

COUNTY OF MONTEREY

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Planning – Building – Housing
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INITIAL STUDY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Title:	Abalone Creek Estate LLC
File No.:	PLN210202
Project Location:	18000 Corral Del Cielo Road, Salinas, CA 93908
Name of Property Owner:	Abalone Creek Estate LLC
Name of Applicant:	Abalone Creek Estate LLC
Assessor's Parcel Number(s):	416-441-047-000
Acreage of Property:	209 acres
General Plan Designation:	Permanent Grazing, 40 acre minimum
Zoning District:	Permanent Grazing, 40 acres per unit, Visual Sensitivity [PG/40-VS]
Lead Agency:	County of Monterey Housing and Community Development
Prepared By:	Fionna Jensen, Senior Planner, County of Monterey Housing and Community Development
Date Prepared:	June 2024
Contact Person:	Fionna Jensen, Senior Planner, County of Monterey Housing and Community Development
Phone Number:	(831) 796-6407

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

A. Description of Project:

Infrastructure

The approximately 209-acre Abalone Creek Estate LLC Project (“Proposed Project” or “Project”) is located at 18000 Corral Del Cielo, Salinas, California (Assessor’s Parcel Number [“APN”] 416-441-047-000) (see **Figure 1. Regional Map**). The infrastructure components of the Project include the construction of the following seven components: 1) a 7,452 square-foot livestock barn; 2) a 2,400 square-foot storage shed; 3) a 1,000 square-foot livestock shed; 4) a 7,200 square-foot machine and equipment shed; 5) a 216 square-foot potting shed; 6) five portable chicken coops and horse shelters; 7) perimeter and internal fencing, and associated site improvements, including development on slopes exceeding 25%. These associated site improvements include the drilling of an agricultural well, creation of a 21,869 square-foot pond, installation of an on-site septic system, roof-mounted solar, installation of four 240 square foot concrete material bins, and placement of five water tanks (above ground and below ground) totaling 152,400 gallons. Ranch Roads A through C and a majority of Ranch Road D already exist on-site and would be improved (re-graded, widened, and/or re-surfaced with gravel) under the Proposed Project. Ranch Road E and the southeast extension of Ranch Road D would be constructed under the Proposed Project. **Figure 2** shows the proposed infrastructure and site plan.

Operation

Per the applicant-prepared draft Agriculture Operations Plan (Source: 31), the subject property is intended to be used as a family ranch and farm (“Abalone Creek Ranch” or “Abalone Creek Ranch Operation”) with limited commercial operations. Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would include free-range rotational pastured grazing and would ultimately house 499 or fewer poultry, and approximately 200 sheep, 30 cattle (in addition to the 30 cattle that occupy the site currently, see **Section II.B**), 10 pigs, four horses, up to six llamas, up to four dogs, and one donkey. There would be no roosters on-site. The poultry would be housed in two portable 20-foot x 48-foot structures that are moved daily throughout a 22-acre upper pasture. Swine would also be contained within the 22-acre area. The horses would be within a 5-acre lower pasture that includes a movable horse pen and three movable trussed horse shelters. The llamas and donkey will graze and protect animals throughout the whole of the property. The cattle and sheep would rotationally graze predominantly throughout the subject property’s rangeland and woodland areas. Per the prepared draft Agriculture Operations Plan, management of the manure would be conducted in a manner consistent with the recommendations contained in the project-specific Manure Management Plan (Monterey County Library No. LIB230181; Source: 24).

Commercial sales of chickens, cattle, pigs, and sheep would be a mixture of direct-to-consumer, farmers market, and off-site existing retail locations, with deliveries to occur off-site once per month. All processing of livestock and other animals would occur off-site at existing USDA-approved facilities. No on-site processing would occur. Further, no commercial or retail sales would occur at the subject property. The daily operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch is anticipated to be managed by two to three employees (in addition to Abalone Creek Estate LLC family

members), however, additional contract workers may be required on an on-demand basis to address livestock health, operations, maintenance, repairs, etc.

In addition to the maintenance of pasture grasses for animal grazing, the Abalone Creek Ranch would include various fruit trees located primarily along the edges of pastures and a 0.25-acre raised bed garden that would be surrounded by a 6-foot tall fence to exclude animals from accessing the garden. While a majority of the fruits and vegetables would be used for personal and on-site animal consumption, limited off-site sales of oils and jams would also occur.

Analysis within this Initial Study is not intended to limit the subject property's quantity of sheep, cattle, pigs, horses, llamas, dogs, donkeys, or other livestock. However, chickens on the subject property would be limited to the keeping of fewer than 500 based on permitting thresholds identified in the County code.

CEQA and Mixed Projects

CEQA defines a "project" as a "whole action" that has the potential to either (1) cause a direct physical change in the environment or (2) cause a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that includes any of the following: discretionary (non-ministerial) activity by a public agency, a private activity that receives any public funding, or activities that involve the public agency's discretionary issuance of a lease permit, license certificate or other discretionary approval that is not statutorily or categorically exempt from CEQA (Pub. Res. Code § 21065). CEQA Guidelines section 15268(d) declares that "[w]here a project involves an approval that contains elements of both a ministerial action and a discretionary action, the project will be deemed to be discretionary and will be subject to the requirements of CEQA." In such cases, while the whole project becomes subject to CEQA, it is only those discretionary components of the project – those parts which the reviewing agency (here, the County) has authority to shape, influence, or deny – that are available for implementation of mitigation measures. (See CEQA Guidelines section 15040; Public Resources Code § 21004.)

In this case, the keeping of llamas, dogs, horses, donkeys, and fewer than 500 chickens, the planting of fruit trees and crops, and the raising and off-site commercial sale of cattle, pigs, chickens, and sheep are principally allowed uses in the subject property's zoning district (Permanent Grazing). These specific components of the Abalone Creek Ranch Operations Plan would not require the issuance of a discretionary permit or any other lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement. These activities also meet the requirements of being "routine and ongoing agricultural activities," as defined by General Plan Policy AG-3.3.

Conversely, certain components of the Project - the proposed development on slopes exceeding 25%, construction of a 7,452 square-foot livestock barn, a 2,400 square-foot storage shed, a 1,000 square-foot livestock shed, a 7,200 square-foot machine and equipment shed, a 216 square-foot potting shed, perimeter and internal fencing, and associated site improvements - require the granting of discretionary permits, as required by Monterey County Code (Title 21).

As the Proposed Project is a mix of ministerial and discretionary activities, it is subject to CEQA per Guidelines section 15268(d). This Initial Study therefore examines the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Project, with mitigation measures applied to those components of the project that are subject to discretionary approvals.

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would generally involve tractors, backhoes, compactors, excavators, rollers, dump trucks, etc. All construction loading, unloading, and parking of equipment would occur within the boundaries of the existing property. Corral Del Cielo Road would provide access to the Project site and access within the site would be provided by Ranch Roads A through E. Additionally, construction equipment and vehicle staging would occur along Ranch Roads A and D within the Project site. No construction vehicles or equipment would be parked on adjacent, public roadways.

The start of construction depends on the Project approval date, seasonal factors, and the contractor's schedule. Land clearing and grading activities would not occur between October 15th and April 15th, unless authorized by the HCD-Chief of Building and found to be consistent with the purposes of Monterey County Code Chapter 16.12. Construction activities would be limited to the hours between 7 AM – 5 PM, Monday through Saturday. No construction activities would occur on Sundays or holidays.

Site Preparation & Demolition

The Proposed Project would not require any demolition. Site preparation work would include staging of construction equipment, vegetation clearing and grubbing, initial grading activities, and other related activities.

Grading

The Proposed Project would require 20,300 cubic yards of cut and 20,300 cubic yards of fill to be balanced on-site. No grading material would be exported. Grading associated with improving and constructing ranch access roads would result in 14,200 cubic yards of cut and 10,200 cubic yards of fill. The proposed roadway improvements would disturb approximately 0.92 acres of slopes in excess of 25%. Grading on slopes greater than 25 percent requires a Use Permit and is associated with Ranch Roads D and E. The estimated area of proposed disturbance and development on slopes in excess of 25% is considered overstated as the prepared civil plans also include the portion of Ranch Road D that was previously improved without the benefit of a discretionary permit. See Section B below. Grading associated with the construction of the barn would result in 6,100 cubic yards of cut and 10,100 cubic yards of fill. The total estimated area of disturbance for construction of the Proposed Project would be 9.75 acres.

Pervious and Impervious Coverage

The Proposed Project would result in a total of 25,020 square feet of impervious coverage on the property. Impervious cover resulting from building coverage would be 20,283 square feet. The relocatable chicken coops and trussed horse shelters contribute to the remaining 4,737 square feet of impervious cover. The remainder of the subject property would remain pervious.

Tree Removal

The Proposed Project would not require the removal of any trees.

B. Surrounding Land Uses and Environmental Setting:

The Proposed Project is located at 18000 Corral Del Cielo Road, Monterey County, California. More specifically, the Proposed Project is located on a primarily undeveloped lot that covers approximately 209 acres off Corral Del Cielo Road (APN 416-441-047-000). The Project site is zoned Permanent Grazing, 40-acre minimum, with a Visual Sensitivity zoning overlay district (“PG/40-VS”) and is located in the Toro Area Plan area of the Monterey County 2010 General Plan. **Figure 3** shows the Proposed Project site and surrounding land uses. The area of the proposed structural development would be located primarily on relatively flat or gently sloping ground surrounded by steep hillslopes. Impact to slopes exceeding 25% would total 0.92 acres and would be associated with construction of the roadway improvements. The Project site is bordered by Corral Del Cielo Road to the north, and is surrounded by Permanent Grazing zoned land and Resource Conservation zoned land developed with single-family residences. **Figure 4a** and **Figure 4b** include site photos of the Project site.

An approximately 2,300-foot segment of an existing ranch roach (a portion of “Ranch Road D”) was previously widened and improved. Improvements along this portion of the ranch road occurred on slopes in excess of 25% and therefore required the granting of a Use Permit from the County of Monterey. However, discretionary approval was not obtained and therefore the proposed discretionary permit (Combined Development Permit) includes an after-the-fact Use Permit to allow the as-graded development on slopes in excess of 25%. Additionally, the following activities have recently occurred but did not require discretionary approval: planting of limited crops, creating Ranch Road A, which connects to Corral Del Cielo Road in the northwestern corner of the property and borders the southwest portion of the upper pasture (approximately 17 acres), improving the western portion of Ranch Road D, which borders the southern portion of lower pasture (approximately 8 acres), installing a 500-gallon water tank, and replacing internal and perimeter fencing.

The subject property is under a Williamson Act Contract (Williamson Act Contract No. 73-030, Document No. 2019034507: Source 31). Portions of the property are currently leased out for cattle grazing (30 cattle). While primarily undeveloped (see above existing improvements), approximately 5 cattle (in addition to the above-mentioned 30 cattle) 26 sheep, 2 guardian llamas, and 15 chickens occupy the subject property’s lower pasture. Abalone Creek Estate LLC family members currently manage the existing Ranch operations and would continue to be involved in the operation of the Proposed Project.

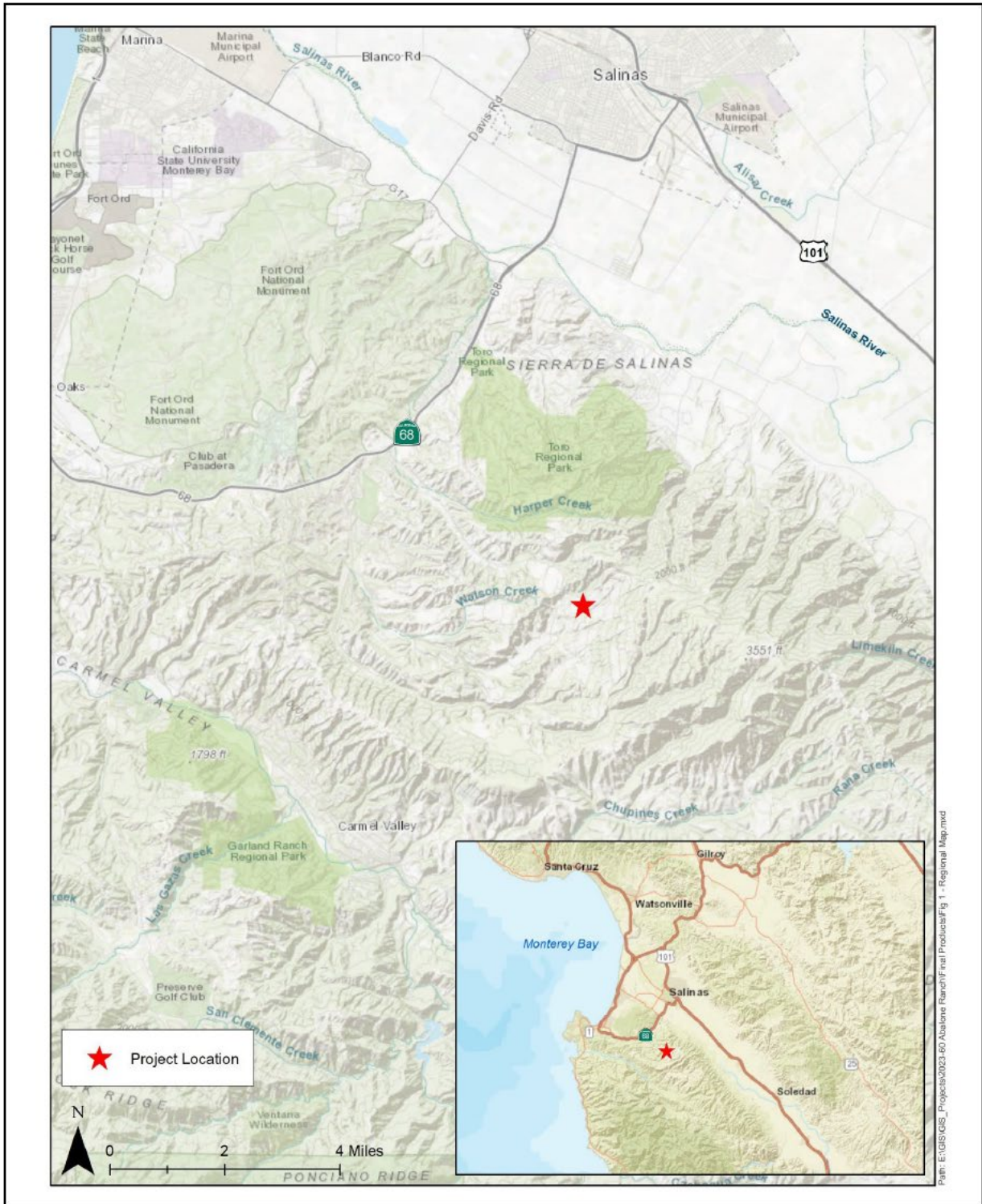
As described above, this Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (“IS/MND”) only identifies the potential impacts of the proposed construction and operation of the Proposed Project. The above-mentioned previous grading activities and minor site improvements are captured in the Proposed Project’s environment baseline conditions. As noted below, after-the-fact permitting is being sought to address the land use violation(s).

C. Other public agencies whose approval is required:

The IS/MND is an informational document for both agency decision-makers and the public. The County is the lead agency responsible for adoption of the IS/MND and approving land use permits related to the Proposed Project. Below is a list of approvals required by the County of Monterey. Project entitlements would include, but not be limited to:

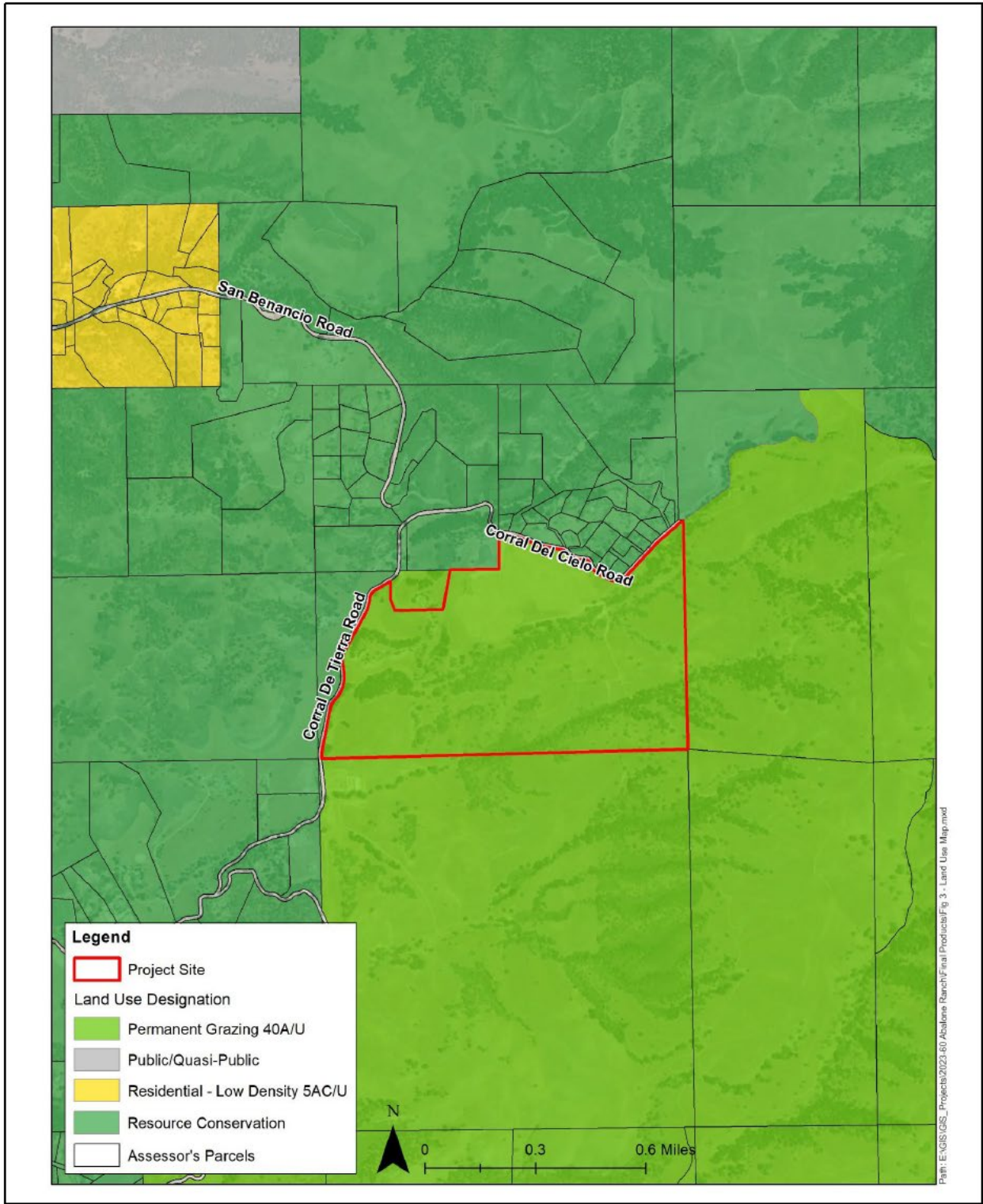
- Combined Development Permit consisting of: 1) an After-the-fact Use Permit to allow development on slopes exceeding 25%, 2) a Use Permit to allow development on slopes exceeding 25% and 3) a Design Approval to allow the construction of a 7,452 square foot livestock barn, a 2,400 square foot storage shed, a 7,200 square foot machine and equipment shed, a 1,000 square foot livestock shed, a 216 square foot potting shed, and associated site improvements including drilling of an agricultural well, creation of a 21,869 square foot pond, installation of an on-site septic system, roof mounted solar, placement of five water tanks (above ground and below ground) totaling 152,400 gallons, and the creation and improvement of ranch roads.
- Grading Permit(s)
- Encroachment Permit(s)
- Building Permit(s)

Other agencies that could have permit or review authority over some aspect of the Proposed Project may include Monterey Bay Air Resources District (“MBARD”) and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (“CDFW”).



