge were to occur, it would be directed to adjacent pastureland and may indirectly discharge to Jensen Slough and Brockman Slough. Discharges from the retention pond will be monitored in accordance with the SWPPP prepared for the site per Industrial General Permit requirements. The stormwater retention pond is sized to meet the 25-year, 24-hour storm per the Industrial General Permit and SMARA requirements. Flows from the site will not enter any existing or planned engineered stormwater drainage systems. Project impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

Impact 4.11-4: Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

As discussed under the impacts above, the project is estimated to use approximately 507 acre-feet of water over the 50-year lifespan of the project. Water would be obtained from a new well, the stormwater pond, and the wash water basin. It is not anticipated that project water use would result in a drawdown of groundwater levels or result in degradation of water quality. The proposed project will not conflict with or obstruct the Lassen County GWMP. Stormwater within the mining area will be conveyed to a stormwater retention pond. Any discharges will be monitored in compliance with the Industrial General Permit to ensure compliance with water quality standards. The proposed quarry will not conflict with or obstruct the Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) for the Lahontan Region. In compliance with the Mining and Reclamation Plan and regulatory requirements, impacts will be less than significant in this regard.

4.11.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.11.6 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.12 Land Use and Planning

This section provides a description of the existing land use of the project site and the surrounding area and summarizes land use and zoning regulations related to the project. Project compatibility with applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted by Lassen County for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect is analyzed.

4.12.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is in unincorporated Lassen County, immediately east of the City of Susanville and within the area covered by the 1984 *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. The project site is located on a single parcel (APN 10-110-024). Mining and reclamation activities will occur on 460 acres of the 640-acre parcel. The project site and surrounding parcels are currently undeveloped and are either vacant or used for agricultural purposes. The closest developed parcels include the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant to the southwest of the project site. Lassen Community College and Lassen Banner Medical Center are located northwest of the project site.

The Lassen County land use designations for the project site include Urban Reserve and Intensive Agriculture. Most of the project site is designated as Urban Reserve. The southwest corner of the project site is designated as Intensive Agriculture. The project site is currently zoned U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District).

The project site is immediately south of parcels within the Susanville city limits. Existing zoning and land use designations for the project site and adjacent parcels are included in Table 4-19 and shown in Figure 3-9 and Figure 3-10, respectively. Land use designations of parcels immediately adjacent to the project site include Open Space: Parks and Recreation, Planned Development, Extensive Agriculture, Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve, Urban Reserve/Intensive, and Intensive. Existing zoning designations include Upland Conservation District-Agricultural

Preserve Combining District (U-C-A-P), Agricultural District (A-3), Light Industrial District (M-1), Open Space (O-S), and Planned Development (PD).

Descriptions of the existing General Plan land use designations and zoning classification for the project site are included below.

Table 4-19
EXISTING USES, ZONING AND LAND USE DESIGNATION

Direction	Current Land Use	Current Zoning	Current General Plan Land Use Designation
Project Site	Vacant	U-C-A-P	Urban Reserve/Intensive
North	Vacant	PD, O-S	Open Space: Parks and Recreation, Planned Development
East	Vacant	U-C-A-P	Extensive Agriculture, Extensive Agriculture/ Urban Reserve
South	Vacant/Agricultural	U-C-A-P, M-1	Extensive Agriculture/Urban Reserve, Urban Reserve/Intensive, Intensive
West	Vacant	U-C-A-P A-3	Intensive, Urban Reserve/Intensive

Lassen County Urban Reserve Land Use Designation
According to the Lassen County General Plan Land Use Element, the Urban Reserve designation may be used as an overlay to indicate areas where the development of urban-type uses will be directed in the future. It will typically overlay an interim land use designation (e.g., Extensive Agriculture), and the underlying designation and corresponding zoning district would prevail until a new, more specific land use designation is adopted to confirm the appropriate types of land uses that may be developed in that area. Interim land uses may be low in intensity and not preclude future planning and development opportunities.

A general plan amendment will eventually be needed for an Urban Reserve area to consider the specific types and intensities of land uses that may be considered when the area is proposed for development. Consideration will be given to the pattern and compatibility of land uses in adjoining areas and the availability of needed infrastructure, among other land use planning concerns.

Lassen County Intensive Agriculture Land Use Designation
The Intensive Agriculture designation identifies lands devoted to or having a high suitability potential for the growing of crops and/or the raising of livestock on natural or improved pastureland. It requires the provision of parcel sizes large enough to support agricultural land use and production. Intensive Agriculture areas also provide a variety of open space resources, including wildlife habitat and scenic resources.

This designation incorporates and generally replaces the land use term of "Crop Land and Prime Grazing Land" used in the 1968 General Plan and in some areas of plans adopted since then. On the Land Use Map contained the Land Use Element, areas indicated as "Intensive Agriculture" are intended to conform with areas designated in 1968 as Crop Land and Prime Grazing Land. Within certain area plans, more specific identification and designation of Intensive Agriculture areas may be made.

Lassen County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 18.68.040 Upland Conservation (U-C) District
According to Chapter 18.68.040 of the Lassen County Code, The Upland Conservation district is intended to be applied in the mountain and upland foothill areas in the county where forestry, mining, grazing and noncommercial recreation are natural and desirable uses; in which the protection of the watershed lands from wild fire, erosion, pollution and other detrimental effects is essential to the general welfare and in which land divisions will be regulated to ensure compatibility with primary uses. It is further intended that this district will be applied to land areas which are classified by the general plan as containing lands suitable for establishment as agricultural preserves. Mining is listed as a natural and desirable use in this zoning district, and processing of natural mineral materials is a use allowed by use permit.

Lassen County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 18.82 A-P Agricultural Preserve Combining District
The Agricultural Preserve Combining District is intended to be applied in combination with other appropriate districts to establish the precise boundaries of agricultural preserves and to provide such additional restrictions upon the use of land as necessary to comply with provisions of law that are applicable to agricultural preserves. In districts with which the A-P district is combined, uses permitted shall be those uses which are listed as those permitted in the particular district with which the A-P district is combined, except in cases where an agricultural preserve district or any portion thereof is covered by a contract between the owner and the county of Lassen under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 and subsequent revisions. Those uses listed in said contract as uses compatible with agriculture shall, with the area covered by said contract, be additional permitted uses.

4.12.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of local environmental regulations and policies that are relevant to the land use CEQA review process for the project.

Local
Land use and planning decisions within and adjacent to the project site are guided and regulated by the Lassen County General Plan and Lassen County Zoning Ordinance as well as the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. Applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in these documents are included below.

Lassen County General Plan
The Lassen County General Plan was adopted in September 1999. The General Plan contains a Land Use Element, Natural Resources Element, Agriculture Element, Wildlife Element, Open Space Element, Circulation Element, and Safety and Seismic Safety Element. The Lassen County Noise Element was adopted by the County on December 14, 2021. An updated Safety Element became effective July 13, 2023.

Land Use Element
The Land Use Element of the General Plan designates the proposed general distribution and intensity of uses in the land for housing, business, industry, open space, natural resources, public facilities, waste disposal sites, and other categories of public and private uses. The Land Use Element is intended to serve as the central framework for the entire General Plan, and to correlate

all land use issues into a set of coherent development policies. Applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures (including those for industrial land uses, agricultural land uses, and wildlife habitat) contained in the Land Use Element of the Lassen County General Plan are listed below.

GOAL L-4: Compatibility between land use types by providing for complementary mixtures and patterns of land uses

- LU-6 POLICY: The County recognizes general plan land use designations and consistent zoning as the appropriate and primary tools for attempting to achieve and maintain compatibility of land uses within the context of the County's land use authority and local control.
- LU-7 POLICY: The County shall consider the land use compatibility implications of proposed changes in land use, including proposed general plan amendments and rezoning, to determine the significance and acceptability of the extent to which proposed changes may affect the pattern and well-being of neighboring land uses.

Implementation Measure LU-F: The County shall continue to utilize the CEQA process, when applicable, to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed changes in land uses on surrounding lands and to implement appropriate mitigation measures when needed.

GOAL L-13: Improvement, expansion, and diversification of the County's industrial base and generation of related employment opportunities.

- LU32 POLICY: The County encourages and will facilitate the development of new, environmentally responsible industrial projects for the economic benefit of the County.
- LU33 POLICY: In considering proposals for new industrial sites, including amendments of the County General Plan and related rezoning, the County will address the compatibility of the site with established land use patterns, the adequacy of the protection of natural resources as addressed in relevant sections of the General Plan.

Implementation Measure LU-S: The County shall continue to utilize the CEQA process, when applicable, to evaluate the potential impacts and land use issues related to proposed industrial development and shall require appropriate mitigation measures when needed.

- LU34 POLICY**:** The County supports the development of industrial land uses primarily in or adjacent to areas which have been designated and developed for such uses and which have or can develop the necessary infrastructure to serve such uses, while recognizing that some types of resource-related industrial uses and processing plants may require or otherwise warrant relatively remote sites which are removed from standard industrial areas.
- LU35 POLICY: Subject to case-by-case review (including review for compatibility with surrounding agricultural uses), and in compliance with relevant area plan, zoning, permitting and environmental review requirements, the development and operation of the following land uses will typically be deemed to be consistent with the Extensive and Intensive Agriculture land use designations and will not require zoning to an "Industrial"

zoning district, nor will they be interpreted by the County to constitute an "agricultural conversion" pursuant to this General Plan:

a) processing plants for the production of agricultural products;
b) processing plants for the production of natural resource products where the location of the resource is fundamental to the location of processing and packaging facilities (e.g., water bottled at the source, etc.);
c) mines, the extraction of minerals, and the ancillary processing of mineral materials generated onsite, including the production of asphalt, ready-mix concrete, and similar products;
d) sawmills and related timber processing operations;
e) geothermal and natural gas wells, hydroelectric projects, and ancillary facilities to produce energy; and
f) uses of similar character as may be determined by the Board of Supervisors.

GOAL L-16: Conservation of productive agricultural lands and lands having substantial physical potential for productive agricultural use, and the protection of such lands from unwarranted intrusion of incompatible land uses and conversion to uses which may significantly obstruct or constrain agricultural use and value.

- LU40 POLICY: The County recognizes and has generally assigned General Plan land use designations for lands having high agricultural resource value as "Intensive Agriculture" or "Crop Land and Prime Grazing Land". It also recognizes the potentially important agricultural values of some of the areas designated "Extensive Agriculture" or "Grazing and Sagebrush Environment" for rangeland grazing and other agricultural purposes.

Implementation Measure LU-X: Land designated "Intensive Agriculture" in the Land Use Element shall be zoned "E-A" Exclusive Agriculture District, "A-3" Agricultural District, "U-C" Upland Conservation District, or "U-C-2" Upland Conservation/Resource Management District.

Implementation Measure LU-Y: Land designated "Extensive Agriculture" in the Land Use Element shall be zoned "U-C", Upland Conservation District, "U-C-2", Upland Conservation/Resource Management District, or "A-3", Agricultural District.

GOAL L-22: Protection and enhancement of important wildlife habitats to support healthy, abundant, and diverse wildlife populations.

- LU49 POLICY: The County supports the management of wildlife resources in ways that enhance the health and abundance of wildlife populations and the diversity of species and their habitats, and which, at the same time, balance management policies and program objectives with the range of social and economic needs for which the County is also responsible.
- LU50 POLICY: To support and protect the value and viability of areas having significant wildlife habitat resources, including migration corridors, such areas should remain in relatively large parcel units. County zoning and subdivision regulations should protect these resources by not allowing isolated subdivisions intended primarily for residential development (except in limited circumstances pursuant to the County's zoning ordinance, e.g., segregation of homesites, parcels created in association with approved use permits,

etc.) to be developed in areas which are not specifically designated in the General Plan or an area plan for a community development land use (e.g., rural residential) and zoned accordingly.

Implementation Measure LUDD: Areas identified as having significant wildlife values may be zoned into zoning districts (including but not limited to: U-C-2, Upland Conservation/ Resource Management District; TPZ, Timber Production Zone; A-P, Agricultural Preserve, O-S, Open Space District) which help provide protection from adverse changes in habitat conditions, and/or may be protected by other measures including project-specific conditions of approval and mitigation measures designed to protect critical wildlife resource features.

Natural Resource Element
Applicable geologic and soil resources goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Natural Resource Element of the *Lassen County General Plan* are discussed in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils*. Applicable vegetation goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Natural Resource Element are included in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*. Forest resources, goals, policies, and implementation measures are included in Section 4.3. *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*. Rangeland goals, policies, and implementation measures are also discussed in Section 4.3. Energy resource goals, policies, and implementation measures are discussed in Section 4.7, *Energy*. Scenic resource goals, policies, and implementation measures applicable to the project are included in Section 4.2, *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*. Air quality goals, policies, and implementation measures are included in Section 4.4, *Air Quality*.

The following mineral resources goals, policies, and implementation measures included in the Natural Resource Element are applicable to the project and were not listed elsewhere in this DEIR:

GOAL N-13: To improve and diversify the County's industrial base by encouraging development of mineral resources in ways that avoid or minimize unacceptable levels of land use conflict and significant environmental damage.

- NR46 POLICY: Projects for the extraction or use of mineral resources shall comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and the County's environmental review guidelines.
- NR47 POLICY: In the consideration of proposed mining activities, the County shall balance goals of protecting and managing wildlife, vegetation, and other resources with the economic and social need to diversify the County's industrial base.
- NR48 POLICY: Surface and subsurface mining operations shall obtain a Use Permit as required by the Lassen County Code.

GOAL N-14: To encourage exploration for developable mineral resources in ways that minimize environmental and land use impacts.

- NR50 POLICY: Applications for mineral resource exploration activity subject to the SMARA shall include the submittal of a reclamation plan to, and approval by, the agency of jurisdiction as required by SMARA and the CCR.

- NR51 POLICY: Mineral resource exploration activity that exceeds the SMARA threshold limits or is determined to be located adjacent to an incompatible land use should be required to obtain a Use Permit.
- NR52 POLICY: The County will develop grading criteria that will apply to earth-moving activities related to mineral resource exploration.

GOAL N-16: To prevent significant long-term environmental damage and damage to other natural resource values in areas that have been, or which may be, disturbed by mineral extraction.

- NR57 POLICY: All mineral resource extraction projects, unless exempt from the provisions of the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, shall include and carry out a reclamation plan which has been approved by the County.
- NR58 POLICY: Reclamation plans shall include a monitoring program to ensure successful compliance with reclamation criteria. Reclamation plans that include revegetation shall be monitored to ensure that planted vegetation successfully satisfies the objectives of the reclamation plan.
- NR59 POLICY: An adequate performance guarantee shall be required of a type and in an amount acceptable to the County to cover the costs of reclamation should the permittee fail to complete successful reclamation of a mined site. Performance guarantees shall be determined based on reclamation cost estimates prepared by a qualified professional.
- NR60 POLICY: Reclamation activities shall be in compliance with the approved reclamation plan and shall be completed to the satisfaction of the County and/or the California Department of Conservation before complete or partial release of required performance guarantees.

Recreation Element
None of the goals, policies, or implementation measures contained in the Recreation Element are applicable to the proposed project.

Agriculture Element
Applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Agriculture Element are discussed in Section 4.3, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*.

Wildlife Element
The goals, policies, and implementation measures contained within the Wildlife Element applicable to the project are discussed in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*.

Open Space Element
Several goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Open Space Element are applicable to the project and are discussed in Section 3.5, *Biological Resources*, and Section 4.11, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Circulation Element
Applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Circulation Element are included in Section 4.15, *Transportation*.

Safety Element
The actions included in the Safety Element applicable to the project are listed in Section 4.17, *Wildfire.*

Noise Element
An evaluation of the consistency of the project with applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Lassen County General Plan Noise Element is included in Section 4.13, *Noise.*

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan
The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* was adopted in 1984 and includes the area about one-half mile to one and a half miles outside of the 1982 Susanville City limits. The planning area substantially overlaps with the City of Susanville's sphere of influence boundary. The plan is based on a concept that new growth should be accommodated and planned for and seeks to identify the most logical areas for growth to occur while protecting the area's natural resources and amenities. The plan is intended to guide decisions regarding land use for an approximate 20-year timeframe and has not been updated since it was adopted almost 40 years ago. The following policies and implementation measures from the area plan are applicable to the proposed Project.

Environmental Safety Element
Noise policies and implementation measures included in the Environmental Safety Element applicable to the project are discussed in Section 4.13, *Noise.* Geologic Hazard policies are included in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils.*

Natural Resources Element
Agricultural Lands policies and implementation measures applicable to the project are listed below. Applicable scenic corridor policies and implementation measures are included in Section 4.2, *Aesthetics and Visual Resources.* Cultural resources policies and implementation measures are included in Section 4.6, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources.* Applicable Fish and Wildlife policies and implementation measures are included in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources.*

Policy 7.1A: Agricultural land in Lassen County shall be protected for its economic importance; its contribution to the character of the community; and its environmental values. The designation of intensive agriculture is applied to agricultural land (as shown on the area plan land use map) in the planning area.

Policy 7.1B: Parcel sizes shall be retained at a sufficient size for productive economic agricultural use.

Policy 7.1C Non-agricultural uses shall be directed to areas with soils with limited value for intensive agricultural use or in areas where similar uses already exist. Non-agricultural uses shall not interfere with agricultural operations.

Community Development Element
The community development element of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* includes general plan elements concerned with residential, commercial, and industrial uses and the facilities, such as streets, water, sewer, and fire protection services, which support them. The following goals,

policies, and implementation measures included in the Community Development component of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* that are applicable to the project are included below. These include goals, policies, and implementation measures for general land use as well as those for the Urban Reserve land use designation. Circulation policies and implementation measures contained in the *Susanville Area Vicinity Plan* Community Development component are applicable to the project and are included in Section 4.15, Transportation, of this document.

Policy 12.1: Lassen County shall establish a land use pattern that will accommodate the projected growth of the planning area. The land use pattern will provide the present and future population with a variety of high-quality living and working environments. The land use map of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* shows the land use designations necessary to achieve this pattern.

Policy 20.1: Lands designated Urban Reserve indicate areas with the potential and prospect for future urban-type development.

- Implementation 20.11: Land should be zoned U-C, upland conservation, or other appropriate districts to prevent land uses and parcel sizes that would interfere with future development opportunities.
- Implementation 20.12: Future development proposals shall be presented as general plan amendments and considered for appropriateness of timing and land use consistency with applicable policies of the area plan.

Lassen County Code

Chapter 9.60 Surface Mining and Reclamation Plan Regulations

Chapter 9.60 of the Lassen County Code contains regulations applicable to surface mining operations, including compliance with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and California Code of Regulations implementing the act. The Chapter outlines use permit and reclamation plan requirements, required contents of applications for use permits for surface mining operations, includes performance standards for reclamation plans, requirements for phasing of reclamation, procedures for processing use permits, and financial assurance requirements. The purpose and intent of these regulations are included below.

9.60.010 Purpose and Intent

The County recognizes that the extraction of minerals is essential to the continued economic well-being of the County and to the needs of society, and that the reclamation of *mined* lands is necessary to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and to protect the public health and safety. The county also recognizes that surface *mining* takes place in diverse areas where the geologic, topographic, climatic, biological, and social conditions are significantly different and that reclamation operations and the specifications therefore may vary accordingly. The purpose and intent of this chapter is to regulate surface *mining* operations as authorized by California's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975 (PRC Sec. 2710 et seq.), as amended, hereinafter referred to as SMARA; PRC Section 2207; and the California Code of Regulations adopted pursuant thereto (14 Cal. Admin., C. Sec. 3500 et seq.), to ensure that:

a) The adverse effects of surface *mining* operations will be prevented or minimized, and the reclamation of *mined* lands will provide for the beneficial, sustainable, long-term productive use of the *mined* and reclaimed lands; and

b) The production and conservation of minerals will be encouraged while eliminating hazards to public health and safety and avoiding or minimizing adverse effects on the environment, including but not limited to geologic subsidence, air pollution, water quality degradation, damage to biological resources, flooding, erosion, degradation of scenic quality, and noise pollution. (Ord. 509 § 2, 1992).

Thresholds of Significance
In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the Project. The following significance thresholds related to *Land Use and Planning* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Physically divide an established community.*
- *Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.*

4.12.3 Impact Analysis

The proposed project includes mining and processing activities for a 50-year period. Following the end of mining activities, the quarry site will be reclaimed and revegetated with a dry rangeland seed mix and used for open space. The consistency of the proposed project with applicable policies and implementation measures contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* is addressed in this section. The discussion focuses on policies applicable to resources for which potentially significant impacts are identified for the proposed project (Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise, and Traffic). In addition, a discussion of consistency with local plans and policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect specific to mining activities is included. The physical impacts of implementing the proposed project and the project's consistency with plans and policies specific to each resource area are described in greater detail in each resource section of the DEIR.

Note that it is nearly, if not absolutely, impossible for a project to be in perfect conformity with every policy set forth in any given applicable plan. It is enough that the proposed project will be compatible with the objectives, policies, general land uses, and programs specified in the applicable plan. Pfeiffer v. City of Sunnyvale City Council, 200 Cal.App.4th 1552, 1563, 135 Cal. Rpt. 3d 380 (2011) (Crenshaw Subway Coal. v. L.A. Cnty. Metro. Transp. Auth. (C.D.Cal. Sep. 23, 2015, No. CV 11-9603 FMO (JCx)) 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 143642, at *66.)

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Land Use and Planning* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Land Use and Planning.*

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed Project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. During the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the EIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

Physically divide an established community.

The proposed project will occur on land that is currently vacant and is surrounded by vacant and agricultural land uses. The project site is not within an established community. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not divide an established community. No impact would occur in this regard.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.12-1: Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Environmental and physical effects of implementing the proposed project are discussed in each resource section of the EIR (Sections 4.1 through 4.11 and Sections 4.13 through 4.17). A discussion of the project's consistency with applicable policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect is included below.

The discussion focuses on consistency of the proposed project with existing land use and zoning designations of the subject site and consistency with policies for resource areas for which potentially significant effects were identified (Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise, and Traffic). In addition, a discussion of consistency with local plans and policies specific to proposed mining and processing activities is included. Based on the analysis below, the proposed project does not conflict with applicable Lassen County land use plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purposes of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect with implementation of mitigation measures identified in this DEIR.

Land Use and Zoning Consistency
The 640-acre site is designated as Urban Reserve and Intensive Agriculture. The site is currently zoned Upland Conservation District-Agricultural Preserve Combining District. According to the *Lassen County General Plan*, the Urban Reserve designation indicates areas where development of urban-type uses will be directed in the future, and the underlying designation and corresponding zoning district prevail until a new, more specific land use designation is adopted to confirm the appropriate types of land uses that may be developed in the area. Mining activities will occur for a 50-year duration, followed by reclamation of the mining area. The proposed end use of the

project site following mining is proposed to be grazing land. The project does not include land uses or reduction of parcel size that would interfere with future development opportunities of the project site following completion of mining. As stated in Lassen County General Plan Policy AG-12, mining and processing activities will typically be deemed to be consistent with the Intensive Agriculture land use designation and will not require zoning to an industrial zoning district.

The Lassen County Code lists mining and grazing as natural and desirable uses in the Upland Conservation zoning district. In the Upland Conservation zoning district, processing of natural mineral materials is allowed with the issuance of a use permit. Therefore, there would be no conflict with the existing County general plan or zoning designations.

Mining Policies
The Natural Resource Element to of the *Lassen County General Plan* includes mineral resource policies to avoid or mitigate effects from mining. Policy NR46 requires that applications for the extraction or use of mineral resources comply with CEQA and the County's environmental review guidelines. Policy NR48 requires surface and subsurface mining operations to obtain a Use Permit as required by the Lassen County Code. The Project includes a Use Permit application for mining activities and is consistent with these policies.

Policies NR57 through NR60 require a reclamation plan for mineral resources projects approved by the county, a monitoring program to be included in the reclamation plan to ensure successful compliance with reclamation criteria, and an adequate performance guarantee to cover costs of reclamation that is not released until reclamation is completed to the satisfaction of the County and/or the California Department of Conservation. The proposed project is subject to the SMARA. A reclamation plan is required to be approved by Lassen County and the Department of Conservation prior to the start of mining activities to ensure compliance with SMARA as well as Section 9.60.010 of the Lassen County Code (see Appendix B). In addition to the minimum statewide performance standards pursuant to SMARA. As required by SMARA, a Financial Assurance Cost Estimate will be required for the mine and is required to be updated annually and approved by Lassen County and the Department of Conservation. A financial assurance will be required that is payable to Lassen County and the Department of Conservation. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the mineral resource policies included in the Lassen County General Plan.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources Policies
The *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* contain policies and implementation measures for development within designated scenic corridors in the county. Policy NR78 of the Lassen County General plan requires that the County develop and enforce policies and regulations to protect areas designated as scenic corridors from unjustified levels of visual deterioration. Policy 8.1 of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* is to protect, maintain, and establish scenic corridors to preserve the beauty of its landscapes. Implementation Measure 8.12 of the Area Plan requires that new development within these corridors use natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape.

As discussed in Section 4.2 of the EIR, the proposed project will be visible from portions of designated scenic corridors within the County. Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 requires that structures, walls, or buildings constructed within the Project site will be constructed of natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape. With implementation of this measure, the project

is consistent with Implementation Measure 8.12 of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* and will not conflict with scenic corridor policies of the Area Plan or General Plan.

The Lassen *County General Plan* includes policies to protect the scenic qualities of the night sky from light intrusion. Policy NR81 requires the County to maintain and enforce policies, development standards, and mitigation measures to control lighting generated by development and to minimize the unnecessary adverse impacts of such lighting in the vicinity of the development and on the general scenic qualities of the night sky in the area.

Mitigation measures are included in Section 4.2 of the EIR to reduce nighttime lighting impacts of the project. Mitigation Measure 4.2-2 requires lighting at the project site to comply with Section 18.108.155 of the Lassen County Code, and that lighting be pointed downward to avoid illumination of the night sky. Implementation of these measures would ensure the project does not conflict with nighttime lighting goals and policies contained in the *Lassen County General Plan*.

Implementation of the proposed project will not conflict with policies for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to scenic corridors or the nighttime lighting with implementation of mitigation measures included in Section 4.2 of the EIR.

Air Quality Policies
The *Lassen County General Plan* and the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* do not contain specific goals, policies, or implementation measures for Air Quality. The Lassen County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) contains rules and regulations including general provisions and rules for APCD-issued permits, fees, prohibitions (including but not limited to nuisance, particulate matter, specific air contaminants, open burning, gasoline storage, reduction of odorous matter, fugitive dust emissions, and equipment breakdown), procedures, new source siting, and Title V permits

As stated in Section 4.4, *Air Quality*, of the DEIR, operation of the project would be implemented in compliance with the Lassen County APCD Air Quality Rules and Regulations, including regulatory requirements AQ-1 through AQ-7 listed in Section 4.4.2 of the DEIR. The project will not conflict with applicable regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect to air quality.

Biological Resources Policies
Applicable goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating effects to biological resources are summarized below.

Goal W-1, included in the Wildlife Element of the *Lassen County General Plan,* is to protect and enhance the overall health of wildlife habitats and species. Implementation Measure WE-E requires that, in review of project proposals, the County will continue to utilize the California Environmental Quality Act process to evaluate the potential for significant adverse impacts upon wildlife resources and will require appropriate related project decisions and necessary mitigation measures. Policy WE-40 states that the County recognizes that some areas which are designated and zoned for development, including but not limited to rural residential lands and areas indicated for planned development, may also have wildlife resource and open space values that need to be addressed and considered for protection. The County will address the need for protection of

wildlife resources and open space values in areas that are zoned for development during the review of development proposals.

The Natural Resource Element of the *Lassen County General Plan* includes goals, policies, and implementation measures related to vegetation. Goal N-7 is to maintain diverse and healthy vegetation communities to sustain natural and economic benefits, including watershed soil stabilization, wildlife, fisheries, timberland, grazing, and scenic values. To avoid or reduce the extent of potential adverse impact to important vegetation communities which may result from projects and land use decisions within its jurisdiction, the County shall consider the potential extent of such impacts during project review (Policy NR26). Projects subject to County approval, which will result in significant disturbance of a site's vegetative cover, shall be required to prepare and implement an effective plan to revegetate disturbed, undeveloped areas of the site (Policy NR27). Implementation Measure NR-J requires that, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, the County shall review the potential for impacts of proposed projects on vegetation resources and shall require appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or compensate for the extent of significant adverse impacts. Such mitigation measures may include the clustering of housing and development to conserve natural vegetation and the implementation of revegetation plans. Plans and revegetation measures shall also include provisions to avoid the introduction of noxious weeds.

Goal N-8 is included in the Natural Resources Element of the *Lassen County General Plan* for protection of rare and endangered plant species, balanced with the need to sustain productive, multiple land uses when possible. Policy NR28 states that the County recognizes the need to identify and provide reasonable measures for the protection of rare and endangered plant species in the consideration of projects and land use decisions. Implementation Measure NR-K requires that, pursuant to the CEQA, the County shall consider the impacts of proposed projects on rare and endangered plant resources and shall require necessary mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or compensate for the extent of significant disturbance.

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* Policy 11.1A states that Lassen County shall conserve and enhance the wildlife and fisheries of the area and preserve and restore the ecological, recreation, and aesthetic benefits of the Susan River and its tributaries. Implementation Measure 11.11 requires review of all proposed projects for their possible adverse or beneficial impacts to fish and wildlife habitats.

The proposed project is consistent with policies and implementation measures listed above requiring CEQA review of proposed development to evaluate impacts to fish and wildlife habitats, rare and endangered plant species, vegetation resources, and wildlife resources. A *Biological Resource Assessment* was prepared for the project to analyze potential effects to biological resources. Potential impacts as well as mitigation measures to minimize the biological resource impacts of the project are included in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*, of the DEIR. Mitigation measures are included to prevent the spread of invasive species (Mitigation Measure 4.5-12) and to conduct protocol level surveys to avoid and mitigate for impacts to special-status plants (Mitigation Measure 4.5-10). The mining area will be revegetated with a dry rangeland seed mix for open space following mining activities in accordance with Policy NR27 of the *Lassen County General Plan*. With implementation of mitigation measures contained in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*, the project would be consistent with policies and implementation measures in the *Lassen County General Plan*

or *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an effect to biological resources.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources Policies
Potential impacts to cultural resources are discussed in Section 4.6, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, of the DEIR. Policy 10.1 of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* requires that the County preserve and protect the cultural resources of the planning area. Implementation measures require that development projects should be designed to minimize their impact on cultural resources and that any discoveries of archaeological resources during construction shall be reported for mitigation (Implementation Measure 10.11). Implementation Measure 10.13 requires that archaeological reconnaissance shall be conducted whenever it appears that cultural resources may be disrupted by a proposed development project.

The Project is consistent with the implementation measures of Policy 10.1. of the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. An Archaeological Survey Report was prepared to identify locations of cultural resources within the project site, and the mining and reclamation area was configured to avoid impacts to most of the cultural resources within the project site. Two identified cultural resources will be impacted by the project; impacts to these resources will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated as discussed in Section 4.6. These sites were evaluated for eligibility on the California Register of Historical Resources by ALTA, and one resource was determined to be eligible for CHHR listing. This resource was exhaustively documented and released from further management considerations. Mitigation Measure 4.6-1 is included in Section 4.6 to ensure that cultural resources discovered during project implementation are evaluated by a professional archaeologist and reported to the County. With the implementation of mitigation measures included in Section 4.6, Cultural Resources, the project is consistent with policies and implementation measures included in the *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* to avoid and mitigate effects to cultural resources.

Noise Policies
Noise impacts of the project are discussed and evaluated in Section 4.13, *Noise*. Section 4.13 includes an analysis of the compatibility of the proposed project with the noise standards and limits contained in the Lassen County Noise Element, Lassen County Noise Ordinance, and Susanville Vicinity Area Plan, as well as other applicable noise policies. As discussed in Section 4.13, the noise impacts of the project will less than significant with mitigation incorporated. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will be consistent with noise policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating the effects of noise generated by mining activities.

Transportation Policies
Transportation impacts associated with the proposed project are discussed in Section 4.16, *Transportation*. Section 4.16 lists the goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the Circulation Element of the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* that are applicable to the proposed project. Policies adopted for the purpose of minimizing or avoiding any environmental effect include Policy CE-10 of the *Lassen County General Plan,* that states "In consideration of proposed projects which would generate a substantial number of large trucks carrying heavy loads, the County shall require special mitigation measures to ensure that those projects do not cause, or will adequately mitigate, significant deterioration of County roads. Implementation measure CE-C requires that, pursuant to impacts evaluated in an environmental impact report or other form of project review, the County may require mitigation measures that

will ensure that project developers adequately and fairly compensate or participate with the County in the necessary upgrading and/or repair of the affected roads. Policy CE requires that no public roadway may be allowed to fall to or exist for a substantial amount of time at or below a Level of Service rating of "E" (i.e., road at or near capacity; reduced speeds; extremely difficult to maneuver; some stoppages).

As discussed in Section 4.16 of the DEIR, project traffic will not result in deterioration of the level of service to a rating of "E" at the intersections closest to the project site, including the intersection of Highway 139 and Skyline Road, Skyline Road and the project driveway, and Johnstonville Road and Skyline Road. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with goals, policies, or implementation measures contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating effects to transportation.

4.12.4 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.12.5 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

4.13 Noise

This section provides a summary of noise and vibration fundamentals and terminology, contains a description of the existing noise setting within the Project vicinity, summarizes noise and vibration regulations/criteria applicable to the Project, and includes a discussion of the estimated noise and vibration levels resulting from the Project. This section includes an analysis of the project's noise and vibration impacts to surrounding land uses and the closest noise-sensitive receptors. The analysis is based on information included in the *Environmental Noise and Vibration Assessment Skyline Aggregates Project* (Noise Assessment) prepared by Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc. (see Appendix H).

4.13.1 Noise and Vibration Fundamentals and Terminology

Noise
Noise is often described as unwanted sound. Sound is defined as any pressure variation in air that human hearing can detect. If the pressure variations occur frequently enough (i.e., at least 20 times per second), they can be identified as sound. The number of pressure variations per second is called the frequency of sound and is expressed as cycles per second or Hertz (Hz). Appendix A of the Noise Assessment includes definitions of terminology used in the assessment.

Measuring sound directly in terms of pressure would require a very large and awkward range of numbers. To avoid this, the decibel scale was devised. The decibel scale utilizes the hearing threshold (20 micropascals of pressure) as a point of reference, defined as 0 dB. Other sound pressures are then compared to the reference pressure, and the logarithm is taken to keep the numbers within a practical range. The decibel scale allows a million-fold increase in pressure to be expressed as 120 dB. Another useful aspect of the decibel scale is that changes in decibel levels

correspond closely to human perception of relative loudness. Figure 4-10 illustrates common noise levels associated with various sources.

Community noise is commonly described in terms of the ambient noise level, which is defined as the all-encompassing noise level associated with a given noise environment. A common statistical tool to measure the ambient noise level is the average, or equivalent, sound level (L_{eq}) over a given time period (usually one hour). The L_{eq} is the foundation of the Day-Night Average Level noise descriptor, L_{dn}, and shows very good correlation with community response to noise.

The Day-Night Average Level (L_{dn}) is based upon the average noise level over a 24-hour day, with a +10-decibel weighing applied to noise occurring during nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) hours. The nighttime penalty is based upon the assumption that people react to nighttime noise exposures as though they were twice as loud as daytime exposures. Because L_{dn} represents a 24-hour average, it tends to disguise short-term variations in the noise environment. Ldn-based noise standards are commonly used to assess noise impacts associated with traffic, railroad, and aircraft noise sources.

Effects of Noise on People
The effects of noise on people can be divided into three categories:

- Subjective effects of annoyance, nuisance, dissatisfaction;
- Interference with activities such as speech, sleep, and learning; and
- Physiological effects such as hearing loss or sudden startling.

Environmental noise typically produces effects in the first two categories. Workers in industrial plants can experience noise in the third category. There is no completely satisfactory way to measure the subjective effects of noise or the corresponding reactions of annoyance and dissatisfaction. A wide variation in individual thresholds of annoyance exists, and different tolerances to noise tend to develop based on an individual's past experiences with noise.

The perceived loudness of sound is dependent upon many factors, including sound pressure level and frequency content. However, within the usual range of environmental noise levels, perception of loudness is relatively predictable and can be approximated by weighting the frequency response of a sound level meter by means of the standardized A-weighting network. There is a strong correlation between A-weighted sound levels (expressed as dBA) and community response to noise. All noise levels reported in this section are A-weighted.

