Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project
U.S. Forest Service Sierra National Forest
Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

June 2025

State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation,
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division

Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project
U.S. Forest Service Tahoe National Forest
Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

June 2025

Prepared for:

State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
(916) 324-4442
www.ohv.parks.ca.gov

Prepared by:

MIG, Inc.
2055 Junction Avenue, Suite 205
San Jose, CA 95131
(650) 327-0429
(650) 327-4024 Fax
www.migcom.com

DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Project: Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project

Project Sponsor: U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District

Lead Agency: California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division

Availability of Documents: The Initial Study for this Mitigated Negative Declaration is available for review on the OHVR Division's website on the CEQA/EIR Notices page at: https://ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26379

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The OHMVR Division proposes to award grant funds to the Sierra National Forest to construct a one-acre off-highway vehicle (OHV) staging area in the High Sierra Ranger District in Fresno County, California. The project would include parking for up to 15 OHV trucks and trailers, a double-vault toilet, seven day-use picnic sites, informational signs, and pedestrian pathways. The project is needed to address dispersed parking along road 8S10 and 8S42, which results in safety issues, resource concerns, range conflicts, and traffic congestion. The existing user-created staging areas would be closed after project construction.

PROPOSED FINDING

The OHMVR Division has reviewed the Initial Study and determined that the Initial Study identifies potentially significant project effects, but:

1. Revisions to the project plans incorporated herein as mitigation would avoid or mitigate the effects to a point where no significant effects would occur; and

2. There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15064(f)(3) and 15070(b), a Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for consideration as the appropriate CEQA document for the project.

BASIS OF FINDING

Based on the environmental evaluation presented in the attached Initial Study, the project would not cause significant adverse effects related to aesthetics, agricultural and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology/soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards/hazardous materials, hydrology/water quality, land use/planning, mineral resources, noise, population/housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities/service systems, or wildfire. The project would not 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, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant. The project would not have impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. The project would not have environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

The environmental evaluation has determined that the project would have potentially significant impacts on tribal cultural resources, as described below.

Mitigation Measures

The project could result in significant adverse effects on tribal cultural resources. However, the project includes the mitigation measure listed below, which would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. With implementation of this mitigation measure, the proposed project would not affect any important examples of the major periods of California prehistory or history.

Mitigation Measures Incorporated into the Project	
Impact TRIB-1: Project construction could disturb or damage unknown Tribal Cultural Resources resulting in an adverse change in the significance of the resource.	**Mitigation Measure TRIB-1:** If any suspected TCRs or resources of cultural significance to affiliated Tribes, including but not limited to features, anthropogenic/cultural soils, cultural belongings or objects (artifacts), shell, bone, shaped stones or bone, or ash/charcoal deposits are discovered by any person during construction activities including ground disturbing activities, all work shall pause immediately within 100 feet of the find, or an agreed upon distance based on the project area and nature of the find. Work shall cease in and within the immediate vicinity of the find, regardless of whether the construction is being actively monitored by a Tribal Monitor, cultural resources specialist, or professional archaeologist. Tribal Representatives, the OHMVR Division as CEQA Lead Agency, and SNF shall be immediately notified. The Tribal Representative in coordination with the Lead Agency and SNF shall determine if the find is a TCR (PRC §21074), and the Tribal Representative shall make recommendations for further evaluation and treatment as necessary. As such, all Native American tribal finds are to be considered significant until the lead agency has enough evidence to make a determination of significance. Work at the TCR discovery location shall not resume until authorization is granted by the Lead Agency in coordination with the culturally affiliated Tribe.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS AND CUSTODIAN OF DOCUMENTS

The record, upon which all findings and determinations related to the approval of the project are based, includes the following:

1. The Mitigated Negative Declaration and all documents referenced in or relied upon by the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

2. All information (including written evidence and testimony) provided by OHMVR Division staff to the decision maker(s) relating to the Mitigated Negative Declaration, the approvals, and the project.

3. All information (including written evidence and testimony) presented to the OHMVR Division by the environmental consultant who prepared the Mitigated Negative Declaration or incorporated into reports presented to the OHMVR Division.

4. All information (including written evidence and testimony) presented to the OHMVR Division from other public agencies and members of the public related to the project or the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

5. All applications, letters, testimony, and presentations relating to the project.

6. All other documents composing the record pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21167.6(e).

The OHMVR Division is the custodian of the documents and other materials that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which the OHMVR Division's decisions are based. The contact for this material is:

Scott Soares, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
CDPR, OHMVR Division
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
Phone: (916) 247-1610
Email: Scott.Soares@parks.ca.gov

Pursuant to section 21082.1 of CEQA, the OHMVR Division has independently reviewed and analyzed the IS/MND for the proposed project and finds these documents reflect the independent judgment of the OHMVR Division.

Red Mountain Staging Area Project
Initial Study

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

The California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division proposes to award grant funds to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS or Forest Service) Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District for the Red Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Staging Area Project. The proposed project is a one-acre OHV staging area on national forest land located near Huntington Lake off State Route (SR) 168 in Fresno County, California.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code [PRC] § 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR §15000 et seq.) establish the OHMVR Division as the lead agency. The lead agency is defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15367 as "the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project." The lead agency decides whether an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Negative Declaration is required for the project and is responsible for preparing the appropriate environmental review document.

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15070, a public agency shall prepare a proposed Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration when:

1. The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, or

2. The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects, but:

    a. Revisions in the project plans made before a proposed Negative Declaration and Initial Study are released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur, and

    b. There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.

Pursuant to Section 15070, the OHMVR Division has determined a Mitigated Negative Declaration is the appropriate environmental review document for the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

The OHMVR Division is providing funding for the project and is the CEQA lead agency. The contact person for the lead agency regarding the project is:

Scott Soares, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
CDPR, OHMVR Division
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
Phone: (916) 247-1610
Email: scott.soares@parks.ca.gov

1.3 DOCUMENT PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

This document is a CEQA Initial Study for the proposed Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project. The purpose of this Initial Study is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of constructing the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area. This document is organized as follows to meet the requirements of CEQA:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction. This chapter introduces the project and describes the purpose and organization of this document.
- Chapter 2 – Project Description. This chapter describes the project objectives and characteristics including the standard practices or best management practices that would be implemented by the Forest Service as part of the project. It also identifies the required permits and approvals.
- Chapter 3 – Environmental Checklist and Responses. This chapter presents project setting information and responses to the CEQA-based environmental checklist questions for each resource topic for the impacts associated with the proposed project.
- Chapter 4 – References and Report Preparation. This chapter identifies all publicly available information and personal communications cited in this report and provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.

Chapter 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is located off SR 168 south of Huntington Lake (Figure 2-1), at the junction of Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42. The project site is adjacent to 8S42 to the east and 8S10 (Red Mountain Road) to the south, see Figure 2-2.The site is in the High Sierra Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest (SNF), in Fresno County, California. The legal description is the SE ¼ of section 30, Township 8 South (T8S), Range 26 East (R26E), Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDB&M). This area is commonly referred to as Red Mountain.

The project site is currently occupied by densely growing lodgepole pines (*Pinus contorta*), mostly less than 18 inches diameter at breast height (dbh). Some larger white firs (*Abies concolor*), approximately 20 inches dbh on average, are also present. There are approximately 12 large red firs (*Abies magnifica*) at the site, averaging between 20 and 40 inches dbh. The understory is unvegetated or sparsely vegetated, perhaps due to the density of the trees, though mountain whitethorn (*Ceanothus cordulatus*) is patchily distributed at the site. The site is relatively level at approximately 7,890 feet in elevation. Photographs of the project site are shown in Figure 2-3.

2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The proposed project is needed to provide parking for OHV users and volunteers in a popular OHV recreation area, and to avoid the impacts of dispersed parking that are currently occurring on and near Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42. The Red Mountain area is a major OHV riding area and has at least seven OHV related destinations. Currently the area is used heavily on weekends and moderately during weekdays throughout the season. Dispersed parking and congestion are the worst on weekends. Finding adequate parking for a larger group is especially difficult. Users are currently parking along Forest Service Road 8S10 and creating mini-improvised-staging areas that are spread out over two miles. The user created staging areas are causing erosion, sedimentation, and water quality impacts. Users are also parking in front of an existing corral located at the junction of Roads 8S10 and 8S42, which interferes with the cattle grazing permittee's access to the facility and continues to occur despite ‘No Parking' signs. Organized OHV volunteer events such as workday projects and cleanup events are held twice a season but do not have a central location to serve as a base. There are as many as 50 OHV volunteers during the events and part of the morning is spent getting everyone to one location to start the trail work. Having one location for volunteers and OHV users to meet would increase time spent on the trails, working and recreating. The project would concentrate use in one location on a more durable surface and thus reduce impacts of dispersed parking. The future staging area could also be used to access nonmotorized recreation opportunities such as camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, birding, equestrian trails, and bicycling.

The proposed OHV staging area project would occur on national forest land and has been approved by the USFS in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (USFS 2015), and the vault toilet was approved in a subsequent Decision Memo (USFS 2024).

2.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the proposed Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project is to address dispersed parking along road 8S10 and 8S42, which results in safety issues, resource concerns, range conflicts, and traffic congestion. The project objectives are to:

- Mitigate the impact to soils with a higher erosion hazard risk, which causes off-site resource damage.

- Ease the parking issue near the corral located at the junction of 8S10 and 8S42, which interferes with the cattle grazing permittee's access to the facility and continues to occur despite 'No Parking' signs.

- Prevent Road 8S42 from becoming difficult to navigate with a trailer.

- Prevent users from parking or staging that creates unsafe conditions or impedes traffic.

The need for this staging area was also identified as a priority by local OHV clubs.

2.4 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed project includes the development, operation, and maintenance of a new, approximately one-acre OHV staging area near the junction of Roads 8S10 and 8S42. The conceptual design for the area is included in Figure 2-4. The design meets current U.S. Forest Service direction for facilities and is laid out to retain as many of the larger trees as possible. The proposed new staging area would include parking for up to 15 OHV trucks and trailers, a double-vault toilet, seven day-use picnic sites, informational signs, and pedestrian pathways as described in more detail below. The entire site would be graded and hardened to provide a durable surface. Drains would be installed to direct water and prevent erosion as needed. Barriers would be installed around the entire staging area to prevent cross country travel within the staging area and concentrate use to only the designated road and trail system. Boulders within the site would delineate site boundaries and protect developed site features. Existing user-created staging areas would be blocked off with natural barriers following construction of the new staging area.

Parking and Circulation. The new staging area would include a 22-foot wide two-way loop road off of Road 8S10 to provide access to the parking stalls. Parking would include 11 pull-thru parking stalls, four back-in/pull-in parking stalls, and one pull-off. The parking stalls are designed to accommodate up to 60- to 70-foot-long pickup trucks with trailers.

Vault Toilet. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible, pre-cast concrete vault toilet would be situated within the footprint of the staging area on the east side of the site. The toilet building would be 16 feet long by 9 feet wide and 11.5 feet tall at its highest point and would provide two stalls. The underlying vault (pit) would be 14 feet, 7 inches long, 8.5 feet wide, and 4 feet, 4 inches deep. The vault toilet is a self-contained unit, and no installation or connection to water or sewer utility lines is proposed. An ADA accessible pathway to the toilet would also be installed.