Regional Map

Figure
1



Land Use Map

Figure
3



Site Photo Looking Southwest at the Project Site from Corral Del Cielo Road

Figure
4a



Site Photo Looking Northwest from Proposed Livestock Barn

Figure
4b

III. PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER APPLICABLE LOCAL AND STATE PLANS AND MANDATED LAWS

Use the list below to indicate plans applicable to the project and verify their consistency or non-consistency with project implementation.

General Plan/Area Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Air Quality Mgmt. Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specific Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Airport Land Use Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality Control Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local Coastal Program-LUP	<input type="checkbox"/>

General Plan/Toro Area Plan: The Proposed Project is located in unincorporated Monterey County and development is governed by the 2010 Monterey County General Plan (“General Plan”), with additional policy guidance from the Toro Area Plan. The Proposed Project is located within the “Permanent Grazing” land use designation, where agricultural-related activities are allowed as principal uses (by right use) or subject to discretionary permits. As described in **Sections II.A and B** of this Initial Study, portions of the Abalone Creek Ranch Operation are principally allowed uses, while other components of the Proposed Project require the granting of a Combined Development Permit (**Section II.C**). The Proposed Project consists of routine and on-going agricultural activities (as defined by General Plan Goal AG-3) and development accessory to the proposed and existing agricultural operations. Therefore, the Proposed Project would be consistent with the allowable uses within the land use designation. In accordance with the General Plan and its Toro Area Plan, the Proposed Project would incorporate rustic architectural design, be appropriately setback from Corral Del Cielo Road, and be subordinate to the surrounding natural features. As detailed in **Section VI.11 (Land Use and Planning)**, the Proposed Project would be consistent with the General Plan, including the Toro Area Plan. **CONSISTENT.**

Water Quality Control Plan: The subject property lies within Region 3 of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board which regulates sources of water quality-related issues resulting in actual or potential impairment or degradation of beneficial uses, or the overall degradation of water quality. Construction of the Proposed Project could result in temporary effects (e.g., erosion). Operation of the Project would not generate pollutant runoff in amounts that would cause degradation of water quality. In accordance with Monterey County Code Chapter 16.12, the Proposed Project shall be required to submit a drainage and erosion control plan to HCD-Environmental Services prior to issuance of building permits. For additional discussion on hydrology and water quality, please refer to **Section VI.10 Hydrology and Water Quality.** **CONSISTENT.**

Air Quality Management Plan: The Proposed Project is located within the North Central Coast Air Basin (“NCCAB”). Air quality in the Project area is managed and regulated by the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (“MBARD”). MBARD has developed Air Quality Management Plans (“AQMPs”) and CEQA Air Quality Guidelines to address attainment and maintenance of state and federal ambient air quality standards within the NCCAB. The 2012-2015 AQMP, the 2008 CEQA Air Quality Guidelines, and 2016 Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental

Quality Act are the most recent documents used to evaluate attainment and maintenance of air quality standards. The California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) uses ambient data from each air monitoring site in the NCCAB to calculate Expected Peak Day Concentration over a consecutive three (3)-year period. The closest air monitoring station is located in Carmel Valley. Based on available air quality monitoring data, there are no indications that the Proposed Project would cause a significant impact to air quality or greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, the Proposed Project would implement best management practices during construction to ensure impacts to air quality and greenhouse gases are less than significant. For a more detailed evaluation, please refer to **Section VI.3 Air Quality. CONSISTENT.**

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED AND DETERMINATION

A. FACTORS

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, as discussed within the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forest Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards/Hazardous Materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildfires | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |

Some proposed applications that are not exempt from CEQA review may have little or no potential for adverse environmental impact related to most of the topics in the Environmental Checklist; and/or potential impacts may involve only a few limited subject areas. These types of projects are generally minor in scope, located in a non-sensitive environment, and are easily identifiable and without public controversy. For the environmental issue areas where there is no potential for significant environmental impact (and not checked above), the following finding can be made using the project description, environmental setting, or other information as supporting evidence.

- Check here if this finding is not applicable

FINDING: For the above referenced topics that are not checked off, there is no potential for significant environmental impact to occur from either construction, operation or maintenance of the Proposed Project and no further discussion in the Environmental Checklist is necessary.

EVIDENCE:

2. *Agricultural and Forestry Resources:* The California Department of Conservation (“CDC”) Division of Land Resource Protection and the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program maps California’s agricultural resources. The subject property is identified as containing “Grazing Land” per the CDC. The Proposed Project site is zoned as “Permanent Grazing” and is under a Williamson Act Contract (Williamson Act Contract No. 73-030, Document No. 2019034507: Source 31). The subject property is intended to be used as a family ranch and farm, consistent with the designated land use, zoning restrictions, and requirements of the Williamson Act Contract. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Source: 2). The Project is not zoned for Resource Conservation and is not designated as Forest. Further, no tree removal is proposed. Therefore, there would be no impacts to existing agriculture and forestry resources.

6. *Energy:* The project would require energy during construction to operate construction equipment and worker vehicles to and from the project site, as well as minimal energy to operate the Abalone Creek Ranch. The proposed site improvements include the structures accessory to on-going and proposed agricultural operations. Energy use associated with construction would be nominal and short-term, and would not be considered wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary. Operational energy demand would be minimal. Pacific Gas and Electric (“PG&E”) provides electricity to the project site. The project would be required to comply with all standards set in California Building Code (CBC) Title 24, which would minimize the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during operation. California’s Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen; CBC, Title 24, Part 11) requires implementation of energy efficient light fixtures and building materials into the design of new construction projects. Accordingly, roof mounted solar would be installed. With implementation of these regulations, the Proposed Project would not conflict with state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in potentially significant environmental effects due to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy (Source: 30).

12. *Mineral Resources:* Mineral resources are determined in accordance with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (“SMARA”) of 1975, and the California Geological Survey which maps regional significance of mineral resources. There are no known mineral resources on the Project site (Source: 4). As a result, the Proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and residents of the state. Additionally, the Project site is also not designated as a mineral resource recovery site. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site. The Proposed Project would not result in any impacts to mineral resources.

14. *Population and Housing:* The Proposed Project consists of constructing and operating a new ranch and farm on a largely undeveloped property that is zoned Permanent Grazing land. The Proposed Project consists of raising poultry and livestock (i.e., cattle, sheep, and pigs) primarily for domestic personal use, and minimal commercial purposes. No commercial sales would occur at the Project property. All commercial sales would occur offsite and would consist of a mixture of direct to consumer, farmers market, and retail locations. All processing of chickens, cattle,

sheep, and pigs would occur at existing off-site facilities. Per the Draft Agricultural Operations Plan, daily operation of the Project would require an anticipated two to three employees, which would primarily consist of family members currently inhabiting nearby residences. Given the small scale of farming uses and the limited sale of commercial items at offsite locations, the Proposed Project would not cause substantial population growth either directly or indirectly. The Project would not change the existing use of the site or increase the number of individuals on the site such that potential growth-inducing impacts would occur. Additionally, the Proposed Project would not displace existing housing units. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have no impact. (Source: 30, 33)

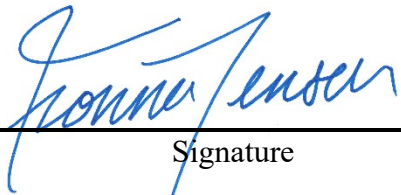
15. Public Services: The Proposed Project would not result in any adverse impacts resulting in the need for new, or physically altered, government facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any public services (i.e., fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities). The Project site would be served by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (“CalFire”) and the Monterey County Regional Fire District (“MCRFD”). The Proposed Project would also be served by the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office, located in the City of Salinas. The Salinas Union High and Washington Union School Districts would serve the Project site (Source: 14). The Proposed Project consists of constructing a new small family ranch and farm on a property that is zoned for Permanent Grazing. The Project would include establishing a new on-site water well, wastewater system (i.e., septic system), and roof mounted solar. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not generate new demand for public services and no new or altered public services would be required for the Project (Source: 30)

16. Recreation: The Project would not result in an increased use of existing neighborhood and/or regional parks or other recreational facilities causing a substantial physical deterioration. The Proposed Project would consist of constructing a livestock barn and accessory structures (i.e., sheds and portable chicken coops and horse shelters) as well as other site improvements (e.g., agricultural well and pond) to be used for operation of the ranch on a parcel that is designated as Permanent Grazing land. No parks, trail easements, or other recreational opportunities would be adversely impacted by the Proposed Project. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any adverse recreation-related impacts. (Source: 20, 30)

B. DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.



Signature

June 21, 2024

Date

*Fionna Jensen, Senior Planne County of Monterey
Housing and Community Development*

V. EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- 1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on project-specific screening analysis).
- 2) All answers must take into account the whole action involved, including offsite as well as onsite, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
- 3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one (1) or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
- 4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level mitigation measures from Section XVII, "Earlier Analyses," may be cross-referenced).
- 5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

- 6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
- 7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
- 8) The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a) The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
 - b) The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

1. AESTHETICS		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? (sources: 6, 17, 20, 30, 36)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway? (sources: 6,17, 20, 30, 36)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c)	Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. (sources: 6,17, 20, 30, 36)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? (sources: 17, 20, 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

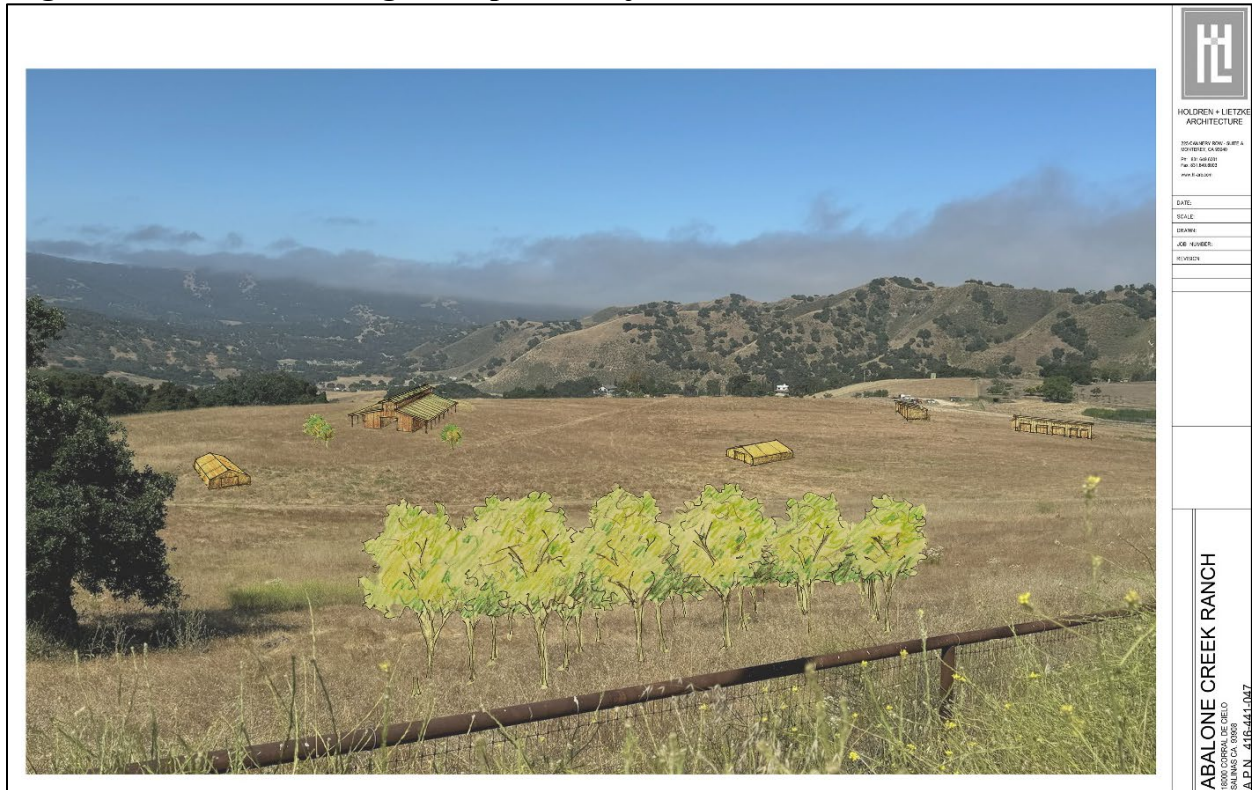
Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The Proposed Project site is surrounded by existing grazing land and Resource Conservation land developed with single-family residences. The Proposed Project site consists predominantly of a mixture of native and nonnative grassland. The Proposed Project consists of constructing a livestock barn and accessory structures for grazing and agricultural use (i.e., equipment/machine sheds, livestock shed, potting shed, etc.), and implementing associated site improvements including, but not limited to, improving ranch roads, installing roof-mounted solar (photovoltaic) systems, and drilling a water well. Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would include the keeping and raising of various livestock, including 499 or fewer chickens, 200 sheep, 30 cattle, 10 pigs, and other animals, in addition to animals already on site, as described above in **Section II.A**. In addition, the Project would include creation of a new ranch access road (“Ranch Road E”) and an extension of an existing ranch access road (“Ranch Road D”).

The Proposed Project site is not located within view from a state designated scenic highway; however, it is in an area designated as visually sensitive, including a critical viewshed as defined by the Toro Area Plan of the Monterey County General Plan. State Route (“SR”) 68 is the nearest State designated scenic highway and is located approximately four miles northwest of the Proposed Project site (Source: 6). The Project site is not visible from this segment of SR 68 or any critical viewing areas along SR 68. The Proposed Project is located approximately 0.35 miles from Corral De Tierra Road and 0.25 miles from San Benancio Road, which are both locally designated scenic

routes (Source: 20). Due to changes in topography and existing vegetation, the proposed development would not be visible from Corral de Tierra Road. However, a majority of the subject property is visible from a portion of San Benancio Road. The proposed pond, livestock barn, equipment storage sheds, portable chicken coops, portable horse shelters, and Roadway D improvements would be visible from this location (0.3 to 0.6 miles west). Additionally, the Proposed Project is located near public roadways (i.e., Corral de Tierra and Corral Del Cielo Road), within a critical viewshed, and has a Visual Sensitivity zoning overlay district (Source: 20). The proposed pond, livestock barn, equipment storage sheds, two potable chicken coops, and at least one portable horse shelter would be visible from Corral Del Cielo Road and neighboring properties (see **Figure 5**). Although not anticipated, all three portable 288-square-foot horse shelters could be visible from Corral Del Cielo depending on placement. Ranch Road E and the southeastern extension of Ranch Road D would not be visible from Corral Del Cielo Road or neighboring properties. The higher elevations of the subject property would be visible from Corral de Tierra. However, the proposed development would not be visible from Corral de Tierra due to siting and changes in topography.

Figure 5 – Visual Rendering of Proposed Project from Corral del Cielo Road



	HOLDREN + LIETZKE ARCHITECTURE
	220 CALIFORNIA ROAD, SUITE 4 COSTA MESA, CA 92626 PH: 949-441-0001 FAX: 949-441-0002 WWW.H&L.AA.COM
DATE:	
SCALE:	
DRAWN:	
JOB NUMBER:	
REVISION:	
ABALONE CREEK RANCH 18355 CORRAL DEL CIELO ROAD COSTA MESA, CA 92626 A.P.N. 416-441-047	

Figure 5. Photo taken along Corral Del Ceilo Road (near 17755 and 18355 Corral Del Cielo Road), and enhanced with visual representations of the proposed livestock barn, equipment storage sheds, and two potable chicken coops. Prepared by Holdren & Lietzke Architecture (June 2024).

Aesthetic Impact (a) and (c) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Corral Del Cielo Road and the 220-foot segment of San Benancio Road where the subject property is visible are not considered common public

viewing areas because these routes are primarily only traveled by local residents who live nearby and not the general public. Visible components of the Project from Corral Del Cielo Road would generally be limited to the proposed pond, livestock barn, equipment storage sheds, and moveable chicken coops (see **Figure 5**). Existing fruit trees along the northeastern edge of the property would further limit views of the proposed livestock barn and chicken coops from Corral Del Cielo Road and nearby residences. Views of the Proposed Project from San Benancio Road, a locally designated scenic route, are distant and limited to changes in topography resulting from roadway improvements and structural improvements adjacent to Corral Del Cielo (proposed pond, livestock barn, equipment storage sheds, portable chicken coops, portable horse shelters). Due to the proposed size and massing of the development and the distance at which these improvements would be visible, the Proposed Project would be subordinate to the surrounding natural environment and topography. Ranch Road E and the southeastern extension of Ranch Road D would not be visible from Corral Del Cielo Road, neighboring properties, or San Benancio Road due to the topography of the Project site. Existing Ranch Roads proposed to be improved are currently visible from Corral Del Cielo Road and a segment of San Benancio Road, and would maintain similar visibility as the existing roads. Additionally, because Corral Del Cielo Road and a portion of San Benancio Road are at a higher elevation than the Project site, the Proposed Project would not significantly impair views of distant mountain ranges located southwest, south and southeast of the Project site (see **Figure 5**). Likewise, residences located west and northwest of the Project site are atop hills at higher elevations than the Project property. Although private views (i.e., views from private property or residences) are not protected or regulated by Monterey County Code, views from private residences of distant mountains to the south and east of the Project site would not be substantially obstructed by the Proposed Project because the highest point of the proposed structures would be below the ridgeline of mountains to the south and east. While views of the Project site from adjacent residences would be altered by new development, the vast majority (over 99%) of the Project site would remain undeveloped.