An important way of predicting a human reaction to a new noise environment is the way it compares to the existing environment (or ambient noise) to which one has adapted. In general, the more a new noise exceeds the previously existing ambient noise level, the less acceptable the new noise will be judged by those hearing it. With regard to increases in A-weighted noise level, the following relationships occur (Caltrans, 2013):

- It is widely accepted that the average healthy ear can barely perceive noise level changes of 3 dBA;
- A change in level of 5 dBA is a readily perceptible increase in noise level; and
- A 10 dBA change is recognized as twice as loud as the original source.

These relationships occur in part because of the logarithmic nature of sound and the decibel system. Noise levels are measured on a logarithmic scale, instead of a linear scale. On a logarithmic scale, the sum of two noise sources of equal loudness is 3 dBA greater than the noise generated by only one of the noise sources (e.g., a noise source of 60 dBA plus another noise source of 60 dBA generates a composite noise level of 63 dBA). To apply this formula to a specific noise source, in areas where existing levels are dominated by traffic, a doubling in traffic volume will increase ambient noise levels by 3 dBA. Similarly, a doubling in heavy equipment use, such as the use of two pieces of equipment where one formerly was used, would also increase ambient noise levels by 3 dBA.

Single-Event Noise and Sleep Disturbance

A single event is an individual distinct loud activity, such as a blasting event, an aircraft overflight, a train or truck passage, or any other brief and discrete noise-generating activity. Noise exposure quantified in terms of 24-hour-averaged descriptors, such as L_{dn} or CNEL, can mask the potential for annoyance or sleep disturbance associated with individual loud events due to the averaging process.

Extensive studies have been conducted regarding the effects of single-event noise on sleep disturbance, with the Sound Exposure Level (SEL) metric being a common metric used for such assessments. SEL represents the entire sound energy of a given single event normalized into a one-second period regardless of event duration. As a result, the single-number SEL metric contains information pertaining to both event duration and intensity. Another descriptor utilized to assess single-event noise is the maximum, or Lmax, noise level associated with the event. A problem with utilizing Lmax to assess single events is that the duration of the event is not considered.

Due to the wide variation in test subjects' reactions to noises of various levels (some test subjects were awakened by indoor SEL values of 50 dB, whereas others slept through indoor SEL values exceeding 80 dB), no definitive consensus has been reached with respect to a universal criterion to apply to environmental noise assessments. The Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise (FICAN) has provided estimates of the percentage of people expected to be awakened when exposed to specific SEL inside a home (FICAN 1997). According to the FICAN study, an estimated 5 to 10 percent of the population is affected when interior SEL noise levels are between 65 and 81 dB, and few sleep awakenings (less than 5 percent) are predicted if the interior SEL is less than 65 dB.

Noise Attenuation with Distance

Stationary "point" sources of noise attenuate (lessen) at a rate of approximately 6 dBA per doubling of distance from the source, not accounting for environmental conditions (i.e., atmospheric conditions, noise barriers, ground type, vegetation, topography, etc.). Surface traffic (a "moving point" source) would typically attenuate at a lower rate, approximately 4.5 dBA per doubling distance from the source (also dependent upon environmental conditions).

Noise from aggregate processing sites (with heavy mobile and stationary equipment and trucks entering and exiting the site daily) would have characteristics of both "point" and "line" sources, so attenuation would generally range between 4.5 and 6 dBA per doubling of distance. Atmospheric absorption of sound varies depending on temperature and relative humidity, as well

as the frequency content of the noise source. In general, "average day" atmospheric conditions result in attenuation at a rate of approximately 1.5 dB per thousand feet of distance in the 1,000 hertz frequency band (SAE ARP 866A, 1975).

Atmospheric (Molecular) Absorption and Anomalous Excess Attenuation
Air absorbs sound energy. The amount of absorption is dependent on the temperature and humidity of the air, as well as the frequency of the sound. Families of curves have been developed that relate these variables to molecular absorption coefficients, frequently expressed in terms of dB per thousand feet. For standard day atmospheric conditions, defined as 59 degrees Fahrenheit and 70 percent relative humidity, the molecular absorption coefficient at 1000 hertz is 1.5 dB per thousand feet. Molecular absorption is greater at higher frequencies and reduced at lower frequencies. In addition, for drier conditions, the molecular absorption coefficients generally increase. Similarly, as temperature increases, molecular absorption coefficients typically increase as well.

Anomalous excess attenuation caused by variations in wind speed, wind direction, and thermal gradients in the air can typically be estimated using an attenuation rate of 1.5 dB per thousand feet for a noise source generating a 1,000-hertz signal. As with molecular absorption, anomalous excess attenuation typically decreases with lower frequencies and increases with higher frequencies.

The Noise Assessment used the SoundPLAN Version 9.0 noise prediction model to project noise generated at the Project site to the nearest residences. International Standards Organization (ISO) 9613-2 was employed as the sound propagation methodology within SoundPLAN. ISO 9613-2 applies appropriate octave-band offsets for atmospheric absorption for various combinations of temperature and relative humidity for each noise source associated with the Project.

Effects of Topographic Shielding
A noise barrier is any impediment that intercepts the path of sound as it travels from source to receiver. Such impediments can be natural, such as a hill or other naturally occurring topographic feature that blocks the receiver's view of the source. Impediments can also be vegetative, such as heavy tree cover, which similarly blocks the source from view of the receiver. In addition, impediments can be man-made, such as an aggregate stockpile, a solid wall, an earthen berm, or a structure constructed between the noise source and receiver. Regardless of the type of impediment, the physical properties of sound are such that, at the point where the line-of-sight between the source and receiver is interrupted by a barrier, a 5 dB reduction in sound occurs.

The effectiveness of a barrier is a function of the difference in distance sound travels on a straight-line path from source to receiver versus the distance it must travel from source to barrier, then barrier to receiver. This difference is referred to as the "path length difference" and is used to calculate the Fresnel Number. A barrier's effectiveness is a function of the Fresnel number and frequency content of the source. In general, the more acute the angle of the sound path created by the introduction of a barrier, the greater the noise reduction provided by the barrier.

For the proposed Project, where shielding would occur, the level of noise reaching the receiver would be lower than at unshielded receivers located the same distances from the source. To account for shielding of Project noise sources by intervening structures, elevation data for the entire study area was input to the SoundPLAN model to create a 3-dimensional base map. Noise

source and receptor heights were input within the base map, and the noise prediction model automatically computed the degree of acoustic shielding between each source and receptor.

Effects of Ground Cover

Ground cover also affects sound propagation. For example, soft ground is more acoustically absorptive than paved surfaces, and vegetated ground is more absorptive still. For this analysis, it was assumed that the project site would essentially consist of acoustically hard surfaces (paved roads and compacted dirt), with little sound absorption. Conversely, the area surrounding the project site is primarily juniper woodlands and agriculture to the south. Using aerial imagery and project site plans, the SoundPLAN model inputs for both hard surfaces, soft surfaces, and vegetated areas were applied. The degree of sound absorption applied to each noise source at each receptor varies depending on the type of ground cover and the distance between the noise sources and receptors. The greater the distance between the project site and the sensitive receptors, the greater the amount of intervening vegetation and the higher the degree of sound absorption. Where the ground between the noise source and receptor consists primarily of hardscape, the model applied positive offsets to account for reflections of sound from those surfaces.

Vibration

Vibration is like noise in that it involves a source, a transmission path, and a receiver. While vibration is related to noise, it differs in that noise is generally considered to be pressure waves transmitted through air, while vibration is usually associated with transmission through the ground or structures. As with noise, vibration consists of an amplitude and frequency. A person's response to vibration will depend on their individual sensitivity as well as the amplitude and frequency of the source.

Vibration can be described in terms of acceleration, velocity, or displacement. A common practice is to monitor vibration in terms of peak particle velocities (inches/second) or rms velocities (VdB). Standards pertaining to perception as well as damage to structures have been developed for vibration in terms of peak particle velocity.

As vibrations travel outward from the source, they excite the particles of rock and soil through which they pass and cause them to oscillate. Differences in subsurface geologic conditions and distance from the source of vibration will result in different vibration levels characterized by different frequencies and intensities. In all cases, vibration amplitudes will decrease with increasing distance. The maximum rate, or velocity of particle movement, is the commonly accepted descriptor of the vibration "strength."

According to the Transportation and Construction-Induced Vibration Guidance Manual (Caltrans, June 2004), the operation of construction equipment and construction techniques generate ground vibration. Traffic traveling on roadways can also be a source of such vibration. At high amplitudes, ground vibration has the potential to damage structures and/or cause cosmetic damage (e.g., crack plaster). Ground vibration can also be a source of annoyance to individuals who live or work close to vibration-generating activities. However, traffic, including heavy trucks traveling on a highway, rarely generates vibration amplitudes high enough to cause structural or cosmetic damage.

4.13.2 Existing Noise Environment

Identification of Existing Sensitive Receivers
BAC utilized aerial imagery and site inspections to identify the nearest potentially affected sensitive receptors to the project site. Although the project site is immediately bordered by mostly vacant land, existing noise-sensitive land uses are present in the project vicinity to the northwest, west, and south of the project site. Figure 4-11 identifies the locations of the five nearest sensitive receptors to the project site, which were analyzed for this study (labeled as R1 through R5). It is important to note that it is not necessary to model noise and vibration levels at every sensitive receptor, provided the selected receptors are reasonably representative of worst-case impacted locations. In addition to the noise-sensitive receptors in the general vicinity of the project area, there are also sensitive receptors located adjacent to the roadways, which will be utilized by project traffic.

The primary roadways that will be utilized by project traffic include the following:

- Skyline Road (site access is from this roadway)
- Highway 139
- Johnstonville Road

Existing Ambient Noise Environment
The existing ambient noise environment in the immediate project vicinity is defined primarily by local and distant traffic. To quantify baseline ambient noise levels, BAC utilized a long-term noise survey and traffic noise modelling using the Federal Highway Administration Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model (FHWA-RD-77-108).

Long-Term Ambient Noise Survey
The existing ambient noise environment at the project site is defined primarily by traffic on Highway 139 and Skyline Road. To quantify the existing ambient noise level environment at the Project site, BAC conducted a long-term (5-day) noise level survey from June 28 through July 2, 2023, at the locations shown in Figure 4-11.

Long-term noise measurement site LT-1 is located approximately 550 feet from the west project parcel boundary and 1,000 feet from Lassen Community College. LT-1 was selected to quantify ambient noise levels between Lassen Community College and the northwest Project boundary. LT-2 is located at the proposed project access road at approximately 120 feet from the centerline of Skyline Road. Photographs of the noise survey locations are provided in Appendix B of the Noise Assessment (see Appendix H).

Larson-Davis Laboratories (LDL) Model 820 precision integrating sound level meters were used to complete the ambient noise level survey. The meters were calibrated immediately before and after use with an LDL Model CAL200 acoustic calibrator to ensure the accuracy of the measurements. The equipment used meets all pertinent specifications of the American National Standards Institute for Type 1 sound level meters (ANSI S1.4).

The long-term ambient noise level survey results are summarized in Table 4-20. The detailed results of the ambient noise survey are contained in *Appendix C* in tabular format and graphically in *Appendix D* of the Noise Assessment (see Appendix H).

Table 4-20 indicates that average hourly noise levels ranged from 41 to 49 Leq dBA at site LT-1 and 51 to 55 Leq dBA at site LT-2. Daytime and nighttime average Leq levels were typically within 4 dB in either direction. The hourly maximum noise level ranged from 52 to 61 Lmax dBA at site LT-1 and 66 to 70 Lmax dBA at site LT-2. In general, ambient noise levels at site LT-1 were about 7 dB lower than at site LT-2. This is expected as site LT-2 is considerably closer to a roadway. The significance of the ambient noise measurement results is discussed in greater detail in the impacts section below.

Table 4-20
SUMMARY OF LONG-TERM NOISE SURVEY MEASUREMENT RESULTS[1]

Site[2]	Description	Date	DNL [dBA]	Average Hourly Noise Levels [dBA] Daytime[3]		Nighttime[4]	
				Leq	Lmax	Leq	Lmax
LT-1	Between Lassen Community College and Project Parcel Boundary	6/28/2023	52	47	61	46	56
		6/29/2023	51	44	59	44	56
		6/30/2023	55	44	55	49	60
		7/1/2023	52	42	55	46	54
		7/2/2023	49	41	53	43	52
		Average	52	44	57	46	56
LT-2	Near Skyline Road at proposed project driveway	6/28/2023	59	51	67	52	68
		6/29/2023	59	53	69	52	68
		6/30/2023	59	55	69	52	67
		7/1/2023	58	54	68	51	68
		7/2/2023	57	54	70	50	66
		Average	58	53	68	52	67

Notes:
[1] Detailed summaries of the noise monitoring results are provided in Appendices C and D of the Noise and Vibration Assessment.
[2] Long-term noise survey locations are identified on Figure 4-11.
[3] Daytime hours: 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
[4] Nighttime hours: 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
Source: Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc. (2023)

Baseline Traffic Noise Levels

To describe existing noise levels due to traffic, the Federal Highway Administration Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model (FHWA RD-77-108) was used. The Model is based on the Calveno reference noise factors for automobiles, medium trucks, and heavy trucks, with consideration given to vehicle volume, speed, roadway configuration, distance to the receiver, and the acoustical characteristics of the area. The Model was developed to predict hourly Leq values for free-flowing traffic conditions. The day/night distribution of traffic is factored into the Model calculations to assess noise exposure in terms of L_{dn}.

Traffic volumes for existing conditions were obtained from the Transportation Technical Study prepared for the Project by Headway Transportation (see Appendix I). The percentages of truck usage on the area roadways were obtained from Caltrans truck counts and BAC observations and

experience for similar roadways. Vehicle speeds were based on posted speed limits with adjustments for BAC field observations.

Table 4-21 shows the predicted existing traffic noise levels in terms of L_{dn} at the approximate distance from the identified segment to the nearest noise-sensitive receiver. The FHWA Model input data for existing conditions is provided in Appendix E-1 of the Noise Assessment.

Table 4-21 data indicate that existing traffic noise levels at the nearest noise-sensitive receptors range from 45 to 63 L_{dn} dBA. Three (3) of the eight (8) identified receptors are above 60 L_{dn} dBA which is approaching typical residential exterior noise standards ranging from 60 to 70 L_{dn} dBA.

Table 4-21
SUMMARY OF EXISTING TRAFFIC NOISE EXPOSURE FOR LOCAL AREA ROADWAYS

Roadway	Segment	Distance [feet][1]	Ldn [dBA]	Distance to Ldn Contours [ft]		
				65 dBA	60 dBA	55 dBA
Hwy 139	North of Skyline Rd	500	52	71	152	328
Hwy 139	South of Skyline Rd	110	62	70	152	327
Skyline Rd	West of Hwy 139	45	62	30	64	137
Skyline Rd	Hwy 139 to Project Dwy	600	51	75	161	348
Skyline Rd	Project Dwy to Johnstonville Rd	1700	45	74	159	343
Skyline Rd	South of Johnstonville Rd	100	57	31	67	145
Johnstonville Rd	East of Skyline Rd	60	63	41	89	192
Johnstonville Rd	West of Skyline Rd	220	51	27	57	123

Notes:
[1]This column represents the approximate distance from the roadway centerline to the nearest noise-sensitive receptor to the roadway segment.
Sources: FHWA-RD-77-108 with inputs from BAC, Headway Transportation, and Caltrans.

Baseline Vibration Environment
The existing ambient vibration environment at the western portion of the project site (in the direction of the nearest receptors) was subjectively evaluated by BAC staff as being imperceptible during field surveys. As a result, baseline vibration levels at the nearest sensitive receptors to the project site are considered to be negligible.

4.13.3 Regulatory Setting

The CEQA contains noise and vibration impact assessment guidelines. In addition, California cities and counties are required to adopt a Noise Element as part of the General Plan. Cities and counties typically also adopt a noise ordinance. The Project site is located in unincorporated Lassen County, which has both a General Plan Noise Element and a Municipal Code Noise Ordinance.

Federal recommendations, CEQA Guidelines, Lassen County and City of Susanville noise-level criteria, and appropriate criteria of other jurisdictions that are considered to be applicable to the proposed project are discussed below.

Federal Criteria for Determination of Significant Noise Increases
The Federal Interagency Commission on Noise (FICON) has developed a graduated scale for use in the assessment of project-related noise level increases. The criteria shown in Table 4-22 were developed by FICON as a means of developing thresholds for impact identification for project-related noise level increases. The FICON standards have been used extensively in recent years by BAC in the preparation of the noise sections of Environmental Impact Reports that have been certified in many California cities and counties.

The use of the FICON standards is considered conservative relative to thresholds used by other agencies in the State of California. For example, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requires a project-related traffic noise level increase of 12 dB for a finding of significance, and the California Energy Commission (CEC) considers project-related noise level increases between 5 to 10 dB significant, depending on local factors. Therefore, the use of the FICON standards, which set the threshold for finding of significant noise impacts as low as 1.5 dB, provides a very conservative approach to impact assessment for this Project.

Based on the FICON research, as shown in Table 4-22, a 5 dB increase in noise levels due to a project is required for a finding of significant noise impact where ambient noise levels without the project are less than 60 dB. Where pre-project ambient conditions are between 60 and 65 dB, a 3 dB increase is applied as the standard of significance. Finally, in areas already exposed to higher noise levels, specifically pre-project noise levels in excess of 65 dB, a 1.5 dB increase is considered by FICON as the threshold of significance.

Table 4-22
SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES IN CUMULATIVE NOISE EXPOSURE

Ambient Noise Level without Project (DNL)	Change in Ambient Noise Level Due to Project
<60 dB	+5.0 dB or more
60 to 65 dB	+3.0 dB or more
>65 dB	+1.5 dB or more

Source: Federal Interagency Committee on Noise (FICON)

As noted previously, audibility is not a test of significance according to CEQA. If this were the case, any project that added any audible amount of noise to the environment could be considered to result in a significant noise impact. Because every physical process creates noise, whether by the addition of a single vehicle on a roadway or a tractor in an agricultural field, the use of audibility alone as a significance criterion would be unworkable. CEQA requires a substantial increase in ambient noise levels before potential noise impacts are identified, not simply an audible change.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines
The State of California has established regulatory criteria that are applicable to the Noise Assessment. Specifically, Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is used to assess the potential significance of impacts pursuant to local General Plan policies, Municipal Code standards, or the applicable standards of other agencies. According to the CEQA guidelines, the project would result in a significant noise or vibration impact if the following occur:

A. Generation of substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable standards of other agencies?
B. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?
C. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

As noted in CEQA Criteria "A" above, a project's noise impacts must be evaluated relative to both the **increase** in noise level which would result from the project as well as compliance with standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance.

The Lassen County General Plan Noise Element and Noise Ordinance do not have a specific policy or standard for assessing noise impacts associated with **increases** in offsite ambient noise levels resulting from project-generated traffic on public roadways.

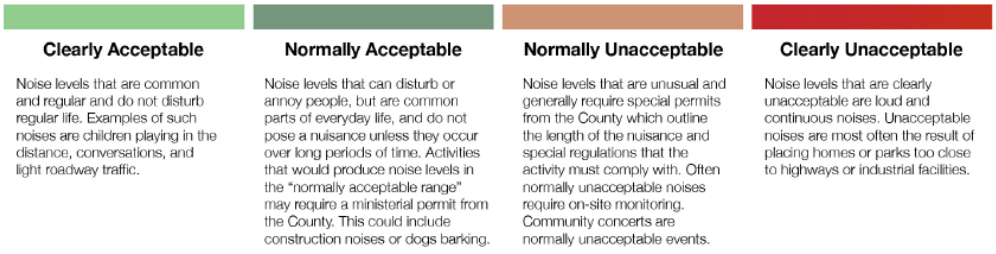
Because CEQA requires that the significance of noise impacts be evaluated relative to the **increase** in noise resulting from a project, where the local jurisdiction does not have such adopted thresholds, reasonable thresholds from other jurisdictions must be considered. As a result, Federal thresholds for assessing the significance of project-related increases in offsite heavy truck traffic using federal research conducted by the Federal Interagency Commission on Noise (FICON) are applicable.

Lassen County General Plan Noise Element
The Lassen County Noise Element of the General Plan (December 2021), establishes acceptable noise level limits for new developments based on land use. Figure 4-12 contains the County's General Plan Land Use Noise Compatibility Standards for new development projects. Land use compatibility standards are shown on Figure 4-12. Land use categories which are most applicable to the proposed project are "Resource Extraction" and "Industrial", and the normally acceptable noise environment for such uses is up to 90-95 dB DNL. This high standard is applied due to the fact that industrial and resource extraction operations are not considered to be noise sensitive. As such, they can be located in high noise environments within Lassen County. For residential uses affected by projects that would introduce new noise sources, the County applies exterior and interior noise level standards of 65 and 45 dBA DNL, respectively.

For existing and proposed sensitive receptors that would be potentially affected by noise generated by the project, the Noise Element also presents goals, policies, and implementation measures to limit the negative effects of noise. The following policies and actions are considered applicable to this project:

Policy 1.1 Noise Generation Standards: Minimize the impact of noise generators by applying clear and appropriate standards during permit review and subsequent monitoring.

Figure 4-12
LAND USE COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS



Land Use Category	Maximum Interior Noise Levels	Land Use Interpretation for CNEL (or Ldn) value								
		50 - 60		61 - 70		71 - 80		81 - 90		91+
Residential	45									
Recreational/Open Space										
Institutional*	45									
Commercial/Retail	50									
Industrial										
Agriculture										
Resource Extraction										
Public Right-of-Way										

*This includes uses such as: schools, libraries, nursing homes, etc.

Action 1.1a: Enforce Stationary Noise Source Levels.
Enforce maximum and average noise level limits on permitted stationary sources based on their impact on the property line ***of the nearest noise-sensitive receptor*** (emphasis added by BAC) as outlined in the Lassen County Noise Ordinance (Lassen County Code, Section 9.65.040). Where the ***noise-sensitive receptor*** (emphasis added by BAC), involves a residence on a parcel with zoning or land use designation of "agriculture," the noise impact shall be evaluated at the boundary of the yard area or property line of the residence, whichever is closer to the residence.

Action 1.1c: Noise Monitoring.
Noise monitoring may be required if determined to be necessary by the Director of Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services or his/her designee, or if determined to be necessary by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors through the use permit process.

Action 1.1d: Ensure Construction Occurs During Accepted Times of Day.
Ensure that noise-generating construction work occurs during the accepted times of day, not between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., pursuant to Standard N-4. Lassen County Noise Ordinance Section 9.65.070(a)(9) exempts construction work from noise regulation between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Policy 1.2 Noise Mitigation and Attenuation. Mitigate the effect of noise from new industrial or commercial uses, project-generated traffic, and short-term/ temporary events on residential and other noise-sensitive land uses by applying feasible noise mitigation measures.

Action 1.2a: Attenuate Project-Related Stationary Source Noise Impacts.
As part of the environmental review process, the County shall work with project applicants to attenuate stationary-source noise impacts. Projects shall be designed to avoid long-term noise impacts or reduce those impacts to meet the applicable CNEL limits presented in Standard N-1.1. Noise impacts can be reduced using the following methods, or similar methods, as appropriate:

- Create a distance buffer between stationary mechanical equipment and noise-sensitive receivers by placing parking lots, storm drain facilities, and landscaping between major stationary equipment and adjacent receivers.
- Provide sound barriers or enclosures for equipment with significant sound generation.
- Where possible, place onsite buildings between major noise-generating equipment and the location of the closest adjacent noise-sensitive land use.
- Where possible, locate/orient/direct/face/position noise-generating uses in such a way that minimizes noise for noise-sensitive receivers.
- Use facility perimeter sound barriers (e.g., solid walls) or landscaped berms to reduce noise levels at immediately adjacent noise-sensitive uses.

Action 1.2b: Require Noise Studies for Discretionary Projects.
When a discretionary project has the potential to generate noise levels that exceed the standards presented in Standard N-11 (as identified through the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] process), a noise study and acceptable noise attenuation techniques to ensure compliance with Standard N-1 shall be required. For such discretionary projects, the environmental review process required by CEQA shall be employed to identify the required analysis and determine appropriate mitigation, as described in Standard N-2. The noise study shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements set forth in Standard N-3.

Action 1.2c: Attenuate Project-Related Traffic Noise Impacts Near Sensitive Uses.
Proposed discretionary developments that may result in an increase in traffic on roadways near existing noise-sensitive uses above levels allowed in the General Plan should include, as appropriate and feasible, traffic-calming design, low-noise pavement surfaces, sound barriers, or vegetated berms to minimize motor vehicle traffic noise.

Standard N-1. CNEL/DNL Standards by Land Use Category
New noise-generating land uses may not exceed the standards presented in Table 4-23 at the property line for the parcel containing said noise-generating use. **For noise-sensitive uses in a project's vicinity, exterior noise standards shall be measured at the property line of the receiving noise-sensitive use** (emphasis added by BAC), or at the yard boundary for residences on agricultural land. Interior noise standards shall be measured with all doors and windows closed.

Table 4-23
COMMUNITY NOISE EQUIVALENT LEVEL (CNEL) STANDARDS FOR RECEIVING LAND USES

Land Use Category	Interior Noise Standard [dBA]	Exterior Noise Standard [dBA]a
Residential	45	65
Recreational/Open Space	N/A	65
Institutional	45	65
Commercial/Retail	50	75b
Industrial	N/A	90b
Agriculture	N/A	90
Resource Extraction	N/A	90b
Public Right-of-Way	N/A	90

Notes:
These noise generation limits are translated into hourly average (Leq) limits in Lassen County Code, Section 9.65.040. Proposed new stationary noise sources must comply with both Standard N-1 and Section 9.65.040. Noise levels generated from these sources are also subject to the land use noise standard of the receiving properties, where such a standard imposes a lower noise limit. For instance, while commercial noise levels of up to 75 dBA CNEL are allowed within a commercially zoned property, this commercial noise source must not exceed 65 dBA CNEL at any residential property boundary in the vicinity. The limit is applied at the receiving land use property line or (for residences in agriculture zones) at the boundary of the yard area.
Source: Lassen County Noise Element

Standard N-2. Environmental/Development Review Process
When noise-sensitive or noise-generating land uses, as defined in the Noise Ordinance (Lassen County Code, Chapter 9.65), are proposed and require a discretionary permit, the environmental review process required by CEQA shall be used to generate the required analysis and determine the appropriate mitigation per General Plan and state standards. For the purpose of completing CEQA review, future noise levels shall be predicted for a period of at least 10 years from the beginning of the environmental document review process. Adherence to mitigation required to address significant noise impacts (as identified in the CEQA review document) shall be ensured via incorporation of mitigation measures in a required Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), to be adopted concurrent with approval of discretionary permits for the project. Adherence to mitigation shall also be ensured through conditions of approval.

Standard N-3. Noise Study Requirements
When a discretionary project has the potential to generate noise levels in excess of N-1 standards, a noise study and acceptable plans to ensure compliance with the standards shall be required. The noise study shall measure or model the following, as appropriate: CNEL, Leq, and Lmax levels at property lines and, if feasible, receptor locations. Noise studies shall be prepared by qualified individuals using calibrated equipment under currently accepted professional standards, and include an analysis of the characteristics of the project in relation to noise levels, all feasible mitigations, and projected noise impacts. Noise studies shall do the following:

- Be the responsibility of the applicant, but accepted by the Department of Planning and Building Services.
- Include representative noise level measurements with sufficient sampling periods and locations to adequately describe local conditions.

- Estimate existing and projected (10 years) noise levels in terms of CNEL standards in Table 4-23 or the standards found in Lassen County Noise Ordinance Section 96.040, and compare predicted noise levels against such standards.
- Recommend appropriate mitigation to achieve compliance with the adopted policies and standards of the Noise Element and Noise Ordinance.
- Predict noise exposure at the property line after the prescribed mitigation measures have been implemented (quantify the noise reduction achieved by the mitigations). If the project does not comply with the adopted standards of the Noise Element and Noise Ordinance, the analysis must provide acoustic information for a statement of overriding considerations for the project.

Lassen County Noise Ordinance

Section 9.65 of the Lassen County Code contains the County's Noise Ordinance. The purpose of the Noise Ordinance is to regulate noise in the unincorporated area of the County to promote the public health, comfort, and convenience of the County's inhabitants and its visitors. Section 9.65.040 of the Noise Ordinance dictates average hourly noise level standards not to be exceeded when measured at the property line of the property that is receiving the noise. The specific policy language and corresponding noise standards are reproduced below:

9.65.040 General Sound Level Limits

(a) Except as provided in sections 050, 060 and 070 of this chapter, it shall be deemed a Public Nuisance (Lassen County Code Chapter 1.18) for any person to cause or allow the creation of any noise, which exceeds the one-hour average sound level limits in Table 1 [Table4-24 below], when the one-hour average sound level is measured at *the property line of the property on which the noise is produced* or at *any location on a property that is receiving the noise*. Any person violating any provision of the Lassen County Code, including the generation of noise in excess of the following sound level limits, may be issued an administrative citation by an enforcement officer as provided in this chapter, pursuant to Lassen County Code Chapter 1.20.

Table 4-24
LASSEN COUNTY GENERAL SOUND LEVEL LIMITS

Zone	Time	One-Hour Average Sound Level Limits [dBA]
(1) R-1, R-2, R-3, PUD, P-C, R-S, M-R, F-R, I-1, O-C-B, O-D, O-H, E-A, O-S, A-1, A-2, A-3, U-C, U-C-2, A-F1,2 Also any future established residential or agricultural zones.	7 a.m. – 7 p.m.	65
	7 p.m. – 10 p.m.	60
	10 p.m. – 7 a.m.	55
(2) B-P, C-H, C-L, C-G, C-R, C-T, C-1, C-2, Y-C2 Also any future established commercial zones.	7 a.m. – 7 p.m.	75
	7 p.m. – 10 p.m.	70
	10 p.m. – 7 a.m.	65
(3) M-L, M-1, M-2, M, H-R, T-P-Z Also any future established industrial zones	7 a.m. – 7 p.m.	90
	7 p.m. – 7 a.m.	80

Notes:
Within agriculture zones, noise exposure limit is applicable only to residences, at the residential yard boundary. These limits also govern the noise exposure level for a legal residence in any zone, applied at the residential yard boundary.
Source: Lassen County Code

(b) Where a noise study has been conducted and the noise mitigation measures recommended by that study have been made conditions of approval of a Use Permit, which authorizes the noise-generating use or activity and the decision-making body approving the Use Permit determined that those mitigation measures reduce potential noise impacts to a level below significance, implementation and compliance with those noise mitigation measures shall constitute compliance with subsection (a) above.

(c) If the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable limit in Table 4-24, the allowable one-hour average sound level shall be the one-hour average ambient noise level, plus three decibels. The ambient noise level shall be measured when the alleged noise violation source is not operating.

(d) The sound level limit at a location on a boundary between two zones is the lower of the respective limits for the two zones.

(e) A fixed-location public utility distribution or transmission facility located on or adjacent to a property line shall be subject to the sound level limits of this section measured at or beyond six feet from the boundary of the easement upon which the facility is located, subject to the jurisdictional authority of the County.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan (Applicable within Unincorporated Lassen County)
The Susanville Vicinity Area Plan (Area Plan) was prepared in 1984. As such, it is unclear if the policies of the Lassen County General Plan Noise Element, which was adopted in 2021, would supersede the policies of the Area Plan. Nonetheless, the policies and implementation measures of the Area Plan, which pertain to noise, are reproduced below:

Policy
3.1: The County shall protect noise-sensitive land uses from existing or future noise generators by locating them within compatible noise environments or by requiring noise mitigation measures.

Implementation
3.11: County planning staff will evaluate the noise potential of proposed projects and their effect on surrounding uses. If the project is incompatible with the surrounding area, it should be directed (generally) to a more compatible area. Conversely, planning staff should encourage noise-sensitive uses to locate away from existing noise generators.

3.12: When new streets are planned, measures such as sound walls or berms should be included to mitigate significant noise impacts.

3.13: New developments shall not exceed the noise standards of the Lassen County General Plan.

3.14: New development locating near noise generators should incorporate design features that will reduce the noise impacts.

3.15: New noise generators shall incorporate design features or devices to reduce the amount of noise that they will emit.

Because Implementation Measure 3.13 requires new developments to satisfy the noise standards contained within the Lassen County General Plan, those standards are applied to this evaluation.

Summary of Lassen County Noise Standards Applicable to this Project:
As indicated above, different noise standards are applied to different land uses located within the County. Figure 4-12 indicates that the proposed use is considered acceptable in noise environments up to 90 dBA DNL. However, Figure 4-12 is not included or referenced within the Goals and Policies section of the Lassen County General Plan. Although CEQA does not require assessment of the impacts of the environment upon a project, the project site would nonetheless be considered acceptable for the proposed mineral extraction use, provided the noise environment within the project site does not exceed 95 dBA DNL.

The noise standards contained within the Goals and Policies section of the Lassen County General Plan are described as being applicable at the property line of a noise-sensitive receptor (see emphasis added to GP Action 1.1a above). Because there are no existing noise-sensitive receptors located on the parcels to the immediate east, south, or west of the project site, the County General Plan Noise Element standards would not be applicable at those property lines. Rather, the County GP standards would be applicable at the property lines of the parcels containing the sensitive receptors identified on Figure 4-11. As indicated in Table 4-25, the specific General Plan exterior noise standards applicable to those nearest receptor locations identified on Figure 4-11 would be 65 dB DNL for residences (R3, R4, and R5), and 65 dB DNL for institutional uses (hospital use represented by R1 and community college use represented by R2). It should be noted that receptors R1 and R2 (hospital and community college) and R4 (residence), are located within the Susanville City limits, not within unincorporated Lassen County. Nonetheless, the Susanville Vicinity Area Plan Implementation Measure 3.13 requires new developments to satisfy the noise standards contained within the Lassen County General Plan. As a result, the County noise standards are applied to all uses in the project vicinity. In addition, the County's noise standards are more restrictive than the City's noise standards.

Table 4-24 from the Lassen County Noise Ordinance indicates that the noise generated by the project shall not exceed 90 dBA Leq during daytime hours, and 80 dBA Leq during nighttime hours, at the project site boundaries (property lines). At the property lines of the nearest sensitive residential receptors (R3-R5 on Figure 4-11), the County ordinance standards in Table 4-24 indicates that noise levels shall not exceed 65, 60, and 55 dBA Leq during daytime, evening, and nighttime periods, respectively, at the property lines of the parcels containing those residences. Recognizing Receptors R1 and R2 are institutional uses that are more commercial in nature than residential or industrial uses, the County noise ordinance standards for commercial uses were used for these receptors. Table 4-25 of the ordinance indicates that noise levels for these types of receptors shall not exceed 75, 70, and 65 dBA Leq during daytime, evening, and nighttime periods, respectively.

City of Susanville General Plan

The City of Susanville General Plan was adopted in 1991. Chapter 9 of the General Plan contains the Community Health, Safety, and Conservation Element. Background on noise exposure within Susanville and the City's policies with respect to noise are contained within that element.

Although other sections of the General Plan have been updated at various times since the 1991 Adoption of the City's General Plan, the section within Chapter 9 containing the City's noise policies has not changed since 1991. As such, it is somewhat outdated. Nonetheless, because a portion of the project site borders parcels located within the Susanville City limits, the noise

policies and standards contained within the Susanville Noise Element, which would be applicable to this project, are presented below.

Policy bk: The City shall require landscaped sound buffers, open space, or other mitigation between residential areas (emphasis added by BAC), and facilities or areas that produce higher noise levels, such as freeways, commercial sites, and industrial developments. The buffers will be designed to achieve sound level reductions necessary to meet the land use compatibility criteria shown on Figure 9-7 of the General Plan. The criteria contained within this figure have been reproduced in Table 4-25.