Signs and Picnic Sites. The new staging area would include informational signs and seven day-use picnic sites with tables and pedestal grills. ADA accessible pathways to the picnic sites would be installed. Signs would include a double-sided recreation sign that identifies the site as the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area, an accessibility sign, and a kiosk to display area information pertaining to OHV opportunities.

Site Drainage. The staging area would be designed to direct runoff away from the staging area and avoid erosion or ponding of water. The existing drainage and culvert on Road 8S10 downhill from the site would be rocked and enhanced to accommodate runoff water from the

staging area. Downstream conveyances for drain points on 8S42 (upslope of the parking area) would be constructed as needed to prevent road runoff from interfering with the parking area.

2.4.1 Site Preparation

Approximately 60 to 70 of the dense lodgepole pines would be removed to provide space for the staging area. Most lodgepole pines are less than 18-inches diameter at breast height (dbh), and many show signs of pine beetle infestation. The white fir average 20 inches dbh and do not show signs of disease. White fir would be retained as much as possible, but up to 20 white fir trees may need to be removed. One large red fir 30 inches dbh and 162 feet tall needs to be removed because it may fall on the staging area or nearby roads. This tree has an approximately 18-foot dead top and meets the Forest Service standard as a Hazard Tree for both roads and recreation sites. Most removed trees would be chipped. Wood chips would be used in the local area for erosion and dust control, possibly at the existing corral near the site. Trees too large to chip would be used as natural barriers to keep vehicles on legal routes.

The project would require only minor grading for drainage and site leveling because the parking lot doesn't have to be flat. About one foot of duff and topsoil would be removed and hauled away to get down to mineral soil. The removed soil would be dispersed at the turnout adjacent to the site and/or elsewhere in the forest. No soil import would be required.

After grading and removal of topsoil is completed, the soil would be compacted prior to installation of a ¾ inch Type 2 aggregate base rock for parking, picnic pads, and ADA pedestrian paths. Project construction would require drafting water from South Tamarack Creek (approximately one mile south of the project site; Figure 2-1) as needed for soil compaction and dust control, but the project would not require water after construction.

2.5 CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND EQUIPMENT

Project construction is proposed to start in September 2025. Construction is expected to take approximately 30 days and to be completed within one dry season, but construction may not be continuous depending on the availability of personnel and equipment. Forest Service staff along with OHV volunteer groups would construct much of the staging area and picnic facilities. Construction phasing is as follows:

- Flag the limits of the staging area;
- Fell and chip the trees;
- Remove the tree stumps;
- Remove topsoil and minor grading for drainage and site leveling;
- Compact soil and apply aggregate base rock;
- Install staging area boundary delineators (boulders);
- Install signs, picnic sites, pathways, and parking stalls; and
- Use natural barriers to close user-created staging areas.

The pre-cast concrete vault toilet would be installed by a specialized contractor and must be scheduled in advance; thus, it would be installed when the contractor is available. The toilet is prefabricated in three parts and would be installed over a two-day period. The drainage improvements downhill or uphill from the site would be installed concurrently with or immediately after staging area construction.

Construction equipment would include a dump truck, grader, backhoe/chipper, truck and transfer trailer, mini excavator, and trail dozer. All equipment would be staged in the dirt area adjacent to the site at the junction of 8S10 and 8S42. The staging area would be closed during construction, but areas surrounding the staging area would remain open unless construction activities such as tree felling require short closures. Temporary closures would be accomplished with road flaggers. Construction would require approximately 50 truck trips to bring and remove materials to and from the site.

2.6 PROJECT DESIGN CRITERIA AND BMPS INCORPORATED INTO THE PROJECT

SNF has incorporated design criteria and best management practices (BMPs) into the project design to reduce and avoid potential impacts on cultural resources, biological resources (botanical resources, terrestrial wildlife, and aquatic species and habitat), hydrology and soils, and water quality. These measures are presented in the USFS Red Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle Staging Area Environmental Assessment (EA) (USFS 2015) and the Decision Memo (DM) for the Red Mountain Staging Area Toilet (USFS 2024), incorporated by reference in this document. Compliance with BMPs is the responsibility of the Project Manager, although the District Soils/Hydrology Specialist would be consulted before and during the project to assist with compliance.

Cultural Resources

- If any previously unidentified cultural resources (artifacts, features, or sites, including areas of traditional use, concern, or significance for the local Native Americans) are encountered as a result of project construction or operation, all treatments in the vicinity of such finds will immediately cease pending an examination by the forest or District Archaeologist. The cultural resources would be recorded, clearly delineated, and protected (see Protocol for the Inadvertent Discovery of Native American Human Remains, Funerary Objects, Sacred Objects, and Objects of Cultural Patrimony).

- As agreed by the Sierra National Forest during the AB52 process, a tribal cultural monitor shall be on-site for all ground disturbing activities during construction of the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area. Ground disturbing activities are estimated to require five days.

Botanical Resources

- The District Botanist or another qualified botanist shall do a preconstruction survey of the project site, staging area, and adjacent areas for Abram's onion and short-leaved hulsea during the blooming period for these two species, which overlaps from May-July. If these or any other special-status plants are identified during the survey, they shall be flagged and avoided if feasible.

- Equipment used to construct the parking area shall be cleaned before being brought onto the SNF to reduce the risk of invasive plant spread.

Terrestrial Wildlife

- Maintain larger trees in islands as depicted in the conceptual site design.

- Vertically installed PVC pipes are a known threat to many migratory bird species. To limit the potential for entrapment of migratory songbirds and owls, any vertical pipes used

during project activities or present at the toilet site shall be screened or capped. After or before toilet installation, work with the wildlife biologist to install a screen cap on the toilet vent pipe.

- Toilet vent pipe must be solid without any drilled holes. Drilled holes in the vent pipe mimic cavities and may entrap birds.

- Any open pits/holes excavated during project activities shall be covered flush to the ground with plywood or other material overnight to avoid accidental entrapment of small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles.

- Work shall be completed outside of the most important breeding period (March 1 - July 8) or avoid active bird nests to reduce the effect on individual nesting birds. Any relevant limited operating periods (LOPs) shall be avoided.

Aquatic Species & Habitat

- Project activities shall occur after September 1 and outside of relevant LOPs to minimize conflicts with aquatic species.

- Cut materials generated from the project shall not be moved outside the project area. If moving materials to a different location is necessary, an offsite location will be approved by the Aquatic Species Biologist prior to implementation.

- Any fill materials needed shall come from an approved location.

- Aggregate gravel used to harden surfaces shall come from an authorized supplier and be free of invasive species.

- Any excess sediment from project activities shall be mitigated prior to the first winter.

- The project manager shall photo document project activities before and after completion and submit the photos to the Aquatic Species Biologist.

Soils & Hydrology

- BMPs (see Table 2-1) shall be implemented to protect water quality. BMPs shall be included in any project contract specifications and maps and adhered to during project implementation. Implementation of BMPs (Forest Service Handbook [FSH] 2509.22 Ch. 10, RS Supplement 2011) is required to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act and agency obligations to the State Water Quality Control Board.

- The following BMPs apply to installation of the vault toilet and need to be adhered to: Fac-4 Sanitation Systems, Fac-5 Solid Waste management, Fac-6 Hazardous Materials. Vault toilet BMP forms need to be turned into the district hydrologist when the project is completed. The form in which to fill out and return is BMP Fac-B Facilities Operation & Maintenance.
- Keep toilets at least 300 feet from stream channels.

Table 2-1. Water Quality Best Management Practices for the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area

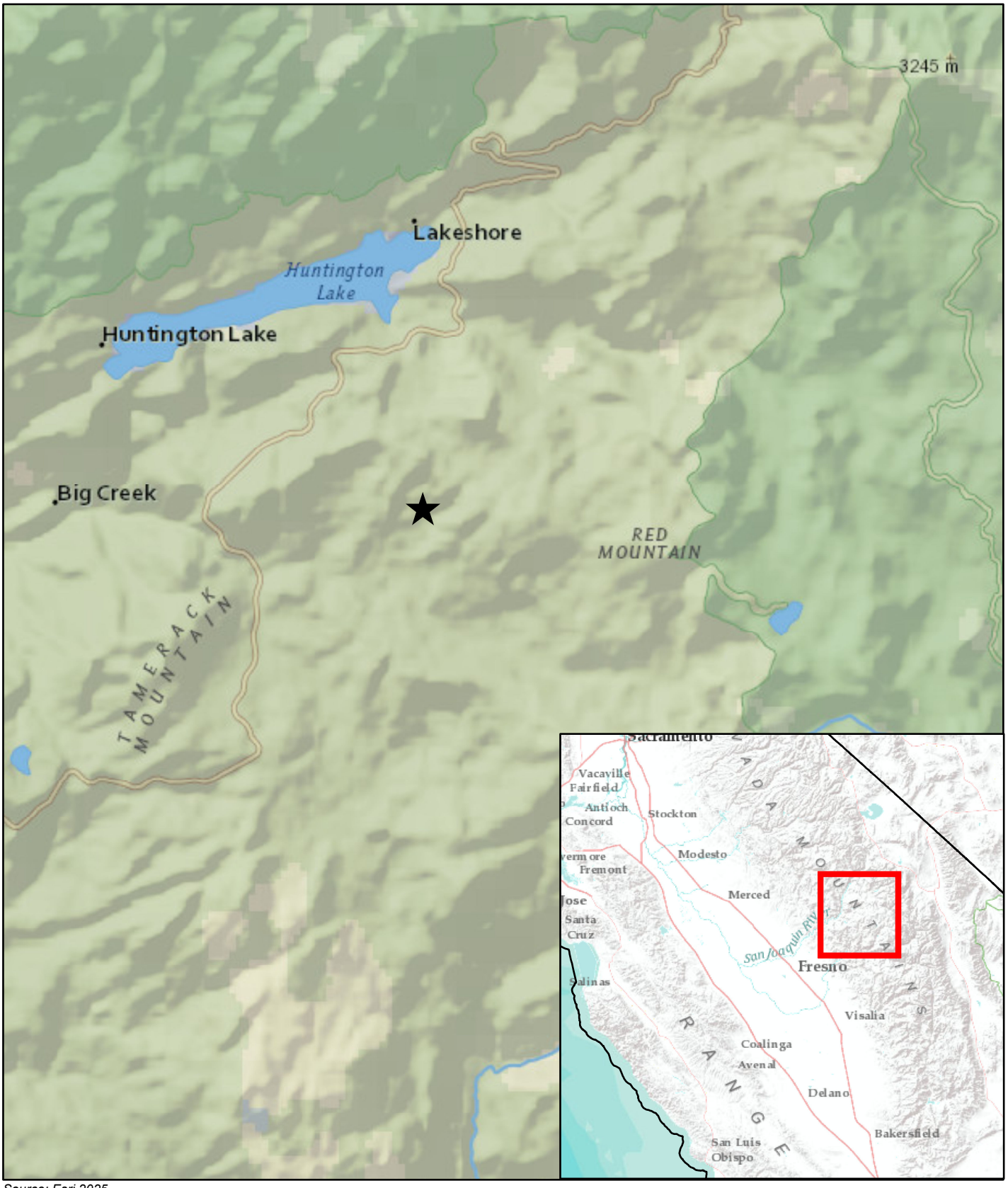
BMP Name, Objective, and Direction	Application to the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area
BMP 1.4 Use of Sale Area Maps (SAM) and/or Project Maps for Designating Water Quality Protection Needs: To ensure recognition and protection of areas related to water quality protection delineated on a SAM or project map.	The project map would be reviewed by the interdisciplinary team prior to being finalized. The project leader, contractor, and/or crew performing work would review these areas on the ground prior to commencement of ground disturbing activities. Examples of water quality protection features that would be designated on the project map include: project access routes, equipment and materials storage areas, etc.
BMP 2.5 Water Source Development and Utilization: To supply water for road construction, maintenance, dust abatement, fire protection, and other management activities while protecting and maintaining water quality.	• Coordinate all water drafting with the hydrologist. • Drafting sites would be located where vehicle approach and water removal have minimal effects on the stream. • Where overflow may enter the stream, erosion control devices shall be installed. • Water drafting vehicles must carry spill kits including petroleum-absorbent pads. • Drafting vehicles would be inspected daily for leaks and repaired when needed to prevent petroleum leaks in the SMZ. • For this project area, drafting is not permitted when bypass flows are less than 1.5 cubic feet per second (cfs) (Forest Plan S&G 43). • No more than 50% of the flow exceeding these minimum levels may be removed (Forest Plan S&G 43). • Drafting pumps must be placed a minimum of 5 feet from the top of the stream bank or be placed in a spill containment tray. They must have a low entry velocity and be fitted with a 2mm screen.