The subject property is located within a Visual Sensitivity zoning overlay district, which requires the granting of a Design Approval in accordance with Monterey County Code Title 20 Chapter 21.44 for new structures that are accessory to agricultural operations in the Permanent Grazing zoning district. The Design Control zoning district (Chapter 21.44) regulates the location, size, configuration, materials, and colors of structures. To approve development within the Design Control district, or in this case, the Visual Sensitivity zoning overlay district, the Appropriate Authority must find that the size, configuration, materials, and colors of structures assure protection of the public viewshed, neighborhood character, and the visual integrity without imposing undue restrictions on private property. Further, Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.1 and the 2010 Monterey County General Plan Policy OS-1.2 require that new development be designed to enhance the scenic value of the surrounding rural area and be subordinate to the surrounding natural features of the area. Accordingly, the Proposed Project incorporates a rustic and ranch architectural style with vertical redwood siding, dark bronze non-reflective metal standing seam roofing, and copper gutters (Source: 30). The proposed colors and materials would blend in with the surrounding natural environment, not detract from the local scenic beauty, and be compatible with the rustic and rural area. As described above, the proposed development would not significantly impair views of distant mountain ranges located southwest, south, and southeast of

the Project site. The most visible development from Corral Del Cielo Road and neighboring residences would be the proposed barn, which would be constructed with a maximum height of 30 feet 2 inches above average natural grade and would not protrude above the distant mountain ridgelines. A portion of the barn would be set partially below grade (approximately 5 feet), thus minimizing the visible bulk and mass of the structure. All other proposed development would be constructed at heights above average natural grade of 16.5 feet (storage shed), 15 feet (livestock shed), 13 feet 7 inches (potting shed), and 22 feet (machine shed), all of which would not distract from the distant mountain ridgelines. Based on information from the Monterey County Assessor's Office, neighboring residences range between 2,200 square feet to 4,800 square feet. Although the proposed bulk and mass of the Project's structural development would be larger than the surrounding development, it would be appropriate and compatible for operation of the existing and proposed agricultural operations on the 209-acre property. Additionally, views of the proposed structures would be distant and unobtrusive due to proposed front setbacks of Project components and compliance with design requirements outlined in the Toro Area Plan. For these reasons, the Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse impact on a scenic vista. This represents a less than significant impact.

Aesthetic Impact (b) No Impact: The Proposed Project would not damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. The Project site is not visible from a state scenic highway. The nearest state-designated scenic highway is SR 68, located approximately four miles northwest of the Proposed Project site with intervening hills (Source: 6 and 36). The Project site is not visible from this segment of SR 68 or any critical viewing areas along SR 68. Neither Corral Del Cielo Road or San Benancio Road are designated scenic highways (see above discussion). For these reasons, the Project would not have an impact on scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

Aesthetic Impact (d) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project does not entail any nighttime construction-related activities; therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any temporary increases in construction lighting. Operation of the Project would increase lighting beyond existing conditions; however, all exterior lighting would comply with standard Monterey County conditions of approval, which require the applicant to submit exterior lighting plans to the County for review and approval prior to issuing construction permits. The lighting plan would be required to comply with design requirements set forth by the Toro Area Plan, Monterey County General Plan, and Title 21 of the Monterey County Code, all of which require that lighting be shielded or directed to illuminate only the intended area. Therefore, all exterior lighting would be adequately located and designed to minimize light sources to preserve the quality of darkness in the area. This represents a less than significant impact.

2. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) 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? (sources: 2,3,17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract? (sources: 2,3,17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) 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))? (sources: 2,3,17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? (sources: 2,3,17,20, 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? (sources: 2,3,17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact on agricultural or forest land resources.

3. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan? (sources: 15, 16)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard? (sources: 15, 16, 32)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations? (sources: 15, 16)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people? (sources: 15,16, 24)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The Proposed Project is located within the NCCAB, which is under the jurisdiction of the MBARD. MBARD is responsible for producing an Air Quality Management Plan (“AQMP”) that reports air quality and regulates stationary air pollution sources throughout the NCCAB. MBARD is also responsible for measuring the concentration of pollutants and comparing those concentrations against Ambient Air Quality Standards (“AAQS”). Additionally, MBARD monitors criteria pollutants to determine whether they are in attainment or not in attainment. **Table 3-1** illustrates the attainment status for criteria pollutants.

Pollutants	State Designation	Federal Designation
Ozone (O ₃)	Nonattainment – Transitional	Attainment
Inhalable Particulates (PM ₁₀)	Nonattainment	Attainment
Fine Particulates (PM _{2.5})	Attainment	Attainment
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Monterey Co. – Attainment	Attainment
	San Benito Co. – Unclassified	Attainment
	Santa Cruz Co. – Unclassified	Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	Attainment	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)	Attainment	Attainment
Lead	Attainment	Attainment

Source: Monterey Bay Air Resources District, 2017. 2012 – 2015 Air Quality Management Plan

MBARD has set air quality thresholds of significance for the evaluation of projects. **Table 3-2** illustrates the thresholds of significance used to determine if a project would have a significant air quality effect on the environment during construction.

Table 3-2 Thresholds of Significance Construction Emissions	
Pollutant	Threshold of Significance (lb./day)
Nitrogen Oxides (NO _x)	137
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	137
Respirable Particular Matter (PM ₁₀)	82
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	55
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550
Source: Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, 2016. Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act.	

In addition to these thresholds, MBARD has also determined that a significant short-term construction-generated impact would occur if more than 2.2 acres of major earthmoving per day were to occur. Activities associated with this threshold include excavation and grading. For projects that require minimal earthmoving activities, MBARD has determined that a significant short-term construction-generated impact would occur if more than 8.1 acres per day of earthmoving were to occur (Source: 15).

Table 3-3 illustrates the thresholds of significance used to determine if a project would have a significant air quality effect on the environment during operation.

Table 3-3 Thresholds of Significance Operational Emissions	
Pollutant	Threshold of Significance (lb./day)
Nitrogen Oxides (NO _x)	137
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	137
Respirable Particular Matter (PM ₁₀)	82
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	55
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550
Source: Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, 2016. Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act.	

The California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) defines a sensitive receptor as children, the elderly, asthmatic, and others who are at high risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to air pollution. Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Sec. 42705.5, a sensitive receptor includes hospitals, schools and daycares centers and such locations as the district or state board may determine. MBARD similarly defines sensitive receptors and adds that the location of sensitive receptors be explained in terms that draw a relationship to the project site and potential air quality impacts.

Per correspondence with MBARD (Source: 34), agricultural air quality emissions and odors associated with the keeping and raising of fowl or animals are exempt from the prohibition on air contaminant discharges and MBARD regulations (California Health and Safety Code § 41705).

However, MBARD standards would apply to the construction and operation of the project's proposed roads, structures, and other site improvements.

Air Quality Impact (a) No Impact: CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15125(b) requires that a project be evaluated for consistency with applicable regional plans, including the AQMP. The most recent update was the 2012 – 2015 AQMP which was adopted in March 2017. This plan addresses attainment of the State ozone standard and Federal air quality standards. The AQMP accommodates growth by projecting growth in emissions based on population forecasts prepared by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (“AMBAG”) and other indicators. Consistency determinations are issued for commercial, industrial, residential, and infrastructure-related projects that have the potential to induce population growth. A project is considered inconsistent with the AQMP if it has not been accommodated in the forecast projections considered in the AQMP. The Proposed Project would include construction of eight agricultural-related buildings with roof-mounted solar-generation systems, an agricultural well, and a pond. In addition, the Project would include improvements to existing ranch access roads (Ranch Roads A through C), an extension of the southwest portion of Ranch Road D, and construction of Ranch Road E. The Project would not induce substantial population growth nor result in any residential development. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct an applicable air quality plan. There would be no impact.

Air Quality Impact (b) Less than Significant: The MBARD 2016 CEQA Air Quality Guidelines contain standards of significance for evaluating potential air quality effects of projects subject to the requirements of CEQA. According to MBARD, a project would violate an air quality standard and/or contribute to an existing or projected violation if it would emit (from all sources, including exhaust and fugitive dust) more than:

- 137 pounds per day of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x),
- 137 pounds per day of reactive organic gases (ROG),
- 82 pounds per day of respirable particulate matter (PM₁₀),
- 55 pounds per day of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), or
- 550 pounds per day carbon monoxide (CO).

According to the MBARD's criteria for determining construction impacts, a project would result in a potentially significant impact if it would result in 8.1 acres of minimal earthmoving per day or 2.2 acres of major grading and excavation per day.

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would require 20,300 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 20,300 cy of fill, with no material imported or exported as all grading would be balanced on-site. Construction would require equipment such as tractors, backhoes, compactors, excavators, rollers, dump trucks and pickup trucks. Construction-related emissions would come from sources such as exhaust or fugitive dust. The total estimated area of disturbance for construction of the Proposed Project would be 9.75 acres. However, grading and excavation-related activities would occur over several weeks and would not exceed MBARD's daily ground disturbing thresholds for excavation

(2.2 acres per day) or grading (8.1 acres per day). As shown in **Table 3-4**, the construction-related air quality emissions were quantified using the California Emissions Estimator Model (“CalEEMod”). Construction of the Proposed Project would not exceed any criteria pollutant thresholds set forth by MBARD. The detailed results of the construction phase air quality emissions are uploaded in the County’s public portal, Accela Citizens Access, as Library No. LIB240073 (Source: 32).

Table 3-4 Construction Air Quality Emissions					
	Emissions in Pounds/Day				
	NO _x	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	ROG	CO
Significance Threshold (MBARD)	137	55	82	137	550
Emissions generated by the Project	53	10	73	20	56
Exceed Threshold?	No	No	No	No	No
Emissions Source: CalEEMod Air Quality and GHG Calculations Spreadsheets Significance Threshold Source: MBARD, 2016					

Pursuant to state requirements, if project construction uses portable equipment registered with the California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) in the Portable Equipment Registration Program (“PERP”), the Applicant/Owner/Contract shall notify MBARD within two working days of commencing operations when a registered equipment unit will be at a location for more than five days. Portable equipment not registered with CARB may be subject to MBARD permit requirements.

Operation

The Proposed Project would also result in a less than significant impact from operational emissions. As discussed below in **Section III(d)**, adherence to the recommendations of the prepared Manure Management Plan would reduce nitrogen emissions. As shown in **Table 3-5**, the operational air quality emissions were quantified using CalEEMod. The operation of the Proposed Project would not exceed any criteria pollutant thresholds set forth by MBARD. The detailed results of the operation phase air quality emissions are uploaded in the County’s public portal, Accela Citizens Access, as Library No. LIB240073 (Source: 32).

Table 3-5 Operational Air Quality Emissions					
	Emissions in Pounds/Day				
	NO _x	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	ROG	CO
Significance Threshold (MBARD)	137	55	82	137	550
Emissions generated by the Project	0.23	0.07	0.49	0.55	1.05
Exceed Threshold?	No	No	No	No	No
Emissions Source: CalEEMod Air Quality and GHG Calculations Spreadsheets Significance Threshold Source: MBARD, 2016					

As shown above, operational emissions associated with the Project would not exceed an applicable MBARD threshold of significance. See **Section VI.5 Energy**, below, for more information

regarding energy consumption. For these reasons, the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact.

Two environmental laws, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), require reporting of releases of hazardous substances that exceed reportable quantities within a 24-hour period. The purpose of the notification is for federal, state, and local officials to evaluate the need for an emergency response to mitigate the effects of a release to the community. However, due to legislative changes in the “Fair Agricultural Reporting Method Act” or “FARM Act” in March 2018, “air emissions from animal waste at a farm” are exempt from reporting under CERCLA. These types of releases also do not need to be reported under EPCRA.

Air Quality Impact (c) Less than Significant: Locations where sensitive receptors congregate may include hospitals, schools, and day care centers. CARB identifies sensitive receptors as children, elderly, asthmatics, and others who are at a heightened risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to air pollution. The Proposed Project site is not within the immediate vicinity of a hospital or daycare center. The nearest school is located approximately four miles to the northwest of the Project site. The school is separated from the Project site by hills, residential housing and other buildings, trees, and the existing topography of the area. Other residences are located within the immediate vicinity of the Project site; however, the nearest residence is located approximately 1,000 feet from the proposed barn, 280 feet from the proposed storage shed, and over 100 feet from the subject property lines (Source: 30). Construction of the Project would generate short-term temporary air quality impacts which would not exceed the thresholds set by MBARD. Operation of the Proposed Project would not result in a substantial impact on air quality beyond existing levels. Operational emissions would be negligible in comparison to MBARD thresholds. The Applicant would be required to implement erosion control measures in accordance with the County’s Grading and Erosion Control Ordinances, Chapters 16.08 and 16.12. Monterey County Code section 16.08.340 specifically requires that dust from grading activities be controlled. In addition, all grading activities associated with construction of the Proposed Project must comply with Monterey County Code section 16.12.80, Land Clearing. The County of Monterey HCD-Environmental Services would review and approve grading plans for the Proposed Project to ensure compliance with these requirements.

Given the distance from neighboring residences, the temporary and short-term nature of emissions from construction, and low operational emissions, the Project would not result in a significant impact.

Air Quality Impact (d) Less than Significant: Construction of the Project could generate temporary odors from construction equipment (e.g., diesel exhaust) which could be noticeable at times to neighboring residences and users of nearby recreational trails in the Project vicinity. However, construction-generated odors would be temporary in nature. Additionally, construction would be limited to daytime hours between Monday and Friday (with some work occurring on

Saturdays) when people are most likely to be at work or in school, which would limit potential exposure to construction-related odors. This represents a less than significant impact.

Per correspondence with MBARD (Source: 34) agricultural odors emanating from the raising of fowl or animals are exempt from the prohibition on air contaminant discharges and MBARD regulations (California Health and Safety Code § 41705). However, MBARD standards would apply to the construction and operation of the project's proposed roads, structures, and other site improvements.

The proposed management of the Abalone Creek Ranch is free-range rotational pastured grazing. The seeded, rain-fed pastures would house poultry, cattle, sheep, a donkey, swine, llamas, and horses. The poultry would be housed in two portable 20-foot x 48-foot structures that are moved daily throughout a 22-acre upper pasture. Swine would also be contained within the 22-acre area. The horses would be within a 5-acre lower pasture that includes a movable horse pen and three movable trussed horse shelters. The llamas and donkey will graze and protect animals throughout the whole of the property. The cattle and sheep would rotationally graze predominantly throughout the subject property's rangeland and woodland areas.

Farm operations associated with the Project could generate odors. However, per the prepared Operations Plan, the Proposed Project would operate in a manner consistent with the County-approved Manure Management Plan ("MMP") (Source: 24; LIB230181). A condition of approval would be applied to the Project to ensure that the recommendations of the MMP (detailed below) are implemented (**PDSP001**). The purpose of the MMP is to provide Abalone Creek Estate LLC with the information necessary to manage agricultural waste in a manner that protects the air, soil, water, vegetation, and animal resources. The guiding principles of the Natural Resources Conservation Service ("NRCS") were utilized in the MMP to achieve the following objectives: 1) budget and supply nutrients for pasture production; 2) properly utilize manure as an organic plant nutrient source; 3) minimize degradation of surface and ground water resources; 4) improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of the soil; and 5) protect air quality by reducing nitrogen emissions and the formation of atmospheric particulates. Proper manure management would mitigate adverse impacts resulting from operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch to surface and groundwater quality, as well as impacts, both on and off-site, from objectionable odors, vectors, noise, and visual aesthetics.

Lower Pasture Manure Management

A total of four horses, six llamas (two of which are already on site), and one donkey would occupy the subject property's lower-seeded pasture, which is approximately 5 acres and situated in the northwest portion of the property. These animals would generate approximately 45 tons of annual manure. The lower pasture is situated approximately 600 feet to 1,600 feet from the nearest residence. The MMP's recommendations for this area include transferring horse manure to a manure storage area (12' x 20' foot concrete bins with available coverage for precipitation events) and cleaning out these bins twice per week. Cleaning of the bins and off-site hauling of the manure twice per week exceeds the guidelines set by the State Water Resource Control Board, which calls for the hauling of manure once every two weeks. The horse manure would also be spread onto the lower pasture as needed to meet the nutrient needs of the seeded pasture. Additionally, as

recommended, the llama manure, also known as llame “beans”, would be collected twice weekly and may be packaged for sale or used onsite as fertilizer. Consistent with the MMP recommendations, as well as the recommendation from the Monterey County Environmental Health Director, the use of manure as fertilizer for the property’s fruit trees would not be applied during precipitation events to minimize any nutrient runoff to nearby intermittent streams. As recommended by the MMP, a monthly manure tracking report would be completed each month for the horses and llamas and saved on-site. Records shall be made available to HCD-Planning Services and the Environmental Health Bureau upon request.

To address potential odors generated by the llamas, horses, and a donkey, the MMP recommends the application of lime either before a rainy period or after aerating the pasture by harrow. Adherence to the MMP condition of approval would require that a maximum of 0.4 lbs per acre of lime be applied to the lower pasture twice a year. Per the MMP, the biological waste odors would not just be masked but rather eliminated with the application of lime.

Upper Pasture Manure Management

As detailed in the prepared Draft Agricultural Operations Plan, up to 499 chickens and 10 pigs would occupy the subject property’s upper pasture. The upper pasture is approximately 22 acres and is directly adjacent to Corral Del Cielo Road. Rotational grazing would be utilized on this pasture; grazing of swine would be followed by grazing of the chickens. Allowing the pigs to graze ahead of the chickens would offer predatory control, lower the grass height, break down grass seed for poultry feed, and leave behind manure containing grubs for proteins. Chicks would be raised in two PastureTek portable chicken coops (20 foot by 48 feet, or 960 square feet) that would be moved daily to avoid overgrazing, limit animal disease, and to allow only a small daily volume of manure (0.2 pounds/square foot) to be distributed. Per the MMP, based on an average of six weeks to maturity, approximately nine flocks could be maintained annually.

The upper pasture occupies approximately 22 acres (958,320 square-feet). Only 350,400 square-feet (eight acres) would be required for poultry production annually when daily rotation is maintained. Subsequently, only 36.5% of the upper pasture’s acreage would be utilized on an annual basis. This would allow the seeded rain-fed pasture to remain healthy. As recommended by the MMP and required through application of a non-standard condition of approval, the subject property’s upper pasture (approximately 22 acres) would spread manure via a pull chain-harrow. The harrow would break up the waste and evenly distribute the nutrients from the manure into the pasture, providing beneficial nutrient cycles and soil organic matter. Dispersing manure piles would also help control parasites and pest insects, which prefer fresh manure for egg laying. Breaking apart manure piles would reduce disease by exposing bacteria to sunlight, which is essential for the health of the pasture. Additionally, harrowing would also facilitate drainage, helping to minimize muddy areas and standing water. Harrowing of the subject property’s upper pasture would not be completed during times of precipitation or when the ground is saturated to avoid compaction of the soil and would only be completed when calm (0-2 mph) or light (2-5 mph) winds are occurring to avoid dust or odors from drifting.