Table 4-25
LAND USE COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS

Land Use Category	Noise Level (DNL or CNEL) [dBA]	
	Normally Acceptable[1]	Conditionally Acceptable[2]
Residential –Single Family, Duplex, Mobile Home	Up to 60	55 – 70
Residential – Multi-family	Up to 65	60 - 70
Transient Lodging – Motel, Hotels	Up to 65	60 - 70
School, Library, Church, Hospital, Nursing Home	Up to 70	60 - 70
Auditorium, Concert Hall, Amphitheater	N/A	Up to 70
Sports Arena, Outdoor Spectator Sports	N/A	Up to 75
Playground, Neighborhood Park	Up to 70	N/A
Golf Course, Stable, Water Recreation, Cemetery	Up to 75	N/A
Office Building, Business, Commercial & Professional	Up to 70	67 - 77
Industrial, Manufacturing, Utilities, Agriculture	Up to 75	70 - 80

Notes:
1."Normally Acceptable" means that the "specified land use is satisfactory, based upon the assumption that any building involved is of normal conventional construction, without any special noise insulation requirements."
2. "Conditionally Acceptable" means that "new construction or development should be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirements is made and needed noise insulation features included in the design. Conventional construction, but with closed windows and fresh air supply systems or air conditioning will normally suffice.
Source: City of Susanville General Plan; State of California

Policy bl: It shall be City policy to minimize the volume of traffic that passes residences.

Policy bm: The City shall limit the introduction or expansion of noise sources that exceed the desired noise levels established in the Susanville General Plan.

Policy bn: The City shall establish local noise standards and enforce them. The recommended noise standards shown in Table 4-25 define acceptable conditions for the arrangement and juxtaposition of different categories of land use. The intent is that outdoor and indoor noise standards will be used to review proposals for new development, especially those that are either noise generators or sensitive receptors (residences, schools, churches, hospitals, etc.). Interior noise levels for single and multi-family residential buildings should be mitigated to provide a level of 45 DNL. DNL 60 should be established as the reasonable noise level for outdoor use areas. Areas along major trafficways should especially be checked to ensure satisfactory sound levels.

Policy bo: The City shall require new commercial and industrial development to contribute financially to sound buffers where required.

Policy bp: Adopt the State of California noise compatibility standards for various land uses as shown in General Plan, Figure 9-7, page 218 (reproduced above as Table 4-25 of this report).

Policy bq: Require acoustical studies for any new development in areas having an Ldn greater than acceptable for the land use proposed.

Policy bs: Stipulate use of the current standard A-weighted sound levels for measuring noise.

Policy bt: Require setbacks, walls, or other mitigation between noise-generating and noise-sensitive uses.

Policy bu: Allow construction activities at normal activity levels, but limit them to times of the day or week when the number of persons occupying the potential noise impact zone is lowest.

Policy bv: Utilize the natural shielding effects offered by topography to determine the phasing of construction.

Policy bw: Require use of mufflers and require muffler maintenance on construction vehicles to meet EPA standards established under the Federal Noise Control Act of 1972 for new equipment.

Policy bx: Require the placement of stationary construction equipment, such as compressors, as far as possible from developed areas, and require that acoustic shielding be used with such equipment.

Policy cc: Enact a noise ordinance or add noise standards to the City's Zoning Ordinance to cover industrial and commercial operations.

Action Program 99: Adopt the State of California land use/noise compatibility standards shown on Figure 9-7, page 218 (reproduced herein in Table 4-25).

Action Program 100: Enact a noise ordinance to include the above policies for new and, where applicable, existing-development.

Summary of City of Susanville Noise Standards Applicable to this Project:
The noise standards contained within the City of Susanville General Plan are described as being applicable sensitive receptor locations (see policies **bk** and **bn**). As such, project noise exposure would be considered "normally acceptable" at existing and proposed residential land uses located within the Susanville City limits, provided it does not exceed 60 dBA DNL. Project noise exposure at Hospital and School uses (Receptors R1 and R1 on Figure 4-11) would be acceptable provided it does not exceed 70 dBA DNL.

Sleep Disturbance Evaluation Criteria
Since a court case in Berkeley, California (*Berkeley Keep Jets Over the Bay Committee v. Board of Port Commissioners of the City of Oakland* (2001) 91 Cal. App.4th 1344), which pertained to increased aircraft overflights of the City of Berkeley, there has been increased attention to the evaluation of single-event noise levels during the preparation of noise analyses. The Berkeley case ruling required that single-event noise be considered, but it did not recommend an appropriate single-event noise level standard.

The Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise (FICAN) has provided estimates of the percentage of people expected to be awakened when exposed to specific SELs inside a home (FICAN 1997). However, FICAN did not recommend a threshold of significance based on the percentage of people awakened. According to the FICAN study, 10 percent of the population is estimated to be awakened when the SEL interior noise level exceeds 81 dBA. An estimated 5 to 10 percent of the population is affected when the SEL interior noise level is between 65 and 81 dBA, and few sleep awakenings (less than 5 percent) are predicted if the interior SEL is less than 65 dBA.

The threshold for sleep disturbance is not absolute because there is a high degree of variability from one person to another. Thus, the means of applying such research to land use decisions is not clear. As a result, there is no consensus on what frequencies of awakenings are acceptable (California Division of Aeronautics 2002). For these reasons, the Federal Interagency Committee on Noise (FICON) and the California Airport and Land Use Planning Handbook continue to use CNEL as the primary tool for the purpose of land use compatibility planning (California Division of Aeronautics 2002). Note that CNEL and L_{dn} are often used interchangeably, as there is only a subtle difference in noise level penalties between the two metrics during evening hours. In fact, CNEL/L_{dn} represents the cumulative exposure to all single events; that is, the exposure of all SELs taken together, weighed to add penalties for nighttime occurrences, and averaged over a 24-hour period. Thus, it can be argued that the L_{dn}-based standards already account for the individual impacts associated with the SELs.

This analysis conservatively utilizes a criterion of 65 dB SEL within residences as the threshold at which sleep disturbance impacts could occur. Based on the FICAN test results on aviation noise, less than 5 percent of the population experiences sleep disturbance if interior noise is less than 65 dB SEL. Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, single-event levels resulting from the project would be considered less than significant if single-event noise levels would not exceed 65 dB SEL within interior areas of residences located in the immediate project vicinity.

Criteria for Acceptable Vibration Exposure
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Lassen County does not currently have adopted standards for groundborne vibration. As a result, the vibration impact assessment criteria established by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) were applied to the project. The FTA's publication, Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual (FTA Report No. 0123 dated September 2018), includes criteria for assessing potential impacts related to groundborne vibration in terms of both annoyance and damage to structures. The FTA vibration impact criteria are based on maximum overall levels for a single event. The FTA vibration impact criteria for interference with human activity and annoyance are shown in Table 4-26.

Table 7-5 of the Federal Transit Administration's publication, *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual*, contains criteria for assessing damage to structures from vibration. That table is reproduced below as Table 4-27.

Table 4-26
GROUNDBORNE VIBRATION IMPACT CRITERIA FOR ANNOYANCE DETERMINATIONS

Land Use Category	Groundborne Vibration Impact Levels (VdB re 1 µinch/sec, RMS)		
	Frequent Events[1]	Occasional Events[2]	Infrequent Events[3]
Buildings where vibration would interfere with interior operations	65[4]	65[4]	65[4]
Residences and buildings where people normally sleep	72	75	80
Institutional land uses with primarily daytime use	75	78	83

Notes:
1. "Frequent Events" is defined as more than 70 vibration events of the same source per day.
2. "Occasional Events" is defined as between 30 and 70 vibration events of the same source per day.
3. "Infrequent Events" is defined as fewer than 30 vibration events of the same kind per day.
4. This criterion limit is based on levels that are acceptable for most moderately sensitive equipment such as optical microscopes. For equipment that is more sensitive, a Detailed Vibration Analysis must be performed.
Source: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual (Sep. 2018), Table 6-3

Table 4-27
FTA VIBRATION DAMAGE CRITERIA

Building/ Structural Category	PPV, in/sec	Approximate LV*
Reinforced-concrete, steel or timber (no plaster)	0.5	102
II. Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3	98
III. Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2	94
IV. Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12	90
*RMS velocity in decibels, VdB re I micro-in/sec		

4.13.4 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Noise* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies*
- *Result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.*
- *For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, where the project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.*

The thresholds of significance applied to noise generated by onsite operations at the Project site include the Lassen County general sound level limits included in the Lassen County Noise Ordinance and the community noise level standards for receiving land uses contained in the Lassen County General Plan Noise Element (Table 4-25). These limits and standards are applied to land uses/noise receptors within unincorporated Lassen County (Receptors R3 and R5).

Because the County's standards are more restrictive than the City's standards, the County's noise limits and standards are also applied to the noise receptors located within the City of Susanville (Receptors R1, R2, and R4) to provide a conservative assessment of noise impacts. In addition, a sleep disturbance threshold of 65 dB SEL within interior areas of residences is applied to nighttime operations.

The Lassen County General Plan and Noise Ordinance do not have a specific policy or standard for assessing noise impacts associated with increases in offsite ambient noise levels resulting from project-generated traffic on public roadways. Therefore, the FICON standards in Table 4-25 are applied to offsite traffic noise increases resulting from the Project.

Vibration impact assessment criteria for annoyance established by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) were applied to the project (Table 4-26) as well as FTA vibration damage criteria (Table 4-27).

4.13.4 Impact Analysis

The proposed Project would generate noise through the following components: aggregate mining (including blasting), aggregate processing (crushing, screening, conveying), ready-mix concrete (RMC) plant operations, and a hot mix asphalt (HMA) plant. In addition to the noise generation of these plants, noise would also be generated by heavy truck traffic related to these Project components. The noise generation of the project's onsite noise sources was evaluated by BAC using the SoundPLAN noise prediction program (V8.2) using ISO standard 9613-2. The assessment of increases in offsite traffic noise levels resulting from the project was completed using the Federal Highway Administration Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model (FHWA-RD-77-108). Noise would also be generated during project site construction, but construction activities would be short-term in nature and limited to daytime hours. Finally, HMA and RMC plant operations would periodically occur during nighttime hours as required to satisfy night paving projects.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to Noise based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Noise*.

Project Impacts

Impact 4.13-1: Result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Project Construction Noise

The primary onsite noise generation at the Project site during construction activities will be the grading and paving of onsite circulation routes and assembly of the processing, RMC, and HMA plants. Offsite construction will consist of gas/electric utility installation within the Skyline Road right-of-way between SR 139 and the project site. The locations of the offsite utility improvements

are indicated on Figure 3-14. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM) was used by BAC to quantify worst-case construction noise levels for the project. For this assessment, it was assumed that graders, front-end loaders, compactors, paving machines, pneumatic tools, etc., would be used for the various stages of onsite preparation. This includes construction of the shop building, and paving of the access road, heavy equipment parking areas near the shop building, and retail landscape building. For offsite utility installation, it was assumed that backhoes, pavers, forklifts, and compactors would be utilized.

Table 4-28 provides the maximum noise levels reported by the RCNM for equipment commonly used in general construction projects at full-power operation at a distance of 50 feet. Not all of these types of construction equipment would be required for the project.

Table 4-28
TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT NOISE LEVELS

Equipment Description	Maximum Noise Level at 50 Feet, dBA
Auger drill rig	85
Backhoe	80
Compactor (ground)	80
Compressor (air)	80
Concrete batch plant	83
Concrete mixer truck	85
Concrete pump truck	82
Concrete saw	90
Crane (mobile or stationary)	85
Dozer	85
Dump truck	84
Excavator	85
Front end loader	80
Generator (more than 25 kVA)	82
Grader	85
Jackhammer	85
Mounted impact hammer	90
Paver	85
Pumps	77
Rock drill	85
Scraper	85

Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM)

Assuming a bulldozer, grader, excavator, front-end loader, and compactor were operating concurrently at the site, the combined noise exposure from the effective noise center of those operations would be 85 dBA L_{eq} at a distance of 50 feet from the operations. For the less equipment-intensive offsite utility installation, the combined noise exposure from the effective noise center of those construction activities is expected to be approximately 75 dBA Leq at a distance of 50 feet from the operations.

The reference construction noise levels cited above were projected to the representative receptor locations shown on Figure 4-11, assuming standard spherical spreading of sound (-6 dB per

doubling of distance from the source), and standard day atmospheric absorption (1.5 dB per thousand feet). The results of the onsite construction noise projections are presented in Table 4-29. Table 4-29 data indicate that predicted noise levels would range from 32 to 48 dBA Leq at the nearest sensitive receptors and approximately 73 dBA at the nearest property line. The nearest residences to the utility improvements, which will occur within the Skyline Road right-of-way, are approximately 600 feet from those construction activities. At that distance, average noise levels would be approximately 53 dBA Leq. Because the construction noise levels are estimated to comply with the applicable noise standards (65 dBA Leq daytime noise standard of Lassen County), noise impacts related to project construction would be less than significant.

Table 4-29
PREDICTED ONSITE CONSTRUCTION NOISE LEVELS AT NEAREST RECEPTORS

Receptor1	Predicted Noise Level (Leq, dBA)	County Daytime Noise Standard (Leq/DNL, dBA)2	Noise Standard Exceeded?	Mitigation Required?
1	32	75	No	No
2	38	75	No	No
3	48	65	No	No
4	45	65	No	No
5	42	65	No	No
Nearest Property Line	73	90	No	No

Notes:
1. Receptor locations are shown on Figure 4-11.
2. Project construction activities would be limited to daytime hours. As a result, only the daytime criteria are utilized for the assessment of potential noise impacts for this activity.

Source: FHWA Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM) reference noise levels.

Offsite Traffic Noise Level Increases

To quantitatively assess traffic noise levels associated with the Project, the Federal Highway Administration Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model (FHWA RD-77-108) was used by BAC. The Model is based on the Calveno reference noise factors for automobiles, medium trucks, and heavy trucks, with consideration given to vehicle volume, speed, roadway configuration, distance to the receiver, and the acoustical characteristics of the site. The FHWA Model was used with inputs obtained from the project transportation impact analysis, prepared by Headway Transportation, to predict existing and future (cumulative), project and no-project traffic noise levels at the nearest identified sensitive receptors to each of the roadway segments described above. Table 4-30 shows existing and existing plus project traffic noise levels, the increase in traffic noise levels related to the project, the significance criteria, and a determination as to whether the increase is considered substantial. Table 4-31 presents the same information for cumulative conditions. Cumulative conditions represent future conditions, including traffic generated by the buildout of the region as defined in the traffic impact analysis report. Appendix E of the Noise Assessment contains the FHWA noise model inputs.

The Table 4-30 and Table 4-31 data indicate that the project-related traffic noise level increases on each roadway segment would be below the applicable threshold for a finding of a significant noise impact at the nearest potentially affected sensitive receptor locations. As a result, offsite traffic noise increases resulting from project heavy truck and employee traffic are estimated to be less than significant.

Table 4-30
PREDICTED TRAFFIC NOISE LEVEL INCREASES AT EXISTING SENSITIVE RECEPTORS
EXISTING VS. EXISTING-PLUS PROJECT CONDITIONS

#	Roadway	Segment Description	Predicted DNL [dBA]				Significance Threshold[1]	Threshold Exceeded?	Sensitive Receptors Present?[2]	Significant Impact Identified?[3]
			Existing	Project	Existing + Project	Increase				
1	Highway 139	North of Skyline Rd	52.3	48.5	53.8	1.5	5.0	No	Yes	No
2	Highway 139	South of Skyline Rd	62.1	55.8	63.0	0.9	3.0	No	Yes	No
3	Skyline Rd	West of Highway 139	62.3	0.0	62.3	0.0	3.0	No	Yes	No
4	Skyline Rd	Highway 139 to Project Dwy	51.5	49.2	53.5	2.0	5.0	No	Yes	No
5	Skyline Rd	Project Dwy to Johnstonville Rd	44.6	44.3	47.5	2.9	5.0	No	Yes	No
6	Skyline Rd	South of Johnstonville Rd	57.4	59.8	61.8	4.4	5.0	No	Yes	No
7	Johnstonville Rd	East of Skyline Rd	62.6	60.5	64.7	2.1	3.0	No	Yes	No
8	Johnstonville Rd	West of Skyline Rd	51.2	44.8	52.1	0.9	5.0	No	Yes	No

Notes:
[1] Significance threshold derived from Tables 4-20 and 4-25.
[2] Sensitive receptors include residences of all densities, schools, churches, & recreational areas
[3] A significant impact is identified only along segments where the project-related traffic noise level increase would exceed the significance threshold AND where sensitive receptors are present along the roadway segment.
Source: FHWA-RD-77-108 with inputs from project traffic impact study. Appendix E of the Noise Assessment contains FHWA Model inputs.

Table 4-31
PREDICTED TRAFFIC NOISE LEVEL INCREASES AT EXISTING SENSITIVE RECEPTORS
FUTURE VS. FUTURE-PLUS PROJECT CONDITIONS

#	Roadway	Segment Description	Predicted DNL [dBA]				Significance Threshold[1]	Threshold Exceeded?	Sensitive Receptors Present?[2]	Significant Impact Identified?[3]
			Future	Project	Future + Project	Increase				
1	Highway 139	North of Skyline Rd	53.0	52.3	55.7	2.7	5.0	No	Yes	No
2	Highway 139	South of Skyline Rd	62.9	62.1	65.5	2.6	3.0	No	Yes	No
3	Skyline Rd	West of Highway 139	63.0	62.3	65.7	2.7	3.0	No	Yes	No
4	Skyline Rd	Highway 139 to Project Dwy	52.2	51.5	54.9	2.7	5.0	No	Yes	No
5	Skyline Rd	Project Dwy to Johnstonville Rd	45.4	44.6	48.0	2.6	5.0	No	Yes	No
6	Skyline Rd	South of Johnstonville Rd	58.2	57.4	60.8	2.6	5.0	No	Yes	No
7	Johnstonville Rd	East of Skyline Rd	63.4	62.6	66.0	2.6	3.0	No	Yes	No
8	Johnstonville Rd	West of Skyline Rd	52.0	51.2	54.6	2.6	5.0	No	Yes	No

Notes:
[1] Significance threshold derived from Tables 4-20 and 4-25.
[2] Sensitive receptors include residences of all densities, schools, churches, & RV parks.
[3] A significant impact is identified only along segments where the project-related traffic noise level increase would exceed the significance threshold AND where sensitive receptors are present along the roadway segment.
Source: FHWA-RD-77-108 with inputs from project traffic impact study. Appendix E of the Noise Assessment contains FHWA Model inputs.

Table 4-32
PREDICTED HOURLY AVERAGE NOISE LEVELS AT NEAREST RECEPTOR FROM ONSITE PROJECT OPERATIONS

Receiver	Predicted Noise Level, Leq [dBA]				Jurisdiction	Most Restrictive County Standard1 Leq [dBA]	Exceeds Standard?
	Processing Equipment	Onsite Haul Trucks	Mining	Combined			
R1	48	25	43	49	Susanville	65	No
R2	44	26	45	48	Susanville	65	No
R3	51	24	44	51	Lassen Co	55	No
R4	48	25	41	49	Susanville	55	No
R5	55	23	41	55	Lassen Co	55	No
Project P/L2	73	42	57	73	Lassen Co	80	No

Notes:
1. The City of Susanville does not have applicable hourly average noise standards. Receptors R1, R2, and R4 are within the Susanville City limits. Because the City's 24-hour average noise standards (DNL) are less restrictive than the County's hourly noise standards, the County standards were applied to provide a conservative assessment of potential noise impacts. This table shows the most restrictive noise level standards for Lassen County.
2. The hourly average noise level standard applies to the property line of the noise-generating land use.
Source: BAC (2023)

Table 4-33
PREDICTED DAY-NIGHT AVERAGE NOISE LEVELS AT NEAREST RECEPTOR FROM ONSITE PROJECT OPERATIONS

Receiver	Predicted Noise Level, DNL [dBA]				Jurisdiction[1]	County Exterior Standard[2] DNL [dBA]	Exceeds Standard?
	Processing Plant	Onsite Haul Trucks	Mining	Combined			
R1	54	32	50	56	Susanville	65	No
R2	51	32	51	54	Susanville	60	No
R3	57	31	50	58	Lassen Co	65	No
R4	54	32	47	55	Susanville	55	No
R5	62	29	48	62	Lassen Co	65	No
Project P/L	79	47	63	80	Lassen Co	80	No

Notes:
1. For a more conservative approach, Lassen County noise standards applied. The City of Susanville noise standard would be 70 dBA DNL.
2. There are no day-night level applicable noise-source property line standards.
Source: BAC (2023)

Noise Generated by Onsite Operations

Onsite activities will consist of aggregate mining and processing, asphalt and ready-mix production, and sales (load-out). The project also proposes the construction of a mobile equipment parking area and shop building north of the retail landscape area by the project site entrance. Figure 4-13 shows the proposed site configuration. Figure 4-11 shows the locations of the nearest potentially affected sensitive receptors to the project site.

Noise sources associated with the shop building for routine equipment maintenance would consist of air compressors, pneumatic wrenches, hydraulic lifts, etc. The noise generation of this equipment is predicted to be effectively contained within the shop building. The nearest residence to the shop building (R3 on Figure 4-11), is approximately 2,000 feet from the shop building.

Mobile equipment moving in and out of the parking area (dump trucks, transfer trucks, loaders, dozers, excavators, etc.), is expected to generate average noise levels of 85 dBA Leq at a reference distance of 50 feet. At the nearest residence, the noise level would be reduced to approximately 50 dBA Leq, which would be satisfactory with the County's most restrictive 55 dBA Leq nighttime noise level standard. As a result, no adverse noise impacts are identified for the shop building operations and mobile equipment parking area.

To quantify the noise generation of the proposed onsite equipment, noise level data contained within the j.c. brennan & associates environmental noise analysis prepared for the *Hat Creek Facility Expansion* (Lassen County, February 2019), and BAC reference noise level data were used. The reference levels were projected to the nearest receptors in the project vicinity using the SoundPLAN model with standard atmospheric conditions. The predicted noise levels at the nearest receptors to the project site are provided in Tables 4-32 and 4-33 in terms of hourly average (Leq), and day-night average (DNL), noise levels for onsite noise sources, respectively. Figures 4-14 through 4-16 show the predicted noise contours for the onsite noise sources in terms of hourly average (Leq), maximum (Lmax), and day-night average (DNL), noise levels for onsite noise sources, respectively.

The table data above and noise contours presented in Figures 4-14 to 4-16 indicate that the onsite project operations are not expected to result in an exceedance of the County's noise standards at the nearest receptors to the project site, including during nighttime operations. In addition, due to the considerable distances between the noisiest components of the project and the nearest sensitive receptors, noise generated during daytime operations at the project site is not expected to substantially exceed baseline ambient conditions at those nearest sensitive receptors. As a result, noise impacts associated with daytime excavation, processing, and load-out operations at the project site are considered to be less than significant at the nearest sensitive receptors.

Due to the proximity of onsite noise sources near the southern Project property line, operational noise levels generated by the Project would be greatest near that property line. However, there are no sensitive receivers located on the parcels immediately adjacent to the Project boundaries. In addition, Project noise levels are not expected to exceed the County's noise standards for industrial uses at the Project site boundaries. As a result, noise impacts related to project operations are considered less than significant at the Project property lines.

As noted above, the project would result in less than significant noise impacts at the nearest existing sensitive receptors during daytime hours. Given the sensitivity of the nearby residential receptors and the proposed periodic nighttime operation of the asphalt and ready-mix plants, there is potential for extended periodic nighttime operations to exceed baseline noise conditions. As a result, noise impacts related to nighttime operations are considered potentially significant. Mitigation Measure 4.13-1 includes the requirement to conduct noise monitoring at nearby sensitive receptors at the commencement of nighttime operations and to provide compliance reporting at each phase to confirm the facility is operating in compliance with the County's noise standards. Additional mitigation measures incorporated include limitations of nighttime operations during scheduled events at the Lassen County Fairgrounds and City of Susanville community events. Sound barrier mechanisms shall also be installed during phase 1 as a means of reducing impacts anticipated to be the most prominent. Noise impacts related to onsite nighttime operations will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Evaluation of Potential Sleep Disturbance Impacts

As noted in the *Regulatory Setting* section above, sleep disturbance impacts would be considered potentially significant if the single-event noise level resulting from the project would exceed 65 dB SEL within interior areas of residences not currently exposed to appreciable nighttime single-event noise. Sleep disturbance impacts at the nearest residences were evaluated for nighttime asphalt plant operations, nighttime ready-mix concrete plant operations, and nighttime heavy truck passbys. The results of that evaluation for each noise source are described below.

Nighttime Asphalt Plant Operations:

Asphalt plants typically generate steady-state noise levels due to the continuous operation of the asphalt burner, drum, and baghouses. As a result, single-event noise is generally not a substantial component of overall asphalt plant operational noise. For this assessment, the maximum noise levels generated by a front-loader feeding the asphalt plant hoppers were used to evaluate single-event noise levels at the nearest noise-sensitive receptors. Specifically, a maximum noise level of 80 dBA Lmax at a reference distance of 50 feet from the loader feeding the hoppers was utilized for the impact evaluation. Given this maximum noise level, the estimated Sound Exposure Level (SEL) for loader operations would be approximately 90 dBA SEL at a reference distance of 50 feet from the loader.

The nearest residence (R5 – see Figure 4-11), is located approximately 4,000 feet south of the asphalt plant operations area. At that distance, the single-event noise from nighttime front-loader operations would be reduced to less than 50 dB SEL due to the effects of distance and atmospheric absorption. Within that nearest residence, SEL values would be approximately 25 to 35 dBA SEL, depending on whether windows were in the open or closed positions. Regardless of the window position, interior SEL values associated with nighttime asphalt plant operations are predicted to be well below the 65 dB SEL threshold for a finding of noise impact. Therefore, sleep disturbance impacts related to nighttime operation of the asphalt plant are estimated to be less than significant.

Nighttime Ready-Mix Plant Operations:

Like asphalt plants, ready-mix concrete plants typically generate fairly steady-state noise levels while in operation. As a result, single-event noise is generally not a substantial component of overall ready-mix plant operational noise. For this assessment, the maximum noise generation of the ready-mix plant is identified as being 80 dBA at a reference distance of 50 feet from the plant (a sound power level of 114 dBA). Given this maximum noise level, the estimated Sound Exposure Level (SEL) for typical concrete batch operations would be approximately 90 dBA SEL at a reference distance of 50 feet from the plant, similar to single-event levels generated by the asphalt plant.

The nearest residence (R5 – See Figure 4-11) is located approximately 4,000 feet from the ready-mix plant. At that distance, the single event noise from nighttime ready-mix plant operations would be reduced to less than 50 dB SEL due to the effects of distance and atmospheric absorption. Within that nearest residence, SEL values would be approximately 25 to 35 dBA SEL, depending on whether windows were in the open or closed positions. Regardless of the window position, interior SEL values associated with nighttime ready-mix plant operations are predicted to be well below the 65 dB SEL threshold for a finding of noise impact. Therefore, sleep disturbance impacts related to nighttime operation of the ready-mix plant are estimated to be less than significant.

Nighttime Heavy-Truck Passbys:
During nighttime operations of the asphalt and ready-mix concrete plants, heavy truck traffic would be higher than normal on the local roadway network utilized by project traffic. More specifically, Skyline Road between the project site access and Highway 139 would experience higher-than-normal numbers of nighttime truck trips. The nearest residences on the corner of Skyline Road and Highway 139 are approximately 600 feet from Skyline Road but as close as 120 feet to Highway 139. Since truck traffic on Highway 139 already exists and because of the relative distance to Highway 139, these residences are not considered noise-sensitive to this segment of Skyline Road. Therefore, the nearest existing noise-sensitive receptor to this segment of Skyline Road and further removed from Highway 139 is a residence located west of Skyline Road (similar to R3 from onsite operations analysis), located approximately 1,000 feet from the roadway.

The FHWA Model reports that a heavy truck travelling 60 mph generates a sound exposure level of approximately 56 dBA SEL at a distance of 1,000 feet from the roadway centerline. Given an SEL of 56 dBA at the exterior building façade of the nearest residence to Skyline Road during heavy truck passbys, SEL values within that residence would be approximately 31 to 41 dBA SEL, depending on whether windows were in the open or closed positions. The predicted interior SEL values associated with nighttime heavy truck passbys at the nearest residences to this segment of Skyline Road are estimated to be well below the 65 dB SEL threshold required for a finding of noise impact.

For nighttime trucks departing to the south on Skyline Road, the nearest residences to that roadway are located near the intersection of Johnstonville Road and Skyline Road. Those residences were scaled to be approximately 100-150 feet from the roadway centerline. The exterior sound exposure level at the building facades of these residences would be approximately 71 dBA SEL at a distance of 100 feet from the roadway centerline. Given an SEL of 71 dBA at the exterior building facade of the nearest residences to Skyline Road at Johnstonville Road during heavy truck passbys, SEL values within those residences would be approximately 46 to 56 dBA SEL, depending on whether windows were in the open or closed positions. The predicted interior SEL values associated with nighttime heavy truck passbys at the nearest residences to the intersection of Skyline Road and Johnstonville Road are predicted to be well below the 65 dB SEL threshold required for a finding of noise impact.

As project traffic moves off of Skyline Road, it will be interspersed with existing traffic on Highway 36 and roadways beyond, including existing heavy truck traffic. Truck speeds through Susanville are also expected to be lower than on Skyline Road. As a result, the project is not expected to result in new sleep disturbance impacts at residences within Susanville or points beyond during the periods when nighttime delivery of aggregate products is required to fulfill night paving contracts. Therefore, sleep disturbance impacts related to nighttime heavy truck operations on Skyline Road are estimated to be less than significant.

Evaluation of Blasting Impacts
It is anticipated that the materials within the quarry will be initially excavated using a combination of conventional ripping and hauling methods and it is anticipated that overburden and highly weathered rock will be rippable using single- or double-shank rippers attached to bulldozers. With depth, as materials become harder and less weathered, it is anticipated that controlled blasting will be needed to excavate rock materials. However, blasting is expected to occur infrequently,

estimated at only seven (7) blasting events per year. Blasting would occur between the hours of 9:30 am and 3:30 pm.

Noise sources associated with blasting consist of the use of rock drills to prepare the shot holes and the shot itself. The noise levels generated by the rock drills depend on drill type, but are predicted to be generally similar to the noise levels generated by excavation equipment, and are included in the levels described in the previous section pertaining to mining noise sources.

Noise generated by aggregate shots is variable, depending on the amount of charge material used, the number of holes and the depth of those holes, timing delays, and other factors. There tends to be misconceptions regarding what an aggregate blast looks and sounds like, due in part to the types of explosions that are frequently seen in movies and other media sources. In reality, aggregate shots are designed to transfer the energy of the shot into the ground, rather than have it vent into the atmosphere.

Based on Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc. observations of various aggregate shots, aggregate shots at distances exceeding 1,000 feet tend to be characteristic of muffled, distant thunder. Using noise level data collected during those blasts, blasting levels at the nearest receptors are predicted to be below existing ambient noise levels at the nearest residences due to the considerable distances between the blasting areas and those receptors.

As a representative example, BAC references noise and vibration monitoring conducted during a typical aggregate shot (blast) at a northern California Quarry. The monitoring was conducted from a distance of approximately 1,500 feet with a direct line of site to the shot area. Weather conditions present during the shot were as follows: 70 degrees Fahrenheit, clear sky, 5 to 10 mph north winds. The shot consisted of 36 holes fired with a total charge weight of 33,457 pounds of explosive material. The maximum A-weighted sound level generated by the shot was 67 dBA at the 1,500-foot monitoring site. In terms of vibration, the peak particle velocity of the shot was measured to be 0.13 inches/second at the measurement site. The measured maximum noise level was projected to the nearest sensitive receptor locations identified on Figure 4-11 using standard sound propagation algorithms (6 dBA decrease per doubling of distance from the source and 1.5 dBA attenuation per thousand feet for atmospheric absorption of sound). The results of those projections are provided in Table 4-34.

As indicated in Table 4-34, noise estimates based on an empirical blasting event measured by BAC indicate hourly average noise levels at the nearest sensitive receptors and property lines would be well below the Lassen County noise standards, which are more restrictive than the Susanville City noise standards. In addition, maximum noise levels during the infrequent blasting events are predicted to be in the same range as maximum noise levels currently experienced in the area due to other sources such as local traffic, aircraft overflights, etc. (see Appendix D of the Noise Assessment). As a result, noise impacts related to blasting events are estimated to be less than significant.

Table 4-34
PREDICTED MAXIMUM BLASTING NOISE LEVELS AT NEAREST RECEPTORS

Location	Distance from Nearest Excavation Area	Predicted Maximum Lmax, dBA	Predicted Hourly Average Leq, dBA	Daytime Average Noise Standard, dBA[1]	Noise Standard Exceeded?	Noise Mitigation Measures Required?
R1	2900	57	26	75	No	No
R2	2400	59	29	75	No	No
R3	2700	58	27	65	No	No
R4	3800	53	22	65	No	No
R5	3700	54	23	65	No	No
Project P/L	200	84	53	90	No	No

Notes:
1. Significance thresholds derived from Tables 4-20 to 4-24. Receptors R1, R2, and R4 are within the Susanville City limits. Because the City's 24-hour average noise standards (DNL) are less restrictive than the County's hourly noise standards, the County standards were applied to provide a conservative assessment of potential noise impacts.
Source: BAC (2023)

Impact 4.13-2: Result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

To quantify the vibration generation of the proposed operations, reference vibration level data collected by BAC at existing ready-mix, recycle, and asphalt plant sites in recent years were utilized. Larson Davis Laboratories (LDL) Model 831 precision integrating sound level meter fitted with a PCB Electronics vibration transducer was used for the vibration surveys. The equipment was calibrated before use with a PCB Electronics vibration calibrator to ensure the accuracy of the measurements. The equipment used meets all pertinent specifications of the American National Standards Institute for precision vibration monitoring systems.

The results of the vibration surveys indicate that vibration levels below 60 VdB can be expected at locations beyond 100 feet from the operating equipment. The nearest sensitive receptors are located in excess of 1,000 feet from the proposed asphalt and ready-mix facilities proposed at the Project site. At that distance, vibration levels would be well below the thresholds for annoyance or damage to residential structures identified in Tables 4-26 and 4-27.

At the nearest sensitive areas, peak particle velocity vibration levels due to blasting are predicted to be below 0.1 inches per second, which is below thresholds at which damage to structures would occur. In addition, because blasting events would occur infrequently, they are not expected to result in adverse public reaction or annoyance despite the vibration generated by the blasting being potentially perceptible.

Because vibration levels generated by blasting, excavation, and processing operations are predicted to be below thresholds for annoyance and damage to structures, vibration impacts of the project are expected to be less-than-significant.

Impact 4.13-3: For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, where the project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The project site is within two miles of the Banner Lassen Medical Center helipad. The helipad is approximately 0.5 miles (2,640 feet) northwest of the project site boundary. The project does not include residential or other noise-sensitive land uses. The Project site is not within the mapped existing or predicted future (2040) 65 dB CNEL noise contours for the helipad contained in the Lassen County Noise Element 2021 Master Noise Exhibit. There are no additional private airstrips, public airports, or public use airports within two miles of the project site. Noise generated by the hospital helipad will be less than 65 dB CNEL within the project boundaries and would not expose people working within the project site to excessive noise levels. Impacts will be less than significant in this regard.

4.13.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would reduce noise impacts from onsite nighttime operations to a less-than-significant level:

4.13-1: *Nighttime Noise Control Procedures.* The following specific noise control procedures shall be implemented to reduce the potential for adverse noise impacts associated with periodic nighttime operations.

1. Ensure that all processing area conveyors are properly lubricated at all times.
2. Utilize electric power rather than generators for onsite power.
3. Design and maintain recycle area aggregate stockpiles such that they maximize shielding of onsite noise sources in the directions of the nearby residences.
4. Equip all mobile plant area equipment with acoustic "growler-type" backup warning systems, rather than conventional "beepers."
5. Limit asphalt and ready-mix operations to daytime hours unless construction contracts specifically require the delivery of materials during nighttime hours.
6. The following noise control options shall be implemented as appropriate to achieve nighttime noise standards:
    a. Suspension of acoustic curtains as close as possible to significant noise sources.
    b. Installation of acoustic silencers on the asphalt plant bag house exhaust fans.
    c. Construct localized barriers adjacent to significant noise sources.
    d. Relocation of aggregate stockpiles as feasible to provide additional screening of processing area noise sources from view of nearby residences.
    e. Pre-loading of asphalt plant and ready-mix feed hoppers prior to nighttime operations to reduce the degree of nighttime loading required.

4.13.5 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Following the implementation of the noise monitoring during nighttime operations and any recommended noise control measures (Mitigation Measure 4.13-1), the noise generated by nighttime operations (analyzed under Impact 4.13-1) is expected to be less than significant relative to Lassen County noise standards and CEQA guidelines.

4.14 Public Services

This section provides a brief summary of available public services, a summary of public services regulations applicable to the project, and an evaluation of potential public services impacts.