BMP Name, Objective, and Direction	Application to the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area
BMP 2.11 Equipment Refueling and Servicing: To prevent fuels, lubricants, cleaners, and other harmful materials from discharging into nearby surface waters or infiltrating through soils to contaminate groundwater resources.	Project personnel would be made aware of the Forest Spill Plan, including who to contact and other steps to take in case of a spill. A spill kit would be kept on-site. All waste oil, containers, and other materials would be removed from National Forest System lands and properly disposed of. For heavy equipment: Storage of hazardous materials (including fuels) and servicing and refueling of equipment would be conducted at pre-designated locations outside of riparian conservation areas (RCAs). If fueling and/or storage of hazardous materials are needed in these areas, sites must be reviewed and approved by the hydrologist or aquatic biologist prior to contractual agreements. Additional protection measures, such as containment devices, may be necessary. For chainsaws and other gas-powered equipment: refueling may not occur in a streamside management zone (SMZ). In the remainder of the RCA, refueling may occur with the use of an absorbent spill pad.
BMP 2.13 Erosion Control Plan: To effectively limit and mitigate erosion and sedimentation from any ground-disturbing activity, through planning prior to commencement of project activity, and through project management and administration during project implementation.	BMP checklists would be prepared by the hydrologist for all project activities. Erosion Control Plan requirements are detailed in FSH 2509.22, 12.21 Exhibit 13, and include provisions for erosion and sediment control, maps, non-storm water management, waste management and disposal, maintenance, inspection and repair, and post-project storm water management. Erosion Control Plans would be reviewed by the hydrologist and approved by the District Ranger prior to commencement of project activities.
BMP 4.7.9 OHV Concentrated Use Area Management: To prevent or minimize the discharge of sediment, petroleum, and chemical products, or human waste into waterbodies - and the contamination of groundwater by infiltration through soils - by planning, constructing, installing and maintaining drainage and runoff treatments at OHV staging areas, and by managing the risk of pollution at high-use and high-risk OHV areas.	Project planning and design addresses the direction in this BMP, including: • The location of this proposed area minimizes the potential for hydrologic connectivity with streams. • Drainage design for the parking area will be based on calculations of expected runoff, including run-on from adjacent areas, using an appropriate design storm. • The design includes armoring with aggregate and integrated vegetated islands to trap and filter runoff.

BMP Name, Objective, and Direction	Application to the Red Mountain OHV Staging Area
BMP 4.9 Protection of Water Quality within Developed and Dispersed Recreation Areas: To protect water quality by regulating the discharge and disposal of potential pollutants.	Educational displays are included in the site design and will include Tread Lightly principles and Pack it in - Pack it out information. In addition, patrols will make contact with visitors at the site.

2.7 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Proposed state funding of the project requires approval by the OHMVR Division. The proposed project would occur on national forest land and has been approved by the USFS in an EA/FONSI (USFS 2015), and the vault toilet was approved in a subsequent Decision Memo (USFS 2024). No other permits or approvals are required for this project.



Source: Esri 2025

★ Project Location

Figure 2-1 Project Location

USFS Sierra National Forest Red Mountain Staging Area

Source: Esri 2024

RMSA Boudnary

0 220 440 880 1,320 Feet

N

Figure 2-2 Project Vicinity

USFS Sierra National Forest Red Mountain Staging Area

MIG

Figure 2-3. Photographs of the Project Site

Photo 1. Looking northwest at the project site from the junction of Roads 8S10 and 8S42.

Photo 2. Looking north at the eastern side of the project site and Road 8S42.

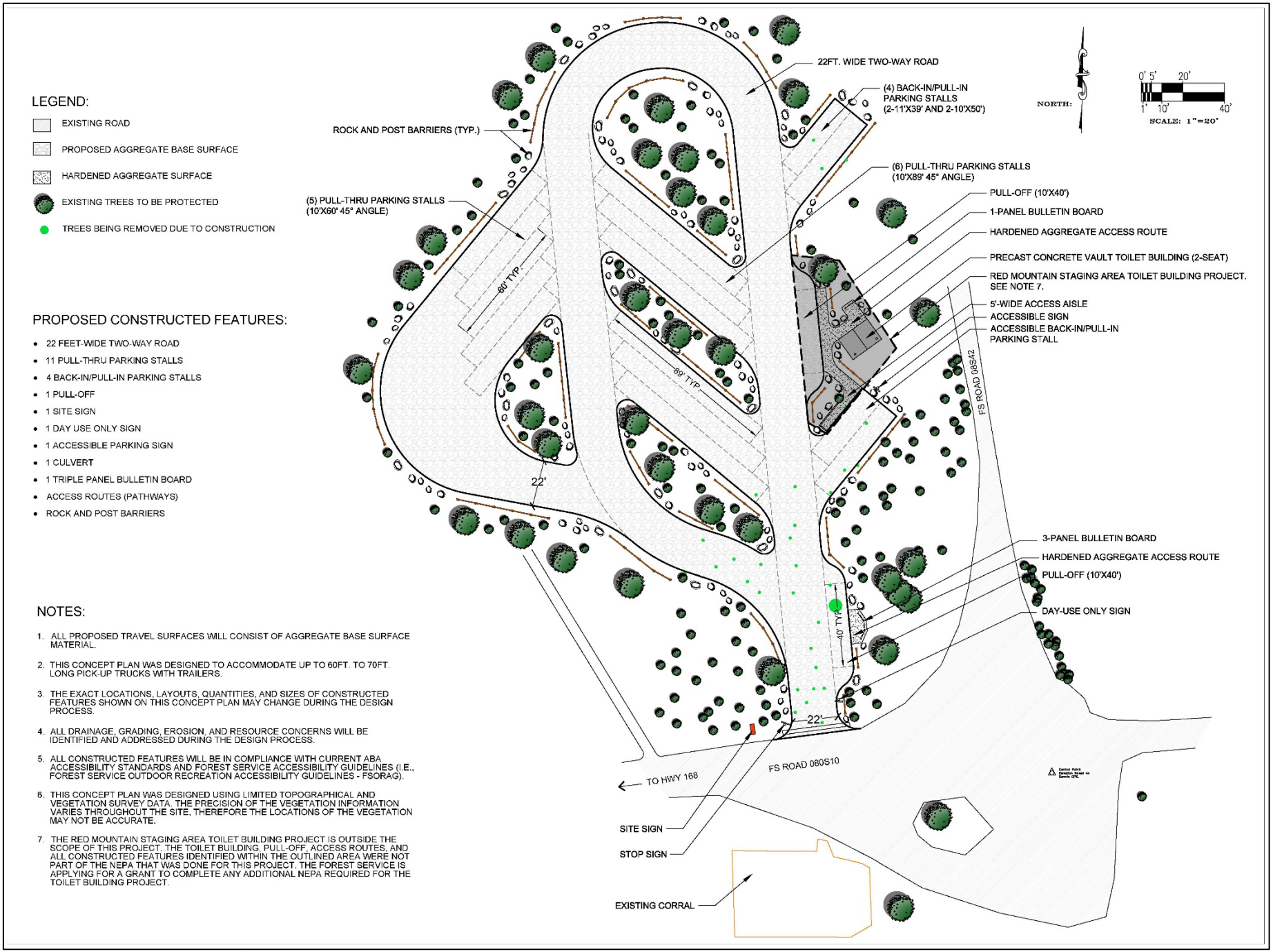
Photo 3. Looking north at dense lodgepole pine forest from interior of project site.

Photo 4. Large red fir with dead top that needs to be removed from the southern border of the site.

Photo 5. Looking east at the drainage along Road 8S10 downhill from the project site that will likely be used for site runoff. The arrow points to the existing culvert. The drainage would be rocked.

Photo 6. One of several dispersed staging areas along Road 8S10; the new staging area would move this use to one location and avoid impacts from existing user-created staging areas.

Photo 7. Looking south at the existing corral near the project site, blocked by vehicles during the busy summer season. This open area would also be used for project staging.



Source: USDA Forest Service 2020

Figure 2-4 Conceptuel Site Plan

USFS Sierra National Forest Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project

Chapter 3. Environmental Checklist and Responses

PROJECT INFORMATION

1. **Project Title:** Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project

2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:** CDPR, OHMVR Division
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

3. **Contact Person and Phone Number:** Scott Soares, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
scott.soares@parks.ca.gov (916) 247-1610

4. **Project Location:** Sierra National Forest, junction of Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42, Fresno County

5. **Project Assessor's Parcel Number:** not applicable

6. **Project Sponsor's Name and Address:** Kevin Woods
High Sierra Ranger District Office
Sierra National Forest
29688 Auberry Road
Prather, CA 93651

7. **General Plan Designation:** As a National Forest the property is owned by the federal government and therefore any general plan designations assigned by the local land use authority do not apply.

8. **Zoning:** not applicable

9. **Description of the Project:** The OHMVR Division proposes to award grant funds to the Sierra National Forest to construct a one-acre OHV staging area in the High Sierra Ranger District in Fresno County, California. The project would include parking for up to 15 OHV trucks and trailers, a double-vault toilet, 7 day-use picnic sites, informational signs, and pedestrian pathways. The project is needed to address dispersed parking along road 8S10 or 8S42, which results in safety issues, resource concerns, range conflicts, and traffic congestion. The existing user-created staging areas would be closed after project construction.

10. **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:** The project site is bordered by Forest Service Road 8S10 to the south, Forest Service Road 8S42 to the east, and forested land to the north and west. SR 168 is about 2 miles to the west of the site, and Chinese Peak (a ski resort) is about 1 mile to the northeast of the site.