Operations odors would also be controlled through application of lime to the soil by a pull spreader. Based on the MMP, the property's soil pH is moderately acidic (6.0). A soil amendment of 0.4 pounds/acre of lime (100% calcium carbonate) was recommended to adjust soil pH to 6.5. The application of lime is known to reduce odors, particularly hydrogen sulfide. In addition to raising soil pH, lime provides free calcium ions, which react and form complexes with odorous sulfur species. Per the MMP, the biological waste odors would not just be masked but rather eliminated with application of lime. Lime applications would be applied when precipitation is forecasted so that the lime may be incorporated into the soil.

Rangeland and Grazing Manure Management

Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would introduce 200 sheep and an additional 30 cattle to the remaining acreage of the subject property. These animals would generate approximately 598 tons of annual manure. For the subject property's rangeland and grazing area, the MMP focused on conditions that may impair the sustainability or intended use of its natural resources. Desirable plant species for feed, live plant cover, plant diversity, plant residues as soil cover, grazing utilization, livestock concentration, soil compaction, plant vigor, and erosion were identified in the MMP as conventional causes of degradation in rangelands. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has developed a Pasture Conditions Scorecard (PCS) that is used to assess overall rangeland conditions to determine if improvements are needed that could benefit productivity and the environment. The MMP recommends that the PCS be completed annually to determine if any management activities changes are required to improve production and natural resource conditions. Adherence to the County's MMP non-standard condition of approval would ensure the grazing activities are conducted in a manner that promotes sustainable agriculture and protects the property's natural resources.

As proposed, and with implementation of non-standard condition **PDSP001**, odors associated with the operation of the Proposed Project would be minimized to the maximum extent possible and therefore would not considerably contribute to a cumulative odor impact.

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES			Less Than Significant		
Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	
a) 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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b) 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 Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c) 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? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d) 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? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29, 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan? (sources: 17,20,22,24,26,27,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Regan Biological & Horticultural Consulting (“Regan”) conducted a comprehensive assessment of biological resources (“Biological Report”) on the 18000 Corral Del Cielo property in June 2022 (Monterey County Library No. 220336; Source: 22). Regan’s assessment included querying online databases that included the California Natural Diversity Database (“CNDDB”) and the California Native Plant Society (“CNPS”) Inventory of Rare Plants and conducting field surveys on April 4 and May 30, 2022.

Regan identified primarily oak woodland and disturbed annual grassland habitats on the Project parcel. No Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (“ESHA”) or areas of special biological importance were identified on the Project property. Likewise, Regan did not identify any special status plant species on the property and determined the likelihood for any special status plant species to be present on the property was low. No special status wildlife species were identified on the Project property; however, due to proximity of available habitat and historic records of special status wildlife species on neighboring properties, Regan included recommendations and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*; “CTS”) and California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*, “CRLF”) to less than significant levels. (Source: 22).

HCD-Planning also engaged in early consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on January 9, 2023, to better determine potential biological impacts associated with implementation of the Proposed Project. CDFW indicated that burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*) have the potential to occupy the site. Burrowing owl is listed as a California Species of Special Concern. Burrowing owls are known to live and breed in abandoned ground squirrel burrows, especially those of the California ground squirrel. Ideal habitat conditions for burrowing owls consist of large, open, dry and nearly level grasslands or prairies with short to moderate vegetation height and cover, and areas of bare ground with significant populations of burrowing mammals. Burrowing owls in the west use burrows dug by other animals as sites for their nests and non-migrating owls use them year-round. They prefer burrows with elevated positioning to avoid flooding, loose soil, and nearby structures like mounds or fences to use as a lookout. Although Regan found no sign of their presence during the site visits, Regan concluded that the open grassland within the Proposed Project site could provide marginally suitable foraging habitat for burrowing owls.

CDFW also recommended that pre-construction surveys be conducted to ensure that Monterey gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora ssp. arenaria*), a federally Endangered species and Threatened state species, is not present within the Project site. As confirmed in the prepared Biological Report, Monterey gilia is not anticipated to occupy the site due to the property’s higher elevations and habitat types. Monterey gilia generally inhabits coastal dunes, coastal scrub, maritime chaparral and cismontane woodland. The nearest occurrence of this species is over 7 miles northwest of the Proposed Project site, within the Fort Ord National Monument. No impact would occur.

Biological Resources Impacts (a) and (d) Less than Significant with Mitigation: The Proposed Project could adversely affect, either directly or through habitat modifications, CTS and CRLF. Regan identified multiple occurrences of CTS and CRLF on adjacent properties. Additionally, the property immediately west of the Project parcel contains a pond and surrounding wetland vegetation abutting the western edge of the Project parcel. This pond may provide breeding habitat for CTS and CRLF. Furthermore, the Project parcel contains upland habitat for estivating CTS, which may migrate between the nearby pond and onsite upland habitat during the breeding season (Source: 22). Regan identified mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to CTS and CRLF to less than significant levels. For these reasons, this represents a potentially significant impact

that would be reduced to less than significant with implementation of **Mitigation Measure No. 1**. Further, though unlikely, the Proposed Project could also adversely impact burrowing owls. Implementation **Mitigation Measure No. 1** would ensure this potential impact is less than significant. Adherence to **Mitigation Measure No. 1** would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measure No. 1: Project Biologist. In order to ensure grading and construction are conducted in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Biological Report (LIB220366), the Applicant/Owner shall submit to HCD-Planning for review and approval a copy of a contract with a qualified biologist (“Project Biologist”). The contract shall include implementation of a Biological Education Program for Employees (“BEPE”), monitoring of initial ground disturbing and trenching activities, installation of exclusionary fencing, and a pre-construction survey for Burrowing owls.

- 1) The BEPE training session shall be conducted prior to ground disturbance and with all project staff and construction personnel. The BEPE shall instruct attendees on habitat sensitivity, identification of special-status species, required practices prior to start of construction, general measures that are being implemented to conserve these species as they relate to the project, guidelines to avoid impacts to these species during the construction period, penalties for non-compliance, and the ability for the Project Biologist to halt work.
- 2) The Project Biologist shall be retained to monitor initial grading and trenching activities. If California tiger salamander (CTS) or California red-legged frog (CRLF), or any other special status species are discovered during construction or grading, the biologist shall stop work in the area until the species has moved out of the vicinity of ground-disturbing activities on its own or stop work and notify California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS).
- 3) To reduce the potential for migrating CTS or CRLF from entering the construction areas, construction impact areas shall be enclosed with exclusionary fencing between December 1 and January 15 and kept in place until construction is completed. The exclusionary fence shall be of standard silt fencing and shall be installed around the entire perimeter of each impact area (including any construction access points which can remain open during the day but shall be closed at night to prevent access). The silt fence shall be a minimum of 24 inches tall and should be buried to a minimum of 6 inches deep. The Project Biologist shall inspect the entire perimeter of the exclusionary fence daily prior to commencement of construction activities for gaps, tears, or presence of CTS or CRLF within the exclusionary fencing. Any gaps shall be filled and corrected as soon as is practicable. If a CTS or CRLF is located within the exclusionary fence, work in the area shall stop immediately. Work shall not commence until either the CTS or CRLF has moved outside of the impact area on its own or until the Project biologist has contacted CDFW and/or USFWS for guidance on next steps.

- 4) The Project Biologist shall conduct a standard burrowing owl survey, per the guidelines set forth by the 1993 CDFW Burrowing owl survey protocol, prior to the start of construction. If the Burrowing owl is determined to be present, then the Project Biologist shall follow the guidelines of the 1993 CDFW Burrowing owl survey protocol and set forth mitigation to avoid and minimize impacts. If the results of the pre-construction surveys are negative for Burrowing owls, then the Project Biologist shall submit the survey results to HCD-Planning for review prior to the start of construction.
- 5) A final report shall be submitted to HCD-Planning for review and approval that is sufficient in detail to explain how protection objectives have been met and any impacts incurred outside those previously analyzed including, though not limited to deviation from measures, modifications required in the field, occurrences of halting construction and/or any other issues identified.

Mitigation Measure No. 1 Compliance Actions:

Prior to issuance of permits from Building Services, the applicant/owner shall submit to HCD-Planning for review and approval a copy of a contract with a qualified biologist to prepare the BEPE, provide the required training, conduct on-going initial ground disturbing monitoring, oversee installation of the exclusionary fencing (if construction occurs between December 1 and January 15), and ensure on-going compliance with these measures.

Prior to project-related ground disturbance, the project biologist shall submit the pre-construction burrowing owl survey results to HCD-Planning. If occurrences were documented, the Project Biologist shall adhere to the requirements of this mitigation.

Prior to project-related ground disturbance, the project biologist shall conduct a worker training session for all project staff and upon completion of the training session, applicant/owner shall provide to HCD-Planning a copy of the form signed by all training attendees.

Prior to final inspection of grading and/or construction permits from Building Services, Owner/Applicant/Project Biologist shall submit to HCD-Planning for review and approval a final report detailing how protection objectives have been met and any impacts incurred outside those previously analyzed including, though not limited to deviation from measures, modifications required in the field, occurrences of halting construction and/or any other issues identified.

Various bird species may nest on open ground or in any type of vegetation at or adjacent to the Proposed Project site. Construction activities have the potential to impact nesting birds protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. Noise-generating construction activities could result in the loss of fertile eggs, nestlings, or otherwise lead to nest abandonment, which would represent a significant impact. This would be a potentially significant impact that can be reduced to a less than significant level with application of the County's standard "RAPTOR/MIGRATORY BIRD NESTING" condition of approval which

requires the Applicant to retain a qualified biologist to conduct pre-construction bird nesting survey during the typical nesting season (February 22 - August 1), if construction occurs during this period. If nesting birds or other protected avian species are found within 300 feet of the project site and within 30 days of construction activities, an appropriate buffer plan shall be established by the project biologist. The Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact on nesting birds with implementation of this standard permit condition.

Biological Resources Impact (b) and (c) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts to sensitive habitats or riparian or wetland habitats. No wetlands or streams are located within the construction footprints of proposed buildings or within the proposed grazing pastures. The Project property contains an intermittent tributary to Watson Creek and associated riparian habitat along the southern boundary of the property. Construction of the Proposed Project could generate surface runoff that may affect the tributary to Watson Creek. Because most Project components are located in relatively flat areas that are not immediately adjacent to the stream, potential runoff reaching the tributary would be primarily limited to grading activities associated with extending Ranch Road D and creating Ranch Road E. As discussed in **Section IV.9**, the Proposed Project would implement standard construction best management practices (“BMPs”) and erosion control measures (e.g., minimize grading, re-vegetate disturbed areas, etc.) that would minimize potential impacts associated with the Project. Furthermore, existing ranch roads which are located on steep slopes adjacent to the tributary were previously graded with the implementation of standard construction BMPs and erosion control measures (e.g., placement of jute mat, wattles, and silt fencing) during and after grading. Therefore, it is unlikely that construction of the Proposed Project would result in significant impacts to the tributary or riparian habitat. Implementation of standard construction BMPs and erosion control measures, and adherence to the MMP (**Condition of Approval PDSP001**) would ensure potential impacts to riparian and stream habitats remain less than significant.

Potential impacts on nearby tributaries and associated riparian habitats from the sheep and cattle grazing operation may occur. However, those components of the Abalone Creek Ranch are not part of the Proposed Project’s discretionary actions. See **Section II.A** for more details.

Biological Resources Impacts (e) Less than Significant Impact: No native trees would be removed during Project activities (Source: 30). Trees within proximity to construction and grading areas would be protected in accordance with the requirements of Monterey County Code Chapter 21.64.260 and the Oak Woodlands Conservation Act, and as required through application of the County’s standard ‘TREE AND ROOT PROTECTION’ condition of approval (**PD011**). The Proposed Project would have a less than significant conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, nor would the Project conflict with any adopted habitat conservation plan or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan affecting the subject property.

Biological Resources Impacts (f) No Impact: There are no adopted habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat

conservation plans adopted for the subject property or surrounding properties. Therefore, no impact would occur.

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5? (sources: 13,17,20,23)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5? (sources: 13,17,20,23)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries? (sources: 13,17,20,23)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The following discussion is based on the results of the 2021 Historic Resource Associates (“HRA”) Cultural Resources Assessment Report (Monterey County Library No. LIB230072; Source 13). HRA conducted background research which included a records search of the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System. An extensive files and maps search was also conducted to support the evaluation. A surface-level field survey was also conducted on February 23, 2021, within the project footprint. No cultural or archaeological resources were identified during the field survey. Additionally, HRA concluded there was no evidence of historic development at the site and that Native American settlement at the Project site would have been unlikely due to the lack of readily available freshwater resources in the area.

Cultural Resources Impact (a) No Impact: CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 defines a historical resource as one being listed in or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Public Resources Code Section 21084.1 states that 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. No historical resources are located on the Project site (Source: 13). Therefore, the Project would not result in any impacts to historical resources.

Cultural Resources Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project is in an area of high archaeological sensitivity. The Project site is located within one mile of eight prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. However, no historic or prehistoric archaeological sites are located within the Project parcel (Source: 13). Additionally, based on their research and field surveys, HRA concluded that it was unlikely that any prehistoric or historic settlement occurred at the Project site and that no additional on-site archaeological studies were necessary. Furthermore, the Proposed Project would be required to comply with the recommendations of a design-level

geotechnical analysis, which would limit subsurface excavation to ensure any impacts to unknown archaeological resources remain less than significant. Lastly, the Proposed Project would implement the standard County condition of approval “PD003B” requiring that work halt in the event of the discovery of any cultural, archaeological, historical, or paleontological resources which would further ensure that impacts would be less than significant. For these reasons, this represents a less than significant impact. For a discussion of potential impacts to tribal cultural resources, please refer to **Section IV.18 Tribal Cultural Resources** of this Initial Study. **Section IV.18 Tribal Cultural Resources** includes mitigation for tribal cultural resource monitoring during initial ground disturbing activities associated with structural development, in addition to the standard County condition of approval “PD003B”.

Cultural Resource Impact (c) Less than Significant: No human remains, including those interred outside of a formal cemetery, are known to occur on the Proposed Project site. HRA found no evidence of historic or prehistoric development within the Project site. As a result, it is unlikely that any human remains would be encountered during construction. Nevertheless, while unlikely, the Proposed Project could impact previously unknown human remains. The implementation of standard County condition of approval “PD003B” would require work to halt in the event that any human remains are discovered. The implementation of this County condition of approval would ensure that impacts would be less than significant. This condition further requires that no excavation or ground-disturbing activities shall occur at the site or nearby area until the Monterey County coroner has been contacted in accordance with §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code. If the coroner determines that the human remains are of Native American origin, the appropriate Native American tribe shall be contacted to provide recommendations for the disposition of the remains. Work would not resume in the immediate area of the discovery until such time as the remains have been appropriately removed from the site. For these reasons, this represents a less than significant impact.

6. ENERGY	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation? (sources: 17,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency? (sources: 17,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact relative to energy.

7. GEOLOGY AND SOILS		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a)	Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the 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? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28) Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii)	Strong seismic ground shaking? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii)	Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv)	Landslides ? (sources : 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	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 off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Chapter 18B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	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? (sources: 19,21,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature? (19,21,23,25,26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Soil Surveys Group, Inc. (“Soil Surveys Group”) prepared three separate geotechnical investigations for the Proposed Project in 2021 and 2022 (Monterey County Library Nos. 22067, LIB220368, and LIB220374; Source: 25, 26, and 27, respectively). Soil Surveys Group assessed the following geotechnical hazards that could potentially affect the Project site: seismic shaking and ground surface fault rupture, liquefaction, and soil suitability including potential for landslides and presence of expansive soils (Sources: 25 & 26). Soils Surveys Group also assessed the suitability of on-site soils to support the proposed septic system (Source: 27). This discussion is based on the findings of all three geotechnical assessments as well as information gathered from the Monterey County Geologic Hazards Map (Source: 19).

Seismicity and Fault Zones

The geologic structure of Central California is primarily the result of tectonic events during the past 30 million years. Faults in the area are believed to be a result of movements along the Pacific and North American tectonic plate boundaries. The movements along these plates are northwest-trending and largely composed of the San Andreas Fault system. Monterey County’s complex geology is a result of changes in sea level and tectonic uplifting. Geologic units in the region have been displaced by faulting and folding. Granitic basement and overlying tertiary deposits have been juxtaposed along many of the northwest/southeast-trending faults.

The Project is located off Corral Del Cielo Road, in unincorporated Monterey County, California. The Project site is not within the Alquist Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (Source: 19). No faults are located within the Project site; the nearest known active or potentially active faults to the Project site are the Harden fault, located approximately 0.6 miles to the northeast and the Corral de Tierra fault, located approximately two miles southwest of the Project site (Sources: 19, 25 & 26). Soil Surveys Group determined that the Project had low risk of surface rupture, liquefaction, lateral spreading, and soil compaction and settlement from seismic activity.

Soils

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) characterizes soils within the Project site as mostly Placentia sandy loam, two to nine percent slopes and Chualar loam, five to nine percent slopes. These soil types are typically found in terraces and alluvial fans at elevations of 30 to 2,660 feet above sea level. These soils are “well drained” and have medium and low runoff, respectively (Source: 21). Near-surface soils at the site are loose, silty, fine to coarse grained sand with deeper soils consisting of dense, silty, clayey, sand, overlying dense fine to coarse grained decomposed granite (Sources: 25 & 26).

Geology and Soils Impact (a.i) No Impact: The Proposed Project is not located within any of the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones established by the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone Act of 1972. No impact would occur.

Geology and Soils Impact (a.ii) and (a.iii) Less than Significant: While the Proposed Project is not located in an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, the Project site is located within a region that is seismically active. Due to the proximity of the Proposed Project to active and potentially active faults, there is the potential for seismic ground shaking at the site during the design lifetime of the structure. While the Proposed Project could be exposed to seismically induced hazards, the

Proposed Project would be required to comply with California Building Code seismic design standards. In addition, Soil Surveys Group determined that there was low potential at the Project site for surface rupture, given that no faults are located within the Project site. Soil Surveys Group also determined that the Project would have low susceptibility to liquefaction or other seismic-related ground failure due to the relatively high density of deeper soils at the Project site and the absence of groundwater during subsurface testing. All recommendations of the geotechnical report are required to be implemented into the final construction plans pursuant to Monterey County Code Chapter 16.080.110. As a result, potential impacts due to seismic hazards would be minimized. This represents a less than significant impact.