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

Fire Protection
The project site is predominantly located within a State Responsibility Area (SRA), an area where the State has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection. A mutual aid agreement is leveraged for overlapping areas under local jurisdiction with the Susan River Fire Protection District for response efforts within the project area. Based on the map of Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the SRA in Lassen County, adopted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) on November 7, 2007, the site is located in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The project area is currently served by the CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit in conjunction with mutual aid for response in local jurisdictional boundaries.

Law Enforcement
The Project area is served by the Lassen County Sheriff's Department. The Lassen County Sheriff's Department is responsible for the prevention and response to crime in unincorporated areas of the County, operation of the 24-hour adult detention facility, managing the 911 dispatch center, search and rescue operations, boating safety services, court security, and serves all State writs, warrants, or other notices issued by the courts.

Schools
The project area is directly adjacent to the Lassen Community College and within the Susanville School District, and Lassen Union High School District. Susanville School District consists of McKinley Elementary School, Meadow View School, and Diamond View Middle School. McKinley Elementary School is the closest school to the project, located approximately 0.96 miles to the west. The Lassen Union High School District consists of Lassen Union High School, Lassen Community Day School, and Credence High School. The closest of these is Creedence High School and Lassen Community Day School, which share a location approximately 1.51 miles to the west of the site. Additionally, there are three charter schools in Susanville: Thompson Peak Charter School, Diamond Mountain Charter School, and Mt. Lassen Charter School; of these, Mt Lassen Charter School is the closest at approximately 1.31 miles to the west

Parks
Parks in the vicinity of the project are operated by the City of Susanville and include Memorial Park, Frank Ernaga Ball Field, Fruit Growers Park, Barry Reservoir, Skyline Trail, Susanville Bark Park, Skyline Park, and Pat Murphy Little League Field. Skyline Park, which operates primarily as a disc golf course, is the nearest public park located at the intersection of Skyline and Highway 139, approximately 0.75 miles to the northwest.

Other Facilities
Other public facilities located in the vicinity of the project are the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant, located immediately adjacent to the southwest corner of the project. In addition, the Lassen County Fairgrounds are located directly west of the Susanville Sanitary

District property. The Northeastern Rural Health Clinic and the Banner Lassen Medical Center is located approximately 0.4 miles north of the project.

4.14.2 Regulatory Setting

Local

Lassen General Plan

- GOAL L-14: A rate and the location of community growth that does not result in a significant burden to existing levels of public services and facilities, including schools, fire protection, and community sewer and water facilities.
- LU36 POLICY: Public facilities and services should be based upon a projection of reasonably expected population increase and economic growth, and should recognize the limits of the County's human, financial, and natural resources.
- LU37 POLICY: The County shall periodically evaluate the impacts of general development trends on public services and, within its authority and in consultation with public service providers, encourage and facilitate mitigation of significant adverse cumulative impacts. ·
- LU38 POLICY: The County supports the provision of community facilities and services to provide for the orderly development of existing communities.
- GOAL L-15: School facilities that support high-quality education.
- LU39 POLICY: The County supports the provision of adequate school facilities, the selection of sites for school facilities which will be compatible with existing and future land uses in the vicinity, and the use by school districts of capital improvement plans to anticipate and prepare for future growth.
- LU-T: The County shall continue to utilize the CEQA process, when applicable, to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed development projects on existing and desirable levels of public services and shall require appropriate mitigation measures when needed.
- LU-U: For development projects which are expected to have significant impacts on school facilities, the County will review and, within the limitations of its authority, may decide to impose appropriate mitigation measures (e.g., the use of impact fees, etc.).
- LU-V: The County will encourage and facilitate the preparation and use of capital improvement plans by school districts and service districts to anticipate future facility needs. The County will continue to encourage districts and non-profit organizations to apply for state and Federal grants to help expand and improve community infrastructure, including water and sewer systems, and to improve structural fire protection and other public services.
- LU-W: The County may enter into memorandums of understanding to assist school districts and fire protection districts in the implementation of their capital improvement plans and programs.

Susanville Area Plan

- Policy 21.1: The extension of enhancement of public facilities into the planning area shall promote and implement the goal, policies, recommendations, and land use patterns of this plan.
- Policy 22.1A: The City of Susanville should take the lead role in designating, acquiring, and developing park and recreational facilities in coordination with Lassen County. Lassen County will provide adequate recreation facilities for both present and future populations.
- Policy 21.1B: The areas of Paiute Meadows and Bagwell Springs are designated as conservation with a public park and the area should be zoned to provide for such uses.

Implementation Measures

- 21.11: The County shall implement State law (Sections 6,5401 and 65402), which requires special and school districts to submit annual capital improvement plans to the County for its review. These laws require the Board of Supervisors or other designated agency to determine if the project· is consistent with the general plan.
- 21.12: As residential development occurs north of the existing Susanville City limits, the County, City and the Susan River Fire District shall explore the possibility of constructing a new fire station to serve the area.
- 22.11: Lassen County should adopt and regularly review and update a countywide recreation element and coordinate its recreation goals and policies with the City and other governmental agencies.
- 22.12: The County should adopt a Quimby Act Ordinance.

State

CAL FIRE

Under Title 14 of the CCR, CAL FIRE has the primary responsibility for implementing wildfire planning and protection for State Responsibility Areas (SRAs). CAL FIRE develops fire safe regulations and issues fire safe clearances for land within the service areas of fire districts in each SRA. There are more than 31 million acres of California's privately owned wildlands under CAL FIRE's jurisdiction (CAL FIRE, 2022).

4.14.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Public Services* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which*

could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services including Fire Protection, Police Protection, Schools, Parks or Other Public Facilities.

4.14.4 Impact Analysis

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Public Services* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts, but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Public Services.*

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County's issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found to not be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

- *Schools:* The proposed project will not generate any new demand for Schools in the area. The project does not include the construction of new residences and will not increase the population of the area. All jobs created by the proposed project are expected to be filled by existing Susanville area residents. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will have no impact on public school facilities.
- *Parks:* The proposed project will not generate any new demand for parks in the area. The project does not include the construction of new residences and will not increase the population of the area, as all jobs created by the proposed project are expected to be filled by existing Susanville Area residents. Existing recreational features listed in Table 4-35 within a 1-mile radius were evaluated for potential impacts and were determined to have sufficient distance to be not visible, result in further demand of use, or create any subsequent recreational development needs. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed project will have no impact on public park facilities.

- *Other Public Facilities:* Other public facilities located in the vicinity of the project include the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant, Lassen County Fair Grounds, the Northeastern Rural Health Clinic and the Banner Lassen Medical Center. The proposed project will not significantly increase wastewater discharged to the wastewater treatment ponds or impair their operation. There will be no increased demand for use of the Lassen County Fairgrounds, as a result of project implementation. The proposed project is expected to create twenty jobs to be filled by existing residents of the Susanville area and

will not create any increased demand for medical services provided by Banner Lassen Medical Center. No impact would occur in this regard.

4.14.5 Project Impacts

Impact 4.14-1 Law Enforcement
Law enforcement services within the area is provided by the Lassen County Sheriff's Department. As the project area is currently undeveloped, the development of the parcel will result in a slight increase in potential demand for police services onsite. The final end use of the site is agricultural use, which will require service equivalent to the existing conditions. The implementation of the proposed project would generate a small demand for police services onsite during the project life span of 50 years. The proposed project does not include the creation of extensive residential or commercial properties and is unlikely to directly demand extensive police services. The demand increase will not be substantial enough to warrant new or altered police facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

Impact 4.14-2 Fire Protection
The operation of heavy equipment, trucks, and storage of fuels has the potential to increase the potential for fire and emergency services. Equipment will primarily operate within areas where vegetation has been removed. However, the operation of heavy equipment during vegetation removal could increase fire risk. The proposed project does not include the creation of extensive residential or commercial properties and is unlikely to directly demand extensive fire services. The proposed shop and scalehouse are the only occupiable structures which could catch fire. CAL FIRE and the City of Susanville have an existing mutual aid agreements for fire protection that covers the entire project area. Therefore, demand increase will not be substantial enough to warrant new or altered fire facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

4.14.6 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.14.7 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts will be less than significant.

4.15 Recreation

This section describes existing or planned development of recreational facilities within the vicinity of the project site, including parks, trails, and reservoirs that residents of the general project area would use.

4.15.1 Environmental Setting

Recreation is generally divided into two categories: developed recreation and dispersed recreation. Developed recreation facilities include parks, campgrounds, ski areas, and swimming areas.

Dispersed recreation includes activities that do not typically depend on the use of man-made facilities, such as fishing, hunting, and hiking. Federal lands contribute significantly to dispersed recreational resources within the project vicinity and make up a reasonable portion of open space available to residents; however, these wilderness areas and open space lands require transportation miles outside of City limits, and thus are considered outside the influence of this project and are not evaluated further.

Recreational opportunities can signify contributing economic value, particularly for small rural communities, and protection of recreational resources ensures the best opportunity for sustained income from natural resources of the Susanville area. The recreational value of wildlife and open space resources is closely related to economic and social values upheld by the City and County, collectively.

Existing and/or planned recreational resources within 2 miles of the project site include the Lassen County Fairgrounds, Skyline Park, and the Barry Reservoir. The Lassen County Fairgrounds is the closest in proximity, at 0.72 miles from the project site. Barry Reservoir is 0.75 miles from the project site. Skyline Park contains a hiking trail (Skyline Trail) and a disc golf course, which is 1.28 miles from the project site. The County's Susanville Ranch is also identified as an open space resource for recreational activities around the city, as well as Lassen Community College. Nearby recreational features within the immediate vicinity of the project site are shown in Figure 3-8. Existing and proposed recreational trails, parks, and open space available for use within the Susanville vicinity are identified in Table 4-35.

4.15.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of federal, State, and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process.

Local

Lassen County General Plan

- GOAL N-18: An expanded range of outdoor recreation resources, facilities, and opportunities.
- NR64 POLICY: The County encourages the development of commercial recreation facilities for the public's use, subject to the determination of the appropriateness and adequacy of specific sites and the mitigation of major land use conflicts and/or significant environmental impacts.
- NR65 POLICY: The County encourages the development of public recreation facilities, subject to the determination of the appropriateness and adequacy of specific sites and the mitigation of major land use conflicts and/or significant environmental impacts.
- GOAL N-19: Improved access to recreation opportunities on public lands.
- NR66 POLICY: The County supports cooperative efforts between private landowners and the public to maintain historic access to public lands and, where new subdivisions are proposed adjacent to public lands, the County supports dedication of easements for public access to the public lands.

- NR67 POLICY: The County supports utilization trails within public right-of-ways. Those right-of-ways can serve as part of interconnected trail systems (e.g., public highway corridors and abandoned railroad grades.
- NR68 POLICY: The County supports promoting the discovery of resource diversity on public lands within Lassen County through the use of roads and trails on public lands for discovery experiences that introduce visitors to the County's rich diversity of natural, historic, and cultural resources.
- NR69 POLICY: The County supports the interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources as part of promoting visitor use of public lands.
- GOAL N-20: Enhanced recreation and economic opportunities and benefits related to the County's wildlife resources.
- NR70 POLICY: The County supports the management of wildlife game species for continued recreational and consumptive use as a matter of economic importance and as an expression of the cultural heritage of the activity.
- NR71 POLICY: The County supports protection and maintenance of, and improvements for, local public access to wildlife resources on public lands for hunting and fishing as well as for recreational and scientific wildlife observation opportunities.
- GOAL N-21: Continued use and enhancement of the county's fishery resources.
- NR72 POLICY: The County supports the continued availability of the Eagle Lake trout for sport and recreational fishing, supports improvement of Eagle Lake trout habitat, and opposes proposals for the listing of the species as a threatened or endangered species.
- NR73 POLICY: The County supports provisions to reintroduce and improve natural spawning of the Eagle Lake trout in Pine Creek as a component of the population produced under natural selection.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The Susanville Vicinity Area Plan (Area Plan) contains the following goals, objectives, and policies related to recreational facilities:

Policy

- Policy 22.1A: The City of Susanville should take the lead role in designating, acquiring, and developing park and recreational facilities in coordination with Lassen County. Lassen County will provide adequate recreation facilities for both present and future populations.

- Policy 23.1: The County and the City of Susanville shall establish policy to guide the and procedures to guide the orderly transition of land from one jurisdiction to the other. The intent of the policy and procedures shall be the fulfillment of the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan.

Implementation

- 22.11: Lassen County should adopt and regularly review and update a countywide recreation element and coordinate its recreation goals and policies with the City and other governmental agencies.

- 23.11: All projects within the planning area should be consistent with the City's development standards.
- 23.12: The County and City shall review their respective zoning ordinances and attempt to make them as compatible as possible.
- 23.13: All proposed "urban-type" projects should be required to locate in the City by infilling or by annexation.

4.15.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Recreation* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

> *Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?*

PR-1 Substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives;

PR-2 Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or

PR-3 Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

4.15.4 Impact Analysis

PR-1: The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts. **Less than Significant.** The project does not impact the availability of land for recreational features. Cumulative impacts from recreational facilities will not be significantly affected by this project.

PR-2: The project would not result in an increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. **Less than Significant.** This project primarily provides jobs to preexisting local or commuting workers, which will not significantly impact the use of existing recreational features. Impacts to use and deterioration of existing recreational features will be less than significant.

PR-3: The project would not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. **Less than Significant.** The project does not include recreational facilities and impacts to expansion of other recreational facilities in Susanville that may affect the environment would be minimal. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.15.5 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative area of recreation impacts for the proposed project includes portions of Susanville that are within three miles of the project site. This area was identified in Figure 3-8, as residents within the immediate project vicinity are most likely to use based on the location of the facilities, pattern of roadway infrastructure, and urban development in the area. The project does not generate new recreational features with similar impacts to existing recreational features, and cumulative impacts with potential development would be less than significant.

4.16 Transportation

This section provides a description of roadways in the project area, and identifies potential impacts related to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and other CEQA criteria in the project area from the proposed mining operation.

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

Area Roadways
The proposed project is located east of Skyline Road, north of Johnstonville Road, and south of Highway 139. The project site will be accessed by a private road from Skyline Road. No roads currently exist on the project site. Descriptions of key roadways within the project vicinity are provided below.

Highway 139 is a primary thoroughfare in Susanville, California and is classified as a "Minor Arterial" per the Caltrans Functional Classification System. Highway 139 is generally a two-lane roadway with one lane in each direction and separate turn lanes at major intersections. The posted speed limit in the project area is 55 mph.

Skyline Road is generally a two-lane beltline roadway that connects Highway 139 to Highway 36. It is classified as a "Minor Arterial" per the Caltrans Functional Classification System. The posted speed limit in the project area is 55 mph.

Johnstonville Road near the project area is generally a three-lane east-west roadway with one lane in each direction and a two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL). It has a posted speed limit of 35 mph near the Skyline Road intersection and is classified as a "Major Collector" per the Caltrans Functional Classification System.

Vehicle Miles Traveled
Vehicle miles traveled for 2017 and future predictions for VMT contained in the Lassen County Regional Transportation Plan are included in Table 4-35. Vehicle miles traveled are expected to increase the most on the State Highway System (Green Dot, 2018).

Area Intersections
Intersections of the above key roadways within the vicinity of the project area include Highway 139 / Skyline Road, Skyline Road / Project Driveway, and Johnsonville Road / Skyline Road. The existing level of service for each existing intersection potentially impacted by project traffic was measured and the results are presented in Table 4-36.

Table 4-36
LASSEN COUNTY FUTURE DAILY VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

Jurisdiction	2017 VMT	2027 VMT	2037 VMT	Total Change (%)	Average Change (%)
Susanville City	87.47	95.34	103.21	-	-
Lassen County	554.26	604.15	654.03	-	-
State Highway System	718.40	783.06	847.71	-	-
State/Federal/Indian	28.14	30.67	33.21	-	-
Total	**1,332.30**	**1,452.21**	**1,572.12**	**18.0%**	**0.9%**

Source: 2017 Lassen Regional Transportation Plan, adopted February 9, 2018.

Table 4-37
EXISTING INTERSECTION LEVEL OF SERVICE

Intersection	Control	AM Peak		PM Peak	
		Delay*	LOS	Delay*	LOS
Highway 139 / Skyline Rd	Signal	C	25.0	C	22.1
Skyline Rd / Johnstonville Rd	Signal	C	23.5	C	22.0

**Notes: ***Delay is reported in seconds per vehicle for the overall intersection for signalized intersections, and for the worst approach/ movement for side street stop controlled intersections.
Source: Headway Transportation, 2024

Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities
Sidewalks or bike lanes do not exist within the immediate project vicinity. Sidewalks exist only at the quadrants of the Highway 139 / Skyline Road and Johnstonville Road / Skyline Road intersections. The Skyline Multi-Use Path exists on the west side of Skyline Road between Highway 139 and Highway 36.

Transit Facilities
Lassen Rural Bus (LRB) operates fixed route bus service throughout Lassen County. Two routes, Susanville City Route and Susanville "Express" City Route, operate in Susanville. The Susanville City Route operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:52 pm and Saturdays from 8:00 am to 3:52 pm. The Susanville "Express" City Route operates Monday through Friday from 10:37 am to 4:00 pm and travels in the opposite direction as the Susanville City Route. Neither route operates along Skyline Road immediately adjacent to the project site. The nearest transit stops to the site are located at Lassen Community College and the Safeway on Main Street.

4.15.1 Regulatory Setting

Traffic analysis in the State of California is guided by policies and standards set at the State level by Caltrans and at the local level by local jurisdictions. The *Lassen County General Plan*, and *Susanville*

Area Plan, provide the necessary framework to guide the growth and development of the County's transportation-related infrastructure.

State

California Department of Transportation

Caltrans policies are summarized in the *Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies* (December 2002). These guidelines identify when a traffic impact study is required, what should be included in the study, analysis scenarios, and guidance on acceptable analysis methodologies. Caltrans endeavors to maintain a target service level of between LOS C and LOS D on State highway facilities; however, this may not always be feasible, and a lower service level may be acceptable.

CEQA Guidelines §15064.3

CEQA Guidelines §15064.3 describes considerations for the evaluation of a project's transportation impacts. Generally, vehicle miles traveled is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. "Vehicle miles traveled" refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. Other relevant considerations may include the effects of the project on transit and non-motorized travel. Except as provided in subdivision (b)(2) regarding roadway capacity, a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact. Section (b) describes criteria for analyzing transportation impacts.

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The Circulation Element of the *Lassen County General Plan* contains the following policies related to circulation that are applicable to the proposed Project:

- Policy CE-6: The County shall review and, when warranted, formulate improved standards for the necessary improvement and maintenance of roads serving new development, including standards for the incremental improvement or development of public roads.
- Policy CE-10: In consideration of proposed projects which would generate a substantial number of large trucks carrying heavy loads, the County shall require special mitigation measures to ensure that those projects do not cause, or will adequately mitigate, significant deterioration of County roads.
    - Implementation Measure CE-C: Pursuant to impacts evaluated in an environmental impact report or other form of project review, the County may require mitigation measures which will ensure that project developers adequately and fairly compensate or participate with the County in the necessary upgrading and/or repair of the affected roads.
- CE12 POLICY: No public highway or roadway should be allowed to fall to or exist for a substantial amount of time at or below a Level of Service rating of "E" (i.e., road at or near capacity; reduced speeds; extremely difficult to maneuver; some stoppages).

4.15.2 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Transportation* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.*
- *Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).*
- *Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).*
- *Result in inadequate emergency access.*

4.15.3 Impact Analysis

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Transportation* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts, but also provides justification for the conclusions that no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Transportation*.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 27, 2024, that summarized the proposed Project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed Project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. It was determined that no Areas of No Project Impact exist related to *Transportation* issues.

4.15.4 Project Impacts

Impact 4.15-1: Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

The project would not make any changes to existing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities or conflict with multimodal transportation plans. The project access would not affect the existing multi-use path located on the west (opposite) side of Skyline Road. Therefore, the project will have a less-than-significant impact on existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Proposed changes to the roadway would be limited to those identified in this section to improve circulation and safety near the project access point. Changes to the roadway would include constructing of separate southbound left turn and northbound right turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point. Turn lanes shall be constructed with 200 feet of pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length. Construction of turn lanes will improve traffic flow and safety at the project access point and will not conflict with any plan, program, ordinance or policy for circulation systems on Skyline Road. Therefore, the project will have a less-than-significant effect on roadways.

The project would not make any changes to an existing public transit system or conflict with any public transit plans plan. The project is anticipated to have 20 or fewer employees, and transit service to the site is not available, needed, or warranted. Therefore, the project would have a less-than-significant impact on public transit.

Impact 4.15-2: Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

Per SB 743 criteria, as of July 1, 2020, the CEQA guidelines require the evaluation of "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) as a key criterion to determine potentially significant transportation impacts. Although Lassen County does not currently have adopted VMT thresholds, the intent of SB 743 is to reduce VMT compared to current/existing levels. The *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, December 2018*, published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) includes guidelines for implementation and states:

> "*Of land use projects, residential, office, and retail projects tend to have the greatest influence on VMT. For that reason, OPR recommends the quantified thresholds described above [between no increase and a 15% reduction compared to existing levels] for purposes of analysis and mitigation. Lead agencies, using more location-specific information, may develop their own more specific thresholds, which may include other land use types.*"

The proposed project is not a residential, office, or a retail project type, which would typically have the greatest influence on VMT. Therefore, the proposed project's VMT impact was analyzed on a qualitative basis. An annual average of employee vehicles and haul trucks was considered, with a total of 60 roundtrips daily would be generated throughout a calendar year for employees and a maximum total of 400 roundtrips daily generated from operational heavy vehicle trips. During the non-peak construction season, more employees have the potential to arrive and/or depart during the peak hours, but truck trips would be much lower. It is estimated that ten percent of the total daily trips will occur within peak hours. As presented, this analysis evaluates the worst-case condition during the peak construction season. Operations for the proposed project would require the use of light, off-highway, and heavy-duty vehicles, including large haul trucks, to transport material for delivery and processing. All California legal truck types may use the project access point and are considered in the analysis. Therefore, in this case, the added project VMT from the Skyline Aggregates project would generally be created by the 20 employees, which would generate 60 daily trips. A total of 60 daily trips is well below the 110-trip-per-day "small project" threshold and would be anticipated to cause a less-than-significant transportation impact on a VMT basis.

Impact 4.15-3: Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

Evaluation of the project site plan and the existing roadway network conducted by Headway Transport and detailed in the *Transportation Technical Study for Skyline Aggregates* (Appendix I) does not indicate any incompatible uses or introduced features significantly affecting safety. Trucks are expected and are appropriate on Skyline Road. It is anticipated that the project access will have adequate sight lines of at least 610 feet on Skyline Road. The project will construct the project access in accordance with Lassen County standards. The project shall not construct structures or vegetation impeding intersection sight distance.

Overall safety and circulation could be improved by constructing separate southbound left turn and northbound right turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project driveway. Based on estimated left turn and right turn volumes and the posted speed limit on Skyline Road (55 mph) at the project driveway, it is recommended that the project construct both turn lanes with 200 feet of pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length. To reduce potential traffic hazards on Skyline Road from left and right turning vehicles generated by the Project, the recommendations of the Transportation Technical Study have been required as Mitigation Measure 4.15.-3. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-3, traffic hazards from Project traffic on Skyline Road would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Lassen County Department of Public Works requested a third party review of the Signal Warrant contained in Appendix I of this document. LSC Consultants conducted the review and provided recommendations. The following is a summary of their review:

- Trip generation using person trip analysis is reasonable, assuming 20 employees and 400 truck loads per day during a 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM operating day.
- Volumes used to evaluate signal warrants (found in Table 6) do not have a clear source. Summing up volumes from the turning movement volume diagram (Figure 7) do not yield Table 6 volumes. No count sheets are included.
- Three signal warrants are evaluated: eight-hour, four-hour, peak hour. Results are reasonable, however the eight-hour warrant does not use 24-hour volumes and only applies the four-hour period of collected data. This assumes that roadway volumes for the remaining 20 hours do not exceed the collected data. A 24-hour roadway count should be conducted to confirm.
- Crash Experience (Warrant 7) was not applied. Based on historical volume of crashes at the project site driveway location this warrant should be evaluated.
- Historical crash concentration at the site driveway location, due to the curve in the roadway, would warrant additional safety signs such as a curve ahead warning sign (W1-2), flashing beacon in conjunction with the sign, curve warning chevron signs (W1-8), and truck warning sign to be installed.
- Installation of an acceleration lane for westbound left turning vehicles exiting the project site is recommended.

Warning Signs:
Historical crash data from 2010-2019 shows a concentration of crashes occurring at the project site location as a result of the roadway curvature. Additional safety counter measures such as a curve ahead warning sign (W1-2), flashing beacon in conjunction with the sign and/or curve

warning chevron signs (W1-8) can be installed to reduce future crashes. The installation of a truck warning sign can also alert motorists of hazardous conditions ahead. The Ca MUTCD list a C44(CA) "Trucks Entering Exiting" sign found in the temporary traffic control section appears in orange. In this application, as a permanent warning sign, the background color of yellow would be more appropriate. Since Skyline Road is not a Caltrans roadway a custom sign not found in the MUTCD that more accurately reflects the hazard can be applied.

Acceleration Lane
The study recommends a southbound left turn/deceleration lane be placed on Skyline Road at the project site driveway intersection. An acceleration lane could be constructed opposite the southbound left turn lane for westbound left turning vehicles departing the facility. The acceleration lane would replace the taper portion opposite the left turn lane. Regardless of the need for acceleration, the additional width created by the acceleration lane allows vehicles to make a 2-stage left turn and provides a safety refuge for the westbound left turning vehicles against southbound through vehicles. As a taper opposite the southbound left turn lane is already needed, the additional acceleration lane would only require modest additional length of roadway widening. As a northbound right turn lane is recommended by the study, roadway reconstruction will already be required.

Mitigation measure 4.15-3 has been modified to require installation of an acceleration lane for westbound left turning vehicles exiting the project site.

Mitigation 4.15-4 has been added

Impact 4.15-4: Result in inadequate emergency access.

As adopted in the June 2023 County of Lassen Safety Element, Skyline Road is not an identified evacuation route; intersecting roads, including State Route 139, State Route 36, A27, and State Route 395, are part of identified evacuation routes. According to the Transportation Technical Study for Skyline Aggregates, prepared by Headway Transportation, proposed truck traffic will not significantly reduce the Level of service at any of the intersections with these routes.

The Lassen County Sheriff's Department, CHP, and other cooperating law enforcement agencies have primary responsibility for evacuations. These agencies work with the Lassen County OES, and with responding fire department personnel who assess fire behavior and spread and other emergencies, which ultimately influence evacuation decisions. All evacuations in the County follow pre-planned procedures to determine the best plan for the type of emergency. The designated County emergency evacuation and law enforcement coordinator is the sheriff. The evacuation coordinator is assisted by other law enforcement and support agencies in emergency events. Law enforcement agencies, highway/street departments, and public and private transportation providers would conduct evacuation operations. Activities would include law enforcement traffic control, barricades, signal control, and intersection monitoring downstream of the evacuation area, all with the objective of avoiding or minimizing potential backups and evacuation delays.

Access to the project site is provided via one main access on Skyline Road. The project will construct the project access in accordance with Lassen County standards to enable adequate emergency access. The project access must be approved by Lassen County and designed to meet

the County's road standards for emergency access. In compliance with emergency access design standards, the project would have a less-than-significant impact related to emergency access.

4.15.6 Mitigation Measures

Impact 4.15-3: The project proponent shall construct separate southbound left turn and northbound right turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point. Turn lanes shall be constructed with 200 feet of pocket/storage plus appropriate deceleration length. Installation of an acceleration lane for westbound left turning vehicles exiting the project site is also required. The project shall not construct structures or vegetation impeding intersection sight distance.

Impact 4.15-4: To reduce the potential for crashes, the project proponent shall construct safety counter measures such as a curve ahead warning sign (W1-2), flashing beacon in conjunction with the sign and/or curve warning chevron signs (W1-8) can be installed to reduce future crashes. Lassen County Public Works will approve of the signage prior to installation.

4.15.7 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impact 4.15-3 and 4.15-4: Increased hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment) will be less than significant after mitigation.

4.16 Utilities and Service Systems

This section provides a brief summary of existing utility and service systems, summarizes applicable regulations, and includes a discussion of project-related impacts to utilities and service systems.

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

The proposed project site is currently undeveloped and has no existing connections to utilities or service systems. The project area is currently within the service area for the following utilities and services:

- Domestic Water Service: None
- Agricultural Water Service: None
- Sewer Service: None
- Solid Waste: C&S Waste Solutions of Lassen County
- Road/Street Maintenance: Lassen County Public Works
- Snow Removal: Lassen County Department of Public Works
- Power: Lassen Municipal Utility District
- Street Lighting: Lassen County
- Planning and Zoning Authority: Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services
- Natural Gas: None

4.16.2 Regulatory Setting

Clean Water Act

The objective of the Clean Water Act (1977, as amended) is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including jurisdictional wetlands, is regulated by the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251-1376) under a permitting process. Applicants for Section 404 permits are also required to obtain water quality certification or waiver through the local Regional Water Quality Control Board under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341).

Safe Drinking Water Act

The Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is enforced by the EPA and sets standards for drinking water quality and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards. SDWA requires many actions to protect drinking water and its sources, including rivers, lakes, and groundwater.

State

California Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings—Green Building Code (2022)

The California Green Buildings Standards Code applies to planning, design, operation, construction, use, and occupancy of newly constructed buildings and requires installation of energy and water-efficient indoor infrastructure.

Integrated Waste Management Act. (Public Resources Code, Section 40000 et seq.)

The Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 requires cities and counties to reduce, by 50 percent, the amount of solid waste disposed of in landfills by the year 2000 and beyond. To comply with the Integrated Waste Management Act, counties adopt regulations and policies to fulfill the requirements of the Act.

California Senate Bill 350 (Renewable Energy Targets).

Senate Bill (SB) 350, the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 was signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown on October 7, 2015. This Bill calls for the adoption of regulations to increase the procurement of electricity from renewable sources from 33 percent to 50 percent by 2030. SB 350 also requires the establishment of annual targets for statewide energy efficiency savings and demand reduction by November 1, 2017. These energy efficiency savings and demand reductions will be designed to achieve a cumulative doubling of statewide energy efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas use by January 1, 2030.

Senate Bill 100—The 100 Percent Clean Energy Act of 2018.

Senate Bill (SB) 100 (Chapter 312, Statutes of 2018) requires that retail sellers and local publicly owned electric utilities procure a minimum quantity of electricity products from eligible renewable energy resources so that the total kilowatt-hours of those products sold to their retail end-use customers achieve 44 percent of retail sales by December 31, 2024, 52 percent by December 31, 2027, and 60 percent by December 31, 2030. This requirement applies to the Silicon Valley Power (SVP) program, which would be the primary source of energy supply for the project. The bill also requires the Public Utilities Commission, California Energy Commission, and State Air Resources

Board to utilize programs authorized under existing statutes to meet the state policy goal of 100 percent of total retail sales of electricity in California provided by eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources by December 31, 2045.

Local

Lassen General Plan- Energy Element

- Policy 4.3.2.9 Transmission Line and Natural Gas Pipelines Policy
  1. The County shall require, to the extent allowed by law, that proposed electrical transmission line and natural gas pipeline (pipeline) plans be submitted to the County for review in the initial stages of route planning and impact assessment. Such review shall include public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in order to solicit public review and to aid the County in preparing comments regarding impacts, routing considerations, and the General Plan consistency of the proposals, including compliance with the standards set forth in this Energy Element.
  2. Transmission lines and pipelines shall be sited to minimize impacts on natural resources including: seasonal and permanent wetlands; riparian habitats; critical wildlife habitats; rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species; and areas of significant waterfowl concentration.
  3. Transmission lines and pipelines shall be designed and routed to minimize erosion and siltation of water courses.
  4. Transmission lines shall not be sited in locations capable of jeopardizing public safety at existing or planned airports.
  5. Existing transmission line corridors, rights of way, and easements shall be used whenever practical in siting additional transmission lines and pipelines.
  6. The siting of transmission and pipeline routes shall minimize impacts to areas with established, or which are zoned for, concentrated residential development.
  7. Siting towers and alignments of transmission lines and pipelines through agricultural fields, which significantly reduce agricultural production, shall be avoided. Lines should follow existing property lines or routes which otherwise minimize the splitting of parcels.
  8. The siting of transmission lines shall minimize impacts on scenic views and shall be visually integrated with the surrounding setting. If located along a highway, the route shall favor the side of least scenic value. Siting of transmission lines on ridgelines or other visually prominent features should be avoided. Whenever possible, hills or topography should be used to screen transmission lines from the public field of view.
  9. The ground surface above underground powerlines and pipelines shall be reclaimed in a manner integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimize visual impacts.
  10. A fire suppression plan, including identification of the availability of suitable water supplies, shall be developed for all transmission lines and pipelines.

11. Subject to the standards set forth above, the County supports the development of well-planned transmission lines and pipelines which will aid the County in obtaining more economical power and natural gas resources.

4.16.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Utilities and Service Systems* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effect??*
- *Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?*
- *Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*
- *Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?*

4.16.4 Impact Analysis

Implementation of the proposed project may include extension of the City of Susanville Natural Gas Utility to the parcel and extension of Lassen Municipal Utility District power lines to the parcel. Utility lines will be extended from the intersection of Highway 139 and Skyline Road. Utilities will be run underground along the eastern side of Skyline Road within the previously disturbed right of way. The project will not connect to the local water or wastewater services; water will be sourced from an onsite well and collected from the stormwater pond and wash wastewater pond. Wastewater generated from industrial sources will be discharged to the wash pond for infiltration or discharge permitted under State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ XXXX-XXXX-DWQ General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities (see Section 4.11, Hydrology and Water Quality.

The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Utilities and Service Systems* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question, discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Utilities and Service Systems.*

Areas of No Project Impact

As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. The effects determined not to be significant are not required to be included in the primary analysis sections of the DEIR. As such, the following impacts either are not applicable to the proposed project or are not reasonably foreseeable and are not addressed further within this section:

Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

The project site will not be served by a public water utility or supply. The project will rely on a groundwater well to be installed onsite for the operation. This demand is expected to be up to 16,000 gallons for aggregate washing and dust suppression per day, with an estimated total annual demand of 3,180,000 gallons (9.76 acre-feet). As discussed in Sections 4.11, Hydrology and Water Quality, the groundwater basin is not at risk of overdraft or depletion.

Process water used in gravel washing will be recycled for dust control to reduce water consumption onsite. There will be no impact in this regard.

Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

The proposed project will not be served by a water treatment provider. The project will be served by a private chemical toilet provider or onsite septic system. Based upon the relatively low number of employees required (i.e., 20) to operate the facility, wastewater services would not require modification to the third party's disposable facilities or permitted disposal methods or volumes. Other wastewater generated by industrial processes onsite, such as gravel washing, will be retained onsite in the wash pond as depicted on Figure 3-14. Water discharged to the wash pond will be recycled onsite for dust control, allowed to infiltrate, or discharged in accordance with *State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ XXXX-XXXX-DWQ General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities*. There will be no impact in this regard.

4.16.5 Project Impacts

Impact 4.16-1: Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause a significant environmental effect?

The proposed project will not require the construction or expansion of public water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, or telecommunications facilities. Extension of natural gas and electric power lines will be required for the project site. Natural gas may be provided by the City of Susanville and will be extended from existing utility lines located at the intersection of Skyline Road and Highway 139; this action may require annexation. Construction of the underground pipeline to supply natural gas to the project site will result in minor and temporary disturbances.

The project will also require the extension of electric utility lines from the Lassen Municipal Utility District. Powerlines to the parcel will be extended from existing lines located along Highway 139 to the north. Construction of underground or aboveground powerlines will create temporary disturbances along Skyline Road; however, these impacts will be minor and temporary. Hat Creek Construction applied to LMUD for an estimated 3 MW peak demand electrical load at the Skyline Road project site. LMUD contracted Electrical Consultants Inc. (EC!) to perform a system analysis on the LMUD system to verify available system capacity. ECI's final report showed that the LMUD system can adequately supply the amount of requested power to the site. The project will have a less-than-significant impact in this regard.