11. **Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, has consultation begun?** Sang Bae, Project Associate in the MIG, Inc. Cultural Places Group, sent consultation letters in December 2024 to tribal contacts per CEQA requirements. The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians requested a tribal monitor be on site during earth moving, which was incorporated into the project as a BMP.

12. **Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required:** None

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐	Aesthetics	☐	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	☐	Air Quality
☐	Biological Resources	☐	Cultural Resources	☐	Energy
☐	Geology/Soils	☐	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐	Hazards and Hazardous Materials
☐	Hydrology/Water Quality	☐	Land Use/Planning	☐	Mineral Resources
☐	Noise	☐	Population/Housing	☐	Public Services
☐	Recreation	☐	Transportation	**X**	Tribal Cultural Resources
☐	Utilities/Service Systems	☐	Wildfire	**X**	Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION*:* (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

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.

X I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there would 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.

Scott Soares — 06/02/2025

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division — Date

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 a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, 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 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 "Earlier Analyses," as described in 5. below, 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. Explanation(s) of each issue should identify:

    a) The criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate the significance of the impact addressed by each question; and

    b) The mitigation measures, if any, prescribed to reduce the impact below the level of significance.

3.1 AESTHETICS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
c) In non-urbanized areas, 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 points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.1.1 Regulatory Setting

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

The Land Management Plan of the Sierra National Forest (Forest Plan; USFS 2023) describes scenic character as a combination of the physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its scenic identity and contributes to its sense of place. The Forest Plan outlines goals and objectives aimed at preserving the aesthetic integrity of forest land and forest resources.

Desired Conditions

SCEN-FW-DC-01 The Sierra National Forest provides a variety of ecologically sound, resilient, and visually appealing forest landscapes that sustain scenic character, supporting the Forest recreation program niche in ways that contribute to visitors' sense of place and connection with nature.

MA-GRA-DC-09 Places for people seeking natural scenery and solitude are available in some areas. In other areas, motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities are easily accessed by roads, and visitors can expect encounters with others.

Management Approach

Minimize visible lines in landscape areas where vegetation is removed for management objectives. Cleared areas should include edges that reflect the visual character of naturally occurring vegetation openings.

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

The project site is not near or within sight of any designated scenic byways or the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Additionally, there are no designated or eligible wild and scenic rivers near the project site (USFS 2023).

The project site is visible from Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42, which are adjacent to the project site and are open to the public. There is an open dirt area and an existing corral at the junction of Roads 8S10 and 8S42. The site and surrounding area are currently mixed conifer forest, consisting primarily of lodgepole pine with smaller numbers of red firs and white firs. See Figure 2-3 for photographs of the project site and adjacent area.

3.1.3 Discussion

Would the proposed project:

a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

No Impact. Scenic vistas in the Sierra National Forest can be viewed from places that provide expansive vistas such as mountain tops or open areas such as valleys, lakes, or reservoirs. There are no mountain tops or open areas in the project area, and views from the project site are limited to a small area immediately along the Forest Service roads due to topography and the many tall trees in and near the project site. As a result, the proposed project would not impact any scenic vistas.

b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No Impact. The project site is not visible from any state scenic highways; therefore, the proposed project would not damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway. Although SR 168 is eligible for listing as a state scenic highway up to Shaver Lake (Caltrans 2024), the project site is not visible from SR 168 due to the distance from the site (~7.5 miles) and the intervening forest and topography.

c. In non-urbanized areas, 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project would change the visual character of the approximately one-acre project site from a lodgepole pine forest to a staging area with a vault toilet and signs. The project site is visible from Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42, which are open to the public. Due to screening from the forest and curves in the Forest Service roads, the project site is only visible from small sections of the roads. Large trees in the project site would be retained in islands if possible (see section 2.6). In addition, the project would avoid the negative aesthetic impacts of dispersed user-created staging areas by concentrating staging in one location. The project is consistent with the Forest Plan's aesthetic goals and objectives. Therefore, potential impacts to the visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings would be less than significant.

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

No Impact. No lighting or reflective surfaces are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, the project would not create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

3.2 AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY 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**	**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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in PRC section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by PRC section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)).	☐	☐	☐	**X**
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐

3.2.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

The project site is located in the Sierra National Forest on federally-owned forested land. No farmland occurs in the area. The SNF includes approximately 141,510 acres that are suitable for timber production; however, the project area is not used for commercial timber (Woods 2024, pers. com.).

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 mandates the U.S. Forest Service to develop comprehensive land management plans for each national forest, ensuring sustainable management of resources like timber, wildlife, water, and recreation by prioritizing multiple-use and sustained-yield principles, while also requiring extensive public involvement and environmental analysis in decision-making processes to protect the long-term health of national forests; essentially aiming to prevent excessive logging and clear-cutting through regulated

harvesting practices and careful consideration of ecological impacts. NFMA requires that the Forest Service determine the suitability of National Forest System lands for timber production and has specific requirements for timber suitability analysis in land management plans (Sierra Forest Legacy 2008).

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

Forest management in the SNF consists of restoration and fuels reduction treatments designed to achieve desired conditions for the associated terrestrial vegetation type on suitable timber lands as well as on some lands not suited for timber production. The Forest Plan describes various objectives, goals, and standards for achieving desired forest conditions related to timber harvest and timber production.

TIMB-FW-DC-01: Salvage of dead and dying trees captures some of the economic value of the wood while retaining key features in quantities that provide for wildlife habitat, soil productivity and other desired conditions of ecosystems.

3.2.2 Discussion

Would the project:

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?

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

No Impact (Responses a – b). The project is located on USFS land in mountainous areas of the Sierra National Forest and with established recreational and resource management uses. There is no farmland within or near the project area. The project area does not contain any farmland, any lands under Williamson Act contracts, or any Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (CDOC 2022). The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program and Williamson Act do not apply to federal land.

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))?

d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Less Than Significant Impact. (Responses c – d). The proposed project would convert approximately one acre of forest land to an OHV staging area. Approximately 60 to 70 of the dense lodgepole pines would be removed to provide space for the staging area. However, the trees at the project site are generally too small to be commercially viable (Woods 2024, pers. com.). Most removed trees would be chipped. Wood chips would be used in the local area for erosion and dust control, possibly at the existing corral near the site. Trees too large to chip would be used as natural barriers to keep vehicles on legal routes. The proposed staging area would support existing recreational uses in the forest, and the project would not cause the rezoning of forest land or convert forest land to a non-forest use in the larger project area. As

stated, the project site is not used for commercial timber. The area surrounding the project site would remain as forest land after project completion, and the project is consistent with Forest Plan objectives, goals, and standards (USFS 2023). Therefore, the project would not conflict with zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land or timberland, and would not convert significant areas of forest land to a non-forest use. Potential impacts to forest land would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not involve other changes in the existing environment that could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to a non-forest use. There is no Farmland in the project area (see response to Questions a and b above), and the project would not convert significant areas of forest land to a non-forest use (see response to Questions c and d above).

3.3 AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district 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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.3.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

Air quality is a function of pollutant emissions and topographic and meteorological influences. The physical features and atmospheric conditions of a landscape interact to affect the movement and dispersion of pollutants and determine its air quality. Federal, state, and local governments manage air quality through the implementation of laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards. The federal National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) have been established for carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), fine particulate matter (particles 2.5 microns in diameter and smaller, or $PM_{2.5}$), inhalable coarse particulate matter (particles 10 microns in diameter and smaller, or PM_{10}), and sulfur dioxide (SO_2). California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) are more stringent than the national standards for the some of the pollutants listed above and include the following additional pollutants: hydrogen sulfide (H_2S), sulfates (SO_X), and vinyl chloride.

San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB)

The SJVAB, which occupies the area south of Sacramento and north of the Tehachapi Mountains, encompasses the San Joaquin Valley, the foothills, and San Joaquin Valley watersheds. Approximately 250 miles long and 35 miles wide on average, the SJVAB is a well-defined climatic region with distinct topographic features on three sides. The Coast Ranges, which have an average elevation of 3,000 feet, are located on the western border of the SJVAB. The San Emigdio Mountains, which are part of the Coast Ranges, and the Tehachapi Mountains, which are part of the Sierra Nevada mountain range (or Sierra), are both located in the southern portion of the SJVAB. The Sierra Nevada forms the eastern border of the SJVAB. No topographic feature delineates the northern edge of the basin, but the SJVAB has jurisdiction south of Sacramento County. The SJVAB can be considered a “bowl” open only to the north.

The SJVAB is essentially flat, with a downward gradient in terrain to the northwest. Air flows into the SJVAB through the Carquinez Strait, the only breach in the western mountain barrier, and

moves across the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta from the San Francisco Bay Area. The mountains bordering the SJVAB to the east (the Sierra Nevada) create a barrier to airflow, which leads to entrapment of air pollutants when meteorological conditions are unfavorable for transport and dilution. As a result, the SJVAB is highly susceptible to pollutant accumulation over time.

The winds and unstable atmospheric conditions associated with the passage of winter storms result in periods of low air pollution and excellent visibility. Precipitation and fog tend to reduce or limit concentrations of some pollutants. For instance, clouds and fog block sunlight, which is necessary to fuel photochemical reactions that form ozone. Because CO is partially water soluble, precipitation and fog also tend to reduce CO concentrations in the atmosphere. In addition, PM_{10} can be washed from the atmosphere through wet deposition processes such as rain. However, between winter storms, high pressure and light winds lead to the creation of low-level temperature inversions and stable atmospheric conditions, resulting in the concentration of air pollutants (e.g., CO, PM_{10}).

Summer is considered “ozone season” in the SJVAB. This season is characterized by poor air movement in the mornings and longer daylight hours. The longer daylight hours provide plentiful sunlight to fuel photochemical reactions between ROG and NOx, resulting in ozone formation. During the summer, winds usually originate at the north end of the San Joaquin Valley and flow in a south-southeasterly direction through Tehachapi Pass and into the Southeast Desert Air Basin (SJVAPCD 2015a).

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD)

The SJVAPCD is the agency primarily responsible for monitoring air pollution and regulating emissions of criteria and toxic air pollutants to improve air quality conditions within the SJVAB. Currently, the SJVAPCD has 9 regulations containing over 200 rules designated to control and limit emissions from sources of air pollutants and administer state and federal air pollution control requirements (SJVAPCD 2024a). The SJVAB is under the jurisdiction of the SJVAPCD and is designated non-attainment for ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ state and federal ambient air quality standards, and for PM_{10} state ambient air quality standards (SJVAPCD 2024b). To that end, the SJVAPCD implements various plans to address violations of ozone and PM standards.