Geology and Soils Impact (a.iv) Less than Significant: The Project site is located in an area of low landslide susceptibility (Sources: 19, 25 & 26). The majority of the Project site is moderately flat. As a result, it is unlikely that the Proposed Project would be exposed to potential landslide-related hazards. Moreover, the Project would be required to comply with the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would ensure any potential impacts from landslides remain less than significant. This represents a less than significant impact.

Geology and Soils Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project is located in an area identified as having moderate to high erosion (Source: 19). Consequently, project-related grading and excavation could result in localized erosion, particularly in areas where grading would occur on slopes greater than 25%, which is limited to sections of Ranch Road D and the entirety of Ranch Road E. All other Project components would be constructed on slopes less than 20%. The Proposed Project would implement standard construction BMPs intended to minimize potential erosion-related effects and would also be required to implement standard erosion control measures during construction. Similarly, the Proposed Project would be required to implement the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis to further ensure erosion impacts would be minimized. Finally, the Proposed Project would also be required to comply with the requirements of Monterey County Code Chapter 16.08 and 16.12. The implementation of standard construction BMPs, in addition to adhering to applicable Monterey County Code requirements, would ensure that impacts would be minimized. Therefore, the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact.

Geology and Soils Impact (c) through (e) Less than Significant: Soils within the Project site have low liquefaction susceptibility and no groundwater was encountered during site exploration (Sources: 25 & 26). The Project site is also not located in a known subsidence zone (Source: 28). Therefore, it is unlikely the Project would be subject to liquefaction or subsidence-related hazards. While the Project site is in a seismically active region, surface rupture and lateral spreading are unlikely (Sources: 25 & 26). Furthermore, the site inspection completed during the preparation of the geotechnical investigations did not reveal surface features indicating fault rupture or subsurface lateral or vertical displacements. Soil Surveys Group identified “slightly expansive” soils at the Project site. However, Soil Surveys Group also provided recommendations and measures that would ensure potential impacts related to expansive soils would be less than significant. Soil Surveys Group determined the site was suitable for construction of the Proposed Project with implementation of these recommendations. All recommendations of the geotechnical and

geological report are required to be implemented into the final construction plans pursuant to Monterey County Code section 16.080.110 and therefore adherence to this requirement would reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

The Proposed Project includes installation of a septic system. Soil Surveys Group conducted onsite testing in 2022 to assess adequacy of soils for supporting the proposed septic system. Soil Surveys Group drilled a groundwater monitoring boring and three percolation test hole borings at the Project site in May 2022. Soil Surveys Group did not observe groundwater at a maximum explored depth of 30 feet below ground surface and determined that percolation rates at the Proposed Project site were generally suitable for supporting the proposed septic system (Source: 27). For these reasons, this represents a less than significant impact.

Geology and Soils Impact (f) No Impact: Significant paleontological resources are fossils or assemblages of fossils that are unique, unusual, rare, uncommon, and diagnostically or stratigraphically important, as well as those that add to an existing body of knowledge in specific areas, stratigraphically, taxonomically, or regionally. They include fossil remains of large to very small aquatic and terrestrial vertebrates, remains of plants and animals previously not represented in certain portions of the stratigraphy, and assemblages of fossils that might aid stratigraphic correlations – particularly those offering data for the interpretation of tectonic events, geomorphic evolution, paleoclimatology, and the relationships of aquatic and terrestrial species. Most of the fossils found in Monterey County are of marine life forms and form a record of the region’s geologic history of advancing and retreating sea levels. A review of nearly 700 known fossil localities within the County was conducted by paleontologists in 2001; 12 fossil sites were identified as having outstanding scientific value. The Project site is not located on or near any of the sites identified (Source: 23). No impact would occur.

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment? (Source: 15,16)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? (Source: 15,16)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Various gases in the earth’s atmosphere, when exceeding naturally occurring or ‘background’ levels due to human activity, create a warming or greenhouse effect, and are classified as atmospheric greenhouse gases (“GHGs”). These gases play a critical role in determining the earth’s surface temperature. Solar radiation enters the atmosphere from space and a portion of the

radiation is absorbed by the earth's surface. The earth emits this radiation back toward space, but the properties of the radiation change from high-frequency solar radiation to lower-frequency infrared radiation. GHGs, which are transparent to solar radiation, are effective in absorbing infrared radiation. As a result, the radiation that otherwise would have escaped back into space is retained, resulting in a warming of the atmosphere known as the greenhouse effect. Among the prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect, or climate change, are carbon dioxide ("CO₂"), methane ("CH₄"), ozone ("O₃"), water vapor, nitrous oxide ("N₂O"), and chlorofluorocarbons ("CFCs"). Human-caused emissions of these GHGs in excess of natural ambient concentrations are responsible for the greenhouse effect. In California, the transportation sector is the largest emitter of GHGs.

MBARD has not yet adopted a threshold for construction-related GHG emissions but recommends utilizing thresholds set by neighboring districts (e.g., Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District ["SMAQMD"]). SMAQMD adopted an updated threshold based on the 2030 target year in April 2020. According to SMAQMD, a project would result in a significant GHG-related impact if it would emit more than 1,100 metric tons of Carbon Dioxide equivalent-CO₂e ("MTOCO₂e") per year. Operation of a stationary source project would not have a significant GHG impact if the project emits less than 10,000 MTOCO₂e.

The County of Monterey is in the process of developing a Community Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CCAAP) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the unincorporated county area. In August 2022, a Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Report was prepared for the County's CCAAP (Source: 35). The CCAAP is intended to align with the requirements of the County's 2010 General Plan, as well as State mandates, and will serve to reduce GHG emissions for target years 2030 and 2045. The long-term target year of 2045 was chosen to align with the statewide carbon neutrality goal expressed in Executive Order B-55-18.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (a) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would generate temporary construction related GHG emissions and would emit GHGs during operation. During construction, the Proposed Project would emit a maximum of 279 MTOCO₂e per year during the construction phase (Source: 32; Monterey County Library No. LIB240073). The Project is in the NCCAB, where air quality is regulated by MBARD. According to significance thresholds recommended by MBARD, if a project emits less than 1,100 MTOCO₂e per year, its GHG emissions impact would be less than significant. Because Project construction would result in fewer GHG emissions than the established threshold, construction impacts would be less than significant.

Operation of the Project would emit approximately 85 MTOCO₂e annually (Source: 32). MBARD determined that if operation of a project emits less than 10,000 MTOCO₂e then its impact would be less than significant. This calculation is made by combining the estimated GHG emissions generated by construction, amortized over a 30-year period, with the estimated annual GHG emissions resulting from operation of the Proposed Project.

The Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Report for the County’s CCAAP was prepared to establish baseline GHG conditions for which future emission levels and future reduction targets could be measured and to better understand the sectors and sources generating GHG emissions. The Inventory Report analyzed seven sectors: Building Energy, On-Road, Off-Road, Solid Waste, Wastewater, Agriculture, and Water. Based on modeling conducted, emissions from the agriculture sector accounted for approximately 266,917 MTOCO_{2e} in 2019, or 24 percent of the county’s emissions. Emissions in this sector are generated from livestock management, fertilizer application, the operation of agricultural equipment, and open burning. Emissions from livestock, which include enteric fermentation and manure management, accounted for 40 percent of emissions from the agriculture sector (106,512 MTOCO_{2e}) or 9.67 percent of the County’s total emissions. The following table establishes the quantity of GHG emissions generated per head of livestock type as well as the total MTOCO_{2e} that would be generated by the total proposed livestock quantities [30 cattle, 10 hogs, 11 horses (and llamas), 200 sheep, 499 chickens]. The

	Enteric Fermentation Factor (kg CH₄/head/yr)	Manure Management (kg CH₄/head/yr)	Manure Management (kg N₂O/head/yr)	Total Emissions (MTOCO_{2e}/head/yr)¹	MTOCO_{2e} for the total quantity of livestock/yr
Cattle	95.45	3.18	0.00	2.93	88
Hogs	1.5	16.22	0.10	0.53	5.3
Horses²	18	3.29	1.34	0.67	7.37
Sheep	8	0.70	0.40	0.27	54
Poultry	0.00	0.10	0.02	0.029	14.88
				TOTAL:	191.8

1. Multiplied by respective global warming potentials (GWP) and subsequently divided by 1,000 to convert to MTOCO_{2e}. CH₄ has a GWP of 29.8 and N₂O has a GWP of 273.
2. Llamas are included in this livestock category.

Thus, in addition to the 85 MTOCO_{2e} that would be generated by the operation of the Project, the keeping of the proposed livestock, chickens, and other animals would generate 191.8 MTOCO_{2e} per year (Source: 35). The Project’s estimated 191.8 MTOCO_{2e} per year is based on the animal quantities established in the Draft Agriculture Operations Plan (499 or fewer poultry, approximately 200 sheep, 30 cattle, 10 pigs, four horses, up to six llamas, up to four dogs, and one donkey). Approximately 35 cattle (including the 30 cattle that occupy the site currently under a grazing contract, see Section II. B), 26 sheep, 2 guardian llamas, and 15 chickens currently occupy the project site (baseline conditions) (see Section II.A). Thus, the estimated 191.8 MTOCO_{2e} per year is an overestimate. With a total 276.8 MTOCO_{2e}, the operational emissions associated with the Proposed Project as well as the keeping of animals would be well below the threshold of 10,000 MTOCO_{2e}. Therefore, operational impacts would be less than significant.

Both construction and operational GHG emissions would be well below the established thresholds recommended by MBARD. Construction would emit a maximum of 279 MTOCO_{2e} per year (compared to the 1,100 MTOCO_{2e} per year threshold). Operation would result in 276.8 MTOCO_{2e} per year (compared to the 10,000 MTOCO_{2e} per year threshold). Therefore, the Project would not result in a significant impact.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (b) No Impact: As described above, the Project is not expected to generate GHG emissions that would exceed applicable thresholds. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. This represents no impact.

9. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials? (sources: 5,17)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment? (sources: 5,17)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school? (sources:5,17)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) 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, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment? (sources: 5,17)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) 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, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area? (sources: 5,17, 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? (sources: 5,17,18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires? (sources: 5,7,17)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Hazardous materials, as defined by the California Code of Regulations, are substances with certain physical properties that could pose a substantial present or future hazard to human health or the

environment when improperly handled, disposed of, or otherwise managed. Hazardous waste is any hazardous material that is discarded, abandoned, or slated to be recycled. Hazardous materials and waste can result in public health hazards if improperly handled, released into the soil or groundwater, or through airborne releases in vapors, fumes, or dust. Soil and groundwater having concentrations of hazardous constituents higher than specific regulatory levels must be handled and disposed of as hazardous waste when excavated or pumped from an aquifer.

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site (“Cortese”) List is a planning tool used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with CEQA requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the California EPA (“CalEPA”) to develop at least annually an updated Cortese List. Various state and local government agencies are required to track and document hazardous material release information for the Cortese List. There are no hazardous materials release sites in the vicinity of the Project site. Similarly, according to the California Department of Toxic Substances Control’s (“DTSC”) *EnviroStor* database, there are no contaminated sites within the vicinity of the Project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials Impacts (a and b) Less than Significant: Construction of the Proposed Project would not involve the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Further, the Proposed Project could generate surface runoff that may contain urban pollutants from vehicles including oil, grease, and heavy metals during construction. Construction activities would, however, require the temporary use of hazardous substances, such as fuel for construction equipment. These impacts would be temporary in nature. Minor hazardous materials used during construction would not constitute a significant hazard to the public due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Hazardous materials would be handled and (if needed) stored in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials.

In addition, the Proposed Project would be required to implement a spill prevention, containment, and countermeasures plan or, for smaller quantities, a spill prevention and response plan would be established for the Proposed Project, pursuant to 40 CFR 112. This plan would identify Best Management Practices (“BMPs”) for spill and release prevention and provide procedures and responsibilities for clean-up and disposal of any spills or releases that could potentially occur during operation of the Proposed Project. Plans for notification and evacuation of site workers and local residents in the event of a hazardous materials release would be in place throughout the construction phase as required under state and federal law. Additionally, the Proposed Project would implement standard Monterey County Code BMPs and erosion control measures (e.g., minimize grading, re-vegetate disturbed areas, etc.) that would minimize potential impacts associated with the Project. The Proposed Project’s compliance with various federal, state, and local regulations as implemented by Monterey County would minimize the risk of a spill or accidental release of hazardous materials. Air emissions from animal waste at a farm are exempt from reporting under CERCLA and EPCRA. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

The Monterey County Environmental Health Director (Bureau Chief) and CDFA have confirmed that the proposed keeping of livestock and small fowl raised within an open pasture would not pose a public health risk, including the spreading of disease, because of the scale of the operation and provided the Abalone Creek Ranch adheres to the prepared Manure Management Plan (Non-standard Condition **PDSP001**; see **Section III(d)**). CDFA also confirmed that Avian Flu is not anticipated to be present as the poultry would be raised on-site from a young age and not transported to the site as adults.

Adherence to the prepared MMP and existing regulations and compliance with the safety procedures mandated by federal, state, and local laws and regulations would minimize the risks resulting from the routine transportation, use, storage, or disposal of hazardous materials or the release of hazardous materials associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Project to a less than significant level.

Hazard and Hazardous Materials Impact (c) through (e) No Impact: The Project site is not located within a quarter mile of a school, nor is the Project site located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (Source: 5). Likewise, the Project site is not within an airport land use plan or within two miles of an airport (Source: 30). Therefore, no impact would occur.

Hazard and Hazardous Materials Impact (f) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not substantially interfere with or impair the implementation of any emergency response plans or evacuation plans. Primary evacuation routes near the Project site are SR 68 and SR 1. A secondary evacuation route near the Proposed Project is River Road (Source: 18). Additionally, as discussed in **Section VI.17 Transportation/Traffic**, the Project would not substantially increase traffic in the area beyond existing levels and would comply with the Monterey County standard conditions of approval, which require implementation of a County-approved Construction Management Plan that includes measures for minimizing construction-related traffic impacts. Furthermore, the Project would conform with all County and MCRFD requirements regarding emergency access. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant impact to an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.

Hazard and Hazardous Materials Impact (g) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project is in a High Fire Severity Zone within a State Responsibility Area (Source: 7) Construction and operation of the Project could result in sparks or other sources of ignition in dry areas, which could expose persons and structures to wildland fire hazards. Hazards during construction would be temporary in nature. Additionally, both construction and operation of the Project would comply with all applicable fire safety provisions (e.g., sprinklers, water supply for fire suppression, defensible space requirements) and applicable local and state building codes pertaining to wildfire protection, thereby reducing the risk of damage from wildland fire. Compliance with all applicable fire regulations would reduce potential fire impacts. However, because the Project site is in a High Fire Severity Zone, there is potential for significant fire-related impacts to occur. MCRFD has reviewed the prepared Fuel Management Plan and raised no concerns (Source: 30). In accordance with Public Resource Code section 4291, the Applicant/Owner would be required to adhere to the

prepared Fuel Management Plan during construction and operation, thereby ensuring impacts would be less than significant.

10. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality? (sources: 1,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin? (sources: 1,8,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) 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 the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site? (sources: 1,14,17,19,21,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite? (sources: 1,9,14,17,19,21,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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? (sources: 1,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) impede or redirect flood flows? (sources: 1,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation? (sources: 1,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan? (sources: 1,8,14,17,19,24,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The Project site is located within the Watson Creek Subbasin of the Salinas River Watershed. The Project site is located on flat to gently sloping terrain surrounded by steep slopes. A drainage

course (i.e., unnamed tributary), which leads into Watson Creek, is located in the southern extent of the Project property. The Proposed Project would include a new onsite water well and water storage tanks totaling 152,400 gallons (Source: 30). The Project would also involve manure production and application to grazing pastures. As discussed in **Section IV.7**, the Proposed Project is located in an area identified as having moderate to high erosion (Source: 19) which could impact water quality or result in erosion or siltation impacts. Bierman Hydrogeologic (“BHgl”) conducted assessments of the potential impacts associated with water demand and water quality at the Project site in March and May of 2023. Additionally, as discussed in **Section IV.4 Biological Resources**, a Manure Management Plan (MMP) was prepared by Dellavalle Laboratory in 2023 to assess potential environmental impacts related to manure production and application at the Project site and to ensure any impacts were less than significant. The following discussion is supported by these assessments.

Hydrology and Water Quality Impact (a) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality. Construction would result in ground-disturbing activities from excavation and grading. These activities could generate temporary soil erosion onsite, which could affect existing water quality. To minimize construction-related impacts, the Proposed Project would be required to implement standard construction BMPs and erosion control measures intended to minimize potential erosion-related effects during construction. Moreover, the Proposed Project would be required to comply with the requirements of Monterey County Code Chapter 16.08, which would ensure that temporary construction-related water quality impact would be minimized.

Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would include the keeping and raising of chickens, hogs, llamas, dogs, horses, donkeys, sheep, and cattle, which generate approximately 705 tons of manure annually (Source: 24). These activities would generate manure and could result in degraded water quality through nutrient runoff. The prepared MMP discusses the keeping of all animals proposed by the Abalone Creek Ranch and establishes recommendations to address potential impacts to surface and groundwater quality, as well as impacts, both on and off-site, from objectionable odors, vectors, noise, and visual aesthetics.

The Proposed Project could result in impacts to existing water quality through nutrient runoff. Manure from the proposed livestock, chickens and other animals would be contained onsite and used as fertilizer. In accordance with the MMP, manure would be spread on the pastures through a combination of rotational grazing activities and pull-chain harrow. Application of manure as fertilizer could result in potential water quality impacts from nutrient runoff (Source: 24). To ensure any potential impacts associated with manure application remain less than significant, Project operation would be required to comply with the recommendations of the MMP, which are designed to avoid and minimize nutrient runoff and promote nutrient infiltration in the various pastures. Non-standard condition **PDSPS001** requires the recommendations of the MMP be implemented on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, the Proposed Project would also be required to comply with the requirements of Monterey County Code Chapters 16.08 and 16.12 to ensure erosion impacts would be minimized. Additionally, the final design of the Proposed Project would

be required to implement the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would further ensure that any erosion-related impacts were less than significant.