Impact 4.16-2 Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

Implementation of the proposed project will result in minor long-term increases in solid waste produced by the project site. The area is currently undeveloped and generates no solid waste collected by the franchise waste hauler or taken to a landfill operated by the Lassen Regional Solid Waste Management Authority. The project site will generate domestic solid waste from the twenty employees who will be working onsite. Mining operations will not generate a significant amount of solid waste as materials are handled exclusively in raw form and trucked offsite. The Bass Hill Class III Municipal Solid Waste Landfill to which waste will ultimately be hauled, has a remaining 603,404 cubic yard capacity of 2,150,000 permitted capacity, with an average of 220 cubic yards placed annually (RWQCB, 2021. CalRecycle, 2023). The project will generate a maximum of 36 cubic yards of waste per year based on industrial generation rates (CalRecycle, n.d). However, as onsite operations consist of only raw material extraction and will only result in minor industrial-related wastes, actual generation will be significantly lower. Solid waste generated by the project site will be hauled offsite through service provided by the franchise waste hauler, or self-hauled to local landfills or transfer stations. The project will not impair any solid waste attainment goal. Therefore, the proposed project will have a less than significant effect on solid waste infrastructure.

4.16.6 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.16.7 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.17 Wildfire

This section provides a brief summary of the wildfire setting of the area, applicable wildfire regulations, and discussion of the potential wildfire impacts related to the proposed mine operations.

4.17.1 Environmental Setting

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is required by law to map areas of significant fire hazards based on fuels, terrain, weather, and other relevant factors. These zones, referred to as Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ), influence how people construct buildings and protect property to reduce risk associated with wildland fires (CAL FIRE, 2007).

A Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) is a mapped area that designates zones (based on factors such as fuel, slope, and fire weather) with varying degrees of fire hazard (i.e., moderate, high, and very high). FHSZ maps evaluate wildfire hazards, which are physical conditions that create a likelihood that an area will burn over a 30-to 50-year period. They do not take into account modifications such as fuel reduction efforts.

While FHSZs do not predict when or where a wildfire will occur, they do identify areas where wildfire hazards could be more severe and therefore are of greater concern. FHSZs are meant to help limit wildfire damage to structures through planning, prevention, and mitigation activities/requirements that reduce risk. The FHSZs serve several purposes: they are used to designate areas where California's wildland urban interface building codes apply to new buildings; they can be a factor in real estate disclosure; and local governments consider fire hazard severity in the safety elements of their general plans (California State Geoportal, 2020).

The proposed quarry is located within a State Responsibility Area (SRA), an area where the state has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection. Based on the map of *Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the State Responsibility Area in Lassen County* adopted by CAL FIRE on November 7, 2007, the project site is located in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Fire hazard severity zone and state responsibility areas are illustrated on Figures 4-8 and 4-9.

According to the *Lassen County General Plan* Safety Element, the entire county is prone to fire, either man-made or natural. Location, accessibility, local climatic conditions, topography, and vegetation type are among the factors associated with the intensity of a fire. Among the factors which can induce fire hazard potential to human safety and the environment is the degree to which fire hazard reduction measures are practiced in an area and, should a fire occur, the response time and effectiveness of the fire suppression activities. All of the populated areas of Lassen County are in high fire hazard areas of either/or timber, brush, and/or grasslands, and all of these areas are especially vulnerable during peak dry seasons (Lassen, 2020).

Topography generally gently slopes from north to south. Site elevation ranges from 4160 in the southwest corner of the parcel to 4350 along the northern edge of the parcel. Vegetation at the project site has been identified via the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP) data and field surveys as Sage Steppe Habitat.

4.17.2 Regulatory Setting

The following is a description of State and local environmental laws and policies that are relevant to the CEQA review process for the proposed project.

State

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CAL FIRE protects the people of California from fires, responds to emergencies, and protects and enhances forest, range, and watershed values providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to rural and urban citizens. The Office of the State Fire Marshal supports CAL FIRE's mission by focusing on fire prevention. It provides support through a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities including by regulating buildings in which people live, congregate, or are confined; by controlling substances and products which may, in and of themselves, or by their misuse, cause injuries, death, and destruction by fire; by providing statewide direction for fire prevention in wildland areas; by regulating hazardous liquid pipelines; by reviewing regulations and building standards; and by providing training and education in fire protection methods and responsibilities.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC) is contained within Title 24, Chapter 9, of the CCR. Based on the International Fire Code, the CFC is created by the California Buildings Standards Commission and regulates the use, handling, and storage requirements for hazardous materials at fixed facilities. Similar to the International Fire Code, the CFC and CBC use a hazards classification system to determine the appropriate measures to incorporate to protect life and property.

California Public Resources Code

California Public Resources Code Sections 4290 and 4291 are discussed in further detail as follows:

- *Public Resources Code Section 4290*. Requires minimum fire safety standards related to defensible space that are applicable to SRA lands and lands classified and designated as HFHSZs.
- *Public Resources Code Section 4291*. Requires a reduction of fire hazards around buildings, which requires 100 feet of vegetation management around all buildings and is the primary mechanism for conducting fire prevention activities on private property within CAL FIRE jurisdiction.

Fire Hazard Severity Zoning

CAL FIRE mapped Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in Lassen County based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors as directed by California Public Resources Code Sections 4201–4204 and Government Code Sections 51175–51189. FHSZs are ranked from moderate to very high and are categorized for fire protection within a Federal Responsibility Area (FRA), State Responsibility Area (SRA), or Local Responsibility Area (LRA) under the jurisdiction of a federal agency, CAL FIRE, or local agency, respectively. As noted above, the project site is located within a High FHSZ.

California Strategic Fire Plan

The *California Strategic Fire Plan* (2018) reflects the State's focus on (1) fire prevention and suppression activities to protect lives, property, and ecosystem services, and (2) natural resource management to maintain the state's forests as a resilient carbon sink to meet California's climate change goals and to serve as important habitat for adaptation and mitigation. The *California Strategic Fire Plan* provides a vision for a natural environment that is more fire resilient; buildings and infrastructure that are more fire resistant; and a society that is more aware of and responsive to the benefits and threats of wildland fire, all achieved through local, State, federal, tribal, and private partnerships. Plan goals include the following:

- Identify and evaluate wildland fire hazards and recognize life, property, and natural resource assets at risk, including watershed, habitat, social, and other values of functioning ecosystems. Facilitate the collaborative development and sharing of all analyses and data collection across all ownerships for consistency in type and kind.
- Promote and support local land use planning processes as they relate to: (a) protection of life, property, and natural resources from risks associated with wildland fire, and (b) individual landowner objectives and responsibilities.
- Support and participate in the collaborative development and implementation of local, county, and regional plans that address fire protection and landowner objectives.
- Increase fire prevention awareness, knowledge and actions implemented by individuals and communities to reduce human loss, property damage and impacts to natural resources from wildland fires.
- Integrate fire and fuels management practices with landowner/land manager priorities across jurisdictions.
- Determine the level of resources necessary to effectively identify, plan and implement fire prevention using adaptive management strategies.
- Determine the level of fire suppression resources necessary to protect the values and assets at risk identified during planning processes.
- Implement post-fire assessments and programs for the protection of life, property, and natural resource recovery.

California Emergency Services Act

The California Emergency Services Act was adopted to establish the State's roles and responsibilities during human-caused or natural emergencies that result in conditions of disaster and/or extreme peril to life, property, or resources of the State. This act is intended to protect health and safety by preserving the lives and property of the people of the state.

California Natural Disaster Assistance Act

The California Natural Disaster Assistance Act provides financial aid to local agencies to assist in the permanent restoration of public real property, other than facilities used solely for recreational purposes, when such real property has been damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster. The California Natural Disaster Assistance Act is activated after a local declaration of emergency and the California Emergency Management Agency gives concurrence with the local declaration, or after the governor issues a proclamation of a state emergency. Once the act is activated, the local government is eligible for certain types of assistance, depending on the specific declaration or proclamation issued.

California Building Code

Chapter 7A of the California Building Code (CBC) applies to building materials, systems and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings located within a WUI Fire Area. The purpose of this chapter is to establish minimum standards for the protection of life and property by increasing the ability of a building located in any FHSZ within SRAs or any WUI Fire Area to resist the intrusion of flames or burning embers projected by a vegetation fire, and to

contribute to a systematic reduction in conflagration losses. New buildings located in such areas shall comply with the ignition-resistant construction standards outlined in CBC Chapter 7A.

Senate Bill 1241

Senate Bill 1241 (Kehoe, 2012) required the Office of Planning and Research, the Natural Resources Agency, and CAL FIRE to develop "amendments to the initial study checklist of the [CEQA Guidelines] for the inclusion of questions related to fire hazard impacts for projects located on lands classified as state responsibility areas, as defined in section 4102, and on lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, as defined in subdivision (i) of section 51177 of the Government Code." (Pub. Resources Code, §21083.01 (emphasis added).) The Agency added several questions addressing this issue. Notably, while SB 1241 required the questions to address specific locations, it did not necessarily limit the analysis to those locations, and so the Agency posed the questions for projects located within or near those zones. Lead agencies will be best placed to determine precisely where such analysis is needed outside of the specified zones. (California Natural Resources Agency, 2018).

Local

Lassen County General Plan

The 2023 *County of Lassen Safety Element* contains the following actions related to fire hazards potentially applicable to the project.

- Defensible Development. The most recently adopted California Fire Code, Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps, California Building Codes, SRA Fire Safe Regulations, and Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures. Regulations shall be applied to all applicable additions, remodels, reconstructions, and new developments in very high fire hazard severity zones and State Responsibility Areas (SRAs). Fire protection plans that include risk analysis, fire response capabilities, fire safety requirements, mitigation measures, and design considerations for non-conforming fuel modification, and wildfire education and maintenance shall be required for new development and subdivisions in very high fire hazard severity zones and SRA, as determined by the County Fire Warden.
- Water Supply. The County will work with CAL FIRE and water providers during the review of new development to identify areas vulnerable to wildfire due to inadequate water supply for firefighting and require improvements of the applicant when deemed necessary by the County Fire Warden (e.g., expansion of water supply, storage hydrants). Ensure that water supply infrastructure adequately supports future development and provides adequate water flow to combat structural and wildland fire during peak load water use. New water systems shall equal or exceed the California Fire Code or California Code of Regulations, while aligning with the efforts of the Lassen County Groundwater Management Plan.
- Evacuation and Access. In Chapter 9.16 of the County Code, continue to require new development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to provide for a second access road or improvements to evacuation routes if necessary, to provide for safe access of emergency equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently. The width, surface grade, radius, turnarounds, turnouts, bridge construction, and lengths of fire apparatus access roads shall meet the requirements of the State Fire Codes. All requirements and any deviations will

be at the discretion of the County Fire Warden. Evacuation routes shall be incorporated into existing Community Wildfire Protection Plans where available.

Susanville Vicinity Area Plan

The *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan* contains the following implementation measures related to fire protection:

- The Planning and Building Department staff will work with the California Department of Forestry, the Susanville Fire Department, the Susan River Fire Protection District, and the City of Susanville to establish and adopt a "Master Plan for Fire Protection" with specific fire safety standards for land divisions and new construction.
- Fire hazard maps prepared by the California Division of Forestry will be kept on file by the Planning Department. The maps will be made available upon request to the public.
- The planning staff will incorporate fire hazard information and "Fire Protection Master Plan" policies in reports involving general plan amendments, zone changes, use permits, and subdivisions.
- The County will encourage coordination and cooperation of all firefighting agencies (state, city, district, volunteer) operating in the planning area.

4.17.3 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine whether they would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. An EIR is required to focus on these effects and offer mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts that are identified. The criteria used to determine the significance of impacts may vary depending on the nature of the project. The following significance thresholds related to *Wildfire* have been derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.*
- *Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire.*
- *Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.*
- *Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slop instability, or drainage changes.*

4.17.4 Impact Analysis

Implementation of the proposed project will result in a change to vegetation and slope within the project site, as well as include potential sources of fire. The following includes an analysis of environmental parameters related to *Wildfire* based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The discussion not only includes the areas for which there is potential for environmental impacts but also provides justification for the conclusions that either no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation could occur. The CEQA Checklist question,

discussion, and environmental significance conclusions are provided below under each individual environmental parameter related to *Wildfire*.

Areas of No Project Impact
As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 26, 2023, that summarized the proposed project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies. In the course of the County's initial evaluation, certain impacts of the proposed project were found not to be significant because of the inability of a project of this scope to create such impacts or the absence of project characteristics producing effects of this type. No project impacts in this section were found to be significant because of the project's inability to create such impacts, and therefore, there are no "*No Impact*" determinations.

4.17.5 Project Impacts

Impact 4.15-1 The Project could Substantially Impair an Adopted Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Evacuation Plan.

An emergency plan describes a comprehensive emergency management system that provides for the planned response to disaster situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents, terrorism, and nuclear-related incidents. Lassen County and the City of Susanville use the *Emergency Operations Plan* (March 2019) to respond to major emergencies and disasters. The *Emergency Operations Plan* identifies a broad range of potential hazards and a response plan for each. The Lassen County Sheriff's Department, CHP, and other cooperating law enforcement agencies have primary responsibility for evacuations. These agencies work with the County Office of Emergency Services and with responding fire department personnel who assess fire behavior and spread, which ultimately influence evacuation decisions. As of this writing, CAL FIRE, Lassen County Office of Emergency Services, Lassen County Sheriff's Department, and others have not adopted a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan applicable to this area.

All evacuations in the County follow pre-planned procedures to determine the best plan for the type of emergency. The designated County emergency evacuation and law enforcement coordinator is the Sheriff. The evacuation coordinator is assisted by other law enforcement and support agencies in emergency events. Law enforcement agencies, highway/street departments, and public and private transportation providers would conduct evacuation operations. Activities would include law enforcement traffic control, barricades, signal control, and intersection monitoring downstream of the evacuation area, all with the objective of avoiding or minimizing potential backups and evacuation delays.

Another factor in the evacuation process would be a managed and phased evacuation declaration. Evacuating in phases, based on vulnerability, location, or other factors, enables subsequent traffic surges on major roadways to be minimized over a longer timeframe and can be planned to result in traffic levels that flow more efficiently when mass evacuations include large evacuation areas simultaneously. Law enforcement personnel and Lassen County Office of Emergency Services staff would be responsible for ensuring that evacuations are phased appropriately, taking into consideration the vulnerability of communities when making decisions.

The proposed quarry is located at the end of a private access road off Skyline Road and will not include traffic volumes that would impair evacuation (see Appendix I). As a result, the proposed quarry will not interfere with the implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. Impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

Impact 4.17-2: Due to Slope, Prevailing Winds, and Other Factors, the Project could Exacerbate Wildfire Risks, and thereby Expose Project Occupants to Pollutant Concentrations from a Wildfire or the Uncontrolled Spread of Wildfire.

The proposed project does not include residential developments or permanently occupied structures. Existing residents within the vicinity are located downslope of the quarry area and on agricultural parcels surrounded by fields or in residential areas within Susanville. Lassen Community College and Banner Lassen Medical Center are located upslope of the project site. The proposed quarry area, including areas surrounding the site, are located in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

Wildfire factors such as slope and vegetation will change as mining progresses and areas of the site are reclaimed. Prior to material extraction, vegetation is removed, creating barren areas during active mining. After completion of mining activities, the mining area will be revegetated with a dryland pasture mix for open space.

Mining will result in changes to onsite topography, creating a steeper slope along the mine boundary and flat areas on the pit floor where plant equipment will be operated. The risk of potential ignitions resulting from mining activities onsite would be considered very low for the cleared areas of the site with non-combustible land cover (mine production areas, rock crushing/screening plant, washing operations, ponds). The proposed project will maintain onsite fire suppression apparatus (i.e., water trucks and fire extinguishers) to assist in a fire-related response if an incident were to occur onsite. Fire suppression equipment will be maintained in the shop, processing areas, and on equipment.

Mining activities in the quarry area will result in an increase in slopes in the mining area. Proposed mine faces will be shaped to have 40-foot benches at a 1:1 slope with a more gradual slope on the pit floor. The steeper slopes along the mine boundary of the quarry area could potentially result in more rapid burn upslope if wildfire were to occur onsite. However, mining activities will also result in the removal of vegetation that will reduce fuels and slow the spread of fire on the project site. The proposed project is subject to Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) requirements related to the implementation of Fire Prevention and Control standards (30 CFR Part 36). Measures include installation of spark and flame arrestors on intake and exhaust, an air shutoff valve, exhaust cooling systems, and installation of a fire extinguisher on all mobile equipment. These measures will be implemented during mining activities. With the presence of onsite fire suppression equipment and implementation of MSHA standards, as well as removal of vegetation from the project site as mining progresses, impacts would be less than significant. In addition, the project will be required to comply with the most recent California Fire Code, California Building Codes, State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations, and a fire protection plan will be prepared for operations as determined by the County Fire Warden.

Mining operations will require the use of onsite diesel fuel storage tanks, 20,000 gallons of fuel in

two aboveground storage tanks, and approximately five 55-gallon drums of lubricants and transmission oil. Operations will continue to meet applicable County requirements related to the storage and use of hazardous materials onsite. As described in Section 4.10, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, the proposed quarry is subject to the County's HMBP program, which is regulated by the Lassen County Environmental Health Department as part of the Certified Unified Program (CUPA). The mine operator will prepare the HMBP to the satisfaction of Lassen County Environmental Health Department. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the handling, storage, and use of hazardous materials onsite would result in a significant impact related to wildfire risk. Impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Impact 4.17-3: Require the Installation or Maintenance of Associated Infrastructure (Such as Roads, Fuel Breaks, Emergency Water Sources, Power Lines or Other Utilities that may Exacerbate Fire Risk or That May Result in Temporary or Ongoing Impacts to the Environment.

The environmental impacts associated with the installation of utilities are discussed in the Utilities and Services section. Installation of power and natural gas, as well as maintenance of this infrastructure, could exacerbate fire risk during installation or maintenance. Utilities will be placed underground in order to reduce ongoing fire risk during and after onsite mining operations.

Power in Lassen County is provided by Lassen Municipal Utility District (LMUD). This provider has Wildfire Mitigation Plans in place outlining the wildfire prevention strategies, including weather monitoring, design and construction standards, vegetation management, and inspections to minimize wildfire risk from their facilities.

LMUD constructs, maintains, and operates its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that minimizes the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by its electrical lines and equipment. This includes extensive tree trimming programs to maintain clearance between trees and bare electrical conductors, pole brushing (clearing around every pole with electrical installed devices such as switches, fuses, reclosers (LMUD, 2022). Many other measures involving equipment selection and settings are also part of LMUD's ongoing efforts. Impacts will be less than significant in this regard.

Impact 4.17-4: Expose People or Structures to Significant Risks, Including Downslope or Downstream Flooding or Landslides, as a Result of Runoff, Post-Fire Slope Instability, or Drainage Changes.

The proposed project is not located within an area with an existing risk of downslope flooding or landslide from a fire that has recently occurred, and will not expose people or structures onsite to significant existing risks. The proposed project would not significantly alter existing onsite drainage patterns or impervious surfaces compared to existing conditions. Rainfall is anticipated to primarily infiltrate into the mining area, as impervious surfaces are limited to the paved road and the Shop building. As described in Section 4.11, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, the proposed project includes the construction of a stormwater retention basin near the southern boundary of the project site, which will retain stormwater draining from the site. The final slopes of the mine floor will be sloped toward the stormwater pond, and water will be transported via culverts under the haul road. The basin will remain in place following reclamation to retain stormwater for future agricultural uses at the project site. The project will not result in downslope flooding. As discussed

in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils*, the proposed project will comply with the requirements contained in the Geotechnical Report prepared for mining operations and is not anticipated to result in landslides.

The project will not significantly exacerbate wildfire risks as discussed under Impact 4.15-2 because of fire prevention and suppression measures that will be implemented at the Project site. Therefore, the exposure of people or structures to significant risks related to downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, and drainage changes would be less than significant.

4.17.6 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.17.7 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

5.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

CEQA Guidelines §15126 requires that all phases of a project must be considered when evaluating the impact on the environment: planning, acquisition, development, and operation. The growth-inducing impacts, significant and unavoidable adverse impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes of the proposed project are discussed in this section. Cumulative impacts are also discussed in this section as required by CEQA Guidelines §15130. Significant environmental effects and the mitigation measures proposed to minimize the significant effects are summarized in Chapter 2, Executive Summary, of the DEIR.

5.1 Environmental Impacts Found to Have No Impact

Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR "contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR." Comments received during scoping have been considered in the process of identifying issue areas that would receive attention in the DEIR. Issues that were found to have no impact during the City's scoping process include the following:

- *Mineral Resources.* California's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) requires the State Geologist to classify land into mineral resource zones based on the known or inferred mineral resource potential of that land. The primary goal is to ensure that important mineral resources do not become inaccessible due to uninformed land-use decisions. To this end, the California Geological Survey performs objective mineral land classification (MLC) to assist in the protection and wise development of California's mineral resources (DOC, 2019). A search of the SMARA *Mineral Lands Classification* data portal did not show any MLC-related studies or maps for Lassen County or the proposed quarry. There are no designated mineral deposits of regional or statewide importance within the proposed quarry.

  The State of California has not designated an area of statewide or regional mineral resource significance within the proposed quarry. In addition, the proposed quarry is not delineated in the *Lassen County General Plan* or *Susanville Area Vicinity Plan* as a locally important mineral resource. As a result, implementation of the proposed project will not result in the loss of availability of a mineral resource of value to the region or residents of the state or delineated locally important mineral resource. Therefore, the proposed project will have no impact to mineral resources.

- *Population and Housing.* No new development or infrastructure is proposed as part of the quarry development, and the site will only require 20 employees. In addition, no existing housing or people will be displaced by the proposed project. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will have no impact to the population and housing.

5.2 Environmental Impacts Found to be Less Than Significant

After further study and environmental review in this DEIR, direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project would be less than significant or could be reduced to less than significant levels with mitigation measures for the following issue areas:

The following subject areas have been identified as having a less-than-significant impact:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources (Section 4.3)
- Energy (Section 4.7)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Section 4.9)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 4.10)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 4.11)
- Public Services (Section 4.14)
- Utilities and Service Systems (Section 4.16)
- Wildfire (Section 4.17)

The proposed project would result in less than significant impacts with incorporation of mitigation measures on the following subject areas:

- Air Quality (Section 4.4)
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (Section 4.6)
- Geology and Soils (Section 4.8)
- Land Use and Planning (Section 4.12)
- Noise (Section 4.13)
- Transportation (Section 4.15)

5.3 Growth-Inducing Impacts

Sections 15126(d) and 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines require that an EIR analyze growth-inducing impacts and state that an EIR shall discuss the ways in which the Project could foster economic or population growth or construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. CEQA Guidelines require an EIR to "discuss the ways" a project could be growth-inducing and to "discuss the characteristics of some projects that may encourage activities that could significantly affect the environment." However, the CEQA Guidelines do not require that an EIR predict (or speculate) specifically where such growth would occur, in what form it would occur, or when it would occur. The answers to such questions require speculation, which CEQA discourages; refer to CEQA Guidelines §15145.

It should be noted that growth-inducing effects are not to be construed as necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment (CEQA Guidelines, §15126.2[d]). This issue is presented to provide additional information on ways in which the proposed Project could contribute to significant changes in the environment beyond the direct consequences of developing the proposed land uses as described in earlier sections of this DEIR.

The proposed project will not result in any direct growth-inducing impacts. The project does not involve the construction of any new housing. In addition, the proposed project will not create a substantial new permanent employment opportunity that will encourage people to move to the area for employment. Employment needs are anticipated to be met by the existing community. The project will require extension of infrastructure (natural gas and electricity) to the project site, which could facilitate development on adjacent parcels similarly zoned UCAP. However, natural gas and electricity would not be difficult to obtain on adjacent parcels in the absence of the project

since adjacent parcels are just outside of the City of Susanville and close to other properties with electricity. LMUD has confirmed that any required upgrades are project-specific, without oversizing for future unrelated development. The project does not include the extension of sewer or water services that would be required to support substantial growth in the area. For these reasons, the proposed project will not result in substantial growth inducement.

5.4 Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Section 15126(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss the significant impacts of a project that cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level. These impacts are referred to as significant and unavoidable impacts of the project.

In Sections 4.2 through 4.17 of this DEIR, the issue areas were analyzed to determine whether project implementation would result in a significant adverse environmental impact. Refer to those discussions for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below. If Lassen County were to approve the proposed project, the County shall be required to cite its findings in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15091 and prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15093. The following impacts described below will remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
Impact 4.2-2: *In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the public views of the site and its surroundings.*

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.).

Implementation of the proposed project will alter the visual character of the site by physical disturbance of the 460-acre mining area. Initial mining operations within the Phase 1 area will represent the most swift and significant change is visual character. In the first two years of project operations, mining will be required to extract enough material to reach the Phase 1 base elevation and place equipment below the existing topography. Over the remainder of the 50-year lifespan of the mine, changes will be in areas to be immediately mined; therefore, changes to the character of the site will be gradual. As practicable, areas that have been mined and are not to be disturbed by ongoing operations will be reclaimed and revegetated. Following the completion of mining activities, the project site will be reclaimed for agricultural use and open space.

Figures 4-1 through 4-3 depict the estimated areas where the proposed project will be visible. As shown in these figures, the project will be visible from public areas, including roadways, Skyline Park, the city disc golf course, Skyline recreational trail, the Lassen County Fairgrounds, and Banner Lassen Medical Center. During construction and mining, the visual character will be degraded in the project area from the vantage points of the listed locations. Revegetation listed in the Reclamation Plan makes these impacts temporary, limited to the duration of mining activities. Implementation of the proposed project will result in the removal of vegetation from the site.

Excavation areas, stockpile areas, the landscape yard, shop, and processing areas will be visible and represent a change in the existing character of the project site from undeveloped and agricultural to an industrial nature for the duration of mining activities. Due to the long-term nature of the disturbance and extent of topographic change, this impact will be significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 includes the use of natural materials and earth-tone colors for project structures and stationary equipment that will allow the project to better blend with the surrounding landscape. Although this measure will reduce the visual impacts of mining activities, the implementation of the proposed project will degrade the existing visual character of the site through the conversion of vacant/agricultural land to industrial use during mining activities. This impact will remain significant and unavoidable.

Biological Resources

Impact 4.5-2: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

The project would result in the permanent loss of potential nesting and foraging habitat for many songbird species. As mining progresses, vegetation will be removed from within the project area, which will reduce nesting and foraging habitat availability for many bird species. Direct impacts to nesting birds will be mitigated to less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.5-8 by surveying prior to site preparation and then creating buffers around any active nests. Indirect impacts from the removal of vegetation from the mine footprint will be significant because even with revegetation efforts, human use and noise will deter use of the site, and the permanent vegetation loss cannot be recovered after closure of the site.

With the incorporation of mitigation measures, this impact will remain significant and unavoidable for the loss of forging and nesting habitat for songbird species.

5.5 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss the significant irreversible environmental changes that would occur with implementation of a project and that cannot be avoided. An irreversible impact is an impact that uses nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a project. Irreversible impacts may also result from damage caused by environmental accidents associated with a project. Irretrievable commitments of resources are also required to be evaluated, to ensure that such consumption is justified.

Determining whether the proposed project would result in significant irreversible impacts requires a determination of whether key resources would be degraded or destroyed with little possibility of restoration.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources, including water, oil, propane, natural gas, diesel, gasoline, and other nonrenewable resources for the 50-year duration of mining activities. Following mining and reclamation, the project site would be used for open space and is unlikely to need extensive further resources.

The project would also extract existing nonrenewable aggregate resources. As a result of productive use of materials from the site, the project would result in the utilization, not loss, of known mineral resources through the extraction and sale of the aggregate resources onsite. The mineral resources extracted as part of the project would make available the raw materials for projects that would be of value to the region and residents of the State for the next 50 years. Because the proposed project would produce and make these mineral resources available for beneficial use within Lassen County and residents of the State for up to 50 years, this commitment is not considered adverse.

Extraction of the Aggregate resource will cause an irreversible change in the landscape through the removal of 39,864,900 cubic yards of material. The utilization of this material will permanently change the existing topography of the mining area, thus modifying the visual character of the site in perpetuity.

Mine reclamation is required by the SMARA. SMARA requires mines to be reclaimed to a usable condition that is readily adaptable for a productive alternative land use. The reclaimed mine must also pose no danger to public health or safety. A Reclamation Plan has been submitted as part of the application materials in compliance with SMARA regulations and is attached as Appendix B.

5.6 Cumulative Impacts

A cumulative impact is an effect on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the proposed project when combined with the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The significance of a cumulative impact may be greater than the significance of individual effects resulting from the individual actions. This section evaluates the reasonably foreseeable potential effects of other existing activities in the area (including other planned projects) when added to the impacts of the proposed project.

Criteria for evaluating the significance of adverse effects are also applicable to cumulative impacts. The timing and duration of each activity are important considerations for evaluating the potential cumulative effects of activities that occur only for a limited period. In those cases, a cumulative effect may occur only when two or more of the activities are occurring simultaneously.

The CEQA Guidelines provide that "Cumulative impacts shall be discussed when they are significant," and that "the discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence..." (Section 15130[a] and [b]). This section considers the likelihood of such impacts and evaluates any significant effects. These effects, where they occur, are then evaluated for their impact in combination with other activities in the area for cumulative impact.

5.6.1 Other Projects in the Area

The following planned projects within Lassen County were identified from Lassen County agendas, packets, and announcements for upcoming meetings of the Planning Commission, Technical Advisory Committee, and Architectural Review Committee, as well as Lassen County

CEQA notices. Projects included on the City of Susanville Planning Commission Agenda are included as well due to the proximity of the project site to the City of Susanville.

Items listed include those from meetings occurring in June 2024 or later:

- **AA #2024-001 and RZ#2024-001, Grimes** - The Land Conservation Committee will consider an application by Grimes Rice Canyon Ranches LLC, requesting to rezone and enter lands within Lassen County into a new Land Conservation (Williamson Act) contract. If approved the contract would add 4 parcels to the existing Agricultural Preserve, and approximately 341.18 acres of land. Assessor's Parcel Number 101-120-030 is zoned U-C (Upland Conservation District). Assessor's Parcel Numbers 117-510-055, 117-510-058, and 117-510-059 are zoned E-A (Exclusive Agriculture District) and are designated Intensive Agriculture by the *Lassen County General Plan, 2000*. The project site is located is located and approximately 9.5 miles east of Susanville CA, via Highway 395.
- **CCU #2024-001, Janesville Christian Fellowship** - The proposal is to place a 32-square-foot service sign related to the Janesville Christian Fellowship. The project site is located approximately on the Southern property line at the property described as APN 129-650-025.
- **Certificate of Correction, Hrezo, Del Rosa** – The proposal is to remove the "Building Site" designation from Parcel C-2 and Parcel C-3 as indicated on Parcel Map No. 94052 in Book 35 of Maps, at Pg. 63. Parcels C-2 and C-3 are zoned A-2-B-4 (Agricultural Residential, 4-Acre Building Site, Combining District) and have a land use designation of "Rural Residential" by the *Janesville General Plan Amendments 1993*. The address for Parcel C-2 is 465-930 Hanlon Ln, Janesville, CA 96114, whereas the address for Parcel C-3 is 466-200 Hanlon Ln, Janesville, CA 96114. The subject parcels are located approximately 0.32 miles east of the intersection of Saddleback Ln. and U.S. Highway 395, approximately 10 miles southeast of Susanville. Parcel C-2: APN 129-590-058. Parcel C-3: APN 129-590-059.
- **HEMP #2024-001, Rodriquez** – Industrial Hemp – Annual Pre-Compliance Checklist and Authorization to Operate at APN 045-050-015.
- **LLA #2024-001, Maselli** - The applicant is proposing a lot line adjustment between three legal parcels under the same ownership that together total 514 acres. Existing Parcel A (APNs 139-060-021; and a portion of 139-310-002) is currently 163 acres, existing Parcel B (139-320-007; and a portion of APN 139-310-002) is currently 151 acres, and existing Parcel C (APN 139-320-012) is currently 200 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 195 acres, Parcel B would become 119 acres and Parcel C would remain unchanged at 200 acres. The subject parcels are zoned A-1 (General Agricultural District) APN's 139-060-021, and 139-310-002 have an "Intensive Agriculture" land use designation. APN 139-320-007 has an "Intensive Agriculture" and "Extensive Agriculture" land use designation. APN 139-320-012 has an "Extensive Agriculture" land use designation, pursuant to the *Lassen County General Plan, 2000*. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located at 443-310 Olive Lane, Doyle CA. (APNs: 139-060-021; 139-310-002; 139-320-007; 139-320-012).

- **LLA #2024-002, Conner** - The applicant is proposing a lot line adjustment between two legal parcels under different ownership that together total 395.9 acres. Existing Parcel A (APN 003-090-010) is currently 79.07 acres, existing Parcel B (003-090-012) is currently 316.83 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 10 acres, and Parcel B would become 385.9 acres. The subject parcels are zoned A-1 (General Agricultural District) and are designated "Intensive Agriculture" by the *Lassen County General Plan, 2000*. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located at 662-360 Susanville Rd., Bieber CA. (APNs: 003-090-010, and 003-090-012).
- **LLA #2024-003, Maselli** - The applicant is proposing a lot line adjustment between three legal parcels (four Assessor's Parcels) under the same ownership that together total 514 acres. Existing Parcel A (APN's 139-060-021; and a portion of 139-310-002) is currently 163 acres, existing Parcel B (APN's 139-320-007; and a portion of 139-310-002) is currently 151 acres, and existing Parcel C (APN 139-320-012) is currently 200 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 195 acres, Parcel B would become 125 acres, and Parcel C would become 194 acres. The subject parcels are zoned A-1 (General Agricultural District). Pursuant to the *Lassen County General Plan, 2000,* APN's 139-060-021 and 139-310-002 have a land use designation of "Intensive Agriculture"; APN's 139-320-007 and 139-320-012 have a land use designation of "Extensive Agriculture". The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located at 443-310 Olive Lane, Doyle, CA. (APN's: 139-060-021; 139-310-002; 139-320-007; 139-320-012).
- **LLA #2024-004, Nagel, Standiford** - The applicants are proposing a lot line adjustment between two parcels that together total approximately 148.88. Parcel A is currently 141.08 acres in size, whereas Parcel B is currently 7.81 acres in size. If approved, Parcel A would be approximately 114 acres in size, whereas Parcel B would be approximately 35 acres in size. Parcel A is zoned P.U.D. (Planned Unit Development District), whereas Parcel B is split zoned P.U.D. and R-1-B-3-AA-D (Single-Family Residential District, 3-Acre Building Site Combining District, Accessory Animal Combining District, Design Combining District). Parcel A is designated "Planned Unit Development"," whereas Parcel B is designated "Planned Unit Development" and "Estate Residential" by the *Richmond/Gold Run Area Plan, 1993*. The current zoning and Land Use Designations are a result of Lot Line Adjustment #2020-008; if this lot line adjustment were approved, Zoning and Land Use Designations would be unchanged. The address for Parcel A is 697-905 Jura Drive, Susanville, CA 96130, whereas the address for Parcel B is 470-480 Amesbury Drive, Susanville, CA 96130. The subject parcels are located three-tenths of a mile south of the intersection of Amesbury Drive and Gold Run Road, approximately four miles south of Susanville. Parcel A: APN 116-230-95. Parcel B: APN 116-480-038.
- **MG #2024-002, White** - The applicant is proposing a merger between two parcels. Currently, Parcel A (APN 115-200-047) is 1.1 acres, and Parcel B (APN 115-200-048) is 73 acres. If the merger were approved, Resultant Parcel A would be approximately 74.1 acres. The subject Parcels A and B are zoned U-C-2 (Upland Conservation/Resource Management District), with a land use designation of "Extensive Agriculture" pursuant to the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA

Guidelines. The subject parcels are located approximately 2.5 miles from the intersection of Highway 44 and Highway 36. APN(s): 115-200-047, 115-200-048.