The SJVAPCD implements several plans for addressing ozone and PM violations – the pollutants most relevant to the project. The SJVAPCD 2022 Plan for the 2015 8-Hour Ozone Standard describes how federal, state, and regional strategies – particularly those contained in CARB’s 2022 State Implementation Plan, combined with SJVAPCD rules and incentive programs – would reduce NO_x emissions by 72% by 2037, resulting in the attainment of the federal 2015 8-hour ozone standard (SJVAPCD 2022). The 2018 $PM_{2.5}$ Plan for the 1997, 2006, and 2012 $PM_{2.5}$ Standards provides a framework to meet the NAAQS for $PM_{2.5,}$ and additionally aims to reduce NO_x emissions. The 2024 Plan for the 2012 Annual $PM_{2.5}$ Standard (2024 $PM_{2.5}$ Plan) builds on the 2018 $PM_{2.5}$ standard by focusing specifically on attainment of the 2012 Annual $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS, which it is designed to achieve by 2030. The 2024 $PM_{2.5}$ Plan primarily focuses on adopting additional regulations to control emissions from agriculture and stationary sources, achieving greater mobile source emissions reductions, offering incentives to turn over older, higher polluting equipment, and partnering with industry to advance air pollution control technologies.

The SJVAPCD has established significance thresholds, shown in

Table 3-1, to determine if a project would have air quality impacts under CEQA (SJVAPCD 2015b).

Table 3-1. SJVAPCD Thresholds of Significance

Pollutant	Construction Threshold (tons/year)	Operational Threshold (tons/year)	
		Permitted Equipment and Activities	Non-Permitted Equipment and Activities
CO	100	100	100
NO_x	10	10	10
ROG	10	10	10
SO_X	27	27	27
PM_{10}	15	15	15
$PM_{2.5}$	15	15	15

Source: SJVAPCD 2015b

3.3.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

No Impact. The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the regional and federal ozone or particulate matter attainment plans. The project would require heavy-duty off-road construction equipment and haul/vendor truck usage for only a short duration, with all construction occurring over approximately 30 days. All equipment and vehicles used during construction would comply with existing regulations (e.g., CARB's In-Use Off-Road Diesel Equipment Program, SJVAPCD's Regulation VIII–Fugitive PM_{10} Prohibitions). The project would not introduce new stationary sources of air pollutants. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct an applicable air quality plan. No impact would occur.

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?

Less than Significant Impact. Construction of the new staging area would occur over a short period of approximately one month, and most of the heavy equipment would be used only approximately two to four days out of the total one-month period. The project's potential construction emissions were modeled using CalEEMod, Version 2022.1. CalEEMod is a computer program recommended for use by the SCAQMD for use in preparing emission estimates for land use and development projects. The emissions modeling reflects the construction activities, duration, and equipment usage contained in the project description.[1] The proposed project's total construction emissions are summarized in in Table 3-2.

[1] As a conservative assumption, heavy-duty construction equipment was modeled as being active throughout the entire construction period. It is anticipated that actual construction activity would involve less equipment usage than the activity level that was modeled. For example, the active use of the grader is anticipated to last approximately four days and the active use of the backhoe and excavator is anticipated to last for approximately two days.

Table 3-2. Maximum Project Construction Emissions

Pollutant	Project Emissions (tons)	SJVAPCD Construction Threshold (tons/year)	Threshold Exceeded
ROG	0.02	10	No
NO_x	0.16	10	No
CO	0.18	100	No
SO_x	<0.01	27	No
PM_{10}	0.68	15	No
$PM_{2.5}$	0.08	15	No

Source: MIG 2024

As shown in Table 3-2, the proposed project's construction emissions would not exceed SJVAPCD-recommended CEQA thresholds of significance and would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in non-attainment criteria air pollutants.

The proposed staging area project is designed to accommodate existing demand and is not anticipated to substantially change visitation levels, motorized trail miles travelled, or otherwise result in a change in emissions associated with the use of the trail. As such, the proposed project would not result in an operations-related air quality impact.

c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less than Significant Impact. Sensitive receptors are defined by CARB as people who have a heightened risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to air pollution. These include children, the elderly, and asthmatics. Sensitive receptor locations are where sensitive receptors may congregate, which may include hospitals, schools, and day care centers (CARB 2021).

Project construction would emit a maximum of 0.71 pounds per day of diesel particulate matter, a toxic air contaminant; however, there are no sensitive receptors close to the work area. The nearest residences are located approximately 1.8 miles west of the project site along Cordwood Avenue, and the nearest school, Big Creek School, is located approximately 4.5 miles west of the project site. In addition, there is no known naturally occurring asbestos in the project area. For these reasons, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

d. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

No Impact. While the project would produce odors associated with construction, such as diesel fuel, motor oil and exhaust, the odors would be temporary and intermittent and would not affect a substantial number of people due to the remoteness of the project site.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.4.1 Regulatory Setting

Federal Regulations

Federal Endangered Species Act. The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) establishes a broad public and federal interest in identifying, protecting, and providing for the recovery of threatened or endangered species. The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce are designated in FESA as responsible for identifying endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat, carrying out programs for the conservation of these species, and rendering opinions regarding the impact of proposed federal actions on listed species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) are charged with implementing and enforcing FESA. USFWS has authority over terrestrial and continental aquatic species, and NMFS has authority over species that spend all or part of their life cycle at sea, such as salmonids.

Section 9 of FESA prohibits the unlawful "take" of any listed fish or wildlife species. Take, as defined by FESA, means "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such action." The USFWS's regulations define harm to mean "an act which actually kills or injures wildlife." Such an act "may include "significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding or sheltering" (50 CFR § 17.3). Take can be permitted under FESA pursuant to sections 7 and 10. Section 7 provides a process for take permits for federal projects or projects subject to a federal permit, and Section 10 provides a process for incidental take permits for projects without a federal nexus.

U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA; (16 U.S.C. §§703–712) prohibits take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the USFWS. Under the MBTA, absent a permit, it is illegal to disturb an active nest of a protected migratory bird species, since this could result in killing a bird, destroying a nest, or destroying an egg. The USFWS oversees implementation of the MBTA.

State Regulations

California Endangered Species Act. The California Endangered Species Act (CESA; California Fish and Game Code §§2050 et seq.) generally parallels FESA. It establishes the policy of the state to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance threatened or endangered species and their habitats. Section 2080 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibits the take, possession, purchase, sale, and import or export of endangered, threatened, or candidate species, unless otherwise authorized by permit or regulations. "Take" is defined in Section 86 of the California Fish and Game Code as to "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." This definition differs from the definition of "take" under FESA. CESA is administered by CDFW. CESA allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful projects but mandates that state lead agencies consult with CDFW to ensure that a project would not jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species.

California Species of Special Concern, Watch List, and California Fully Protected Species. California species of special concern (CSSC) are broadly defined as animals not listed under FESA or CESA, but which are nonetheless of concern to CDFW because they are declining at a rate that could result in listing, or historically occurred in low numbers, and known threats to their persistence currently exist. This designation is intended to result in special consideration for these animals by CDFW, land managers, consulting biologists, and others, and is intended to focus attention on the species to help avert the need for costly listing under FESA and CESA and cumbersome recovery efforts that might ultimately be required. This designation also is intended to stimulate collection of additional information on the biology, distribution, and status of poorly known at-risk species, and focus research and management attention on them. Although these species generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under CEQA during project review.

CDFW Watch List species are taxa that were previously CSSCs but do not currently meet CSSC criteria, and for which there is concern and a need for additional information to clarify status.

Four sections of the California Fish and Game Code list 37 fully protected (CFP) species (California Fish and Game Code §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515). Most of the species on these lists have subsequently been listed under CESA and/or FESA. CDFW may generally not authorize take or possession of fully protected species, with some exceptions, including for

scientific research and via development of a natural community conservation plan (NCCP; California Fish and Game Code § 2800 et seq.).

Nesting Birds. Nesting birds, including raptors, are protected under California Fish and Game Code Section 3503, which reads, "It is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation made pursuant thereto." In addition, under California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5, "it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto." Passerines and non-passerine land birds are further protected under California Fish and Game Code Section 3513. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered "take" by CDFW.

Non-Game Mammals. Sections 4150-4155 of the California Fish and Game Code protect non-game mammals, including bats. Section 4150 states: "A mammal occurring naturally in California that is not a game mammal, fully protected mammal, or fur-bearing mammal is a nongame mammal. A non-game mammal may not be taken or possessed except as provided in this code or in accordance with regulations adopted by the commission." The non-game mammals that may be taken or possessed are primarily those that cause crop or property damage. Bats are classified as a non-game mammal and are protected under the California Fish and Game Code.

California Native Plant Protection Act. The California Native Plant Protection Act (CNPPA; (California Fish and Game Code §1900 et seq.) of 1977 preserves, protects, and enhances endangered and rare plants in California by specifically prohibiting the importation, take, possession, or sale of any native plant designated by the California Fish and Game Commission as rare or endangered, except under specific circumstances identified in the CNPPA. Various activities are exempt from the CNPPA, although take as a result of these activities may require other authorization from CDFW. Section 1911 of the CNPPA dictates that all state departments and agencies shall utilize their authority in furtherance of the purposes of the CNPPA by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered or rare native plants. Notwithstanding that provision, CNPPA section 1913 directs that the performance by a public agency of its obligation to provide service to the public shall not be restricted because of the presence of rare or endangered plants.

3.4.2 Environmental Setting

MIG Senior Biologist Megan Kalyankar conducted a reconnaissance-level review of the project site during the October 22, 2024, site visit. The following setting information is based on the site visit and the cited resources.

Vegetation

The project site is currently occupied by densely growing lodgepole pines, mostly less than 18 inches dbh. Some larger white firs, approximately 20 inches dbh on average, are also present. There are approximately 12 large red firs at the site, averaging between 20 and 40 inches dbh. The understory is unvegetated or sparsely vegetated, perhaps due to the density of the trees, though mountain whitethorn is patchily distributed at the site.

This plant community corresponds to the *Pinus contorta* ssp. *murrayana* Forrest & Woodland Alliance (Lodgepole pine forest and woodland) in CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP), which is not considered sensitive (CDFW 2024a).

Wildlife

No birds were recorded during the October 2024 site visit, but according to eBird, 95 species of birds have been observed at the Tamarack Sierra Lodge, about two miles west of the project site (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2024). Recent observations (July 2024) include), mountain quail (*Oreortyx pictus*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), Calliope hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*), Williamson's sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*), hairy woodpecker (*Dryobates villosus*), white-headed woodpecker (*Dryobates albolarvatus*), northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), Stellar's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*), Clark's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), mountain chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*), red-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), American robin (*Turdus migratorius*), dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) , and western tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2024). Many of the same species are likely present in the project area.

Mammals recently observed in the project area include American black bear (*Ursus americanus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), bushy-tailed woodrat (*Neotoma cinerea*), Douglas squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*), California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), golden-mantled ground squirrel (*Callospermophilus lateralis*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), lodgepole chipmunk (*Neotamias speciosus*), long-tailed weasel (*Neogale frenata*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), white-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*), and yellow-bellied marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*) (iNaturalist 2024). According to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB 2024), several bat species have been recorded within five miles of the site, including pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*), long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), and Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*). Pallid bat is a CSSC.

Reptiles and amphibians recently observed in the project area include common sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*), Gilbert's skink (*Plestiodon gilberti*), Northern alligator lizard (*Elgaria coerulea*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), Northern pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*), Northern rubber boa (*Charina bottae*), pacific gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), western terrestrial garter snake (*Thamnophis elegans*), ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*), and pacific chorus frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) (iNaturalist 2024).