Hydrology and Water Quality Impact (b) and (e) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the Project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. Further, the operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would not contribute to a cumulative impact related to groundwater supplies or recharge. The Project would also not substantially conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. The El Toro Planning Area includes five Subareas and is based on local topographic drainage divides which include: Calera Creek, Watson Creek, Corral de Tierra, San Benancio Gulch, and El Toro Creek. The water supply for the El Toro Planning Area is derived from groundwater for which the Subareas are hydrogeologically connected (Source: 30). The Proposed Project would be located within the Watson Creek Subbasin in the greater El Toro Planning Area, which also includes the El Toro Primary Aquifer System (“Primary Aquifer System”). The Primary Aquifer System is considered to be in overdraft; however, previous technical studies have shown that current and increasing rates of pumping could be sustained for decades in areas with suitable saturated thickness in the Primary Aquifer System (Source: 30). BHgl determined that the Project site had sufficient saturated thickness of the formation which underlies the Project site to support development (i.e., the Z-Ranch Development) and the Proposed Project. Additionally, the Project is not considered to be within the Primary Aquifer System and would therefore not directly contribute to overdraft of the Primary Aquifer System (Source: 30). Based on a previous El Toro Groundwater Study prepared by Geosyntec for the County of Monterey Water Resources Agency (“MCWRA”), BHgl also concluded that groundwater levels beneath the Project site have not changed significantly in almost 50 years (Sources: 1 & 31). Further, groundwater elevation data provided by MCWRA for the two closest monitoring wells (16S/03E-17F01 and 16S/03E-17F02) to the subject Project site indicate that historical groundwater elevations have an increasing trend in groundwater elevations in more recent years, with some oscillation in the groundwater elevation that correlates with drought periods (Source: 30).

Additionally, BHgl determined that the proposed well would not result in any adverse impacts to creeks, springs, existing offsite wells (including the wells supporting the Z-Ranch development), or groundwater quality. All of the neighboring private wells are ground-truthed including the two closest neighboring wells, which are 515-ft and 535-ft from the proposed well location. BHgl determined that these wells are not within the proposed well’s radius of influence (400 feet after 1-year of pumping at the Average Day Demand). After 50-years of intermittent pumping, the proposed well’s radius of influence would be 1,000 feet, at which point a well within 500 feet would only have 0.56 foot of drawdown. This represents a less than significant impact and there would be no cumulatively significant impacts to any offsite wells, including the Z-Ranch well-field. Further, given the difference in depths of each off-site well, the horizontal distance between these wells and the technical calculations presented in BHgl’s assessment concluded that there would be no hydrogeologic interference between the proposed well and offsite wells and no cumulative significant impacts to either the El Toro Primary Aquifer System or Marine Sandstone or Fractured Granite Aquifer (Source: 30).

The MCWRA reviewed and agreed with the conclusions of the assessments conducted by BHgl. Further, MCWRA prepared an independent Well Impact Assessment dated November 15, 2023 (Source: 31) and concluded that the proposed well, at its current location and with its proposed design (800 feet deep with 130 to 800 foot screening intervals) and pumping rate (7.95 gallons per minute), would not have a significant adverse impact on existing domestic wells, water system wells, or in-stream flows based on regional aquifer parameters and the methodology applied to meet the criteria of Policy PS-3.3 of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan and the requirements set forth in Governor’s Executive Order N-7-22, which aims to address California’s “extreme and expanding drought conditions” and requires that new wells do not interfere with or damage nearby wells or their infrastructure. Furthermore, the Proposed Project would include an onsite septic system, which may contribute to groundwater recharge through infiltration after wastewater has been decontaminated by the septic system. For these reasons, this represents a less than significant impact to groundwater resources.

Hydrology and Water Quality Impact (c) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not result in alteration of any rivers or stream courses and would not significantly alter drainage at the Project site. The Project would include construction of new impervious surfaces; however, impervious surfaces from the Proposed Project would cover only 0.28% of the total subject parcel area. Approximately 0.22% of the total impervious cover would be from building coverage. The maximum allowable building coverage on the subject parcel is 5% (Souce: 30). The Proposed Project would be used for free-range rotational pastured grazing and related agricultural activities, pursuant to the property’s zoning restrictions. Nearly all of the area within the subject parcel (99.7%) would comprise permeable surfaces. Therefore, creation of impervious surfaces would not substantially alter drainage at the Project site. This represents a less than significant impact.

Hydrology and Water Quality Impact (d) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project is not located in an area subject to significant seiche, tsunami, or flooding effects. FEMA designates the Project site as being located in an area of minimal flood risk (Source: 9). Additionally, the California Office of Emergency Services indicates that the Project site is located outside of any tsunami hazard areas. As a result, the Project would not result in the risk of pollutants due to Project inundation from a tsunami, seiche, or flood hazard. This represents a less than significant impact.

11. LAND USE AND PLANNING	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community? (sources: 14,17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a significant 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? (sources: 14,17,20, 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The Project is regulated by the Toro Area Plan. The Toro Area Plan identifies the land use designation of the Project site as Permanent Grazing. This land use category supports preservation, enhancement, and expansion of exclusive grazing and associated grazing operations within parcels that are at least 40 acres in size. The overall philosophy of the Toro Area Plan is to maintain rural density development, conserve and expand existing agricultural land use, and to maintain the visual value of scenic vistas and corridors. The Project also falls under the Monterey County Code Chapter 16.40 (Right to Farm), which protects lawful and properly conducted agricultural operations from nuisance claims (i.e., complaints of noise, odors, etc.). Moreover, pursuant to the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, routine and ongoing agricultural activities are exempt from a number of policies meant to regulate development in Monterey County, including several policies pertaining to visual and scenic resources (see detailed discussion below).

Land Use and Planning Impact (a) No Impact: The division or disruption of an established community would occur if a project were to create a physical barrier that separates, isolates, or divides a portion of a built community. The physical division of a community is traditionally associated with the construction of large-scale transportation improvements (e.g., highways) or the creation of a large university campus. The Proposed Project would consist of constructing a livestock barn and accessory structures as well as other site improvements (e.g., agricultural well and pond) to be used for operation of a family ranch and farm on a parcel that is designated as Permanent Grazing land. Due to the nature of the Project and the location, the Project would not create a barrier that would divide an established community. Therefore, no impact would occur.

Land Use and Planning Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Project site is regulated by the Toro Area Plan. The Toro Area Plan identifies the land use designation of the Project site as Permanent Grazing. This land use category supports preservation, enhancement, and expansion of exclusive grazing and associated grazing operations on parcels of at least 40 acres in size. The Proposed Project consists of constructing a livestock barn and accessory structures for grazing and agricultural use (i.e., equipment/machine sheds, livestock shed, potting shed, etc.), and associated site improvements including, but not limited to, improving ranch roads and drilling a water well (Source: 30).

Operation of the Proposed Project would include the keeping and raising of various livestock, including 499 or fewer chickens, 200 sheep, 30 cattle (in addition to the 30 cattle that currently occupy the site under a grazing contract), 10 pigs, and other animals (Source: 30). The Proposed Project is not subject to certain policies from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan because Monterey County Code Chapter 16.40 (Right to Farm), states that agricultural operations are not subject to the same regulations as other types of development in Monterey County. The purpose of Chapter 16.40 of the Monterey County Code is to increase awareness with the general public of the potential conditions that result from accepted agricultural practices in Monterey County and of the potential inconveniences or discomforts associated with living in and/or visiting a county with a strong rural character and healthy agricultural sector and with related "right to farm" protections, so long as the agricultural operations are conducted in a manner consistent with proper and

accepted customs and standards. These potential inconveniences or discomforts may include, but are not limited to, noises, odors, lights, fumes, insects, dust, chemicals, smoke, the operation of machinery (including aircraft), agricultural truck traffic, crop rotation, and impacts associated with the presence of a large labor force.

Policy AG-3.3 of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan establishes the following activities as “Routine and On-Going Agricultural Activities”: 1) pasture and rangeland management; 2) conversion of agricultural land to other agricultural uses; 3) preparation of product for market, and delivery of product to market; 4) planting, harvesting, cultivation, tillage, selection, rotation, irrigation, fallowing, and all soil preparation activities; 5) raising of livestock, poultry, fur bearing animals, dairying, or fish; 6) maintenance of sediment basins, stock ponds, irrigation and tail water return systems, stream bank and grade stabilization, water retention and pumping facilities, erosion control and surface drainage activities; 7) maintenance of farm access roads, trails, and parking facilities; 8) fencing, corrals, animal handling facilities; 9) greenhouses, sheds, storage and outbuildings; and 10) emergency activity that protects the health and safety of the general public. All components of the Proposed Project and Abalone Creek Ranch are considered “Routine and On-Going Agricultural Activities.” According to 2010 Monterey County General Plan Policy AG-3.3, “Routine and On-Going Agricultural Activities” are exempt from certain General Plan policies, including Policies C-5.3 (Scenic Highway Corridors), C-5.4 (Scenic Highway Corridors), OS-1.9 (Views), OS-1.12 (Scenic Routes), OS-5.5 (Native Vegetation), OS-6.3 (Archaeological Sites), OS-7.3 (Paleontological Sites), OS-8.3 (Burial Sites), OS-10.8 (Air Quality), and S-2.3 (Floodplain). While these policies are not applicable to the Proposed Project, this Initial Study includes a detailed evaluation of potential environmental effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Project and mitigation has been identified to ensure impacts would be less than significant.

In accordance with Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.1 and 2010 Monterey County General Plan Policy OS-1.2, the Proposed Project’s rustic and ranch architectural style, consisting of vertical redwood siding, dark bronze non-reflective metal standing seam roofing, and copper gutters, would enhance the scenic value of the surrounding rural area and be subordinate to the surrounding natural features of the area, primarily Mount Toro and the mountains surrounding Corral de Tierra Road (Source: 30). The County’s standard exterior lighting condition would be applied to ensure consistency with Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.4 and 2010 Monterey County General Plan Policy LU-1.13. Additionally, all proposed development would be setback greater than 100 feet from Corral Del Cielo Road (Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.3). Development proposed on the higher elevations of the subject property (limited to ranch roads and a 1,000 square foot livestock barn) would not impact the property’s steeper slopes (greater than 30%) and would enhance the viability of the property’s grazing activities in accordance with Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.6. Further, although a subject property’s zoning includes the Visual Sensitive zoning overlay district, Monterey County Code Title 21 excludes agricultural operations from its district regulations intended to minimize potentially adverse visual impacts from common public viewing areas. Consequently, a Design Approval consistent with the regulations of Title 21 of the Monterey County Code Chapter 21.44 is required for construction of the Proposed Project. Therefore, while the Proposed Project would not be subject to specific 2010 Monterey County General Plan policies,

the Proposed Project would not conflict with remaining applicable 2010 Monterey County General Plan Policies, or other land use plan, policy, or regulation intended to reduce or avoid a significant environmental impact. Therefore, the Project would have a less than significant impact.

12. MINERAL RESOURCES		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state? (sources: 17,20,21)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan? (sources: 17,20)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation :

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact on mineral resources.

13. NOISE		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:					
a) 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? (sources: 11,17,20)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels? (sources: 11,17,20)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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? (sources: 11,17,20)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Noise is commonly defined as unwanted sound. Sound levels are usually measured and expressed in decibels (“dB”) with zero (0) dB corresponding roughly to the threshold of hearing. Most sounds

consist of a broad band of frequencies, with each frequency differing in sound level. The intensities of each frequency add together to generate a sound. Most environmental noise includes a conglomeration of noise from distant sources, which creates a relatively steady background noise in which no particular source is identifiable.

The subject property is located off Corral Del Cielo Road and surrounded by agricultural and residential uses. The Proposed Project consists of construction of a livestock barn and accessory structures for grazing and agricultural use (i.e., equipment/machine sheds, livestock shed, potting shed, etc.), and associated site improvements including, but not limited to, improving ranch roads and drilling a water well.

The primary sources of existing noise in the Project vicinity are from vehicle traffic along Corral Del Cielo Road, neighboring residences, and neighboring agriculture operations, which include livestock farming. The nearest residences are located adjacent to the subject property and across Corral Del Cielo Road, which has a 50-foot right of way. All residences have a 100-foot required setback from Corral Del Cielo Road. The closest residence is located approximately 150 feet from the subject property's northern property line, and 250 feet from the proposed development (includes improving of ranch roads). The proposed chicken coops would be moved throughout the upper pasture area (250 to 1,100 feet from the nearest residence) (Source: 30). Permanent sources of noise from the Project would primarily include sounds associated with raising livestock (e.g., mooing, clucking, and whinnying). Other noises associated with Project operation may include routine maintenance (e.g., equipment repair and occasional noises associated with small group tours or workshops on the property). The Toro Area Plan does not include specific policies related to noise from residential development. In the absence of noise related policies within the Toro Area Plan, the 2010 Monterey County General Plan policies are applicable.

Noise Impact (a) Less than Significant: Construction of the Project would generate temporary airborne noise and groundborne vibration and noise in the Project vicinity due to the use of construction equipment (e.g., trucks, tractors, excavators). The Toro Area Plan does not contain specific policies pertaining to noise. Therefore, this analysis relies on noise policies contained in the 2010 Monterey County General Plan and Title 10 of the Monterey County Code. The Safety Element of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan and Title 10 of the Monterey County Code establish regulations and policies that address noise in order to minimize noises generated that could impair hearing, impede convalescence, hinder concentrated mental effort, interfere with relaxation and sleep, depreciate property values, and cause stress and nervous tension and consequent irritability, insomnia, accident proneness, and increased risk for cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Furthermore, construction activities are required to comply with the Monterey County Noise Ordinance as described in Chapter 10.60 of the Monterey County Code. The ordinance applies to “any machine, mechanism, device, or contrivance” within 2,500 feet of any occupied dwelling unit and limits the noise generated to 85 dBA at a distance of 50 feet from the noise source.

Construction

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project would be required to comply with Chapter 10.60 of the Monterey County Code. Noise-generating construction activities would be limited to the hours between 7AM and 5PM, Monday through Saturday. No construction noise is allowed on Sundays or holidays.

While the extent, duration, and volume of noise generated by the construction of the Project has not been quantified, it is unlikely that construction noise would result in a significant impact given the location of the Project site, proximity of existing sensitive receptors, type of construction, and the temporary nature of construction activities. **Table 13-1 Construction Equipment Noise Emission Levels** identifies typical noise emissions (i.e., levels) generated by construction equipment and how equipment noise reduces with distance.¹

**Table 13-1
Construction Equipment Noise Emission Levels**

Equipment	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 50 ft from Source	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 100 ft from Source ¹	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 200 ft from Source ¹	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 400 ft from Source ¹
Air Compressor	81	75	69	63
Backhoe	80	74	68	62
Ballast Equalizer	82	76	70	64
Ballast Tamper	83	77	71	65
Compactor	82	76	70	64
Concrete Mixer	85	79	73	67
Concrete Pump	82	76	70	64
Concrete Vibrator	76	70	64	58
Dozer	85	79	73	67
Generator	81	75	69	63
Grader	85	79	73	67
Impact Wrench	85	79	73	67
Jack Hammer	88	82	76	70
Loader	85	79	73	67
Paver	89	83	77	71
Pneumatic Tool	85	79	73	67
Pump	76	70	64	58
Roller	74	68	62	56

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment*, 2006 Construction generated noise levels drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance between the source and receptor.

The nearest sensitive receptor is located approximately 150 feet from the northern property line and approximately 250 feet from any proposed development (including improving of ranch roads). Based on the proximity of the nearest receptor and the rate that noise diminishes, construction related activities would not exceed the County’s noise related threshold. Based on the proximity of the nearest receptor and the rate that noise diminishes, construction activities are not likely to exceed the County’s noise-related threshold.

Operation

¹ The rate of noise diminishes as the distance from the source of noise doubles.

Operational noise would result in a permanent increase in ambient noise. As described above, the County's Noise Ordinance applies to "any machine, mechanism, device, or contrivance." In this case, the keeping and raising of livestock and other animals, including 499 chickens, are not considered machines, mechanisms, devices, or contrivances, and therefore are exempt from the 85 dbA daytime threshold. Further, section 10.60.040.A of the Monterey County Code establishes the following regulation for nighttime noise: "It is prohibited within the unincorporated area of the County of Monterey to make, assist in making, allow, continue, create, or cause to be made any loud and unreasonable sound any day of the week from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. the following morning." However, Monterey County Code section 10.60.040.C.4 states that commercial agriculture operations are exempt from the County's nighttime noise regulations. Therefore, the Proposed Project and on-going operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would not exceed noise level standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance and would not significantly contribute to a cumulative noise impact. While activities associated with the keeping and raising of livestock and poultry are exempt from Title 10 requirements, due to known concerns and opposition regarding the Proposed Project, specifically with the keeping and raising of 499 chickens, the following discussion is provided:

Chicks would be purchased off-site and transported to the subject property to be raised in portable chicken coops that would be moved daily to avoid overgrazing/foraging. No on-site processing of chickens would occur. It is difficult to determine the sex of a chick until six to eight weeks old. Therefore, although the Abalone Creek Ranch intends to only purchase female chicks (hens), male chicks (roosters) may be inadvertently purchased. On average, roosters generally begin crowing around the age of four to five months but can vary depending on the breed. In this case, most chicks would be purchased at the age of two to four weeks old and then sold for off-site processing at the age of eight to 12 weeks (two to three months old). Thus, if a male chick is purchased, it will be sold and/or processed off-site before it begins crowing. A permit from the Monterey County Animal Control office is required if more than five roosters are kept on-site. However, as proposed, the Abalone Creek Ranch would not permanently keep a rooster on-site.

Hens are most vocal during specific times and for various reasons:

- Morning: Chickens tend to be more vocal in the morning, especially when they are waking up and getting ready for the day. This can include general clucking as they become active.
- Egg Laying: Hens might be particularly noisy when they are laying eggs. This can vary among individuals, with some hens noticeably louder than others.
- Feeding Times: Chickens may become vocal when they are hungry or anticipating feeding times. They may cluck and make noise to get attention for food. Feeding would occur near dawn and dusk or on an as-needed basis.
- Disturbances or Predators: If they sense danger or are disturbed by something, chickens can become more vocal as a warning to the flock or as an alarm call.
- Social Interaction: Chickens are social animals, and they communicate through vocalizations. They may make noise during social interactions to establish a pecking order or for regular communication.

The noise level produced by chickens (hens) can vary widely depending on factors such as their breed, age, environmental conditions, and behavior. A single hen's clucking can range from around 60 to 70 decibels (dB) on average. When considering up to 499 chickens, the combined noise is anticipated to reach higher decibel levels. Poultry farms, which can vary by size, can generate between 70-90 decibels (Source: 11). As described above, noise produced by chickens would vary throughout the day and would not be considered a constant noise generation source. Hens typically make less noise at night compared to the daytime. Once they settle down on their roosts for the night, they usually become quiet. Chickens, including hens, are diurnal animals, meaning they are most active during the day and rest at night. While occasional clucking or soft murmurs might occur, especially if disturbed by a predator or other external factors, generally, hens are relatively quiet during the night.