- **PD #2024-001 Stucki** – Minor Amendment to Planned Development Permit for Thomas Taylor.
- **PM #2024-001, Musachia** – The proposal is to divide a single 160-acre legal parcel into two parcels, pursuant to Lassen County Code Section 18.108.250 (Segregation of Homesites in Agricultural Zones); per Tentative Parcel Map for Lawrence & Christine Musachia, resultant Parcel A ("homesite" parcel) is a 40-acre parcel and Parcel B is a 120-acre parcel. The subject parcel is zoned E-A-A-P (Exclusive Agriculture Agricultural Preserve Combining District) and has a land use designation of "Intensive Agriculture" pursuant to the *Standish-Litchfield Area Plan, 1986*. Pursuant to Section 15300.4 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this project is exempt from CEQA, as the segregation of homesites has been identified by Lassen County Board Resolution No. 01-043 as locally exempt under Section 15315 of the CEQA Guidelines. The parcel is located at 727-650 Fish & Game Rd. Litchfield, CA. 96117 (per ParcelQuest) APN:119-380-006.
- **PM #2024-002, Comino** - Proposal to divide a single 1334.5-acre legal parcel, which consists of APN's 116-070-016, 116-070-042, 116-070-055, 116-160-014, 117-510-001, 117-510-002, 117-510-020, and 117-510-021 into one homesite, one additional parcel, and a remainder, pursuant to Lassen County Code Section 18.108.250 (Segregation of Homesites in Agricultural Zones). Resultant Lot 1 ("homesite" parcel) is 40 acres (as shown on the tentative parcel map), Lot 2 ("additional" parcel) is 397.5-acres, and the Remainder is 897 acres. The parcels consist of zoning districts E-A-A-P (Exclusive Agricultural, Agricultural Preserve Combining District), E-A-A-P/P-S-A (Exclusive Agricultural, Agricultural Preserve, Public Safety Airport Combining District), U-C-A-P (Upland Conservation, Agricultural Preserve Combining District), E-A (Exclusive Agricultural District), and A-2-B-5 (Agricultural Residential, 5-acre Building Site Combining District), and include land use designations of "Intensive Agriculture", "Extensive Agriculture", "Rural Residential", and "Urban Reserve" pursuant to the Johnstonville Area Plan and EIR, 1987. The subject parcel address provided is 706-295 N. HWY 395, Susanville, CA.
- **UP #2024-001, American Legion Post 162** - The applicant is proposing an annual American Legion Region Post "Poker Run", which will begin and end at the American Legion Eagle Lake Post #162. Event will include OHV use, Live Music, Silent Auction, and Cornhole Tournament to benefit veterans of the legion as well as The Reno Vets Guesthouse. The subject parcel is zoned C-T-D (Town Service Design Combining District) and is designated "Existing Commercial" by the *Eagle Lake Area Plan, 1982*. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcel is located approximately 32 miles northwest of Susanville, CA, via Highway 36 and Eagle Lake Road. The address provided is 687-935 Spruce Way. (APN: 077-193-034).
- **UP #2024-002, Slate Mountain Renewables LLC** - To allow for the re-permitting of a temporary 197 foot (60 meter) tall meteorological tower (wind data collection device). Said tower will be removed no later than five years from the date of approval (if approved), unless a new use permit is secured. For safety, a solar-powered aviation obstruction light

is mounted on the top of the tower and high-visibility orange marker balls are mounted on the guywires. Data collected at the site is being transmitted remotely by cellular or satellite comms to avoid frequent site visits. The project site is zoned T-P-Z (Timber Production Zone District). The project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15306 of the Guidelines. The proposed tower location is 6 miles northwest of Stones Landing at Eagle Lake, and 4.6 miles northwest of the intersection of A-1 and Highway 139. APN 053-070-011.

- **UP #2024-003, UP #2024-004, UP #2024-005, UP #2024-006, UP #2024-007, UP #2024-008, UP #2024-009, UP #2024-010, Fourth Element Wind** - The permitting of temporary meteorological towers to measure wind speed, direction, and other meteorological variables. APN's: 051-100-010, 049-120-003, 051-110-011, 051-120-011, 051-080-004, 051-080-005, 039-080-009, 053-010-007.
- **UP #2024-011, Mullanix** - Proposal to add a new manufactured 972-square-foot second dwelling unit. The subject parcel is zoned A-1(General Agricultural District) and has an "Extensive Agriculture" land use designation in the Lassen *County General Plan, 2000*. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcel is 63.5 acres and is located approximately 24 miles southeast of Susanville and 352 yards south of Highway 395 at 449-600 Mill Street Milford, CA 96121. APN: 135-200-012.
- CCU #2025-001, Cronkhite. In accordance with Lassen County Code Section 18.120 et seq., and subject to the conditions of approval specified below, a Certificate of Conditional Use is hereby granted to reconstruct and expand a nonconforming residential use as described herein, and as applied for through Building Permit No. 2025-025. The subject use is nonconforming to the side-yard setback requirements of U-C-2 (Upland Conservation/Resource Management) zoning district, and to the onsite wastewater treatment provisions of Lassen County Code Chapter 12.12.020. The project site is located at 643-845 The Bund, Assessor's Parcel Number 097-240-002.
- CCU #2025-002, Tibbets. In accordance with Lassen County Code Section 18.120 et seq., and subject to the conditions of approval specified below, a Certificate of Conditional Use is hereby granted to reconstruct and expand a nonconforming residential use as described herein, and as applied for through Building Permit No. 2025-026. The subject use is nonconforming to the front-yard setback requirements of R-1-B (Single-Family Residential, Building Site Combining) zoning district, The project site is located at 463-215 Twin Pines Drive, Assessor's Parcel Number 123-030-015.
- CCU #2025-003, Citizens Utility Company. In accordance with Lassen County Code Section 18.114 and 18.108.290, and subject to the conditions of approval specified below, a Certificate of Conditional Use (CCU) is hereby granted to allow for the removal of six (6) existing antennas and six (6) existing radios, with the addition of six (6) new antennas, three (3) new antennas with integrated radios, six (6) new radios, and two (2) Overvoltage Protection Modules (OVP's), on an existing 100-foot-tall tower. Said tower is an "opportunity site" as recognized by Lassen County Code Section 18.108.290(d)(1)(A)(viii). Separate carriers own other wireless service facilities on the tower. The project site is located on School House Road, Ravendale, CA 96123, and is approximately 0.41 miles southwest of the intersection of School House Road and U.S. Hwy 395, and approximately 51 miles northeast of Susanville (A.P.N. 057-010-012).

- LLA #2025-001, Colwest Investments. The applicant is proposing a lot line adjustment between two legal parcels under two different ownerships that together total 1.64 acres. Existing Parcel C (APN 116-350-024) is currently 0.84 acres, existing Parcel D (APN 116-350-025) is currently 0.80 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel C would become 1.0 acres and Parcel B would become 0.64 acres. The subject parcels are zoned R-1-AA-D (Single-Family Residential, Accessory Animal Combining, Design Combining District). Regarding land use designations, both parcels are "Low Density Urban Residential" pursuant to the Richmond/Gold Run Area Plan, 1993. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located at 700-355 E. Richmond Rd. and 700-415 E. Richmond Rd. Susanville CA. (APNs: 116-350-024 and 116-350-025). Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.
- LLA #2025-003, Roberts. The applicant is proposing a lot line adjustment between three legal parcels (four Assessor's Parcels) under the same ownership that together total 7.62 acres. Existing Parcel A (APN 001-550-037) is currently 1.05 acres, existing Parcel B (APN 001-550-028) is currently 0.41 acres, and existing Parcel C (APN's 001-550-026 and 001-550-036) is currently 6.16 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 0.89 acres, Parcel B would become 1.07 acres, and Parcel C would become 5.65 acres. Parcels A and B are zoned R-1 (Single-Family Residential District), and Parcel C is split-zoned R-1 (Single-Family Residential District) and A-1 (General Agricultural District). The subject parcels have a land use designation of "Town Center" pursuant to the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. Parcel A is located at 305 Punkin Center Rd, Parcel B does not have an assigned address, Parcel C is located at 309 Punkin Center Rd, and all are located in Bieber, CA. (APN's: 001-550-037; 001-550-028; 001-550-026; 001-550-036). Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- LLA #2025-004, McMullen, Ovitz. The applicants are proposing a lot line adjustment between two legal parcels under different ownership that together total 38.01 acres. Existing Parcel A (APN 129-590-021) is currently 19.01 acres and existing Parcel B (APN 129-590-020) is currently 19.00 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 11.86 acres and Parcel B would become 26.15 acres. Parcels A and B are zoned A-2-B-19 (Agricultural Residential, 19 acre Building Site Combining District). The subject parcels have a land use designation of "Rural Residential" pursuant to the Janesville General Plan Amendments, 1993. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. Parcel A is located at 465-150 N Church St, Janesville, CA 96114 and Parcel B is located at 465-320 N Church St, Janesville, CA 96114. (APN's: 129-590-021; 129-590-020). Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- LLA #2025-005, Cunningham Properties LLC. The applicants are proposing a lot line adjustment between two legal parcels under the same ownership that together total 7.64-acres. Existing Parcel A (APN 116-130-024) is currently 4.06-acres and existing Parcel B (APN 116-130-032) is currently 3.58 acres. If the proposed adjustment is approved, Parcel A would become 5.60-acres and Parcel B would become 2.04 acres. Parcels A and B are zoned C-T (Town Service District). The subject parcels have a land use designation of "Town Service" pursuant to the Johnstonville Area Plan, 1987. The proposed project is

exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. Parcel A does not have an assigned address, Parcel B is located at 704-485 Richmond Rd. E. Susanville CA 96130. (APN's: 116-130-024; 116-130-032). Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.

- MA #2025-001, D-Mine. Hat Creek Construction, propose a minor amendment of Reclamation Plan #2003-168, modifying reclamation conditions at an existing aggregate quarry (CA Mine ID #91-18-0050) as follows: change the required final slope of the slopes on the southern edge of the pond, and change the revegetation seed mix. The project site is zoned U-C-2 (Upland Conservation/Resource Management District) and is designated Extensive Agriculture by the Lassen County General Plan 2000. The parcels are located adjacent to Hwy 44 in Lassen County, approximately 13 miles east of Old Station, CA and 40 miles northwest of Susanville, CA. A.P.N.: 073-030-009 & 073-070-002. Staff Contact: Chris Martin, Natural Resources Coordinator.
- MG #2025-001, Clear Creek Investment Group. The applicant is proposing a merger between two parcels. Currently, Parcel A (APN 123-041-002) is 0.567 acres, and Parcel B (APN 123-041-026) is 0.446 acres. If the merger were approved, Resultant Parcel A would be approximately 1.013 acres. The subject Parcels A and B are zoned C-1 (Retail Business District), with a land use designation of "Commercial" pursuant to the Westwood/Clear Creek Area Plan, 2002, and the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located approximately 1.2 miles from the intersection of State Highway 147 and State Highway 36. APN(s): 123-041-002, 123-041-026. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- MG #2025-002, Duncan. The applicant is proposing a merger between two parcels. Currently, Parcel A (APN 125-222-008) is 0.26 acres, and Parcel B (APN 125-222-009) is 0.268 acres. If the merger were approved, Resultant Parcel A would be approximately 0.528 acres. The subject parcels are zoned R-1-B-D (Single-Family Residential, Building Site, Design Combining District), with a land use designation of "Urban Residential, Low Density" pursuant to the Westwood/Clear Creek Area Plan, 2002, and the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. Parcel B is located at 463-735 Fern Way, Westwood, CA and Parcel A is the neighboring parcel to the north. APN(s): 125-222-008, 125-222-009. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- PD #2025-001, Standiford, Nagel. The applicant is proposing an amendment to existing Planned Development (PD), Gold Hill Subdivision Unit Two. Amendment would remove/exclude from open space designation, three locations for designated potential building sites on 6.54 acres of land. Said locations are described as a 2.0-acre site along Jura Drive, a 2.54-acre site, and a 2.00-acre site on Nagel Ranch Road. Additionally, the amendment will include into the PD, APN 116-230-096 (Northernly 23.18 acres presently zoned E-A (Excusive Agricultural District)) to be designated as open space, which would result in a new total of 133.99 acres of open space (117 acres required), and 6.54 acres of new building sites. APN 116-230-096 is located at 697-905 Jura Dr, Susanville, CA 96130, and APN 116-480-040 is located at 470-480 Amesbury Dr, Susanville, CA 96130-5880. APN's: 116-230-096 and 116-480-040. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.

- PM #2025-001, Corder Farms. Proposal for segregation of homesite, reconfiguring two adjacent legal parcels, pursuant to Lassen County Code Section 18.108.250 (Segregation of Homesites in Agricultural Zones); Parcel 1 shown on the tentative parcel map, currently 162.7 acres is proposed to be 241.8 acres and the "homesite" parcel 2, currently 81.3 acres is proposed to be 2.2 acres. The subject parcels are zoned A-3-B-160 (Agricultural, 160-acre Building Site Combining District) and have a land use designation of "Cropland and Prime Grazing Land" pursuant to the Pittville Area Plan, 1986. Pursuant to Section 15300.4 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this project is exempt from CEQA, as the segregation of homesites has been identified by Lassen County Board Resolution No. 01-043 as locally exempt under Section 15315 of the CEQA Guidelines. The parcels are located at 542-565 Little Valley Rd. McArthur, CA. APN:013-100-002 and 013-100-019. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-002, T-Mobile West LLC. Proposal to place a new personal wireless service facility onto an existing 100 ft, 10 in water tower to enhance network coverage and capacity in the designated service area. The facility will consist of 6 panel antennas, 6 Remote Radio Units (RRU's), and 2 hybrid cables mounted at 77 ft, 6 in of the water tower. They will also install 2 radio cabinets on a new 10 ft x 15 ft concrete pad located on the ground on the south side of the tower, and 1 utility H-Frame to mount its electrical and telco switch gear. Fiber will be run underground from Park Street approximately 43 ft, 3 in to the proposed H-Frame. Power will run underground from Market Street approximately 159 ft to the proposed H-Frame. Project site is zoned C-T (Town Service District) and is designated "Town Center" per the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301 of the Guidelines. The proposed site is located on the Southwest corner of the intersection of Park St and Market St in Bieber, CA. APN 001-183-004. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-003, Verizon Wireless, Cunningham Properties LLC. Proposal to construct an 88' Verizon Wireless co-location concealed tree tower, antennas, support equipment, 30' x 30' screen equipment enclosure, and emergency backup generator. The subject parcel is zoned C-T (Town Service District) and has a Town Service land use designation per the Johstonville Area Plan, 1987. The subject parcel is located next to 704-485 Richmond Rd. E., Susanville, CA 96130, near Hwy. 36 and the Susanville Auto Center. APN: 116-130-024. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-004, Tamplen. Proposal to add an additional dwelling unit by means of an 816 square foot garage conversion/remodel. The subject parcel is zoned A-2-B-4 (Agricultural Residential, 4-acre Building Site Combining District) and has a "Rural Residential" land use designation in the Janesville General Plan Amendments, 1993. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcel is 4.010 acres and is located approximately 15 miles southeast of Susanville at 714-035 Hicks Rd. Janesville, CA. APN:129-640-012. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-005, Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative (PSREC). Proposal for a non-public utility line for transmission of electricity through four private parcels necessitating right of way acquisition. The project site is zoned A-1 (General Agricultural District) and is designated "Extensive Agriculture" per the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines. The proposed site is located near the intersection of Cal-Neva Rd. and Fort Sage Rd., approximately 11

miles from Herlong, CA. APN's 139-230-007, 139-230-009, 139-230-011, and 139-230-012. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.

- UP #2025-006 & IS #2025-003, Menne/Birac Alturas. Proposal to construct a floating 469-acre solar array on an irrigation pond, 1.5-acre interconnection substation, and a 5-mile transmission line to a proposed interconnection substation project. The interconnection substation is a proposed project for NV Energy, and is not part of this project. The floating solar is expected to have a 30 to 40-year lifetime. The 630-acre irrigation pond is located approximately 4 miles North of Termo, on APN 031-110-013 zoned E-A-A-P (Exclusive Agricultural, Agricultural Preserve Combining District). The interconnection substation is proposed to be built on APN 031-110-007, zoned U-C-2 (Upland Conservation/Resource Management District). The transmission line poles will be on a total of seven different parcels (031-110-007, 031-110-010, 031-110-009, 031-310-006, 031-310-049, 031-310-008, and 043-050-043), zoned either E-A-A-P, U-C-2-A-P (Upland Conservation/Resource Management Agricultural Preserve Combining District), or U-C-2. The proposed floating solar array site is approximately 4-miles west of Highway 395 and 40 miles South of Alturas, CA. The subject parcels have an Extensive Agriculture land use designation per the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The project site is located near Termo, CA, West of Highway 395, within an area known as Madeline Plains. APN's: 031-110-013, 031-110-007, 031-110-010, 031-110-009, 031-310-006, 031-310-049, 031-310-008, and 043-050-043. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-007, Connolly. Proposal to construct a storage building and bay utilizing 4 shipping containers on a 2.4-acre parcel. The shipping containers will be attached to the main bay and will be used to store an airplane fuselage and supporting equipment. The project site has an abandoned mobile home, which will be removed from the property. Project site is zoned C-T (Town Service District) and has a land use designation of "Town Center" per the Lassen County General Plan, 2000. The proposed site does not have an assigned address. The subject parcel fronts Hwy 299 and Bieber Dump Road. APN: 001-150-035. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-008, Weston. Proposal to construct a telecommunications facility consisting of a 125'monopine with associated equipment, and backup generator, within a 50'x 50' fenced area. The subject parcel is zoned C-T (Town Service District) and the portion of the property within 500'of Highway 395, is C-T-D (Town Service District, Design Combining District). It has a "Town Center" land use designation per the Standish-Litchfield Area Plan, 1986. The subject parcel is located at 471-485 Sierra St, Standish, CA 96117. APN: 119-230-033. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.
- UP #2025-009, STAWIARSKI. Proposal to construct an 892 square-foot attached second housing unit, along with 140 square feet of additional covered deck. The subject parcel is zoned A-2-B-4 (Agricultural Residential, 4-acre Building Site Combining District) and has a "Rural Residential" land use designation in the Janesville General Plan Amendments, 1993. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcel is 5.03 acres and is located approximately 11 miles southeast of Susanville at 464-600 Quail Ln, Janesville, CA 96114. APN:129-670-011. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.

- USE PERMIT #2026-001, Ingram. Proposal to open an indoor recycling center for redemption of CRV recyclables. Proposal would include construction of a 12,000 square

foot commercial industrial building. The proposed project would include a concrete driveway, parking spaces, grass area, lighting, and sign. The subject parcels are zoned C-T (Town Service District) and have a Town Service land use designation per the Johstonville Area Plan, 1987. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15303(c) of the 2026 CEQA Guidelines. The subject parcels are located at 472-445 Diamond Crest Road Susanville, CA 96130. APNs:116-140-021 & 116-140-020. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Senior Planner

- USE PERMIT #2026-002, INITIAL STUDY #2026-001, CL SIERRA INVESTMENTS, LLC. Proposal to construct a 300 megawatt (MW) AC Photovoltaic Solar Array over multiple parcels, which total approximately 1,861 acres. The project would include 80 blocks and inverters, approximately 500,000 720-Watt modules/panels, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), an onsite substation and tie-in to existing energy infrastructure. Energy produced from this project would be interconnected to NV Energy's transmission lines. APN's 133-070-013, 133-070-019, 133-070-020, 133-070-021, 133-080-063, 133-080-065, 133-120-008, 133-120-010, and 133-120-013 are zoned M-2-P-S-A (Heavy Industrial, Public Safety Airport Combining District) and have a land use designation of "Industrial" per the *Wendel Area Plan, 1987*. APN's 133-080-038, 133-080-042, 133-080-043, 133-080-044, 133-080-045, and 133-080-046 are zoned U-C-P-S-P-S-A (Upland Conservation, Public Safety Combining, Public Safety Airport Combining District) and have an "Agriculture Extensive" land use designation per the *Wendel Area Plan, 1987*. The subject parcels are located near the Amedee Army Airfield in Herlong, CA and approximately 37 miles southeast of Susanville. APN's: 133-070-013, 133-070-019, 133-070-020, 133-070-021, 133-080-038, 133-080-042, 133-080-043, 133-080-044, 133-080-045, 133-080-046, 133-080-063, 133-080-065, 133-120-008, 133-120-010, and 133-120-013. Staff Contact: Matt Oden, Associate Planner.

- Use Permit 2026-003. Proposal to construct a fuel station, Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) with drive-through, and convenience store. The 7.6-acre site will include buildings, paving, and septic system. The QSR is proposed to be 4,000 square feet and the convenience store is proposed to be 6,500 square feet. The fuel station will service both gas and diesel, with a proposed 8 islands servicing up to 16 vehicles for gas, and 7 islands servicing up to 8 trucks for diesel. The proposal includes an electrical vehicle charging station, as well as water, air, and propane fueling station. In addition to parking at service areas, additional parking is proposed for both vehicles and trucks, providing spaces for a total of 73 vehicles and 30 trucks. The subject parcel is zoned C-2-D (General Commercial Design Combining District). It has a "Commercial" land use designation per the *Janesville General Plan Amendments, 1993*. The subject parcel is located at 711-711 Sears Rd. Janesville, CA 96114-9522. APN 129-690-040. Staff Contact: Mindie Hilton, Senior Planner

In addition, a search of the State Clearinghouse database was conducted for projects within Lassen County and the City of Susanville not included above. Many of the projects in Lassen County include renewal of existing projects, scientific monitoring, planning, roadway maintenance projects, short-term restoration projects, or projects with no physical environmental impacts. Projects are not listed unless located adjacent or near the Project site. The additional projects

within the County were identified from documents received by the State Clearinghouse since June 2024 and onward:

- *North Susanville WUI Fuels Treatment Project* The +/- 67,505-acre fuel reduction and forest/woodland health improvement project would tie in to other Lassen Fire Safe Council (LFSC) and Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District (HLVRCD) projects west and south of the City of Susanville, eventually creating a landscape-scale defensible zone around the City of Susanville. This project would create a defensible zone west and north of the City of Susanville and represents one of the only areas around the City of Susanville that has not been impacted by recent wildfires, including the Hog Fire (2020), Sheep Fire (2020), and the Dixie Fire (2021). This would create a defensible space that could be used to fight wildfire moving from the City of Susanville north toward wildlands, or wildfire moving toward communities from the north. The goals of the project include reducing threats to communities from large, severe wildfires by clearing vegetation from critical locations to reduce wildfire intensity and rate of spread on the landscape. The project would reduce fuels, improve access and safety for firefighting personnel, and improve forest/woodland health using a variety of techniques, including: mechanical treatments, mastication, hand treatments, pile burning, broadcast burning, emergent brush treatments, and reforestation of areas within the project area impacted by past fires. Means of shrub and small tree removal would be selected based on careful analysis of current site conditions including weather, time of year, and the presence of sensitive cultural or biological resources, as described in this document. This includes hazard and overstocked tree removal within communities; implementation of landscape-scale fuel treatments around and near communities; the expansion of existing fuel breaks and establishment of new fuel break; protection of critical infrastructure; and improve ingress and egress along roads used by the public and used during fire suppression activities. Usually, more than one tool/technique would be present on site at a time so that operations can be carefully optimized for site conditions.
- *GSCA City of Susanville Broadband Network* Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) will construct and operate open-access, public benefit municipal broadband infrastructure in the project area to provide broadband access to unserved and underserved communities. GSCA will install approximately 54.22 miles of fiber optic lines within the project area. Fiber optic lines will be primarily installed underground in existing conduit on established roadways, avoiding roadway or new surface disturbance wherever feasible. The beneficiaries of the proposed future broadband projects will be the residents and businesses within the project area. No exact location for these activities is provided.
- *Lassen Community College Student Housing Project* Final design and construction of an approximately 36,400 square foot residence hall at the LCC main campus, north of the existing residence hall. The new two-story residence hall would include approximately 20,000 square feet of assignable residential living area, 2,000 square feet of community spaces, and 4,000 square feet of building support, along with outdoor walkway areas covered by the roof. The project also includes the demolition/relocation or reconfiguration of existing parking, pedestrian walkways and a basketball court to accommodate the new building. A new 40,000 gallon water storage tank would be located adjacent to the relocated parking to expand existing storage for fire flows and residence hall needs. Lassen Community College is within 0.5 miles of the Skyline Aggregates site.

- *Kang/Hays Ranch Solar Project* - EIR #2023-002/EIR #2023-003 The land owners of the project site are working with Pristine Sun, a solar energy development firm, acting as the authorized representative for the project. Pristine Sun proposes to develop the 2,990.4-acre project area with a solar farm facility. The solar panels [132 megawatts (MW) alternating current (AC)] will be at a maximum height of 1.5 meters (5 feet) above ground surface and affixed to a multi-panel articulating tracker mounting system. The applicant plans to construct a private transmission line with a direct Gen-tie to a proposed substation the applicant will construct. The Lassen County Planning and Building Services Department has received two use permit applications (one from each land owner) and a rezone application requesting the rezoning of APNs 133-070-002, 133-070-004 and 133-070-005 from 0-S-PSA (Open Space, Public Safety Airport combing district) to E-A-PSA (Exclusive Agricultural District Public Safety Airport Combing District). The Project design assumes buildable land, approval of the parcel rezone, and mitigation of any environmental encroachments.
- *Geofortis Pozzolan Mine- Lassen County*: Proposal for a Use Permit and Reclamation Plan to establish an 83-acre pozzolan materials year-round mining operation, with batch mining and screening operations on a seasonal schedule and loading and daily hauling operations on a year-round schedule. Approximately 5 acres would be on Public Lands while the remaining 78 acres is split estate land where the Federal Government retains the mineral rights administered by the BLM. The Geo Pozzolan Mine is located along Highway 395 north of Hallelujah Junction near the California-Nevada Border, approximately 50 miles southeast of the proposed Skyline quarry project.
- *139 Susanville Paving- California Department of Transportation, District 2*: Caltrans proposes a maintenance project on state route 139 in Lassen County from PM 0.74 to 11.0. The project will overlay from edge of pavement to edge of pavement with hot mix asphalt. This project will be located along SR 139, 0.7 miles from the Skyline Quarry Project site.
- *RZ/GPA/UP/IS #22-009, Thompson Family Trust 70 Space RV Park- City of Susanville*: The applicant is proposing a 70 space RV Park on a 10.19-acre parcel that is currently zoned C-M (Commercial Light Industrial Zoning District) with a General Plan designation of "Light Industry or Business Park" pursuant to the City of Susanville General Plan 1990-2010. Approximately 1.28 acres of the subject parcel is zoned O-S (Open Space) and while still a part of the project, is not proposed to be rezoned because the land use classification is already acceptable for an RV Park with a Use Permit. The bulk of the project proposal requires a rezone and general plan amendment application, which if approved would rezone the subject parcel from C-M to C-2 (General Commercial Shopping Center District) with a General Plan designation of General Commercial/Shopping Center. The subject parcel has an Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 116-470-018-000 and is located on Bella Way approximately 950 feet northwest of the intersection of Skyline Road and Johnsonville Road in Susanville CA. The subject parcel is bordered by the Jensen Slough on the western portion of the parcel and adjacent to Western Nevada Supply Company to the south and JW Wood Company to the west. This project is located off Skyline Road, 0.45 miles south from the Skyline Quarry Project site.
- *Golden State Natural Resources Forest Resiliency Demonstration Project- Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA):* The proposed project is a response to the growing rate of wildfires in California, which has been exacerbated by hazardous excess fuel loads in forests, and the

need to promote economic activity within California's rural counties. The proposed project would improve the resiliency of California's forestlands by sustainably procuring and processing excess biomass into a pelletized fuel source for use in renewable energy generation overseas. The proposed project components include the vegetation treatment activities (feedstock source); the transportation and storage of feedstock, and subsequent processing at two pellet processing facilities (one in the foothills of the Central Sierra Nevada Mountain range (Tuolumne facility) and one in the Modoc Plateau of Northern California (Lassen facility)); and the transportation of the finished product to a storage and shipping facility to be constructed at a suitable deep-water port in California for export to international markets. The Lassen County location for this project is located in Nubieber, California, 55 miles northwest of the Skyline Quarry Project.

- *Leavitt Lake Community Services District Well #2- Leavitt Lake Community Service District:* Leavitt Lake Community Services District is a small community whose second well is not currently in use due to high iron content, a significant deteriorated casing, and the fact that it pumps a large amount of sand. If Well #1 were to malfunction, it would take days to locate parts and have it repaired. This project is to obtain financing to plan for a new second well to provide source redundancy for the system. This project is located near Levitt Lake just south of Highway 395 along Buffum Lane, approximately 5.85 miles from the Skyline Quarry Project site.
- *Ward Lake Quarry Expansion- Lassen County:* Draft Final SEIR-Use Permit Amendment #2021-003, Reclamation Plan Amendment #2021-001 TLT Enterprises LLC. Proposal to amend mining operations at the Ward Lake Pit (CA mine ID #91-18-0008). If approved, the amendment would allow for the expansion of approximately 78.6 acres, with an associated additional volume of 5,000,000 tons of material; extension of the life of the mine from 2030 to 2050; and an increase of the maximum volume per year from 100,000 tons to 200,000 tons per year. The project site is located in Litchfield, CA at 476250 Ward Lake Road, off Center Road (A-27) in Lassen County, approximately 13 miles east of Susanville, CA.

5.6.2 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The following resources were found to have no impact and are therefore excluded from the cumulative impacts evaluation:

- Population and Housing
- Mineral Resources

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
Aesthetic and visual resource impacts of the project include mining activities in the previously undisturbed 460-acre mining and reclamation area. Following completion of mining activities, the project site will be revegetated with a dry rangeland seed mix and will be used for open space. The geographic scope for cumulative visual resource impacts includes the viewsheds that will be affected by the proposed project. These areas include the area from which the project site will be visible. The project site is visible from portions of Highway 395, Highway 36, and Highway 139, and the surrounding area. This geographic extent is appropriate as only those projects that can be viewed at the same time as the Project site could contribute to cumulative visual effects.

Have a substantial cumulative adverse effect on a scenic vista?

As discussed in Section 4.2, *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*, the project site is visible from Highway 395, Highway 36, and Highway 139. These highways are not officially designated state scenic highways; however, portions of these highways are designated as scenic corridors in the *Lassen County General Plan*.

Project-level impacts to a scenic vista were determined to be less than significant after mitigation due to the common scenic value and average to low sensitivity of the project site. In addition, the project does not include features that would block the view of any scenic vista. Mitigation Measure 4.2-1 requires the structures to be constructed with natural materials and earth-tone colors that blend into the landscape as required by *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. Other development within a scenic corridor would be subject to the same requirements. The only known planned new development close to the proposed project site that may be visible from the same scenic corridors is the construction of new student housing at Lassen County Community College. The student housing project's impacts were determined to be less than significant since the project will add additional structural coverage to the already developed area at the community college. Cumulative impacts of the project to a scenic vista will be less than significant with the incorporation of Mitigation Measure 4.2-1.

Result in cumulatively substantial damage to scenic resources including trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The proposed project is not located in an area that is designated as a state scenic highway. The project site is visible from portions of Highway 395, Highway 36, and Highway 139; however, these highways are not designated State scenic highways. Additionally, the proposed project does not impact a designated landmark, historic building, trees, or rock outcroppings of valued visual character. The project will not result in impacts to scenic resources within a state scenic highway; therefore, the impacts of the project are not cumulatively considerable, and the project will have no cumulative impact to a state scenic highway.

Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

The project will result in physical disturbance of the 460-acre mining and operations area of the project site, including removal of vegetation, excavation, and a change in topography. Stockpile areas, the landscape yard, and the crusher and asphalt plant will also be visible from public areas and represent a change in the existing character of the area from undeveloped and agricultural to an industrial nature. Project-level impacts related to the degradation of the existing visual character of quality of the site and its surroundings will be significant and unavoidable.

The project will be visible to the public along Skyline Road, the grandstands of the Lassen County Fairgrounds, and portions of Highway 36. Project-level impacts are cumulatively considerable with other projects visible from the same public viewpoints as the project site. The impacts of the project are cumulatively considerable with all existing and proposed development within the project vicinity. Since mitigation measures proposed for the project will not reduce significant project-level impacts to a less than significant level, cumulative impacts related to degradation of

the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings are also significant and unavoidable.

Create a new source of substantial cumulative light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

During construction season, the project site may operate 24 hours a day to meet construction demand and Caltrans requirements for nighttime work. work will require lighting at the project site. In addition, the project includes lighting for security. Permanent lighting on the site will be installed around the asphalt and concrete plant for any required nighttime work. Two 42,000-lumen lights will be installed at the asphalt plant, and one 42,000-lumen light will be installed at the concrete plant. The crusher, wash plant, lime plant, and scale house will each have one 21,000-lumen security light installed. The shop area will have six 21,000-lumen lights installed around the building exterior. Two mobile 42,000-lumen lights may be used onsite if light for irregular night operations is needed; these units extend up to 20 feet high. All lights will be downcast.

Mitigation measures for the project include using shielded directional nighttime lighting, which is pointed downward to avoid adjacent natural areas and the night sky. Down-casting of light sources will contain nighttime lighting to the project site, reducing the project-level impact of nighttime operations lighting to less than significant.

Nighttime lighting at the project site is cumulatively considerable in combination with existing light sources in the project vicinity, as well as lighting from future development in the project vicinity. Existing sources of nighttime light in the project vicinity include Lassen Community College, Lassen County Fairgrounds (during events), and commercial and street lighting within the City of Susanville. The closest known future projects to the project site that will result in a new source of nighttime lighting is additional student housing at Lassen Community College.

Any outdoor lighting would be downward-facing as required pursuant to the City of Susanville Municipal Code Chapter 17 17.96.050. Lighting will also be limited to security and safety minimums outside of nighttime operations. Nighttime operations will not occur during fairground concerts to minimize operational lighting for safety and security purposes only during events. Exterior lighting at the new student housing at Lassen Community College would also be directed downward. In addition, future development in the project vicinity would be subject to design review by Lassen County or the City of Susanville and would be subject to the same lighting requirements. Cumulative impacts of the project to nighttime views in the area will be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation. Outside of occasional nighttime operations, Mitigation Measure 3.1-3b will be implemented to limit lighting to the minimum amount of lighting needed for security and safety.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Agriculture and forestry impacts of the proposed project are cumulatively considerable in combination with other projects impacting agriculture or forest resources within Lassen County. The geographic scope for cumulative agriculture and forestry resource impacts includes the entire County.

Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

The project site is not covered by a Williamson Act contract. The proposed project will not contribute to a cumulative impact related to the conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.

Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production or result in the cumulative loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The project site is not forested and not zoned for forestland, timberland, or timber-production zone. The project will not impact forestland. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will not contribute to a cumulative impact to forestland.

Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

The project site has not been surveyed for inclusion in the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program and is not mapped as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Based on existing soil types within the site, it does not meet the definition of prime agricultural land included in California Government Code Section 51201. Therefore, the impacts of the proposed project are not cumulatively considerable and will not contribute to a cumulative impact related to the conversion of Farmland.

Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use?

As discussed in Section 4.3, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*, implementation of the project will result in the loss of approximately 460 acres of low-capability grazing land during mining, but this area will be revegetated with a dry rangeland seed mix and used for grazing upon reclamation. Project-level impacts will be less than significant. Other planned developments on land designated for agricultural use in Lassen County include the Ward Lake Pit expansion activities and Geofortis Pozzolan Mine. As outlined in the Lassen County General Plan, areas designated as Extensive or Intensive agriculture may also accommodate natural resource-related production facilities, including but not limited to mineral extraction and processing. These projects are not interpreted by the County to constitute an agricultural conversion. Cumulative impacts related to the conversion of farmland will be less than significant.

Air Quality

The geographic context for cumulative air quality impacts for the proposed project includes the immediate area surrounding the project site, as well as the Northeast Plateau Air Basin. This represents the geographic limit for cumulative air quality since air emissions have a regional effect. Pollutant impacts are cumulatively considerable when considered with other projects in the air basin, and impacts related to toxic air contaminants are cumulatively significant considered projects generating toxic air contaminants in the immediate project vicinity. Odors are cumulatively considerable in combination with other sources in the immediate project vicinity.

Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Estimates of the air quality emissions generated by the proposed project are included in Section 4.4, *Air Quality*. Annual and daily emissions from the project will be less than significant after implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.4-1 through 4.4-9. Generally, projects that exceed the project-specific significance thresholds are to be cumulatively considerable. Conversely, projects that do not exceed the project-specific thresholds are generally not considered to be cumulatively significant. As such, impacts from the proposed project would generate less than significant air emissions and thus would not result in a cumulatively considerable increase of air emissions during operations.

Expose sensitive receptors to substantial cumulative pollutant concentrations?