Fish are not expected to occur in the project area due to a lack of aquatic habitat.

Special-Status Species

Special-status species are those plants and animals that are legally protected or otherwise recognized as vulnerable to habitat loss or population decline by federal, state, or local resource conservation agencies and organizations. In this analysis, special-status species include:

- Species listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered under FESA (50 CFR §17.12 [listed plants], 50 CFR §17.11 [listed animals], and various notices in the Federal Register [proposed species]);
- Species listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing by the state of California as threatened or endangered under CESA (14 CCR §670.5);
- Species listed as sensitive by the Forest Service;
- Species that meet the definitions of rare or endangered under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines §15380);
- Plants listed as rare under the CNPPA;

- Animal species designated as CSSC; animal species listed as CFP or on CDFW's Watchlist; and
- Plants considered by CDFW in coordination with the California Native Plant Society to be "rare, threatened, or endangered in California" (California Rare Plant Ranked [CRPR] 1-4).

MIG performed a review of available information on special-status species documented from the project region to evaluate the potential for such species to occur at the project site based on the presence or absence of suitable habitat or detection in the vicinity of the study area. Review of information included: 1) a search of the CNDDB and CNPS Rare Plant Inventory records of species occurring within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Huntington Lake 7.5-minute quadrangle (where the proposed project is located) and eight surrounding quads; 2) review of the USFWS list of federal endangered and threatened species using the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) online tool; 3) citizen science observations from iNaturalist and eBird; 4) review of available USFS Sierra National Forest High Sierra Ranger District NEPA EA (USFS 2015) and Decision Memo (USFS 2024a) prepared for the project; and 5) personal communication with SNF (Woods 2024).

According to IPaC (USFWS 2024a), CNDDB (2024), and the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory (CNPS 2024), 44 special-status plant species and 25 special-status animal species occur in the nine 7.5-minute quadrangles containing and/or surrounding the project site. Of those, 47 special-status plant species and 23 special-status animal species were found to be unlikely to occur in or adjacent to the project site for at least one of the following reasons: (1) a lack of specific habitat (e.g., vernal pools, marsh, etc.) and/or edaphic requirements (e.g., serpentine soils) for the species in question, (2) suitable habitat may be present but is of poor quality due to the size and density of the trees and/or recent wildfires, (3) the geographic range and/or elevation range of the species does not overlap the project site, (4) the species is known to be extirpated from the site vicinity, and/or (5) records of the species are far from the project site and/or old (i.e., from 50 years ago or more).

Appendix A tables list the special-status plant and animal species that occur in the general region of the project, along with their protection status, geographic distribution, habitat, and basis for determining which species had the potential to occur at the project site. The five special-status species with the potential to occur on the project site are described below. Of note, additional CNDDB-tracked taxa that are not considered special-status are included in the tables for informational purposes but are excluded from this analysis.

Abrams' onion (*Allium abramsii*), CRPR 1B.2. Abrams' onion is a perennial bulbiferous herb in the Alliaceae (onion) family. It is endemic to California and is found in Fresno, Madera, and Tulare counties. Suitable habitat includes lower montane coniferous forest and upper montane coniferous forest, on sandy soils derived from disintegrated granite. It occurs at elevations from 885-3050 m. It blooms between May and July. (CNPS 2024).

There are two CNDDB records of Abram's onion within five miles of the project site from 1955 and 2009. There is some suitable habitat, but the dense forest at the site may preclude this species.

Short-leaved hulsea (*Hulsea brevifolia*), CRPR 1B.2 and USFS Sensitive. Short-leaved hulsea is a perennial herb in the Asteraceae (sunflower) family. It is endemic to California and occurs in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties. Suitable habitat includes lower montane coniferous forest and upper montane coniferous forest on sandy (sometimes), granitic (sometimes), gravelly or volcanic (sometimes) soil of forest openings and road cuts. It

occurs at elevations from 1500-3200 m. It blooms between May and August. It is threatened by foot traffic, vehicles, logging, vegetation clearing, erosion, and road maintenance (CNPS 2024).

There are 13 CNDDB records of short-leaved hulsea within 5 miles of the project site from 1936 to 2008. There is some suitable habitat at the site, though the forest may be too dense to support this species.

Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), CSSC, USFS Sensitive. Pallid bats are found in deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. They are most common in open, dry habitats with rocky areas for roosting. Roosts must protect bats from high temperatures. This species is very sensitive to disturbance of roosting sites. There are two CNDDB records of pallid bat within five miles of the project site from 2002. There is some suitable roosting habitat in the project area, but the site lacks open habitat preferred by this species.

Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*), CSSC. Within California, the range of western mastiff bats is the central and southern coast and parts of the Sierra foothills. They inhabit many open, semi-arid to arid habitats, including conifer and deciduous woodlands, coastal scrub, grasslands, chaparral, etc. This species roosts in crevices in cliff faces, high buildings, trees, and tunnels. There is one CNDDB record of western mastiff bat within five miles of the project site from 2002. There is some suitable roosting habitat in the project area, but the site lacks open habitat preferred by this species.

Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), USFS Sensitive. Within California, the range of fringed myotis is coastal California, the northern and central Sierra Nevada, and a few pockets of the Mojave Desert. It inhabits a wide variety of habitats; optimal habitats are pinyon-juniper, valley foothill hardwood, and hardwood-conifer. This species uses caves, mines, buildings, or crevices for maternity colonies and roosts. There is one CNDDB record of fringed myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002. There is some suitable habitat in the project area, but preferred roosting sites may be lacking.

Nesting Birds

All native birds and their nests are protected by the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code. Trees and other vegetation in and near the project site provide nesting habitat for a variety of native bird species. See the wildlife section above for a list of bird species observed in the project area recently.

Roosting Bats

All roosting bats are protected by the California Fish and Game Code as nongame mammals. According to CNDDB records and based on habitat in the project area, the following bat species may occur in the area besides the three species described above under special-status species: hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*), long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), and Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*). The maternity roosting season for most species of bats is between April 15 and August 15.

3.4.3 Discussion

Would the project:

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?

Less than Significant Impact. The EA prepared for the project did not identify any impacts to botanical resources, terrestrial wildlife, or aquatic wildlife. In addition, BMPs incorporated into the project to protect terrestrial and aquatic wildlife include maintaining larger trees in islands if possible, conducting activities in the fall after September 1, not moving cut materials outside of the project area, sourcing any fill materials from an approved location, using aggregate gravel free of invasive species, ensuring excess sediment is mitigated before the first winter, and before and after photo documentation (see Section 2.6).

There are nearby CNDDB records and suitable habitat for Abram's onion and short-leaved hulsea in the project area, both CRPR 1B.2 plants, and the latter is also a USFS sensitive species. These species have a low likelihood of occurring on the project site due to the very dense forest limiting availability of sunlight and soil resources. More suitable habitat for these species occurs nearby but outside of the project footprint. BMPs incorporated into the project include a preconstruction survey for these species and avoidance if feasible if any special-status plants are found during the survey (see Section 2.6). Therefore, potential impacts to special-status plants would be less than significant.

Pallid bat (CSSC and USFS Sensitive), western mastiff bat (CSSC), and fringed myotis (USFS Sensitive) as well as other species of bats may roost in the project area in small numbers, but maternity roosts are considered to be unlikely due to the small size of the project site and the proximity to the road (Woods 2024). BMPs incorporated into the project to retain larger trees and conduct the work in the fall (outside of the maternity roosting season, which is from April 15 to August 15, would avoid and minimize potential impacts to roosting bats. Therefore, this impact is considered to be less than significant.

Conducting work in the fall would also avoid impacts to nesting birds. In addition, no work would occur within any relevant LOPs. Therefore, no impacts to nesting birds are anticipated.

b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant Impact. There is no riparian habitat in the project area. The closest stream to the project site is a tributary to Tamarack Creek, located about 0.1 mile south of the site (NWI 2024). Water drafting may be required for the project from Tamarack Creek during construction, but Forest Service BMPs are incorporated in the project to prevent any impacts to the creek or associated riparian habitat (see Section 2.6). Therefore, the project would not impact riparian habitat.

There are no sensitive vegetation communities in or near the project site, based on the CNDDB Sensitive Natural Communities List and the CDFW VegCAMP Sensitive Natural Communities List (CNDDB 2024 and CDFW 2024a).

The project site is within USFWS-designated critical habitat for Yosemite toad. However, the EA found that there is no occupied habitat in or downstream of the project site, and the site does not contain suitable aquatic or dispersal habitat (USFS 2015). Therefore, the project is not expected to impact suitable habitat for this species or significantly impact critical habitat.

There is no NOAA Fisheries-designated critical habitat (NOAA Fisheries 2024a) or Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (NOAA Fisheries 2024b) in or near the project site.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. There are no wetlands or other jurisdictional waters in or adjacent to the project site (NWI 2024 and verified during the October 2024 site visit). The closest stream to the project site is a tributary to the Tamarack Creek, located about 0.1 mile south of the site (NWI 2024). Water drafting may be required for the project from Tamarack Creek during construction, but Forest Service BMPs are incorporated in the project to prevent any impacts to the creek or associated riparian habitat (see Section 2.6). Therefore, the project would not significantly impact jurisdictional waters.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is in the Sierra National Forest, a large, forested area with abundant wildlife movement opportunities and potential nursery sites for terrestrial wildlife such as nesting birds and denning mammals. There is no aquatic habitat in or adjacent to the project site, and therefore no aquatic movement corridors or nursery sites in the project area.

The proposed project would convert approximately one acre of lodgepole pine forest to an OHV staging area with picnic tables, pathways, signs, and a vault toilet. The project could have local impacts on wildlife movement if species avoid the site during construction. However, construction is expected to be intermittent and would not occur at night, allowing wildlife to continue to use the site in between construction activities and at night. In addition, the project would not include fencing, new roads, or other wildlife movement barriers. Existing user-created staging areas would be closed off after construction of the new staging area, improving habitat conditions in those areas. Wildlife movement opportunities in the project area would be similar to existing conditions after project completion. Resource protection measures have been incorporated into the project to minimize impacts to wildlife, including wildlife movement and nursery sites. These measures include maintaining larger trees in islands, measures to avoid entrapment such as screening or capping vertical pipes and covering pits/holes, and completing work in the fall after September 1, outside the breeding season for aquatic species, the bird nesting season, and the bat maternity roost season (see Section 2.6). Therefore, the project is not expected to interfere substantially with the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

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

No Impact. The project site is on federal (USFS) land, and no local policies or ordinances apply to the project area. Therefore, the project does not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.

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?

No Impact. There are no adopted habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local habitat related plans in effect in the project area (CDFW 2024b).

3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☐	**X**	☐

3.5.1 Regulatory Setting

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C §§ 470 et seq.) declared a national policy of historic preservation and instituted a multifaceted program, administered by the Secretary of the Interior, to encourage the achievement of preservation goals at the federal, state, and local levels. The NHPA authorized the expansion and maintenance of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), established the position of State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), provided for the designation of State Review Boards, set up a mechanism to certify local governments to carry out the purposes of the NHPA, assist Native American tribes in preserving their cultural heritage, and created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).