Noise levels reduce as the observer moves farther away from the source due to the dispersion and absorption of sound waves by the surrounding environment. This reduction in noise with distance is known as the inverse square law. In simple terms, for every doubling of the distance from the noise source (starting at 50 feet therefrom), the sound intensity decreases by approximately 6 dB. However, this reduction is not consistent and can be affected by various factors like obstacles, terrain, and atmospheric conditions. For instance, if the observer standing 50 feet away from the proposed chicken coop moves to 100 feet away, it is presumed that the observer would experience a reduction in noise by about 6 dB. Moving from 100 feet to 200 feet would result in an additional 6 dB reduction, and so on.

The proposed portable chicken coops would be placed on the property's "upper pasture", approximately 22 acres, and moved throughout the day in accordance with the Agriculture Operations Plan and MMP. Although the proposed quantity of chickens (499 or fewer) does not constitute a Poultry Farm, as defined by the Monterey County Code section 21.06.880 ("the raising, keeping or raising and keeping of, in the aggregate, more than 500 chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, pheasants, peafowl"), this section of the Initial Study relies on the data provided in Source: 11, which did analyze noise levels of a commercial poultry farm. Consequently, it is conservatively assumed that, at the source, 499 chickens could generate up to 90 dBs during the day. The PastureTreks and chickens would be between 250 feet (including a 100-foot setback on either side of Corral Del Cielo Road) and 1,100 feet from the nearest residence (adjacent to Corral Del Cielo). Thus, when observing from a nearby residence, the daytime noise generated by the chickens on the subject property could range between approximately 64 dB (at 1,100 feet) and 77 dB (at 200 feet), which is consistent with the allowable daytime noise of Monterey County Code Title 10. The Proposed Project includes the planting of various fruit trees along Corral Del Cielo. While these trees would not effectively reduce noise levels as they would not have dense canopies, the trees would provide visual screening of the property, which may reduce the perception of noise from livestock and on-going agricultural activities. For these reasons, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact.

Noise Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Project would not generate excessive ground borne vibration or groundbourne noise. Construction of the Project would include grading of 20,300

cubic yards of cut and 20,300 cubic yards of fill that would be balanced on-site (Source: 30). Bedrock could be encountered during the Project’s grading and earthmoving phase, though it is expected that the majority of the soils on site consist of clayey, silty, fine to coarse-grained sand. Bedrock may need to be broken up during grading to use the rock as backfill, but the amount of rock encountered would not be significant (Source: 26). Therefore, groundborne vibration and noise would be generated from these construction activities but would be temporary in nature. This represents a less than significant impact related to groundbourne vibration and noise.

Noise Impact (e) No Impact: The Project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip of an airport land use plan, or within two (2) miles of a public airport. For these reasons, no impact would occur.

14. POPULATION AND HOUSING	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? (sources: 17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? (sources: 17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact on population and housing.

15. PUBLIC SERVICES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project 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:				
a) Fire protection? (sources: 7,14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

15. PUBLIC SERVICES		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:					
b)	Police protection ? (sources : 14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c)	Schools? (sources: 14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d)	Parks? (sources: 14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e)	Other public facilities? (sources: 14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact on public services.

16. RECREATION		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a)	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? (sources: 17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b)	Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment? (sources: 17,20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Please refer to **Section IV.A Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**. The Proposed Project would have no impact on agricultural or forest land resources.

17. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC				
Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities? (sources: 6,10,17,18,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)? (sources: 6,10,17,18,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? (sources: 6,10,17,18,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access? (sources: 6,10,17,18,20,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

A traffic report was prepared for the operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch (Source: 12, Monterey County Library No. LIB230182). Senate Bill (‘SB’) 743 required that starting July 2020 transportation impacts for projects per CEQA be based on a project’s Vehicle Miles Traveled (“VMT”). CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(1) calls for the evaluation of transportation impacts of projects based on VMT. CEQA uses the VMT metric to evaluate a project’s transportation impacts. The “Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, State of California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research,” December 2018, provides recommendations regarding VMT evaluation methodology, significance thresholds, and screening thresholds for land use projects.

The OPR screening threshold recommendations are intended to identify when a project should be expected to cause a less-than-significant impact without conducting a detailed VMT evaluation. The OPR screening threshold recommendations are based on project size, maps, transit availability, and provision of affordable housing. The OPR recommendations include the screening threshold criteria listed below (emphasis added):

- OPR recommends that office or residential projects not exceeding a level of 15 percent below existing VMT per capita and employees may indicate a less-than-significant impact on VMT.
- OPR recommends that projects (including office, residential, retail, and mixed-use developments) proposed within ½ mile of an existing major transit stop or ¼ mile of an existing stop along a high-quality transit corridor may be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT.
- OPR recommends that 100 percent affordable residential development in infill

locations be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT.

- **OPR recommends that projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day generally may be assumed to cause a less-than-significant impact on VMT.**
- OPR recommends that local-serving retail development (considered to be less than 50,000 square feet in size) may be assumed to cause a less-than-significant impact on VMT.

Transportation Impact (a) and (b) Less than Significant:

Construction

The Proposed Project would not conflict with a program plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, or be inconsistent with CEQA guidelines Section 15064.3(b). The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction-related traffic. The Proposed Project would temporarily increase vehicle trips during construction; however, the number of trips would be less than 110 daily trips. As a result, the construction of the Proposed Project would not result in a significant VMT-related impact. Further, the Project would comply with standard Monterey County condition of approval (**PW0044**) requiring implementation of a Construction Management Plan which would include measures to minimize traffic impacts during the construction and grading phases of the Project. This would ensure any temporary construction-related traffic impacts remained less than significant.

Operation

The Proposed Project would not result in an increase in operational traffic such that a substantial increase in VMT would occur. For the purpose of this Initial Study, the Proposed Project would result in a significant traffic-related effect if the Project exceeds 110 daily trips. Delivery of cattle, sheep, and pigs for off-site processing would occur once every three months, while delivery of poultry would occur twice per month. Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch also includes hosting education tour groups (25 people per quarter; 6 cars total). Infrequently, consultants, contractors, and veterinarians would visit the project site. If all traffic-generating activities proposed in the draft Agriculture Operations Plan were to occur on a single day (delivery of cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, contractors or veterinarians, education tour groups, four employees plus Abalone Creek Ranch family members, and miscellaneous other agricultural operations), approximately 24 daily trips would be generated (worst case scenario). However, these activities are unlikely to occur on the same day. Therefore, on an annualized basis, the Proposed Project and operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would generate approximately 9 daily trips (Source: 12) - with 0.20 daily trips being associated with the delivery of animals, 0.4 daily trips being associated with customer visits, 6 daily trips being associated with employees, 2 trips being associated with consultants, contractors or veterinarians, and 0.13 trips being associated with education tour groups. The anticipated 9 average daily trips are well below the 110 trips per day significance threshold (see above OPR screening threshold criteria). The Proposed Project would therefore have a less than significant VMT impact.

Daily trips associated with the Proposed Project would be generated from its ministerial and principally allowed components (e.g. raising and off-site commercial sale of cattle, pigs, chickens,

and sheep, agriculture employees, etc.) and thus the County does not have the authority to shape or influence the Project's anticipated trip generation. However, per the Abalone Creek Ranch draft Agricultural Operations Plan, all deliveries of livestock and poultry would occur during off-peak hours (before 7 AM, between 9 AM-4 PM, and after 6 PM) to avoid peak periods along Highway 68.

Corral De Cielo, San Benancio Road, Corral de Tierra Road Intersection

Corral De Cielo is controlled by a Yield sign at its 'T' intersection with Corral De Tierra and San Benancio Road. Both Corral De Tierra and San Benancio Road serve as the major street of the intersection and have no sign control. Observations of the traffic, by the Project Engineer, at the Corral De Cielo Road / San Benancio Road / Corral de Tierra Road intersection during the PM peak hour indicate there is minimal traffic with no delay at this location" and "[the 9-weekday trips associated with operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch] will be almost imperceptible at this intersection and will not result in traffic operational issues." Based on the estimated daily trip generation, the project would not result in conditions that would degrade Corral de Tierra Road or San Benancio Road, to an unacceptable level of service. Therefore, the Proposed Project with an estimated 9 daily trips would represent a less than significant impact on these roadways. Thus, with such low trip generation, the Proposed Project would likely have an imperceptible impact on these roadways.

State Route 68

SR 68 currently operates at Level of Service F. Therefore, per Policy C-1.4, a project resulting in an addition of a single peak hour trip on SR 68 would be considered a significant impact and would be required to mitigate in accordance with the requirements of Policy C-1.3, which require fair-share payment of traffic impact fees into the County's Traffic Impact Fee and Regional Development Impact Fee programs to mitigate for cumulative impacts. Although deliveries associated with the Proposed Project would occur during off-peak hours (no impact on Highway 68 LOS), other trips associated with the operation of the Christensen Ranch, such as employee trips, could occur during peak hours. Therefore, the Applicant/Owner would be required to pay local and regional traffic impact fees per Policy C-1.3 (applied as standard County conditions of approvals **PW0043** and **PW0045**). The Proposed Project and operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would have a less than significant cumulative impact on SR 68 with payment into the County's Traffic Impact Fee and Regional Development Impact Fee programs. Therefore, the Proposed Project and operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would not directly or cumulatively further diminish the existing level of service.

Corral Del Cielo Road

Corral Del Cielo Road is a two-lane public road that serves approximately 30 homes and ranch lands. Based on a daily trip rate of approximately 10 trips per home, it carries about 300 trips per day (30 PM peak hour trips) at the Project's main driveway on the west edge of the Project. This is about one vehicle every two minutes in the PM peak hour. The prepared traffic report indicated that Corral Del Cielo Road operates at Level of Service A.

Along the Project site frontage, Corral Del Cielo is a paved road that includes about 20 feet to 22 feet of pavement with no parking or sidewalks/pedestrian facilities and is in general conformance

with the Monterey County Loop Sidehill typical street section. The width of Corral Del Cielo Road along the Project site frontage also exceeds the minimum width of 18 feet of pavement plus 2 feet of graded shoulders for an Average Daily Traffic of 400 or less per A Policy on *Geometric Design of Highway and Streets*, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (Source: 12).

The existing gated driveway in the northwest corner of the Project site will serve as the main access and egress for the Proposed Project and provides direct access to Corral Del Cielo Road. The gate is 18 feet wide and thus two lanes of traffic can be accommodated. The existing driveway provides 80 feet of clearance between the Corral Del Cielo Road edge of the pavement and the gate, as required by the County of Monterey – Public Works, Facilities, and Parks. This clearance would accommodate vehicles that exceed the length of any legal transport vehicle, including semi-trailer trucks, the longest of which are about 74 feet. The vehicle planned to exclusively be used for hauling materials to the Project site or livestock from the site is a livestock trailer pulled by a pickup truck, which has a total length of about 50 feet. The gate clearance also exceeds the Caltrans Highway Design Manual Figure 205.1 standard for access driveways on high-speed, high-volume expressways of 75 feet. Further, the corner radius of 30 feet on the west side of the driveway exceeds the Caltrans 25-foot radius standard. A graded shoulder is provided on the west side of the driveway which serves as a tapered entrance. The Project Traffic Engineer also evaluated site distance from the existing driveway and determined that adequate line of sight exists to accommodate typical speeds along this road, with visibility of approximately 240 to 250 feet (looking left and right of the driveway, respectively).

A second driveway is proposed approximately 900 feet east of the existing driveway and will be used on a minimal or emergency basis for ingress and egress to Corral Del Cielo Road. The proposed gate at the second driveway would be located 30 feet from the edge of pavement. This would be adequate to accommodate cars, pickup trucks, and single-unit trucks without encroaching onto the Corral Del Cielo Road pavement surface. Larger vehicles would utilize the main driveway (Gate “A”). This driveway will be located on a straight section of Corral Del Cielo Road and will have adequate sight distance. The County’s standard Condition of Approval for the preparation and implementation of a Construction Management Plan would require that larger construction vehicles utilize the existing driveway. The Proposed Project would be required to pay the TAMC Regional Development Impact Fee and Monterey County Traffic Impact Fee based on its anticipated annual average trip generation. This would represent the Proposed Project’s fair share contribution toward Highway 68 improvements and improvements to other regional facilities. This represents a less than significant impact.

Transportation Impact (e) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not substantially increase hazards due to the geometric design features or incompatible uses. The Proposed Project would include the creation of the southeastern portion of Ranch Road D and the entirety of Ranch Road E within the property, which would be constructed on slopes exceeding 25% and could present geometric design hazards (e.g., limited traction and visibility). However, the final design of the access roads would be required to comply with the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would reduce impacts to less than significant. Additionally, the

Project would not result in significant impacts associated with incompatible use. The Project site is zoned as Permanent Grazing and is surrounded by Permanent Grazing and Resource Conservation Land. Therefore, the Project would not result in any incompatible uses with the surrounding land uses. This represents a less than significant impact.

Transportation Impact (d) No Impact: The Proposed Project would conform with all County and Fire Department requirements regarding emergency access (e.g., gate setback and access road grade and width requirements). The Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District has reviewed the Proposed Project plans, had no comments, and raised no concerns relative to emergency access or compliance with applicable fire code. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in inadequate emergency access. No impact would occur.

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Would the project 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, 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:				
i) 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); or (sources: 13,17,23,)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) 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 I of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision I of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. (sources: 13,17,23)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The following discussion is based on the results of the 2021 HRA Cultural Resources Assessment Report (Source: 13; Monterey County Library No. LIB240072) and is supplemented with additional information provided by Native American representatives as part of the Tribal consultation process undertaken by the County of Monterey in accordance with AB52. The County of Monterey initiated consultation with local Native American tribes on September 12, 2023, and met with representatives from the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County, as well as representatives from the Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation.

HRA conducted background research which included a records search of the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System. An extensive files and maps search was also conducted to support the evaluation. A surface-level field survey was also conducted on February 23, 2021, within the project footprint. No cultural or archaeological resources were identified during the field survey. Additionally, HRA concluded there was no evidence of historic development at the site and that Native American settlement at the Project site would have been unlikely due to the lack of readily available freshwater resources in the area.

Tribal Cultural Resources Impact (a.i) and (a.ii) Less than Significant with Mitigation:

Public Resources Code Sec. 21074 defines a tribal cultural resource as “sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following: a) included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources, [or] b) included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of [Public Resources Code] Section 5020.1” (Public Resources Code Sec. 21027(a)). No tribal cultural resources, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074, are known to exist on the Project site. Further, the Proposed Project does not include demolition of any existing structures. No known or previously recorded archeological sites are located within the Project site. However, eight prehistoric and/or historic archaeological sites are located within one mile of the property. The closest resource is within a quarter mile and is identified as a prior occupation site, which has been disturbed over the years. Additionally, the field reconnaissance conducted in February 2021 did not find surface evidence of potentially significant historic period archaeological resources (Source: 13). Furthermore, the majority of the Proposed Project would be located within a portion of the subject property that has been disturbed in connection with the current and past agricultural operations and the ranch road network. While no known tribal cultural resources exist on the Project site, construction-related activities could potentially affect buried or otherwise previously unknown tribal cultural resources. This represents a potentially significant impact that would be reduced to a less than significant level through the incorporation of mitigation.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1, Monterey County HCD-Planning initiated consultation with local Native American tribes on September 12, 2023. The Esselen Tribe of Monterey County and Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation requested tribal consultation. During consultation (October 31, 2023, and November 6, 2023), representatives of both tribes requested the on-site presence of a Native American monitor to observe excavation activities associated with the development of the site, specifically for construction of the proposed barn and equipment storage structures and grading associated with new ranch roads. In addition, the Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation representative requested that they be included in any resource recovery program or reburial, and that the applicant send the archaeological report to the Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation.

A standard County condition of approval for the protection of cultural resources, “PD003(B)”, would be applied to address the potential inadvertent discovery of tribal cultural resources (see **Section VI.5**). Additionally, mitigation measures are required to reduce potential impacts to unknown tribal cultural resources to a less than significant level. **Mitigation Measure No. 2**

(described below) would require a Tribal Monitor be on site during initial ground disturbance to ensure that tribal cultural artifacts or human remains are treated with the appropriate dignity and respect if discovered. With implementation of the County's condition of approval for cultural resources (**PD003B**) and **Mitigation Measure No. 2**, the potential impact on tribal cultural resources would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure No. 2: *On-Site Tribal Monitor*. To ensure that tribal cultural resources incur a less than significant impact if encountered, a Tribal Monitor approved by the appropriate tribe shall be on-site and observe initial project-related grading and excavation related to the barn, equipment storage building, and new ranch roads to identify resources with tribal cultural significance. This Tribal Monitor shall have the authority to temporarily halt work to examine any potentially significant cultural materials or features. If resources are discovered, the Applicant/Owner/contractor shall refer to and comply with County condition of approval PD003(B) as applicable. This mitigation is not intended to alleviate the responsibility of the owner or its agents from contacting the County Coroner and complying with State law if human remains are discovered.

Mitigation Measure No. 2 Compliance Actions:

Prior to the issuance of construction permits from HCD-Building Services, the Applicant/Owner shall include a note on the construction plans encompassing the language contained in Mitigation Measure No. 2, including all compliance actions. The Applicant/Owner shall submit said plans to HCD-Planning for review and approval.

Prior to the issuance of construction permits from HCD-Building Services, the Applicant/Owner shall submit evidence to the satisfaction of the Chief of HCD-Planning that a Tribal Monitor traditionally and culturally affiliated with the vicinity of the subject parcel and that has consulted with the County and designated one lead contact person in accordance with AB52 requirements, or other appropriately NAHC-recognized representative, has been retained to monitor the appropriate construction activities. This Tribal Monitor shall be retained for the duration of initial project-related grading and excavation related to the barn, equipment storage building, and new ranch roads.

Any artifacts found that are not associated with a finding of human remains shall be cataloged by both the Tribal Monitor and the qualified archaeological monitor. Once cataloged, the qualified archaeological monitor shall take temporary possession of the artifacts for testing and reporting purposes. Upon completion of these testing and reporting activities, all artifacts, at the discretion of the Property Owner, shall be returned within one (1) year to a representative of the appropriate local tribe as recognized by the NAHC, or the Monterey County Historical Society. A final technical report containing the results of all analyses shall be completed within one year following completion of the fieldwork. This report shall be submitted to HCD-Planning and the Northwest Regional Information Center at Sonoma State University prior to the finalization of construction permits. Artifacts associated with a finding of human remains shall be reburied in accordance with State Law and the penalty for violation pursuant to PRC section 5097.994.

The Tribal Monitor shall prepare daily monitoring reports that shall be available upon request by HCD – Planning. A final report prepared by the Tribal Monitor, including all of the daily monitoring reports, shall be submitted to HCD – Planning for review and approval within 60 days of completion of ground disturbing activities. The final report shall confirm participation in the monitoring and provide a summary of archaeological and /or cultural finds or no finds, as applicable.

19. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) 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 effects? (Source: 1,8,29,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years? (Source:1,8,29,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) 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? (Source:1,8,29,30)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) 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? (Source: 24,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste? (Source: 24,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Water Demand

BHgl determined that historical water demand ranged from 1.5 to 3-acre feet per year (“AFY”), while the current (baseline) water demand is approximately 2 to 3 AFY. Water supply for the Proposed Project would be provided by a proposed new onsite agriculture well. The Proposed Project would also include placement of five water storage tanks totaling 152,400 gallons. The

following impact analysis regarding water demand and long-term water supply is based on assessments of the potential impacts associated with water demand and supply at the Project site, conducted by BHgl in March and May of 2023 (Sources 1 & 30). BHgl calculated that the proposed water demand for the operation of the Proposed Project would be an estimated 5.96 AFY. At its current location and with its proposed design (800 feet deep with 130-to-800-foot screening intervals) and pumping rate (7.95 gallons per minute), BHgl calculated that the proposed well, accounting for system and treatment losses, could generate approximately 6.41 AF of water per year. BHgl also found that the proposed well would be sufficient for supplying long-term water needs, including during drought. Furthermore, BHgl determined that the proposed well would not result in any adverse impacts on creeks, springs, existing offsite wells, or groundwater quality. The MCWRA also conducted a well impact assessment for the proposed well in July 2023 and determined the proposed well would not result in significant impacts to other water system wells or in-stream flows (Source: 31). Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant cumulative impact.

Electricity Demand

The Proposed Project includes roof mounted solar panels and connection to the existing PG&E grid. The Proposed Project would be required to comply with all standards set in California Building Code (“CBC”) Title 24, which would minimize the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during operation. With the production of solar powered energy, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to have a strain on the grid with the anticipated energy demand.

Wastewater

The Proposed Project would be served by an onsite wastewater treatment system (i.e., a septic system), which would include a 500-gallon underground septic tank, two leach fields, and a proposed future leach field. The following analysis regarding potential impacts related to wastewater is based on septic system design calculations completed by Whitson Engineers, Inc. (“Whitson”) in 2023 and a 2022 percolation investigation conducted by Soil Surveys Group. The designed septic system would be capable of supporting more than 10 employees per day, per the requirements in Chapter 15.20 of the Monterey County Code and Section 5.7 of the Local Agency Management Program for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (“LAMP”) requirements (Source: 29). The number of employees estimated to be onsite daily is two to three. As discussed in the Draft Agricultural Operations Plan, the Project may also include occasional small group tours or workshops generally comprising fewer than 15 individuals, with potential for occasional class trips comprising groups of 25 to 30 individuals which would be temporarily served by the proposed septic system. Furthermore, the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau (“EHB”) previously reviewed the septic system design prepared by Whitson (2023) and concluded that the septic system was sufficient for serving the Project (Source: 8).

To assess the adequacy of the Project site for supporting the proposed septic system, Soil Surveys Group drilled a groundwater monitoring boring and three percolation test hole borings at the Project site in May 2022. Soil Surveys Group did not observe groundwater at a maximum explored

depth of 30 feet below ground surface and determined that percolation rates at the Proposed Project site were generally suitable for supporting the proposed septic system (Source: 27).

Solid Waste

The following analysis of solid waste production is based on the results of the MMP prepared by Lisa Rubin from Dellavalle Laboratory, Inc. in May 2023. Operation of the Project would result in generation of an estimated 705 tons of manure per year. Per the MMP, manure would be contained onsite and used as fertilizer for grazing pastures or agricultural uses (i.e., fruit trees), with limited offsite sale of llama manure. Manure would be spread on pastures through a combination of rotational grazing activities and pull-chain harrow and would follow the recommendations of the MMP to ensure manure application does not result in adverse offsite impacts due to nutrient runoff.

Solid waste generated by construction of the Project would be transported and disposed of at the Monterey Peninsula Landfill and Recycling Facility north of the City of Marina. The Monterey Regional Waste Management District (“ReGen Monterey”) operates the landfill which has a permitted capacity of 3,500 tons per day of solid waste and currently receives approximately 1,100 tons per day. The remaining capacity is approximately 48 million tons or 72 million cubic yards. At current rates of disposal, the landfill will continue to serve the present service area for approximately 150 years.

Utilities and Service Systems Impacts (a) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not result in significant environmental effects from the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, or other facilities. The Proposed Project would include construction of a new onsite water supply well, roof-mounted solar panels, and an onsite wastewater treatment system (i.e., septic system).

Water Supply

The Project includes the construction of a new on-site well that would not result in significant environmental impacts. BHgl concluded that the proposed water supply well would not result in any adverse impacts to creeks, springs, existing offsite wells, or groundwater quality (Source: 1). Likewise, MCWRA reviewed the assessments conducted by BHgl and determined the proposed well would not result in significant impacts to other water system wells or in-stream flows (Source: 31). See **Section VI.10** of this Initial Study. Therefore, the Project would not result in a significant environmental impact from construction and operation of the new water well.

Electricity

Operation of the Project would not result in significant impacts related to expanded electricity consumption. The Project would be required to comply with California Building Code Title 24, Part 6 which sets energy efficiency standards for residential and nonresidential buildings. The Project would also be required to comply with “CalGreen” which establishes mandatory green building standards for all buildings in California (see **Section IV.A**). As proposed, roof mounted solar would be installed on the accessory structures. For these reasons, this represents a less than significant impact.

Wastewater

The Proposed Project would be served by an onsite septic system, which would include a 500-gallon underground septic tank, two (2) leach fields, and a proposed future leach field. The preliminary design of the septic system would be capable of supporting more than 10 employees per day (Source: 29). Per the requirements in Chapter 15.20 of the Monterey County Code and Section 5.7 of the Local Agency Management Program for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (“LAMP”) requirements, to serve 10 individuals daily, the septic system would be required to have a capacity of 300 gallons. The number of employees estimated to be onsite daily is two to three. As detailed in the Draft Agricultural Operations Plan, the Project may also include occasional small group tours or workshops generally comprising fewer than 15 individuals, with potential for occasional class trips comprising groups of 25 to 30 individuals which would be temporarily served by the proposed septic system. Given that the number of individuals estimated to be onsite daily is substantially less than the estimated number used to calculate the designed septic system capacity, and the septic system was designed to include 200 gallons more than the County and LAMP requirements, the proposed septic system has adequate capacity to accommodate the Project. Additionally, the results of testing conducted by Soil Surveys Group resulted in a determination by Soil Surveys Group that the site was adequate for supporting the proposed septic system (Source: 27).

Utilities and Service Systems Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years. BHgl calculated an estimated proposed water demand of 5.96 AFY. The estimated yield from the proposed well would range from 7.95 gallons per minute (gpm) to 10 gpm when pumping on 12-hour cycles. This range in gpm reflects normal to dry season pumping rates. Based on a 12-hour pumping cycle with the anticipated 7.95 gpm, BHgl concluded that the proposed well would be sufficient for supplying potable and non-potable water to serve the Project for the foreseeable future, including in drought (Source: 26).

Additionally, based on the technical calculations, BHgl concluded that the Abalone Creek Ranch and Proposed Project would have a sustainable long-term water supply because the proposed well would not draw water from El Toro Primary Aquifer System. BHgl also concluded that the Proposed Project and operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would have no impacts on the regional groundwater basin or the localized sandstone aquifer beneath the subject Project site and surrounding area because local groundwater level trends (1960 to 2021) are rising in the immediate area. Lastly, BHgl concluded that the proposed well would be able to maintain a long-term supply even if accounting for a gradual natural groundwater decline, as seen in the Primary Aquifer System (Source: 26). Therefore, the Project would not have a significant water supply impact, nor would the Project result in a significant environmental impact from construction and operation of the new water well.

Utilities and Service Systems Impact (c) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project includes the construction of an on-site wastewater treatment system (i.e., septic system). Whitson Engineers provided the wastewater design plans to Monterey County EHB, who reviewed the preliminary

design of the septic system and concluded that the system was sufficient for serving the Proposed Project. Therefore, the Project would not result in significant environmental impacts from construction and operation of the new onsite wastewater system, nor would the Project result in significant impacts caused by inadequate wastewater treatment capacity.

Utilities and Service Systems Impact (d) and (e) Less than Significant: The Project would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. Solid waste generated from construction is not quantifiable, however for the purpose of this report it is assumed that construction waste would have been disposed of at the ReGen Monterey. Operation-generated waste, with the exception of manure, would be disposed of at ReGen Monterey (Sources: 14 & 24). This landfill is operating well below its daily intake capacity; ReGen Monterey has a permitted capacity of 3,500 tons per day of solid waste and currently receives approximately 1,100 tons per day. Therefore, solid waste generated from the Proposed Project would be insubstantial.

Per the MMP, manure generated from the livestock, chickens, and other animals would be kept onsite, except for limited sales of llama “beans.”. Additionally, manure in the upper and lower pastures would be spread throughout the pastures via pull-chain harrow to further break up manure and distribute nutrients to promote grass growth and prevent standing water. No harrowing would occur during times of precipitation or when the ground is saturated (Source: 24). The anticipated manure production would not result in excessive waste production. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact from solid waste production.

20. WILDFIRE				
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? (sources: 7,17,18,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) 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 a wildfire? (sources: 7,17,18,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) 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? (sources: 7,17,18,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) 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? (sources: 7,17,18,29)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

The Proposed Project is in a High Fire Severity Zone within a State Responsibility Area (Source: 7). The Proposed Project could be subject to wildland fire hazards and may expose project occupants to uncontrolled wildfire. The Project site and surrounding area is served by CalFire and MCRFD.

Wildfire Impacts (a), (c), and (d) Less Than Significant: The Proposed Project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. As discussed in **Section VI.9**, primary evacuation routes near the Project site are SR 68 and SR 1. A secondary evacuation route near the Proposed Project is River Road (Source: 18).. Additionally, as discussed in **Section VI.17**, the Project would not substantially increase traffic in the area beyond existing levels and would conform with all County and Fire Department requirements regarding emergency access. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant impact to an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.

The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts from installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure. The Proposed Project would include installation of two water storage tanks totaling 50,000 gallons (i.e., one 20,000-gallon and one 30,000-gallon tank) for fire protection. The Project would also include maintenance of existing access roads. Installation of

water tanks would be required to comply with the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would ensure any impacts are less than significant. Maintenance of access roads would be conducted in part to maintain necessary road conditions for emergency vehicle access (e.g., adequate road widths, turning radius, etc.). Maintenance of access roads would therefore contribute to reducing fire risk by maintaining adequate emergency access at the Project site.

The Proposed Project would not expose people or structures to significant risks associated with post-fire slope instability or flooding. The Project site is located primarily on flat or gently sloping land surrounded by steep slopes and is in an area of low landslide susceptibility. Additionally, soils at the Project site are well-drained and the water table at the site is relatively low (i.e., over 80 inches below the ground surface) (Sources: 19, 25, 26 & 27). As a result, it is not anticipated that the Proposed Project would expose people or structures to significant risks associated with landslides, post-fire slope instability, or flooding from post-fire runoff. Moreover, the Project would be required to comply with the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would ensure any potential impacts related to slope failure would remain less than significant. This represents a less than significant impact.

Wildfire Impact (b) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project could expose persons and structures to wildland fire hazards. Construction and operation of the Project could result in sparks or other sources of ignition in dry areas. Hazards during construction would be temporary in nature. Additionally, both construction and operation of the Project would comply with all applicable fire safety provisions (e.g., sprinklers, water supply for fire suppression, and defensible space requirements) and applicable local and state building codes pertaining to wildfire protection, thereby reducing the risk of damage from wildland fire. However, because the Project is in a High Fire Severity Zone, increased fire hazards during construction and/or operation of the Project could result in significant fire-related impacts. The Project would be required to comply with a non-standard Monterey County condition of approval requiring implementation of a County-approved Fuel Management Plan during construction and operation, thereby ensuring impacts would be less than significant (please refer to **Section IV.9** for more information regarding mitigation of fire hazards).

VII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

NOTE: If there are significant environmental impacts which cannot be mitigated and no feasible project alternatives are available, then complete the mandatory findings of significance and attach to this initial study as an appendix. This is the first step for starting the environmental impact report (“EIR”) process.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21083.05, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 65088.4, Gov. Code; Sections 21080(c), 21080.1, 21080.3, 21082.1, 21083, 21083.05, 21083.3, 21093, 21094, 21095, and 21151, Public Resources Code; *Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino*, (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 296; *Leonoff v. Monterey Board of Supervisors* (1990) 222 Cal.App.3d 1337; *Eureka Citizens for Responsible Govt. v. City of Eureka* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109;

Does the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? (sources: 6,7,8,11,12,13,14,15,22,26)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)? (sources: 6,7,8,11,12,13,14,15,22,26)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? (sources: 6,7,8,11,12,13,14,15,22,26)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion/Conclusion/Mitigation:

Mandatory Findings Impact (a) Less than Significant: As discussed in this Initial Study, the Proposed Project would not 1) substantially degrade the quality of the environment; 2) substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; 3) cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; 4) threaten to eliminate plant or animal community; 5) reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal; or 6) eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory. There is potential for endangered Burrowing Owls, CTS and CRLF to be present at the Project site. Project activities could result in significant impacts to these species; however, any potential impacts would be mitigated to less than significant through implementation of the mitigation measures identified in **Section IV.4**. Additionally, the subject property contains an intermittent tributary and associated riparian corridor. Erosion from temporary construction activities or nutrient runoff from manure application could result in impacts to this stream. However, erosion from construction would be limited and temporary. Additionally, the Project would be required to implement standard construction BMPs and erosion control measures, which would ensure construction-related impacts were less than significant. Furthermore, the Project must adhere to the recommendations

of a County-approved MMP to ensure potential impacts related to nutrient runoff are less than significant.

The Project site does not contain any known cultural or tribal cultural resources. Additionally, archaeological assessments at the Project site concluded there was no evidence of historic development at the site and that Native American settlement at the Project site would have been unlikely. While unlikely, construction could unearth resources that were previously unknown. However, the Project would be required to implement the mitigation measure identified in **Section IV.18** and standard County conditions of approval to ensure potential impacts related to the inadvertent discovery of previously unknown resource are minimized. Furthermore, the Project would be required to implement the recommendations of a design-level geotechnical analysis, which would limit subsurface excavation and further ensure impacts remained less than significant.

Mandatory Findings Impact (b) Less than Significant: In order to determine whether a cumulative effect requires an EIR, the lead agency shall consider whether the impact is significant and whether the effects of the project are cumulatively considerable (CEQA Guidelines §15064(h)(1)). In addition, CEQA allows a lead agency to determine that a project’s contribution to a potential cumulative impact is not considerable and thus not significant when mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study will render those potential impacts less than considerable (CEQA Guidelines 15064(h)(2)).

The Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable adverse environmental effect when considered with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects planned in the area. This Project, when considered collectively with past, present, and future projects, would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact for several reasons. First, this Initial Study identifies mitigation measures to lessen the extent of all potentially significant impacts associated with the Proposed Project to a less than significant level. These mitigation measures would ensure that the Project’s contribution towards a cumulative impact (i.e., impacts associated with further development) would be less than significant. Second, as identified in this Initial Study, the Proposed Project is located entirely on a property that is zoned as “Permanent Grazing” land and is under a Williamson Act Contract. The Proposed Project is consistent with the land use and zoning restrictions for the property. Therefore, the Project would not result in any unplanned changes to the existing land use. Furthermore, other cumulative development in the surrounding area would be subject to additional project-level CEQA review and would be subject to project-specific mitigation measures to reduce those effects to a less than significant level thereby minimizing future cumulative effects associated with long-range development in the area. Third, development of the Proposed Project would occur over a relatively short period and construction-related impacts would be limited in duration. The potential for construction activities associated with the Proposed Project to overlap and contribute towards a cumulative construction-related impact in the area would be unlikely as development within the area tends to be minimal. As a result, the Proposed Project would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable construction-related impact. Finally, as discussed in this Initial Study, the Proposed Project would not substantially increase population, traffic, or use of recreational and other facilities in the area. As

a result, the Proposed Project would not contribute to potential cumulative effects associated with substantial increases in the local population.

In summary, the Proposed Project together with the operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch, when considered with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development in the area, would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact. All impacts associated with the Proposed Project and potential cumulative impacts associated past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development in the area, including operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch, would be addressed through 1) the implementation of mitigation measures identified in this Initial Study, 2) compliance with standard Monterey County conditions of approval and all applicable local and State regulations, and 3) implementation of standard construction BMPs. No additional mitigation measures are necessary to reduce cumulative impacts to a less than considerable level.

Mandatory Findings Impact (c) Less than Significant: The Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly. The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction-related impacts that would be minimized to a less than significant level through the incorporation of construction BMPs and appropriate mitigation measures identified throughout this Initial Study. The Proposed Project comprises construction of a livestock barn, accessory buildings (i.e., sheds, portable horse shelters, and chicken coops) on a property zoned for Permanent Grazing and under an agricultural conservation easement. The Project would therefore not result in a change in land use. Additionally, the Proposed Project would not increase the local population or use of public facilities and other common resources. Operation of the Abalone Creek Ranch would primarily consist of principally allowed activities, which includes the keeping and raising of livestock and fewer than 500 chickens. As described in this Initial Study, construction of the Proposed Project components would not result in significant environmental impacts causing substantial adverse effects on human beings. All potentially significant impacts which would affect human beings can be reduced to less than significant through implementation of the mitigation measures described in this document; therefore, no additional mitigation measures are necessary for reducing cumulative impacts to a less than considerable level.

VIII. CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FEES

Assessment of Fee:

The State Legislature, through the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 1535, revoked the authority of lead agencies to determine that a project subject to CEQA review had a “de minimis” (minimal) effect on fish and wildlife resources under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Projects that were determined to have a “de minimis” effect were exempt from payment of the filing fees.

SB 1535 has eliminated the provision for a determination of “de minimis” effect by the lead agency; consequently, all land development projects that are subject to environmental review are now subject to the filing fees, unless the California Department of Fish and Wildlife determines that the project will have no effect on fish and wildlife resources.

To be considered for determination of “no effect” on fish and wildlife resources, development applicants must submit a form requesting such determination to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. A No Effect Determination form may be obtained by contacting the Department by telephone at (916) 653-4875 or through the Department’s website at www.wildlife.ca.gov.

Conclusion: The project will be required to pay the fee.

Evidence: Based on the record as a whole as embodied in the HCD-Planning files pertaining to PLN210202 and the attached Initial Study / Proposed (Mitigated) Negative Declaration.

IX. SOURCES

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4. [CDC] California Department of Conservation. 2023c. CGS Information Warehouse: Mineral Land Classification. Available online at: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=mlc>.
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