Health impacts could occur from mine operations due to diesel particulate matter (DPM) emissions from onsite equipment and haul trucks, as well as crystalline silica from aggregate processing and various air toxics from the concrete and asphalt operations. The Health Risk Assessment prepared for the project determined that project-level impacts would be less than significant. The proposed project is not in the vicinity of an existing source or planned project that would generate toxic air contaminants from the operation of diesel-powered equipment and vehicles or other sources. Therefore, toxic air contaminants generated by the proposed project would not be cumulatively considerable and would not contribute to a cumulative impact.

Result in other cumulative emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Odors generated by the proposed project are cumulatively considerable with existing sources of odors in the project vicinity, including the Lassen County Fairgrounds (raceway and livestock exhibitions) as well as the Susanville Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant located on the opposite side of Skyline Road. The rodeo grounds and equestrian area at Lassen Community College are also potential sources of odors. There are no known planned projects resulting in odorous emissions immediately adjacent to the project site.

As discussed in Section 4.4, project-level odor impacts are potentially significant, and mitigation Measure 4.4-10, which includes development of an Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP) would reduce the opportunity for odor impacts and reduce project-level impacts to a less than significant level. Odors from project operations (asphalt plant, asphalt silo, diesel exhaust) are unlikely to be detected at the same receptors affected by existing odor sources in the project area with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.4-10. Therefore, the project will result in less than significant cumulative odor impacts with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.4-10.

Biological Resources

The geographic context for cumulative biological resource impacts is both regional and local. The geographic context for cumulative impacts includes the area immediately surrounding the project site for direct and indirect impacts from mining and reclamation activities at the project site. The geographic context for cumulative impacts related to habitat loss includes similar habitat types within Lassen County. The geographic context for cumulative impacts to pronghorn and mule deer includes the CDFW-designated critical winter-range habitat for pronghorn antelope. Cumulative projects include those operating or affecting habitat concurrent with the proposed project.

Have a substantial cumulative adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Implementation of the proposed project will result in potentially significant direct impacts to several special-status plant and wildlife species from vegetation removal and mining activities. The project will result in permanent habitat modification within the mining area during mining and following reclamation. Special-status species with potential to occur onsite include nesting raptors and migratory birds, greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), Morrison's bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*), monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), Pulsifer's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*), and Susanville beardtongue (*Penstemon sudans*). Project-level impacts to each of these species will be less than significant or less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures included in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*.

The proposed project includes mitigation measures to avoid direct mortality to special-status species during vegetation removal and equipment operation. Other proposed projects subject to CEQA review will also be required to implement measures to avoid direct mortality to special-status species during construction or implementation, such as requiring vegetation removal outside of the nesting bird season or implementation of pre-construction nesting bird surveys, visual inspection of equipment, etc.

Light, noise, and human disturbance from the proposed project could combine with the impacts of other projects in the same general vicinity. Construction of student housing at Lassen Community College is the closest planned future developments. The project is not anticipated to result in significant operational noise and will implement measures to avoid impacts to nesting birds during construction, as well as require lighting fixtures to be downward-facing, designed, and installed to minimize photo pollution and spillover of light onto adjacent habitat or the night sky. The Lassen Community College Student housing project will occur in an area that is already currently developed, and exterior lighting will be directed downward as required by government codes.

The project-level impact of permanent loss of habitat for special-status species will be less than significant due to the low likelihood of several species to occur onsite, tolerance for human presence, or the abundance of habitat in the project vicinity. Project impacts are cumulatively considerable with other projects, resulting in the loss of similar habitat types within the County. The Geofortis Pozzolan Mine contains juniper woodland with an understory dominated by big sagebrush and could support several of the same special-status species as the proposed project. The Ward Lake Pit expansion area contains sagebrush habitat and could also support several of the same special-status species as the project site. Portions of the North Susanville WUI Fuel Treatments Project will occur close to the project site and will also affect similar habitat types. The pozzolan mine will result in the temporary loss of 83.6 acres during mining and reclamation activities. Revegetation of the mining area is included as part of the reclamation that is required to commence within 2 years after mining is completed on each phase. Expansion activities at Ward Lake Pit will result in a temporary loss of 79 acres but will also be revegetated, similar to existing conditions, following mining activities. The mine project areas will be revegetated following reclamation and are surrounded by areas of similar habitat. The North Susanville WUI Fuel

Treatments Project includes manipulation of habitat conditions through thinning, emergent brush treatments, and prescribed fire to improve native species habitat, reduce the risk of high-intensity catastrophic wildfire, and ensure fire resilience to the surrounding community. The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for the fuel reduction project determined that the small-magnitude short-term contributions from the project contribute to potential long-term benefits. As a result, cumulative direct and habitat modification impacts to special-status species will be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation measures included in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources.*

Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

As discussed in Section 4.5, *Biological Resources*, the project will result in significant and unavoidable impacts to the loss of foraging and nesting habitat for songbird species. The loss of songbird habitat resulting from the project is cumulatively considerable in combination with the other projects in the County that would result in habitat loss for nesting songbirds. All projects involving a considerable removal of juniper trees or sagebrush are cumulatively considerable for nesting songbird habitat loss. Significant project-level impacts in combination with additional development and activities in the region will result in significant and unavoidable cumulative impacts.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

As discussed in Section 4.6, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*, the proposed project will result in direct impacts to six pre-colonial resources identified as significant, due to contributing elements to the Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape, where value is derived from important cultural themes. These sites are not merely remnants of a historical past, as they represent the ongoing cultural, spiritual, and historical relationship of the Maidu and their land (ALTA 2024). STCL contains the six sites collectively and qualifies as a Tribal Cultural Resource eligible for listing under Criteria 1, 3 and 4 on the CRHR. After implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.6-1, Mitigation Measure 4.6-2, and Mitigation Measure 4.6-3, project-level impacts will be significant and unavoidable.

Project impacts are cumulatively considerable with other projects in the region that result in significant adverse changes to historical, archeological and tribal cultural resources related to the same time period or resource as those at the project site. Since previously unknown cultural resources could be encountered during implementation of these future planned projects, the proposed project is cumulatively considerable with all past and existing projects in the region. Numerous additional elements were identified outside of the project area, collectively. Themes of cultural, historical and spiritual significance found within the surrounding area are similar to elements identified within the project area. These themes emphasize the interconnected nature of the elements and their role in preserving and interpreting tribal heritage. For projects within or near the Antelope Mountain, Honey Lake, and Lake Lahontan basins; these areas hold cultural importance for local SIR Tribal people, and are considered included within the STCL boundaries. Further analysis of the broader landscape within a much larger area is ongoing, making it a candidate for broader protection. No projects were found to be planned or in development within these areas, thus determining cumulative impacts for areas of significance directly linked to the STCL boundaries as less than significant.

The project would disturb human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Project-level impacts related to the disturbance of human remains are potentially significant since it is possible that human remains could be encountered over the course of mining activities. Mitigation Measure 4.6-2 is included to ensure that project-level impacts related to the disturbance of human remains would be less than significant. Impacts to human remains are site-specific and not cumulatively considerable. The project will not result in a cumulative impact to disturbance of human remains.

The project would cause a cumulative substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource?

The project site overlaps with a traditional site for hunting large game, waterfowl, rabbits, and groundhogs, as well as for collecting goose eggs. Tribal members who historically hunted passed through the project area to access hunting grounds that have traditionally been hunted within the project area (and would still be hunted) within the project limits, if private property were not restricting such use.

Hunting blinds, stacked rocks, and rock cairns have also been identified within the project area (DeGeorgey 2024), which were used as reference points to measure distance and direction for anchoring hunting nets within the project area (ALTA 2025). Tribal members expressed concerns about the limited access to hunt groundhogs, which has resulted in the erosion of traditional knowledge surrounding traditional cooking practices. The project area also includes deposits of lava rock that tribal members identify as essential material for use in traditional sweat lodge ceremonies and prayer activities. Tribal cultural resources are identified within the project area and are considered eligible for the CRHR. The Project would result in a substantial adverse change of the Supom tribal cultural landscape and currently undiscovered tribal cultural resources, if encountered over the course of mining, resulting in a significant impact. An MOA has been developed for the management of repatriation of tribal artifacts, monitoring of project activities, treatment measures for cultural resources, and protocols for inadvertent discovery of human remains. After implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.6-1, Mitigation Measure 4.6-2, and Mitigation Measure 4.6-3, project-level impacts are significant and unavoidable. Impacts are cumulatively considerable with other past, present, and future projects in the region that result in impacts to tribal cultural resources. Significant tribal resource impacts were not identified for other future planned projects within Lassen County. The project will result in less than significant cumulative impacts to tribal cultural resources.

Energy

The geographic context for cumulative impacts related to energy consumption is both local and regional. Electricity will be provided for the project by Lassen Municipal Utility District (LMUD). LMUD serves most of Lassen County. Natural Gas may be provided by the City of Susanville which serves the Susanville area. Diesel fuel and gasoline for onsite operations will be obtained from a fuel provider and stored onsite. Haul trucks would fuel along local routes to construction projects. Cumulative projects include projects relying on the same energy sources as the project.

Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Implementation of the proposed project will require the use of diesel fuel, propane, natural gas, electricity, and gasoline for onsite equipment and material hauling. Estimated annual diesel fuel

usage for the proposed project (off-road equipment, generators, and haul trucks) is 137,220 gallons. The estimated annual gasoline fuel usage (employee vehicles) for the proposed project is 5,945 gallons. Estimated annual propane or natural gas fuel usage (City of Susanville) for the proposed project is 1.076 million gallons or 128 million cubic feet, respectively. The estimated annual electrical usage (Lassen Municipal Utilities District) for the proposed project is 11,787 megawatt-hours (MWh). (RCH, 2024). Following reclamation of the site after mining ends in 2075, the energy demands of the project will cease, and the project site will be used for open space. There are no unusual project characteristics that would necessitate the use of off-road equipment that would be less energy-efficient than at comparable quarry sites in the region or State. Therefore, fuel consumption associated with the proposed project would not be any more inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary than other similar projects of this nature. Project-level impacts related to energy resources will be less than significant.

Additional planned development within the County that will require long-term or permanent energy consumption includes expansion of Ward Lake Quarry, the 70-unit RV park on Skyline Road, the Geofortis Pozzolan Mine, additional student housing at Lassen Community College, and multi-family residential housing developments within the City of Susanville. Other planned projects will result in negligible energy use or are very short-term in nature (construction or restoration projects). Ward Lake Quarry will require slight increases in electricity and fuel for onsite operations but will not result in an increase in overall traffic numbers requiring additional diesel for haul trucks. The Geofortis Pozzolan Mine will require fuel for onsite mobile equipment, electricity for processing equipment, and fuel for 35 to 55 material haul trips each day. Energy demand from these mining projects will cease upon the end of mining operations in 20 to 40 years. The student housing project at Lassen Community College includes higher efficiency appliances and heating/cooling systems, and is designed to capture natural light and would improve energy efficiency compared to older campus buildings. Additional housing projects in the County will also be subject to current energy efficiency standards.

The energy consumption impacts associated with the proposed project are less than significant. Minimal other development is proposed in Lassen County that will have high or unusual energy demands that would exceed regional supplies. The proposed project will not combine with other projects to create a significant impact on local and regional energy supplies, resulting in a need for additional capacity. The project will not combine with other projects to result in an increase in peak and base period demand for electricity and other forms of energy or result in a significant impact on energy resources. Cumulative impacts of the project related to energy consumption will be less than significant.

Conflict or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy standards?

Implementation of the proposed project will not conflict or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy resources or energy standards. The proposed project will have no impact and therefore is not cumulatively considerable. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will not contribute to a cumulative impact related to conflict with a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy standards.

Geology and Soils

Development projects are analyzed on an individual basis and must comply with established requirements of the City of Susanville, Lassen County, and the California Building Standards Code as they pertain to protection against known geologic hazards and potential geologic and soil-related impacts. The geographic extent for geology and soils impacts is limited to the project site, since potential geologic hazards impacts as well as erosion and soil impacts would be confined to the project site. This geographic extent is appropriate as geology and soil-related impacts are generally site-specific and are determined by a particular site's soil characteristics, topography, and proposed land uses.

Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i. *Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?*
ii. *Strong seismic ground shaking?*
iii. *Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?*
iv. *Landslides?*

The proposed project will have a less than significant impact related to the exposure of people or structures to substantial adverse effects, including risks of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of a known earthquake fault, strong seismic ground shaking, and seismic-related ground failure. Mining at the project site will be conducted per the recommendations contained in the *Preliminary Geotechnical Report Skyline Quarry* (Bajada, 2023) prepared for the project area (refer to Appendix F), which will minimize the risk of landslides on cut faces. Project-level impacts will be less than significant. The proposed project will not result in the creation of geologic hazards that will impact people or structures outside of the limits of the project site. Project-level impacts were determined to be less than significant with mitigation, are site-specific, and will not contribute to a cumulative impact.

Result in substantial cumulative soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

As discussed in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils,* the proposed project has the potential to cause localized erosion through actions such as excavation, vegetation clearing, and disturbing upland areas. BMPs implemented during mining operations and included in the Reclamation Plan will result in a less-than-significant project-level impact. Soil erosion and loss of topsoil impacts are site-specific and not cumulatively considerable. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will not contribute to cumulative soil erosion or loss of topsoil impact.

Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the Project, and potentially result in on- or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

The volcanic rock materials at the proposed project site are not subject to liquefaction, and the terrace deposits at the project site are considered to have a low potential for liquefaction susceptibility or lateral spreading. The Mining and Reclamation Plan prepared for the proposed project has incorporated recommendations from a Geotechnical analysis to minimize slope failure. As a result, project-level impacts are considered less than significant. As this impact is confined to the project site, it is not considered cumulatively considerable.

Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

The project site does not contain expansive soils as defined in Table 18-1 B under the Uniform Building Code of 1994. Since the project site does not include expansive soils, the impacts of the proposed project are not cumulatively considerable.

Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

As discussed in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils*, the project will utilize portable chemical toilets or a septic system for wastewater generated by employees. The project will also use a wash pond for process water disposal. This water will be allowed to infiltrate, recycled onsite for dust control, or discharged under SWRCB General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities. Soils on the project site are well-drained and will allow infiltration of wastewater from the wash pond. Project-level impacts were determined to be less than significant and are site-specific. Wastewater disposal impacts from the project are site-specific and are not cumulatively considerable.

Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Project-level impacts to unknown paleontological resources could be significant without mitigation incorporated. The mitigation measure included in Section 4.8, *Geology and Soils*, to avoid and minimize impacts to paleontological resources, reduces the project-level impact to be less than significant. Mitigation of impacts through data recovery and avoidance, where preservation is infeasible, would be required for all other projects as well. The implementation of the proposed project with the incorporation of mitigation measures contained in the DEIR would reduce the potential cumulative impact of the proposed project to a less-than-significant level. Implementation of the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant cumulative impact in this regard.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Generally, individual projects are insufficient by themselves to influence climate change or result in a substantial contribution to the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory. GHG impacts are recognized as exclusively cumulative impacts. Emissions of GHGs have the potential to adversely affect the environment in a cumulative context. The emissions from a single project will not cause global climate change; however, GHG emissions from multiple projects throughout the world could result in a cumulative impact with respect to global climate change. The cumulative project list for this issue (climate change) comprises anthropogenic (i.e., human-made) GHG emissions sources across the globe, and no project alone would reasonably be expected to contribute to a noticeable incremental change to the global climate. However, legislation and executive orders on the subject of climate change in California have established a statewide context for developing an enforceable statewide cap on GHG emissions. Given the nature of environmental consequences from GHGs and global climate change, CEQA requires that lead agencies consider evaluating the cumulative impacts of GHGs, even relatively small (on a global basis) additions.

As a result, the extent of cumulative GHG emissions is defined as Lassen County, including the Northeast Plateau Air Basin, as well as the State of California. Although GHG emissions have a global effect, this represents the geographic limit for cumulative GHG emissions since the focus of this analysis is compliance with State and regional GHG emission reduction targets.

Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

The estimated total GHG emissions would be approximately 9,856 metric tons of CO_2e, and emissions of GHG were quantified for both construction and operation of the Project. The project GHG emissions are below the significance threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e/year. The proposed project would have a less than significant impact to GHG emissions, directly or indirectly, on the environment. The Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable global climate change impact. The incremental greenhouse gas impacts of the project are less than significant and will not result in a significant cumulative impact.

Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Lassen County APCD has not adopted a region-specific plan for reducing GHG emissions. As discussed in Section 4.9, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, GHG emissions generated by the proposed quarry would not surpass the significance threshold of 10,000 metric tons of CO_2e per year. In addition, the operation of the facility is a benefit to Lassen County in that the maintenance of roads and other infrastructure requiring the generation of asphalt pavement and concrete is necessary for support of a safe public transportation system within the City of Susanville and Lassen County. The generation of pavement material and concrete is required, whether located at this facility or other facilities further away. The transportation of materials from facilities further away would result in higher emissions per ton of material produced due to the increased emissions from miles traveled by truck. As described in Section 4.9, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions,* the proposed project would not conflict with any applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs. This impact would be less than significant. As a result, the proposed project will not result in a cumulative impact that would conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs. Implementation of the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant cumulative impact in this regard.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The health and safety hazards posed by most hazardous materials are typically local in nature. They generally do not combine in any cumulative sense with the hazards of other projects. However, possible exceptions include the potential transportation of hazardous materials and waste disposal. The geographic scope for cumulative impacts to hazards and hazardous materials encompasses the projects as identified above in Subsection 5.4.1, *Other Projects in the Area*, and development within the City of Susanville and unincorporated Lassen County. For the transport of hazardous materials, the geographic scope of cumulative impacts considers local roadways that include Skyline Road, Highway 36, Highway 139, and Highway 395 within Lassen County. This geographic scope of analysis is appropriate because of the influence of the area with wildfires, as well as the localized nature of hazardous materials impacts.

Create a cumulative a significant hazard to the public or environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Project-level impacts related to the transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials will be less than significant and will not be cumulatively considerable. There are no projects in the County that will combine with the proposed project to result in a cumulative impact related to hazardous materials.

Expose people or structures to a significant cumulative risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

As discussed in Section 4.10, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) requires implementation of Fire Prevention and Control standards (30 CFR Part 36). These measures will be implemented at the project site. The proposed project will not expose people or structures to a significant risk or loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. The potential risk of wildfire is cumulatively considerable in combination with potential fire sources in the vicinity of the project. Neighboring land uses are vacant or used for agricultural purposes, and activities on these properties, other than vehicle use, are not likely to result in wildfire. With the implementation of Fire Prevention and Control standards, the project will result in a less-than-significant contribution to a cumulative wildland fire impact. Implementation of the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant cumulative impact.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The geographic area considered for cumulative impacts to surface water, drainage, and flood hazards of the Lower Susan River-Frontal Honey Lake HUC 10 watershed. This defined geographic area is appropriate, as cumulative development may adversely affect downstream water quality and flood hazards. The geographic area considered for cumulative impacts to groundwater includes the entire Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin. This geographic extent is appropriate as the cumulative groundwater impacts are generally limited to the groundwater basin in which cumulative development would occur.

Result in a cumulative violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Water quality impacts of the project are cumulatively considerable with other projects in the watershed and groundwater basin. As discussed in Section 4.11, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, the proposed project will be subject to the *Construction Stormwater General Permit* and the *General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities*. Disposal or recycling of gravel wash water onsite will be subject to Waste Discharge Requirements from the Water Board. The requirements of these permits minimize project-related discharge of pollutants to surface and groundwater to the extent feasible. In addition, other projects within the watershed and groundwater basin are subject to the same permit requirements. Therefore, cumulative impacts of the project to surface and groundwater quality will be less than significant.

Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level?

Groundwater use and recharge impacts of the proposed project are cumulatively considerable with all existing and proposed projects within the Honey Lake Valley Groundwater Basin. Project impacts related to the depletion of groundwater were determined to be less than significant. As discussed in Section 4.11, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, within this basin, *Bulletin 118* estimates the total volume of water stored in the upper 100 feet of saturated basin-fill deposits and volcanic-rock aquifers to be 10 million acre-feet. Estimates of groundwater extraction for agricultural, municipal, and industrial and environmental wetland uses are 51,000, 15,000, and 3,800 acre-feet, respectively. Deep percolation from agricultural-applied water is estimated to be 14,000 acre-feet. There is currently no trend or pattern indicating overdraft in the basin. No additional future projects that would use a substantial amount of groundwater or create a large area of impervious surface have been identified in the County. The project does not include the creation of a substantial area of impervious surfaces that would interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. Implementation of the proposed project will result in a less-than-significant cumulative impact in this regard.

Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through addition of impervious surfaces in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on-or offsite; substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or offsite; create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or impede or re-direct flood flows?

Project impacts related to the alteration of the existing drainage pattern of the site were determined to be less than significant. Implementation of the proposed project will avoid onsite surface waters and will not result in the creation of large areas of impervious surfaces. As noted above, the proposed project is subject to the Construction General Permit and Industrial General Permit, which will minimize pollution in runoff from the site. There is no 100-year flood hazard area onsite. A retention pond will be constructed to capture surface flow from the site and will be sized to meet the 25-year, 24-hour storm per the Industrial General Permit and SMARA requirements. Project-level impacts were determined to be less than significant.

The drainage impacts of the project will be confined to the project site footprint, are not expected to result in offsite flooding or polluted runoff. Impacts are considered to be cumulatively less than significant.

Result in a cumulative flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to inundation?

The project site is not in an area subject to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mud flow. There is no 100-year flood hazard area onsite. The proposed project was determined to have no impact; therefore, it is not cumulatively considerable.

Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Project impacts are cumulatively considerable in combination with other projects within the Lassen County Groundwater Management Plan Area and Lahontan Region. Project-level impacts related to the drawdown of groundwater levels and degradation of water quality were determined to be less than significant. Therefore, the proposed quarry will result in less than significant

cumulative impacts related to conflict or obstruction of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

Land Use

The geographic scope for cumulative impacts related to land use includes closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects located in unincorporated Lassen County. Related land use projects in the surrounding areas have been: 1) submitted for plan processing, 2) approved by Lassen County, and/or 3) engaged in active construction programs. This geographic extent is appropriate as land use impacts are generally localized, and individual impacts of any future projects would be addressed on a project-by-project basis.

Cause a significant cumulative environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

With the incorporation of mitigation measures included in each resource section of the DEIR, project implementation will not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding an environmental effect. Most of the future projects within unincorporated Lassen County are relatively small or short-term in nature. Larger development projects within unincorporated Lassen County include expansion activities at Ward Lake Pit and development of the Geofortis Pozzolan Mine. Land use impacts of the expansion of Ward Lake Pit were determined to be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures. Land use impacts of the Geofortis Pozzolan Mine were determined to be less than significant. Cumulative impacts will be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures contained in other sections of the DEIR.

Noise

The geographic context for cumulative noise impacts is limited to the areas near the project site or projects that would use the local roadways also used by project-related traffic (Skyline Road, Highway 139, Highway 36, and Highway 395). For another project to contribute to a cumulative noise or vibration impact, it would need to be operational at the same time as the proposed project.

Result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent cumulative increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

As discussed in Section 4.13, noise generated by the project would not exceed applicable standards in the Lassen County Noise Element, Lassen County Code. Project-level noise impacts were determined to be less than significant with the exception of onsite nighttime noise, which was less than significant with mitigation incorporated. Existing development in the immediate project vicinity that would not generate noise that would combine with onsite noise generated by the project due to the proposed project schedule for Summer of 2026. Section 4.13 included an analysis of the project in combination with future traffic volumes anticipated on area roadways from future growth in the area and determined that noise levels from the project in combination with future traffic on area roadways would be less than significant. Cumulative temporary or permanent noise increases associated with the proposed project would be less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.13-1 included in Section 4.13, *Noise*. Table 4-24

includes dB limitations on noise throughout all hours of the day and night that shall be achieved with the included mitigation measures as needed.

Result in the generation of excessive cumulative groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

Project-level vibration impacts were determined to be less than significant. Since vibration amplitudes decrease with increasing distance, vibration would be cumulatively considerable only with other projects in the immediate project vicinity. Since there are no existing sources of vibration or proposed projects within the vicinity of the project, there will be no cumulative vibration impacts from operations at the project site.

For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, where the project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

The project site is located within two miles of the Banner Lassen Medical Center helipad. There are no additional private airstrips, public airports, or public use airports within two miles of the project site. Noise generated by the hospital helipad will be less than 65 dB CNEL within the project boundaries and would not expose people working within the project site to excessive noise levels. Project-level impacts are less than significant, project-specific, and not cumulatively considerable. Therefore, the proposed project will have no cumulative impact.

Public Services

The geographic context for cumulative impacts related to police protection includes unincorporated Lassen County, since the Lassen County Sheriff Department provides law enforcement services to the project area. The geographic context for cumulative impacts to fire protection is the CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc unit Battalion 1, since fire protection services will be provided by CAL FIRE. This area also receives fire protection by the Susan River Fire Protection District. According to the Lassen Local Agency Formation Commission (LLAFC), the Susan River Fire Protection District has a population of approximately 4,789 people. The Susan River Fire Protection District has three fire stations located on Richmond Road in Susanville, in Johnstonville, and in Leavitt Lake. This fire district includes 25 volunteer firefighters, including one Assistant Chief, three Captains, and one Administrative Officer (LLAFC 2008). Project impacts would be cumulative with existing and future projects within these areas.

Results in substantial cumulative adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services including:

Fire Protection?

The proposed project does not include the creation of extensive residential or commercial properties and is unlikely to directly demand extensive fire services or require new or altered facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives. The proposed project is cumulatively considerable with other developments within Battalion 1 of the CAL FIRE Modoc-Lassen Unit. Battalion 1 is in the central and southeastern portions of Lassen County, with the communities of Susanville, Johnstonville, Janesville, Standish, Litchfield, Lake Forest Estates,

Stones Landing, and Spaulding. The incorporated City of Susanville lays in the center of the Battalion (CAL FIRE, 2020). There is no significant development within this area that would require new or physically altered governmental facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection. The Susan River Fire Protection District oversees minimal jurisdiction under mutual aid agreements with CAL FIRE and the City of Susanville Fire Department. Cumulative impacts will be less than significant.

Law Enforcement?
The proposed project does not include the creation of extensive residential or commercial properties and is unlikely to directly demand extensive police services. The demand increase will not be substantial enough to warrant new or altered law enforcement facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives. There are no other known projects within unincorporated Lassen County that would require extensive police services. Cumulative impacts of the project will be less than significant.

Schools?
As discussed in Section 4.14, the proposed project will not result in impacts to schools; therefore, the impacts of the proposed project are not cumulatively considerable.

Parks?
Nearby recreation facilities such as Memorial Park, Frank Ernaga Ball Field, Fruit Growers Park, Barry Reservoir, Skyline Trail, Susanville Bark Park, Skyline Park, and Pat Murphy Little League Field have the potential to be impacted by cumulative nighttime light. Mitigation measures mentioned under aesthetics will make these impacts less than significant, with mitigation for recreation as well. When nighttime operations are not necessary, outdoor lighting shall be limited to minimum requirements for safety and security. During nighttime operations, all activities will occur with shielded lights to minimize impacts on recreational facilities.

Other Public Facilities?
As discussed in Section 4.14, the proposed project will not result in impacts to public facilities; therefore, the impacts of the proposed project are not cumulatively considerable.

Transportation
The geographic setting for cumulative traffic impacts includes the roadways that will be used by project-generated traffic, including Skyline Road, Highway 139, and Highway 36. Transportation and traffic impacts associated with project implementation have the potential to be cumulatively considerable when considered with projected increases in traffic and population growth through the year 2084. Based on information contained in the *2017 Lassen Regional Transportation Plan*, growth projections for Lassen County are 0.9 percent per year for population, housing, and employment (Green Dot, 2018).

Result in a cumulative conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

The project would not require any changes to existing transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities or conflict with multimodal transportation plans. The project access would not affect the existing multi-use path located on the west (opposite) side of Skyline Road. The project would not make any changes to the existing public transit system or conflict with any public transit plans. As

the quarry operation is anticipated to only require 20 or fewer employees, expanded transit service to the site is not needed. Project-level impacts do not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system.

Project level-of-service (LOS) impacts are cumulatively considerable in combination with existing and future projects within the County. The traffic analysis prepared for the project included an analysis of project traffic volumes in combination with future year traffic volumes (assuming a growth rate of 1 percent per year for 20 years). Future-year-plus project traffic LOS at intersections near the project site, including the intersection of the project-site driveway and Skyline Road, Highway 139 and Skyline Road, and Johnstonville Road and Skyline Road are expected to operate at LOS C or better and will not exceed the Lassen County LOS standard (LOS E) contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* over the next 20 years. The proposed quarry is anticipated to operate up to 50 years. While traffic increases of 1 percent each year are anticipated for County growth, this increase is not anticipated to degrade LOS at these intersections. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to compliance with local programs, plans, ordinances, and policies addressing the circulation system will be less than significant.

Result in a cumulative conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines §15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Project-level impacts related to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) were determined to be less than significant. The VMT generated by the proposed project is cumulatively considerable in combination with all VMT along the area roadways, as well as the projected increase in VMT in the County that will occur over the life of the project. Based on demographic growth projections of 0.9 percent per year for population, housing, and employment, countywide, the average annual increase in daily VMT in the county is 0.9 percent per capita (Green Dot, 2018).

CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan extends and expands upon earlier scoping plans with a target of reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions to 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The 2022 Scoping Plan's strategies that are applicable to the proposed project include reducing fossil fuel use, energy demand, and VMT. The actions and outcomes in the plan will achieve significant reductions in fossil fuel combustion by deploying clean technologies and fuels, further reductions in short-lived climate pollutants, support for sustainable development, increased action on natural and working lands to reduce emissions and sequester carbon, and the capture and storage of carbon.

The proposed project would be consistent with the applicable strategies in the 2022 Scoping Plan, adopted for the purposes of reducing GHG emissions. These strategies address the project's incremental contribution to climate change, and thus, the project's incremental contribution is not cumulatively considerable. Project-level impacts related to VMT were determined to be less than significant; therefore, the proposed project will likewise result in a less than significant cumulative impact related to VMT.

Substantially increase cumulative hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

Implementation of the proposed project will result in an increase in trucks using Skyline Road and entering the project site. Project-level impacts related to traffic hazards are less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-3, which requires construction of separate

southbound left-turn and northbound right-turn lanes on Skyline Road at the project access point to improve overall safety and circulation. The turn lanes will provide separation between traffic on Skyline Road and project-related traffic, slowing speed to perform turning movements. Side street control on the project access point was warranted as a level of geometric design control for safe encroachment, with 200 feet the minimum for appropriate deceleration length from the project site.

The construction of several safety improvements to ensure no substantially unsafe conditions will be created for users of the public right-of-way. The proposed project will include measures to address hazards from constructing new access off Skyline Road that will ensure cumulative traffic hazard impacts will be less than significant.

Result in cumulative inadequate emergency access.

Project-level impacts related to emergency access are less than significant, project-specific, and are not cumulatively considerable.

Utilities and Service Systems

The Lassen Municipal Utility District (LMUD) will provide electricity to the proposed project. The service area for LMUD is Lassen County. Natural gas may be provided by the City of Susanville. The geographic context for cumulative impacts to utilities and service systems includes the service area for the provider that will be supplying utilities and services to the site (Lassen County).

Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant cumulative environmental effect?

Implementation of the proposed project will not require the construction or expansion of public water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, or telecommunications facilities. However, as noted above, the project will require an extension of a natural gas pipeline and an electric power line. There are no other known future electric power or natural gas extension projects within the utility service areas. Cumulative impacts will be less than significant.

Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

The project site will not be served by a public water utility or supply and will rely on a groundwater well to be installed onsite for the operation. As discussed in Sections 4.11, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, the groundwater basin is not at risk of overdraft or depletion. Process water used in gravel washing will be recycled for dust control to reduce water consumption onsite. There will be no impact to water supplies from a public utility; therefore, project impacts to water supply are not cumulatively considerable.

Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

For wastewater generated by the 20 onsite employees, an onsite septic system or private chemical toilet provider will be utilized. Other wastewater generated by industrial processes onsite, such as gravel washing, will be retained onsite in the wash pond. Water discharged to the wash pond will be recycled onsite for dust control, allowed to infiltrate, or discharged in accordance with State Water Resources Control Board General Waste Discharge Requirements for Aggregate and/or Concrete Facilities. There will be no impact to wastewater treatment provider capacities at the project level. Impacts of the proposed project are not cumulatively considerable in this regard.

Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

Implementation of the proposed project will result in a minor long-term generation of solid waste associated with domestic waste from the twenty employees working onsite. Solid waste generated will be hauled offsite through service provided by the franchise waste hauler, or self-hauled to local landfills or transfer stations. The project will generate a maximum of 36 cubic yards of waste per year, as it is anticipated that a single three-yard dumpster removed monthly will service the site. The project will not impair any solid waste attainment goal. The Lassen Regional Solid Waste Management Authority Westwood Class III Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, which waste will ultimately be hauled to, has a remaining 62,207 Cubic Yard Capacity with an average of 220 CY placed annually (RWQCB, 202. CalRecycle, 2023). However, as onsite operations consist of only raw material extraction and only result in minor industrial-related wastes, actual generation will be significantly lower. Therefore, the project will have a less than significant effect of solid waste infrastructure, and the level of waste generated at the site will not be sufficient to cause a cumulative impact with other proposed developments. The cumulative impact will be less than significant.

Wildfire

The geographic scope for cumulative impacts to wildfire hazards includes all of Lassen County and the City of Susanville. This geographic extent is appropriate because much of the unincorporated areas of Lassen County are in or near a state responsibility area or lands classified as very high fire hazards severity zones.

The Project Could Substantially Impair an Adopted Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Evacuation Plan?

The proposed project will be located at the end of a private access road and does not include any elements that would impair an emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan beyond increasing traffic volumes on area roadways. Based on the traffic analysis, project-generated traffic and project traffic in combination with future traffic numbers in 20 years will not substantially degrade the existing level of service at nearby intersections. As a result, the proposed project will not interfere with the implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. Project-level impacts are less than significant. Therefore, cumulative impacts will be less than significant.

Due to Slope, Prevailing Winds, and Other Factors, the Project Could Exacerbate Wildfire Risks, and Thereby Expose Project Occupants to, Pollutant Concentrations from a Wildfire or the Uncontrolled Spread of Wildfire?

As discussed in Section 4.15, *Wildfire*, without controls, mining equipment and processes could increase the risk of fire if operated near vegetated areas during the dry season. Vegetation will be

removed from mining areas prior to material extraction. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) requires implementation of Fire Prevention and Control standards (30 CFR Part 36). These measures will be required in the quarry area. Project-level impacts related to the exposure of people to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire were determined to be less than significant. Other projects occurring in the County will be required to comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws related to fire prevention, design features, and operational measures. Cumulative impacts of the project will be less than significant.

Require the Installation or Maintenance of Associated Infrastructure (such as Roads, Fuel Breaks, Emergency Water Sources, Power Lines or Other Utilities) that may Exacerbate Fire Risk or that may Result in Temporary or Ongoing Impacts to the Environment?

Cumulative utility impacts of the proposed project are discussed under utilities and services above. Implementation of the proposed project will not require the installation of fuel breaks or emergency water sources. Fire risk impacts from onsite installation and maintenance of the power lines and natural gas lines required for the project were determined to be less than significant.

No future projects requiring the installation of natural gas lines from the City of Susanville have been identified. Utilities are currently available at the proposed RV park on Skyline Road without major infrastructure upgrades. Natural gas lines are underground and not anticipated to require significant maintenance that would exacerbate fire risk.

Power in Lassen County is provided by LMUD. This provider has Wildfire Mitigation Plans outlining the wildfire prevention strategies, including weather monitoring, design and construction standards, vegetation management, and inspections to minimize wildfire risk from their facilities.

LMUD constructs, maintains, and operates its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that minimizes the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by its electrical lines and equipment. This includes extensive tree trimming programs to maintain clearance between trees and bare electrical conductors, and pole brushing (clearing around every pole with electrical installed devices such as switches, fuses, reclosers) (LMUD, 2022). Many other measures involving equipment selection and settings are also part of LMUD's ongoing efforts. Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with fire risks from the installation and maintenance of power lines will be less than significant.

Expose People or Structures to Significant Risks, Including Downslope or Downstream Flooding or Landslides, as a Result of Runoff, Post-Fire Slope Instability, or Drainage Changes?

Development of the proposed project would not significantly alter existing onsite drainage patterns or impervious surfaces compared to existing conditions, and overall water management and stormwater runoff control of the proposed project will be similar to current operations. The proposed project will be covered under the General Industrial Storm Water Permit and implement BMPs to reduce impacts to related to erosion. Therefore, the project's incremental contribution related to downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of post-fire slope instability is not cumulatively considerable.