NHPA establishes the nation's policy for historic preservation and sets in place a program for the preservation of historic properties by requiring federal agencies to consider effects on significant cultural resources (i.e., historic properties) prior to undertakings.

National Register of Historic Places

The NRHP was established by the NHPA as "an authoritative guide to be used by federal, state, and local governments, private groups, and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment." The NRHP recognizes properties that are significant at the national, state, and local levels. To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a resource must be significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of potential significance must also possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. A property is eligible for the NRHP if it is significant under one or more of the following criteria:

Criterion A: It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion B: It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in our past.

Criterion C: It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represents the work of a master; possesses high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Criterion D: It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historic figures; properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes; structures that have been moved from their original locations; reconstructed historic buildings; and properties that are primarily commemorative in nature are not considered eligible for the NRHP unless they satisfy certain conditions. In general, a resource must be at least 50 years of age to be considered for the NRHP, unless it satisfies a standard of exceptional importance.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA provides criteria to evaluate whether a building, structure, object, or site is significant. Under CEQA Guideline §15064.5(a), historic resources include the those meeting the criteria listed below.

(1) A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR; Pub. Res. Code §5024.1, 14 CCR § 4850 *et seq.*)

(2) A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined PRC Section 5020.1(K) or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of PRC section 5024.1(g), shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.

(3) Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, providing the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources (Pub. Res. Code §5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852) (Criteria listed below under *California Register of Historical Resources*).

(4) The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC Section 5020.1(k)), or identified in a historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC Section 5024.1(g)) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be a historical resource as defined in PRC Section 5020.1(j) or 5024.1. In accordance with CEQA, properties designated or eligible at all levels are deserving of protection by a lead agency when any undertaking proposes to demolish or alter any such property.

California Register of Historical Resources

The CRHR is "an authoritative guide in California to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the state's historical resources and to indicate properties that are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change" (Pub. Res. Code §5024.1). Certain properties, including those listed in or formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP and California Historical Landmarks (CHLs) numbered 770 and higher, are automatically included in the CRHR. Other properties recognized under the California Points of Historical Interest program, identified as significant in historic resources surveys, or designated

by local landmarks programs may be nominated for inclusion in the CRHR. A resource, either an individual property or a contributor to a historic district, may be listed in the CRHR if the State Historical Resources Commission determines that it meets one or more of the following criteria, which are modeled on NRHP criteria (Pub. Res. Code §5024.1):

Criterion 1: It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.

Criterion 2: It is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.

Criterion 3: It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction; represents the work of an important creative individual; or possesses high artistic values.

Criterion 4: It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Resources nominated to the CRHR must retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historic resources and to convey the reasons for their significance. It is possible that a resource whose integrity does not satisfy NRHP criteria may still be eligible for listing in the CRHR. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the CRHR if, under Criterion 4, it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data. Resources that have achieved significance within the past 50 years also may be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR, provided that enough time has lapsed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource.

Assembly Bill (AB) 52

AB 52 specifies that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, as defined, is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. AB 52 requires a lead agency to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, if the tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed by the lead agency of proposed projects in that geographic area and the tribe requests consultation, prior to determining whether a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report is required for a project. AB 52 specifies examples of mitigation measures that may be considered to avoid or minimize impacts on tribal cultural resources.

Health and Safety Code, Sections 7050 and 7052

Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 declares that, in the event of the discovery of human remains outside a dedicated cemetery, all ground disturbances must cease, and the county coroner must be notified. Section 7052 establishes a felony penalty for mutilating, disinterring, or otherwise disturbing human remains, except by relatives.

Penal Code Section 622.5

Penal Code Section 622.5 provides misdemeanor penalties for injuring or destroying objects of historic or archaeological interest located on public or private lands but specifically excludes the landowner.

Government Code Section 6254(r)

Government Code explicitly authorizes public agencies to withhold information from the public relating to Native American graves, cemeteries, and sacred places maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC).

Government Code Section 6250 et. seq.

Records housed in the Information Centers of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) are exempt from the California Public Records Act.

United States Forest Service Region 5 Programmatic Agreement Section 7.9

USFS Region 5 Programmatic Agreement (USDA and SHPO 2018) Section 7.9 stipulates that, in the event of inadvertent or unanticipated discoveries of human remains on Region 5 lands, the County Coroner be notified immediately in accordance with California Heal and Safety Code Section 7050.5(b), and if remains are determined to be Native American or Native American cultural items pursuant to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) are uncovered, the provisions of NAGPRA and its regulations at 43 CFR Section 10 and Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) at 43 CFR Section 7 shall be followed on federal lands. If such remains or items are discovered off federal lands within California, for projects authorized by the Forest Service, the provisions of the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (California Health and Safety Code 8010-8030, and California Public Resources Code 5097.98-99) shall be followed.

3.5.2 Environmental Setting

The geographic region of the Sierra Nevada exhibits archaeological evidence of multi-season occupation going back at least 13,500 years (USFS 2025a). The proposed project site in the southern Sierra is ethnographically known to have been inhabited by the Western Mono people for generations. Linguistic evidence suggests that the ancestors of the Mono people occupied an area on the east slopes of the Sierra approximately 1000 years ago, before dividing into the regional dialect groups of the Eastern Mono and Western Mono (Dallavelle 1989). The Western Mono are estimated to have migrated approximately 550 years ago to inhabit the western slopes of the Sierra (including the vicinity of the project area) and utilized routes spanning the Sierra Nevada crest to travel and trade with other Indigenous groups (Dallavelle 1989). The post-contact Shaver Trail traverses the east side of Tamarack Mountain (west of the proposed project area), and the Mono Trail connecting Shaver Lake to Huntington Lake (west of the project area) may follow Indigenous routes in the area. Tamarack Creek may have been an access route to Red Mountain, the Blayney Meadow area, and Paiute Pass. The exact locations of pre-contact trails are unverified (Dallavelle 1989).

During the early 1800s the Spanish government of Alta California raided villages in the San Joaquin Valley, including the western foothills of the southern Sierra. The raids disrupted Indigenous lifeways and forced the relocation of many people into the California Missions system. Disruption and displacement were further exacerbated under the subsequent Mexican government, as changes to the local landscape and ecology resulted in lack of access to food and medicine, and the local Indigenous population experienced a malaria epidemic in 1832-1833 (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007).

In 1848 California became a state, and the gold rush began one year later, with the Sierra at the center of nation-wide speculation. Indigenous groups living near the gold mines were severely

impacted through contact with settlements via the introduction of diseases and violent disputes over access to land and resources (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007). In 1850, possibly to solidify land claims in the region, California passed the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians that codified the indenture of Indigenous children and some adults (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007).

After the gold rush, European-American immigrants established homesteads and farms in the Sierra Nevada foothills, and the grazing allotments were established within the vicinity of the project area (USFS 2025a). A camp was located north of the project area, established during the late 1800s, managed by a white rancher named Knox Blasingame. Blasingame hired a Chinese-American cattle hand named Fong Ah Lee, known as Charley, to manage herds consisting of a thousand head of cattle. The site where Blasingame and Lee resided during cattle season is known as China Camp today in honor of Lee's longtime residency in the area (The Fresno Bee 2024).

Mining in the region also expanded beyond the initial rush of unskilled individuals with gold pans to include industries with major engineering infrastructure development including underground mines and hydraulic power systems. The expansion of the mining industry in the late 1900s was connected with the increased harvest of lumber and water resources and led to the creation of more camps and towns throughout the Sierra to house miners and loggers. These largest mining operations were located at the north end of the Sierra, but mining and associated resource extraction industries spanned the western foothills (Beesley 1996). Around 1913, the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project constructed three dams to the north of the project site to create a reservoir and flooded the Huntington Lake Basin (USFS 2025b).

The United States government began to regulate the land use of Sierra in the 1860s to manage the emerging farming, grazing, and timber harvesting industries in the region. The Forest Reserves Act was passed in 1891, authorizing the creation of the Sierra Forest Reserve in 1893 (USFS 2025a). It was the second national forest created in California and the largest of its time. Under the newly named National Forest Service in 1905, Sierra National Forest hired staff to build recreational trails, buildings, bridges, camps, and other structures on the land, allowing for expanded public use (Pacific Crest Trail Association 2025). Although one of the missions of the national forest is resource conservation, timbering continues through private use permits. The project area was extensively logged starting in the late 1800s, and the practice continued through the 1990s (Dallavalle 1989).

3.5.3 Discussion

Would the proposed project:

a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?

No Impact. The types of cultural resources that meet the definition of historical resources under Section 21084.1 consist of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant for their traditional, cultural, and/or historical associations. Archaeological resources are discussed under (b) below and the potential for cultural resources associated with Native American culture and history are discussed under Tribal Cultural Resources in Section 3.18. Post-contact built environment historical resources are discussed here.

MIG conducted a CHRIS search through the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC). The search was completed on November 13, 2024. The records search covered the

project area and a .25-mile buffer zone. No historical resources have been recorded or identified within the project area or buffer. Several cultural resource investigations have been completed in the vicinity, but the resources identified are primarily archaeological in nature and are summarized under discussion item (b).

The Sierra National Forest also prepared a cultural resources report (ARR R2011051552065) for part of the project area in 2011 that evaluated a two-acre Area of Potential Effects (APE) including the approximately one-acre Red Mountain staging area. The survey was conducted under the first amended Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, California State Historic Preservation Officer, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (USDA and SHPO 2018). No historical resources were identified within the APE.

In sum, no known historical resources, such as mining/homesteading sites or historic trails/roads, are located with the project site or buffer. As a result, there would be no impact on historical resources.

b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Less than Significant Impact. As described under (a) above, MIG submitted a CHRIS search request to the SSJVIC in November of 2024. The CHRIS search was completed on November 13, 2023. No archaeological resources were discovered within the project site or within the 0.25-mile buffer zone.

The CHRIS search results listed cultural resource reports overlapping with the project site and 0.25-mile buffer radius. The reports are summarized in Table 3-3:

Table 3-3: Cultural Reports within the Project Area

Report Number	Year	Title	Report Type
FR-00078	1991	Archaeological Reconnaissance for the Brewer Lake OHV Route, Red Lake/Coyote OHV Route, and the West Lake/ Strawberry Lake OHV Route.	Archaeological field Survey
FR-01266	1989	Tot Pole Salvage Sale	Archaeological Investigation and Field Survey
FR-01362	1986	Red Again Salvage Sale	Archaeological Investigation
FR-01416	1993	An Archaeological Reconnaissance Report (ARR) for the Proposed Red Hazard Tree Removal Project	Archaeological Investigation and Field Survey
FR-01436	1994	An Archaeological Reconnaissance Addendum for the Red Hazard Tree Removal Project	Archaeological Investigation and Field Survey
FR-01467	1982	Rerun and Totempole Timber Sales	Archaeological Investigation and Field Survey

It should be noted that although these reports do not indicate the presence of archaeological resources within 0.25 miles of the project site, several pre-contact resources and one post-

contact resource identified as “Charley Lee’s Cabin and the Blasingame Bunkhouse” (Report Number FR-01436; Site Number 05-15-63-514) were located within the boundaries of the survey areas. All of the recorded resources are located within the Sierra National Forest, adjacent to the .25-mile buffer zone.