Some related projects could be proposed in areas that could expose people or structures to risks from downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of post-fire instability. Based on the recent fire events in California, all projects would be required to adhere to Lassen County's

zoning and land use designations and codes, State and local fire codes, and regulations associated with drainage and site stability. These regulations, policies, and codes would reduce the potential for exposing people or structures to risks from downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of post-fire instability. Each project would require site-specific hydrology and drainage studies for effective drainage design. Impacts in this regard would be cumulatively less than significant.

6.0 ALTERNATIVES

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that "an EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives" (CEQA Guidelines §15126.6). This chapter identifies potential alternatives to the proposed project and evaluates them, as required by CEQA. Key provisions of the CEQA Guidelines on alternatives (§15126.6(a) through (f)) are summarized below to explain the foundation and legal requirements for the alternatives analysis in the DEIR.

- "The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives or would be more costly" (§15126.6(b)).
- "The specific alternative of 'no project' shall also be evaluated along with its impact" (§15126.6(e)). "The no project analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published, and at the time the environmental analysis is commenced, as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the 'no project' alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives" (§15126.6(e)(2)).
- "The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a 'rule of reason' that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project" (§15126.6(f)).
- "Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent)" (§15126.6(f)(1)).
- For alternative locations, "only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR" (§15126.6(f)(2)(A)).
- "An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative" (§15126.6(f)(3)).

Per the CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(d), additional significant effects of the alternatives are discussed in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.

The intent of this section is to evaluate alternatives capable of eliminating or substantially lessening significant impacts associated with the proposed project. For this project, four alternatives are evaluated:

- No Project Alternative.
- Reduced Footprint Alternative.
- Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative
- No Asphalt Plant Alternative

The discussions in this section identify only substantial changes in project impacts anticipated with each alternative, as compared to the proposed project. Resource areas not impacted by the proposed project are not discussed in detail.

Descriptions of these alternatives are included below, as well as a discussion of their impacts and how they would differ from the significant impacts of the proposed project. In addition, a discussion of alternatives considered but rejected from further consideration and a discussion of the environmentally superior alternative are included below.

6.1 Factors in the Selection of Alternatives

CEQA Guidelines §15126.6 recommends that an EIR describe the rationale for selecting alternatives to be discussed. Alternatives were considered that would avoid or lessen any significant effects for the proposed project and that could achieve most of the project objectives. The alternative must also be feasible from an economic, environmental, legal, and technological standpoint. Alternatives for this project were selected that would avoid or lessen impacts to Aesthetics and Visual Resources and Biological Resources, and that could also feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project.

6.2 Project Objectives

The project objectives are:

- Provide a comprehensively planned and financially feasible project that will continue to accommodate projected growth in construction-related activities and associated services, and also serve to help meet the current and future demands for construction materials both locally and regionally.
- Provide a full-service mine operation that includes the extraction of material at a rate of approximately 450,000 tons per year.
- Siting of a new quarry near major highways to minimize vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Provide construction material diversion from landfills through recycling of 100,000 tons of asphalt/concrete annually.
- Provide a local source of materials for emergency jobs (during federal, State, or County declared emergencies) and other construction jobs requiring nighttime work.
- Contribute to the improvement of the Lassen County economy by increasing sales taxes, but also does not impose fiscal demands on the provision of County services compared to other types of development projects.

- Avoid sensitive natural resources to the extent feasible and provide adequate mitigation where avoidance is not feasible; minimize aesthetic impacts through site design, mine phasing, and ultimate site reclamation.
- Implement a reclamation plan that provides for long-term slope stability, prevents wind and water erosion, and establishes self-sustaining native and naturalized vegetation cover.
- Provide additional high-quality jobs within Lassen County.

6.3 Alternatives Considered but Rejected from Further Consideration

Section 15126.6(c) of the CEQA Guidelines permits the elimination of an alternative from detailed consideration due to:

- Failure to meet most of the basic project objectives;
- Infeasibility; and
- Inability to avoid significant environmental impacts.

Section 15126(f)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines states that "among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries…and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire control or otherwise have access to the alternative site. None of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives." In addition, the California Supreme Court has stated that lead agencies, not project opponents, have the burden to formulate alternatives for inclusion in an EIR.

Two potential alternatives to the proposed project were initially considered but determined not to be viable and eliminated from further consideration. These alternatives are described below:

Alternative Project Location
Materials produced at the site will include asphalt, concrete, various sizes of crushed rock, and crushed base rock, which are used as construction materials. The quality of the resources and choice of location for the existing and potential market aggregates and paving materials were the determining factors in choosing the proposed project site for the planned operations.

CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(f)(2)(a) states that "only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR." CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(f)(1) states that "Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent). None of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives."

It may be possible that the impacts of the project could be substantially avoided or lessened by putting the project in another location within the region. Aesthetic and visual impacts of the

project would be lessened if the alternate location that was not visible to the project were available. Biological resources impacts could be avoided or lessened if an alternative site were available that did not contain pronghorn wintering range or nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds.

An alternative location would require the identification and design of a quarry and aggregate processing facilities at another location that meets the criteria above to avoid or lessen significant impacts within the Project region capable of producing up to 450,000 tons of aggregate annually, or the identification of multiple quarry locations that could achieve that combined capacity. Successful development of a quarry and processing facilities at an alternative location would depend on a number of geologic, environmental, and economic factors. Site-specific studies would be required to evaluate a new site and its adequacy to support mining and processing operations. Issues to be addressed for a new site are dominated by availability and suitability. The site must be available for purchase or long-term lease with abundant aggregate resources to justify the investment necessary to permit and operate an alluvial rock quarry. Extensive overall feasibility studies would need to be prepared to evaluate the following environmental and logistical concerns:

- quality and quantity of aggregate resource and its suitability to meet construction specifications for concrete and asphalt;
- water supply availability;
- electricity service availability;
- natural gas availability,
- distance to markets and potential increases in haul truck trip distances;
- available truck routes, road design, and existing and predicted future traffic volumes and levels of service;
- proximity to a state highway;
- existing and future surrounding land uses;
- effects of the mining and processing plants on these surrounding land uses, including aesthetics, air pollutants, light, and noise;
- potential impacts to groundwater and surface water quality and consumption;
- potential impacts to biological resources, including special-status species and their habitat;
- potential presence of and impacts to significant cultural and paleontological resources; and
- options and costs for reclamation and use of the site after mining.

No specific location with attributes necessary to accomplish the project objectives is known in enough detail to be identified as a specific alternative site. Because of the multiple and underdetermined site conditions that could exist at an alternative location, the County does not possess sufficient information to determine whether potential mining and processing sites at alternative locations are available to feasibly meet the project objectives. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 (f)(2)(B) specifically lists mining projects as a case where there may be no feasible alternative location since it is a project that must be in close proximity to natural resources at a given location. For the reasons discussed above, the County has eliminated alternative locations from further consideration.

Alternative Asphalt Plant Location

An alternative asphalt plant location was initially considered but rejected for further consideration. This alternative included trucking material from the project site to Ward Lake Pit to produce asphalt at the existing Ward Lake Pit asphalt plant. Ward Lake Pit is operated

by the project proponent and is approximately 15 miles southeast of the project site. This alternative was initially considered to reduce potential noise, air quality, and odor concerns of the project. After site-specific studies were complete, these impacts were found to be less than significant with mitigation of the asphalt plant onsite. This alternative would result in the same emissions as the proposed project from asphalt production and would result in increased impacts. Under this alternative, additional truck traffic and vehicle miles traveled would be required to transport materials between the two sites, resulting in increased energy use and emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. As a result, this alternative was rejected for further consideration.

6.4 No Project Alternative

6.4.1 Description

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would remain in its current state and would not be developed.

6.4.2 Impacts

Under the No Project Alternative, environmental conditions at the site would remain as they currently exist. The No Project Alternative would eliminate the significant impacts of the proposed Project to Aesthetics and Visual Resources and Biological Resources, as well as impacts that were determined to be less than significant and less than significant with mitigation incorporated. Demand of local and regional construction projects would be supplied by an alternate existing or new quarry and mineral processing facility. Depending on the location of the alternate source, the No Project Alternative could result in an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and air quality impacts if the source is located a greater distance from the construction projects than the proposed project site.

6.4.3 Conclusion

The No Project Alternative would eliminate the significant impacts of the proposed project to Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Biological Resources, and Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, as well as the less-than-significant impacts of the proposed project. Construction materials for local and regional demands, including jobs requiring nighttime work, may be met by the nearby Ward Lake Pit in Lassen County, which is permitted to operate until the year 2050, or a combination of other smaller quarries in Lassen County. Local and regional demand may not be met if Ward Lake Pit runs out of material prior to 2050 or if demand is greater than 200,000 tons of material per year. The No Project Alternative would not meet the objectives of the proposed project to contribute to the Lassen County economy and provide additional high-quality jobs within Lassen County since the site would remain vacant and not generate any jobs, tax revenue, or utility fee revenue.

6.5 Reduced Footprint Alternative

6.5.1 Description

This alternative is similar to the proposed project, but with a reduced material extraction area to minimize resources that will be impacted by the proposed project and reduce the acreage of winter range for pronghorn and nesting habitat impacted by the excavation area. Under the Reduced Footprint Alternative, the mine boundary would be modified to minimize impacts by extending the eastern boundary of the excavation area westward to reduce the area of pronghorn winter range habitat directly impacted by 50 percent compared to the proposed project. The excavation area of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be 270 acres compared to the 430-acre excavation area included in the proposed project. This alternative would include the same annual production and the same equipment operating at the same capacity as the proposed project; however, the overall total volume extracted would be reduced by approximately 6,000,000 tons due to the smaller footprint of the excavation area. Due to the smaller footprint, the life of the mine would be reduced by an estimated 19 years compared to the proposed project. The same average and maximum traffic volumes would be required to haul materials during the life of the mine. Reclamation would be the same as the proposed project, but would occur within the smaller footprint and at an earlier date.

6.5.2 Impacts

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would include an excavation area of 270 acres rather than 430 acres that are included in the proposed project. This alternative would result in similar visual impacts compared to the proposed project, but within a smaller quarry footprint. The same mitigation measures for aesthetics and visual resources required for the proposed project would be required for this alternative, since the excavation area would still be visible to the public, and the same equipment and structures would be included. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in less aesthetic and visual resource impacts compared to the proposed project due to the smaller mine footprint; however, the impact would be significant and unavoidable due to the change in the visual character of the site from undeveloped to industrial

Agriculture and Forestry
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would have no impact related to conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract and would have no impact to forestland or farmland of local or state importance. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in the temporary loss of 270 acres of low-capability grazing land, which would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use. Similar to the proposed project, the agricultural and forestry impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than significant.

Air Quality
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would not change the daily or annual emissions from mining, processing, or haul trips compared to the proposed project. The same equipment and traffic volumes would be required to achieve the maximum annual production volume of 450,000 tons per year. However, the life of the mine would be reduced by 37 percent (19 years) due to the

smaller footprint of the mine, and emissions would occur for a shorter duration. Measures included for the proposed project to reduce fugitive dust and exhaust emissions, as well as preparation of an Odor Impact Minimization Plan, would also be required for the Reduced Footprint Alternative. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in fewer impacts to air quality compared to the proposed project due to the reduction in overall production and life by the mine by 37 percent. Air quality impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Biological Resources
Impacts to biological resources under the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be reduced when compared to the proposed project, since this alternative would reduce the acreage of pronghorn winter range directly impacted by the excavation area by 50 percent compared to the proposed project. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would disturb 160 fewer acres than the proposed project, 151 of which include pronghorn winter range. Vegetation and ground disturbance would occur over a smaller area. The reduced mining area would reduce direct impacts and habitat impacts to special-status species, nesting birds, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope; however, the mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required to reduce biological resource impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative. Impacts to loss of wintering range for pronghorn and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds would be less than the proposed project; however, the impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
The Reduced Footprint Alternative mining area also unavoidably contains known cultural resources. Tribal consultation has taken place for minimizing impacts to the present cultural resource(s) onsite, although details are not public information. Impacts to currently undiscovered cultural resources, archaeological resources, tribal-cultural resources, or human remains could occur during mining activities in the 270-acre mining area. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would require the same mitigation measures for currently undiscovered cultural and known tribal cultural resources as the proposed project. The impact to Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources under the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be similar to the proposed project and would be significant but unavoidable.

Energy
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would require the same annual energy requirements during operation as the proposed project, but energy would be required for a shorter duration due to the smaller mining area and less overall material extracted. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in fewer energy impacts than the proposed project. Energy impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than significant.

Geology and Soils
The geology and soil impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be similar to those of the proposed project, but would occur over a smaller area. Similar to the proposed project, impacts related to geologic hazards would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated; impacts to the wastewater disposal system and septic tanks, slope stability, and erosion would be less than significant; and no impacts related to expansive soils would occur. Similar to the proposed project, impacts related to paleontological resources and unique geologic features would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in the same daily and annual greenhouse gas emissions as the proposed project during the life of the mine. The life of the mine would be reduced by 19 years due to the smaller mining area and less material extracted. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in less greenhouse gas emissions than the proposed project due to a reduced operating period and would result in less than significant greenhouse gas emission impacts.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials
The Reduced Footprint Alternative will have the same hazards and hazardous material impacts as the proposed project. The Reduced Footprint Alternative will require the transport, use, storage, and disposal of the same hazardous materials used for the proposed project. Hazardous materials would be handled, stored, and transported in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Fire prevention and control standards would ensure risks due to wildland fires are less than significant. Similar to the proposed project, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in less than significant impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology and Water Quality
The hydrology and water quality impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be the same as the impacts of the proposed project. The mining area would not be within a flood hazard area and would not expose people or structures to flooding or inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. No surface waters would be impacted within the mining area, and all stormwater and wash water would be retained onsite or discharged in the same manner as the proposed project. Groundwater use would not create a demand for water in excess of available supplies. Similar to the proposed project, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in less than significant impacts to hydrology and water quality.

Land Use
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in the same land use impacts as the proposed project. Mitigation measures included for the proposed project would be required for the Reduced Footprint Alternative. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would comply with policies contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan*. Similar to the proposed project, the land use impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than significant.

Noise
The Reduced Footprint Alternative does not include changes to plant operational noise levels or traffic noise levels during the life of the mine. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in similar noise as the proposed project; however, noise from mobile equipment and blasting required for material extraction would be confined to a smaller area compared to the proposed project. Noise levels at the eastern side of the site would be reduced compared to the proposed project. In addition, noise impacts would occur for a shorter duration compared to the proposed project due to the shorter life of the mine. Mitigation measures required for nighttime operations for the proposed project would also be required to reduce nighttime noise for the Reduced Footprint Alternative. The noise impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Public Services
The reduced size of the excavation area would not result in a change to the public services required for the site. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would require police protection and fire protection. Law enforcement services would be provided by the Lassen County Sheriff's Department, CAL FIRE, and the City of Susanville would provide fire protection for the site. Similar to the proposed project, public service impacts would be less than significant.

Transportation
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would generate the same average and maximum traffic and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the proposed project during operation. The mining area would be accessed from the same proposed access road during mining operations. The Reduced Footprint Alternative would not result in a conflict with local programs, plans, ordinance, or policies, will not increase traffic hazards, or result in inadequate emergency access. Similar to the proposed project, a southbound left turn and northbound right turn lane would be required on Skyline Road for access. Similar to the proposed project, impacts of the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Utilities and Service Systems
The Reduced Footprint Alternative would require extension of electric power and natural gas infrastructure to the site. Similar to the proposed project, impacts would be less than significant.

Wildfire
As with the proposed project, wildfire risks from the Reduced Footprint Alternative will be less than significant with prevention control standards. The Reduced Footprint Alternative will not impair an emergency response plan or evacuation plan or expose people or structures to significant risks. Similar to the proposed project, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would result in less than significant impacts related to wildfire.

6.5.3 Conclusion

The Reduced Footprint Alternative would reduce the length of time for degradation impacts to known Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources. This alternative would also result in reduced impacts to biological resources as well as aesthetic and visual resources since the excavation area would be smaller than the excavation area of the proposed project. Although reduced, impacts related to degradation of the tribal cultural landscape, existing visual character of the site, and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds will remain significant and unavoidable.

Overall energy demand, as well as air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions generated by the reduced footprint, would be less than the proposed project due to the shorter duration of operations; however, the daily and annual emissions would remain the same during the operational period of the Reduced Footprint Alternative. Noise impacts from material extraction would also be reduced since mobile equipment and blasting would occur within a smaller area. Impacts to other resource areas will be similar to the proposed project but will occur for a shorter duration as a result of the reduced footprint of the excavation area.

The Reduced Footprint Alternative would meet all of the project objectives, but for a shorter duration, since the life of the mine would be reduced due to the reduced footprint of the excavation area.

6.6 Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative

6.6.1 Description

This alternative is similar to the proposed project with modifications to the final topography and revegetation plan for the mining area. Mining methods, hours of operation, and annual production would be the same as the proposed project. Reclamation under this alternative would convert the mining area to agricultural use for open space similar to the proposed project, but would include extensive improvements for antelope habitat. The revegetation palette would be expanded to include low sage (*Artemisia arbuscula*), Basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*), and bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) to improve the available forage for wintering pronghorn. Slopes that are proposed to be steeper than 2:1 under the proposed project will be modified to be 2:1 or less to reduce the fall hazard and entrapment risk to Pronghorn and improve access to the site. Retention of the wash pond and stormwater retention pond for wildlife habitat will improve onsite water availability for pronghorn. Wash pond reclamation activities would include a reduction of bank slopes to 3:1 to provide adequate access, revegetation with a mix of native riparian species to provide cover and forage, and installation of cattle exclusion fencing, which will preserve the area of pronghorn use and prevent degradation by grazing cattle.

Under this alternative, the total volume of material to be extracted from the mine would be decreased by an estimated 800,000 cubic yards to produce slopes less than 2:1 along the northern and western boundaries of the mining area. Due to the decreased total volume extracted from the mine and assuming annual production would be the same as the proposed project, the life of the mine would be decreased by about one to one and a half years compared to the proposed project.

6.6.2 Impacts

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would reduce the long-term visual impacts from mining following reclamation, as the final vegetation palette would closely resemble existing conditions at the project site. Additionally, the reduction of slope to 2:1 or less would create a more natural final topography, reducing the scope of visual impacts due to topographic changes onsite. This alternative would result in similar visual impacts compared to the proposed project during mining operations. However, following reclamation, the project site would closely resemble pre-mining conditions. The aesthetic and visual resource impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be significant and unavoidable during mining activities due to the temporary change of the visual character of the site, but reduced to less than significant following reclamation. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in fewer aesthetic impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Agriculture and Forestry
Similar to the proposed project, the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would not conflict with an existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract and would have

no impact on forestland or important farmland. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will result in the temporary loss of 460 acres of low-capability grazing land, but no loss of farmland of local or statewide importance. Similar to the proposed project, the agricultural and forestry impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be less than significant.

Air Quality
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would not change the daily or annual emissions compared to the proposed project. The same equipment and traffic volumes would be required to achieve the maximum annual production volume of 450,000 tons per year. Annual emissions would be the same as the proposed project. This alternative would require the same measures to reduce fugitive dust and exhaust emissions as the proposed project, as well as preparation of an Odor Impact Minimization Plan. Similar to the proposed project, the air quality impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Biological Resources
Impacts of this alternative to biological resources will be the same as the proposed project during the life of the mine. This alternative would require the same mitigation measures as the proposed Project to reduce most of the biological resource impacts of mining to a level less than significant level. Similar to the proposed project, impacts to pronghorn and songbird habitat would be significant and unavoidable during operation of the mine; however, long-term impacts would be reduced to less than significant following reclamation.

This alternative would restore the mining area to its current state or better for use as grazing and Pronghorn wintering range. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would provide increased forage availability, improve access, provide water sources, and reduce hazards to Pronghorn after reclamation. Restoration would also restore nesting habitat lost for songbirds. Following reclamation, impacts to biological resources under the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be reduced when compared to the proposed project.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would create the same impact on Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources as the proposed project. There is one historic resource and one prehistoric resource within the proposed mining area. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would require the same mitigation measures as the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the impact to Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources would be less than significant with mitigation under this alternative.

Energy
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would require the same annual energy requirements during operation as the proposed project, but the total energy required would be slightly reduced due to the shorter life of the mine. Similar to the proposed project, the energy impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be less than significant.

Geology and Soils
The geology and soil impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be the same as those of the proposed project. Impacts related to geologic hazards would be less than

significant with mitigation incorporated; impacts to slope stability, erosion, and wastewater disposal systems and septic tanks would be less than significant, and no impacts related to expansive soils would occur. Impacts related to paleontological resources and unique geologic features would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation similar to the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in the same daily and annual greenhouse gas emissions as the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in less than significant greenhouse gas emission impacts.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will have the same hazards and hazardous material impacts as the proposed project. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will require the transport, use, storage, and disposal of the same hazardous materials used for the proposed project. Hazardous materials would be handled, stored, and transported in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Fire prevention and control standards would ensure risks due to wildland fires are less than significant. Similar to the proposed project, the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in less than significant impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology and Water Quality
The hydrology and water quality impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be the same as the impacts of the proposed project. The mining area would not be within a flood hazard area and would not expose people or structures to flooding or inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. No surface waters would be impacted within the mining area and all stormwater and wash water would be retained onsite or discharged in the same manner as the proposed project. Groundwater use would not create a demand for water more than available supplies. Similar to the proposed project, the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in less than significant impacts to hydrology and water quality.

Land Use
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in the same land use impacts as the proposed project. Mitigation measures included for the proposed project would be required for the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative and the alternative would comply with policies contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan.* Similar to the proposed project, land use impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be less than significant.

Noise
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in the same noise impacts as the proposed Project. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative does not include changes to plant operational noise levels or traffic noise levels. Mitigation measures required for nighttime operations for the proposed project would also be required to reduce nighttime noise for this alternative. Similar to the proposed project, noise impact would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Public Services
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would require police and fire protection. Law enforcement services would be provided by the Lassen County Sheriff's Department, CAL FIRE and the City of Susanville would provide fire protection for the site. Similar to the proposed project, public service impacts would be less than significant.

Transportation
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would generate the same average and maximum traffic and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the proposed project during operation. The mining area would be accessed from the same proposed access road during mining operations. This alternative would not result in a conflict with local programs, plans, ordinances, or policies, would not increase traffic hazards, or result in inadequate emergency access. Similar to the proposed project, a southbound left turn and northbound right turn lane would be required on Skyline Road for access. Traffic impacts of the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Utilities and Service Systems
The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would require extension of electric power and natural gas infrastructure to the site. Similar to the proposed project, impacts would be less than significant.

Wildfire
As with the proposed project, wildfire risks from the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will be less than significant with prevention control standards during mining activities. The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will not impair an emergency response plan or evacuation plan or expose people or structures to significant risks. Similar to the proposed project, the Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would result in less than significant impacts related to wildfire.

6.6.3 Conclusion

The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative will result in similar impacts as the proposed project; however, significant impacts to aesthetics and biological resources would be temporary in nature since the project site would be reclaimed close to pre-mining conditions following completion of mining. Short-term impacts to aesthetics and biological resources during mining activities would remain significant and unavoidable. Impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources would remain significant and unavoidable since the resources within the mining area would be impacted under this alternative. Impacts to all other resource areas will be the same as the impacts of the proposed project, and the mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required for this alternative. Reducing the slopes along the northern and western sides of the mining area would result in less material extracted from the mine and reduce the life of the mine slightly, which would decrease the duration of impacts by one to 1.5 years.

The Pronghorn Winter Range Restoration Alternative would meet all of the project objectives while reducing long-term aesthetic and biological resource impacts.

6.7 No Asphalt Plant Alternative

6.7.1 Description

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative includes the same mining area and activities as the proposed project with the exception of asphalt production. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would not include the propane/natural gas-fired hot mix plant, associated hoppers and conveyor belt, or three diesel backup generators required for the asphalt plant. Without the Asphalt Plant, extension of natural gas utility to the site would not be required.

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative assumes the mining area would be the same as the proposed project and that concrete and aggregate products would be produced at the same rate as the proposed project. However, this alternative would include a lower annual aggregate extraction rate compared to the proposed project since asphalt would not be produced at the site. An estimated 80,000 tons of aggregate would be extracted each year for the production of 100,000 tons of concrete, and an additional 90,000 tons of aggregate would be crushed, screened, and washed. Annual extraction would be less than 200,000 tons compared to 450,000 tons per year extracted under the proposed project.

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in fewer haul trips from the site. Reclamation of the mine under the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be the same as the proposed project but would require removal of fewer structures following mining activities. Due to the lower annual extraction rate without production of asphalt, the life of the mine could be extended up to an additional 50 years since it would take longer before aggregate is depleted from the site.

6.7.2 Impacts

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in similar visual impacts to the proposed project, but would include fewer structures within the processing area of the project site. Visual impacts of the industrial structures and equipment within the processing area would be reduced since the asphalt plant would not be present; however, without asphalt production, the annual extraction rate of the mine would be much lower, and the life of the mine could be extended, resulting in an extended duration of visual impacts from the extraction and processing areas. The same mitigation measures for aesthetics and visual resource impacts required for the proposed project would be required for this alternative. Similar to the proposed project, the aesthetic and visual resource impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be significant and unavoidable since it would result in a change to the visual character of the site from undeveloped to industrial.

Agriculture and Forestry
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would have no impact related to conflict with an existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract and would have no impact to forestland or farmland of local or state importance. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative will result in the temporary loss of 430 acres of low-capability grazing land, which would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use. Similar to the proposed project, the agricultural and forestry impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than significant.

Air Quality
The No Asphalt Plant alternative would reduce emissions of criteria pollutants from onsite operations compared to the proposed project. Maximum daily and average annual emissions from stationary sources at the site would be greatly reduced. Emissions from asphalt hauling would also be greatly reduced. In addition, without asphalt production, less aggregate would be extracted annually, resulting in lower emissions from mobile equipment as well. Mitigation measures required for the proposed project to reduce fugitive dust would still be required for this alternative to reduce daily and annual emissions to a less-than-significant level. Under this alternative, an Odor Impact Minimization Plan would not be required since there would be no odors from an asphalt plant. The air quality impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Biological Resources
Impacts to biological resources under the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be similar to the proposed project since the footprint of the mine would be the same as the proposed project. Daily human presence and noise could be reduced since annual extraction and overall noise levels would be lower without an asphalt plant. Mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required to reduce the biological resource impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative. Similar to the proposed project, impacts to and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds would remain significant and unavoidable.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in the same impacts to Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources as the Proposed Project Alternative since the footprint of the mine would be the same as the Proposed Project Alternative. Mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required to reduce tribal cultural resource impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative. Similar to the proposed project, impacts to the tribal cultural landscape would remain significant and unavoidable.

Energy
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in a reduction of annual energy requirements during operation compared to the proposed project alternative. Propane, natural gas, and the backup generators would not be required for the Asphalt Plant under this alternative. In addition, less fuel would be required for mobile equipment and material hauling since there would be a reduction in the annual volume of material extracted from the mine and fewer haul trips without asphalt production. The energy impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less than significant.

Geology and Soils
The geology and soil impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be the same as the proposed project, since the mining area and method of mining would be the same as the proposed project. Impacts related to geologic hazards and stability would be less than significant with the same mitigation required for the proposed project. Wastewater disposal system and septic tank impacts and erosion impacts would be less than significant, and no impacts related to expansive soils would occur. Impacts related to paleontological resources and unique geologic features would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation similar to the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in reduced daily and annual greenhouse gas emissions compared to the proposed project without emissions from the asphalt plant and as a result of decreased aggregate extraction and no asphalt haul trips. Greenhouse gas emissions would be less than the proposed project. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in less than significant greenhouse gas emission impacts.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials
The No Asphalt Plant alternative would require the transport, use, storage, and disposal of fewer hazardous materials than the proposed project, since asphalt additives would not be required at the site. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would still require the transport, use, storage, and disposal of concrete additives, fuel, and lubricating oils. Hazardous materials would be handled, stored, and transported in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Fire prevention and control standards would ensure risks due to wildland fires are less than significant. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would require handling and storage of fewer hazardous materials compared to the proposed project and result in less than significant impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology and Water Quality
The hydrology and water quality impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be the same as the impacts of the proposed project, since it includes the same footprint and layout as the proposed project. The mining area would not be within a flood hazard area and would not expose people or structures to flooding or inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. No surface waters would be impacted within the mining area, and all stormwater and wash water would be retained onsite or discharged in the same manner as the proposed project. Groundwater use would not create a demand for water in excess of available supplies. Similar to the proposed project, the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in less-than-significant impacts to hydrology and water quality.

Land Use
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in the same land use impacts as the proposed project. Most of the mitigation measures required for the proposed project for other resources would be required for the No Asphalt Plant Alternative. This alternative would comply with policies contained in the *Lassen County General Plan* and *Susanville Vicinity Area Plan.* Similar to the proposed project, land use impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than significant.

Noise
Under the No Asphalt Plant Alternative, noise generated in the processing area would be slightly reduced without the asphalt plant, as well as throughout the mining area, assuming less equipment or reduced hours of material extraction due to the decrease in aggregate needed without an asphalt plant. In addition, the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would require fewer haul trips, resulting in lower traffic noise levels than the proposed project. Mitigation measures required for nighttime operations for the proposed project would also be required to reduce nighttime noise for the No Asphalt Plant Alternative, since the concrete ready-mix plant generates noise levels similar to the asphalt plant. Noise impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Public Services
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would require police protection and fire protection. Law enforcement services would be provided by the Lassen County Sheriff's Department, CAL FIRE, and the City of Susanville would provide fire protection for the site. Similar to the proposed project, public service impacts would be less than significant.

Transportation
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would generate fewer average and maximum truck trips and less vehicle miles traveled (VMT) than the proposed project during operation. Fewer haul trucks would be needed since asphalt will not be produced or hauled. Similar to the proposed project, the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would not result in a conflict with local programs, plans, ordinances, or policies, would not increase traffic hazards, or result in inadequate emergency access. Similar to the proposed project, a southbound left turn and northbound right turn lane would be required on Skyline Road for access. Traffic impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than the proposed project and would be less significant with mitigation incorporated.

Utilities and Service Systems
The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would require extension of electric power to the site, but would not require extension of natural gas infrastructure to the site. Solid waste generated by the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be the same as the proposed project. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project since the environmental effects of extending natural gas would not occur. Utilities and Service System impacts of the No Asphalt Plant Alternative would be less than significant.

Wildfire
As with the proposed project, wildfire risks from the No Asphalt Plant Alternative will be less than significant with prevention control standards. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative will not impair an emergency response plan or evacuation plan or expose people or structures to significant risks. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would result in less than significant impacts related to wildfire.

6.7.3 Conclusion

No asphalt production at the site would result in less energy required and lower emissions of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases than the proposed project. In addition, fewer trucks would be required since asphalt would not be produced or hauled, and noise levels from onsite operations and from traffic would be lower than the noise generated by the proposed project. Noise and human disturbance would be reduced, resulting in reduced disturbance impacts to wildlife. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would also require fewer hazardous materials at the site. Although impacts to air quality, biological resources, greenhouse gases, energy, hazardous materials, noise, and traffic would be lessened under the No Asphalt Plant Alternative, the overall level of significance for these impacts would be the same as the proposed project. Impacts to other resources would be similar to the impacts of the proposed project, and most of the mitigation measures required for the proposed project would also be required for the No Asphalt Plant Alternative.

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative does not eliminate or substantially reduce the significant and unavoidable impacts of the project. As with the proposed project, impacts related to degradation of the existing visual character of the site, loss of pronghorn wintering range, and loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds, and adverse effects to Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources will remain significant and unavoidable.

The No Asphalt Plant Alternative fails to meet many of the project objectives. Without the production of asphalt, this alternative would not be able to meet current and future demands for construction materials, both locally and regionally, since projects requiring asphalt could not be served. The No Asphalt Plant Alternative would not be a full-service operation without asphalt production. In addition, asphalt recycling could not be conducted without an asphalt plant, and the No Asphalt Plant Alternative could not serve emergency projects requiring asphalt, including most road repair projects.

6.8 Comparison of Alternatives

Table 6-1 includes a summary of the analyses for each alternative included above.

Table 6-1
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Environmental Resources	Proposed Project	No Project Alternative	Reduced Footprint Alternative	Pronghorn Winter Range Alternative	No Asphalt Plant Alternative
Aesthetics	SU	NI	SU(less)	SU(less)	SU(similar)
Agriculture & Forest Resources	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)
Air Quality	LTSM	NI	LTSM(less)	LTSM(similar)	LTSM(less)
Biological Resources	SU	NI	SU (less)	SU (less)	SU (less)
Cultural Resources	SU	NI	SU (similar)	SU (similar)	SU (similar)
Energy	LTS	NI	LTS (less)	LTS (similar)	LTS (less)
Geology & Soils	LTSM	NI	LTSM (similar)	LTSM (similar)	LTSM (similar)
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	LTS	NI	LTS (less)	LTS (similar)	LTS (less)
Hazards & Hazardous Materials	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (less)
Hydrology & Water Quality	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)
Land Use & Planning	LTS	NI	LTS(similar)	LTS(similar)	LTS (similar)
Noise	LTSM	NI	LTSM (less)	LTSM (similar)	LTSM (less)
Public Services	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)
Recreation	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)
Transportation	LTSM	NI	LTSM (similar)	LTSM (similar)	LTSM (less)
Utilities & Service Systems	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (less)
Wildfire	LTS	NI	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)	LTS (similar)

NI= No Impact
LTS= Less than Significant Impact
LTSM= Less than Significant with Mitigation
SU= Significant and Unavoidable
Source: VESTRA, 2023

6.9 Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA Guidelines §15126.6 requires that the alternatives analysis must identify the environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives considered. The No Project Alternative would eliminate all the impacts of the proposed project and would be the environmentally superior alternative. However, the No Project Alternative does not meet the project objectives. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires that if the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must also identify the environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

The Reduced Footprint Alternative results in the fewest impacts among the remaining alternatives considered. As discussed previously, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would reduce long-term impacts of the project to biological resources and aesthetic resources to less than significant after reclamation. However, degradation of the visual character of the site as well as loss of nesting and foraging habitat for songbirds will be significant and unavoidable for the duration of mining activities. Impacts to other resource areas would be reduced from the smaller footprint and shorter operational period of this alternative. Therefore, in lieu of the "no project" alternative, the Reduced Footprint Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative.

7.0 LIST OF EIR PREPARERS

7.1 Lead Agency

Lassen County Department of Planning and Building Services
Lead Agency
707 Nevada Street, Suite 5
Susanville, CA 96130

7.2 Preparers of the EIR

VESTRA Resources, Inc.
5300 Aviation Drive
Redding, CA 96002

Wendy Johnston	Project Manager
Mary Tess Johnson	Senior Regulatory Compliance Specialist
Kristine Cloward	Senior Regulatory Compliance Specialist
Sydney Waddell	Regulatory Compliance Specialist
Nicolaas Van Ooyen	Regulatory Compliance Specialist
Anna Prang	Regulatory Biologist
Jennifer Williams	GIS Technician

7.3 Additional EIR Consultants

The RCH Group
11060 White Rock Road #150-A
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

ALTA Archaeological Consulting LLC
15 Third Street
San Rosa, CA 95401

BAJADA Geosciences, Inc.
1300 Market Street, Suite 201
Redding, CA 96001

Headway Transportation, LLC
2240 George Lane, Suite 1
Chico, CA 95926

Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc.
P.O. Box 7968,
Auburn, CA 95604

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Appendix A

NOP, Comment Letters, and Response Letter

Appendix B
Mining and Reclamation Plan

Appendix C

Updated Viewshed Technical Summary

Appendix D

Updated Air Quality Technical Report

Appendix E

Updated Biological Resource Assessment and Addendum

Appendix F

Preliminary Geotechnical Report

Appendix G

Updated NRCS Soil Survey

Appendix H

Updated Environmental Noise & Vibration Assessment

Appendix I

Updated Transportation Technical Study

Appendix J

Archaeological Survey Report and Addendum (Confidential)

Appendix K

Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation Report (Confidential)

Appendix L

Evaluation Report Supom Tribal Cultural Landscape (Confidential)