Based on the post-contact habitation, migration, mining, ranching, and logging histories that are associated with this region of the Sierra National Forest, and the presence of archaeological sites outside but adjacent to the project area and buffer zone, the project area is considered archaeologically sensitive. Therefore, BMPs for cultural resources were incorporated into the project description to reduce and avoid potential impacts on cultural resources. These measures are presented in the project’s EA and the Decision Memo, incorporated by reference. The BMP for cultural resources states:

> *If any previously unidentified cultural resources (artifacts, features, or sites, including areas of traditional use, concern, or significance for the local Native Americans) are encountered as a result of project construction or operation, all treatments in the vicinity of such finds will immediately cease pending an examination by the forest or District Archaeologist. The cultural resources would be recorded, clearly delineated, and protected (see Protocol for the Inadvertent Discovery of Native American Human Remains, Funerary Objects, Sacred Objects, and Objects of Cultural Patrimony).*

Furthermore, should any archaeological resources be uncovered during construction, the SNF would follow the procedures as stipulated in section 7.10 of the USFS Region 5 Programmatic Agreement with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (USDA and SHPO 2018). The stipulation outlines the process for discoveries and inadvertent effects, requiring written notification to the Regional Heritage Program Leader and the SHPO within two working days of the discovery. The USFS would then consult with SHPO, the ACHP, and affiliated Tribes regarding the cultural and religious significance of the resource and any necessary treatment measures. Once resource evaluation is complete and standard protection measures are applied (if applicable), the project may resume.

Compliance with the above BMP and existing USFS policies and practices ensures that the potential project impact on archaeological resources is less than significant. See Tribal Cultural Resources (Section 3.18) for further discussion of potential archaeological resources associated with Indigenous peoples.

c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Less Than Significant Impact. Although not expected, if human remains were inadvertently discovered during project construction, the USFS would follow the procedures as outlined in California Health and Safety Code section 7050.5 and stipulated per section 7.9 of the USFS Region 5 Programmatic Agreement with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (USDA and SHPO 2018). All project activities at the find site must come to a complete stop and no further excavation or disturbance of the area or vicinity would occur. The county coroner must be contacted immediately, and if the coroner determines or has reason to believe that the remains are Native American, the coroner would contact the NAHC within 24 hours of making this determination. Whenever the NAHC receives notification of a discovery of Native American human remains from a county coroner, the NAHC follows the procedures as outlined in Public Resources Code section 5097.98.

Per the Programmatic Agreement, if the remains are determined to be Native American or if Native American cultural items pursuant to Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) are uncovered, the provisions of NAGPRA and its regulations at 43 CFR 10 and Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) at 43 CFR 7 would be followed on federal lands.

The CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR §15064.5(e)) reference the appropriate state law (PRC §5097.98) that applies when human remains are accidentally discovered. This language states:

> *"In the event that human remains are accidently discovered, the project must come to a complete stop and no further excavation or disturbance of the area or vicinity will occur. The county coroner is to be called immediately to determine that the remains are of Native American ancestry. If the coroner confirms that the remains are Native American, within 24 hours of the discovery the coroner is to contact the [NAHC]. The NAHC will identify the person(s) believed to be the Most Likely Descendent (MLD), and the MLD will decide, along with the property owner, to appropriate treatment or disposal of the human remains and associated grave goods as provided in PRC §5097.98. If the NAHC cannot identify the MLD, the MLD fails to make a recommendation, or the property owner rejects the MLD's recommendations, the property owner can rebury the remains and associated burial goods in an area not subject to ground disturbance (14 CCR §15064.5)."*

Compliance with existing state Public Resources Code and Health and Safety Code ensures that the NAHC would be notified upon discovery of Native American human remains and that proper treatment measures would be implemented. Therefore, with these protective state laws in place, the potential project impact on human remains is less than significant.

3.6 ENERGY

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.6.1 Regulatory Setting

Since increased energy efficiency is closely tied to the state's efforts to reduce GHG emissions and address global climate change, many of the regulations, policies, and action plans aimed at reducing GHG emissions also promote increased energy efficiency and the transition to renewable energy sources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and the state address climate change through numerous pieces of legislation, regulations, planning, policy-making, education, and implementation programs aimed at reducing energy consumption and the production of GHG.

While there are numerous regulations that govern GHG emissions reductions through increased energy efficiency, the following regulatory setting description focuses only on regulations that: 1) provide the appropriate context for the proposed project's potential energy usage; and 2) may directly or indirectly govern or influence the amount of energy used to develop and operate the proposed improvements. See the Regulatory and Environmental Setting discussion in Section 3.8.1, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, for a description of the key regulations related to global climate change, energy efficiency, and GHG emission reductions.

Federal Vehicle Standards

The U.S. EPA and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) work in tandem to update GHG and vehicle fuel efficiency standards, respectively. There have been numerous updates over the years, including new fuel standards adopted in 2022 and 2024; however, those most recent updates would be applicable to vehicles produced in the future, not those that would most likely be used during construction of the proposed project. The regulatory setting below for federal vehicle standards instead focuses on prior rulemaking that affect vehicles that would most likely be used by the proposed project.

In 2010, President Obama issued a memorandum directing the Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, U.S. EPA, and NHTSA to establish additional standards regarding fuel efficiency and GHG reduction, clean fuels, and advanced vehicle infrastructure. In response to this directive, the U.S. EPA and NHTSA proposed stringent, coordinated federal GHG and fuel economy standards for model years 2017–2025 light-duty vehicles. The proposed standards projected to achieve 163 grams per mile of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in model year 2025, on an average industry fleetwide basis, which is equivalent to 54.5 miles per gallon if this level were achieved solely through fuel efficiency. The final rule was adopted in 2012 for model years 2017–2021.

In addition to the regulations applicable to cars and light-duty trucks described above, in 2011, the U.S. EPA and NHTSA announced fuel economy and GHG standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks for model years 2014–2018. The standards for CO_2 emissions and fuel consumption are tailored to three main vehicle categories: combination tractors, heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans, and vocational vehicles. According to the U.S. EPA, this regulatory program reduces fuel consumption for the affected vehicles by 6% to 23% over the 2010 baselines.

In August 2016, the U.S. EPA and NHTSA announced the adoption of the phase two program related to the fuel economy and GHG standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks. The phase two program applies to vehicles with model year 2018–2027 for certain trailers, and model years 2021–2027 for semi-trucks, large pickup trucks, vans, and all types and sizes of buses and work trucks. The final standards are expected to reduce oil consumption by up to 2 billion barrels over the lifetime of the vehicles sold under the program (U.S. EPA and NHTSA 2016).

3.6.2 Environmental Setting

Energy consumption is closely tied to the issues of air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as the burning of fossil fuels and natural gas for energy has a negative impact on both, and petroleum and natural gas currently supply most of the energy consumed in California.

In general, California's per capita energy consumption is relatively low, in part due to mild weather that reduces energy demand for heating and cooling, and in part due to the government's proactive energy-efficiency programs and standards. According to the California Energy Commission (CEC), Californians consumed about 287,826 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity and 11,711 million therms of natural gas in 2022 (CEC 2022a and CEC 2022b).

In 2022, total electricity use in Fresno County was 8,384 million kilowatt hours (kWh), including 5,214 million kWh of consumption for non-residential land uses (CEC 2022a). Natural gas consumption was 319 million therms in 2022, including 211 million therms from non-residential uses (CEC 2022b). There were an estimated 371 million gallons of gasoline and 85 million gallons of diesel sold in Fresno County in 2022 (CEC 2023).

Energy conservation refers to efforts made to reduce energy consumption to preserve resources for the future and reduce pollution. It may involve diversifying energy sources to include renewable energy, such as solar power, wind power, wave power, geothermal power, and tidal power, as well as the adoption of technologies that improve energy efficiency and adoption of green building practices. Energy conservation can be achieved through increases in efficiency in conjunction with decreased energy consumption and/or reduced consumption from conventional energy sources.

3.6.3 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

No Impact. The proposed project consists of the construction of a staging area for OHV users. Construction activities would require the use of on- and off-road equipment and generate

construction-related vehicle trips that would combust fuel, primarily diesel and gasoline. The fuel efficiencies of these on-road vehicles are directly affected by the federal vehicle fuel economy standards. The use of energy during construction would be necessary to provide parking and access to trails and to prevent the erosion, sedimentation, and degraded water quality conditions that are currently resulting from informal parking in proximity of the project site. The use of these fuels to construct necessary facilities would not be wasteful or unnecessary, and construction activities would occur in an efficient manner that would avoid unnecessary fuel combustion. No impact would occur.

b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

No Impact. The staging area improvement project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. There are no plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency applicable to the project or its location. No impact would occur.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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? (Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42).	☐	☐	☐	**X**
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

The Forest Plan (USFS 2023) discusses desired conditions, standards, and potential management approaches related to protecting and managing soils within the SNF.

Desired Conditions

DA-WILD-REC2-DC-04: Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation occurs. Minimal erosion occurs on disturbed sites.

DA-WILD-REC3-DC-04: Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation, litter, and duff occurs on many visitor-created trails, in camp areas, and in areas used by livestock. Minimal erosion occurs on disturbed sites and is mitigated to prevent long-term impacts.

INFR-FW-DC-04: Forest resources meet administrative objectives. Vegetation and soils are modified to accommodate facilities, but disturbance is minimized. Fire protection measures are planned to protect improvements.

TIMB-FW-DC-03: Salvage of dead and dying trees captures some of the economic value of the wood while retaining key features in quantities that provide for wildlife habitat, soil productivity and other desired conditions of ecosystems.

Guidelines

TERR-CES-GDL-01: Post-disturbance restoration projects should be designed to reduce potential soil erosion and the loss of soil productivity caused by loss of vegetation and ground cover.

Standards

WTR-FW-STD-01: Use applicable best management practices and other soil management practices, as described in agency technical guides and handbooks, to minimize adverse impacts to soil and water resources during the planning and implementation of Forest management activities.

WTR-FW-STD-04: After restoration actions (including soil disturbance or seeding activities), limit subsequent soil-disturbing management activities until project objectives are met.

3.7.2 Environmental Setting

Regional Geology

The project site is located along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Geomorphic Province. The Sierra Nevada Geomorphic Province is a tilted fault block nearly 400 miles long. Its east face is a high, rugged multiple scarp in contrast with the gentle western slope, which disappears under sediments of the Great Valley. Deep river canyons are cut into the western slope. Their upper courses, especially in massive granites of the higher Sierra Nevada, are modified by glacial sculpturing, forming such scenic features as the Yosemite Valley. The high crest culminates in Mount Whitney, with an elevation of 14,495 feet above sea level near the eastern scarp. The metamorphic bedrock contains gold-bearing veins in the northwest trending Mother Lode. The northern Sierra Nevada boundary is marked where bedrock disappears under the Cenozoic volcanic cover of the Cascade Range (CGS 2002).

Local Geology, Soils, and Topography

The project site is located in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Huntington Lake 7.5-minute quadrangle. The project site is underlain by Mesozoic granite, quartz monzonite, granodiorite, and quartz diorite (gr^{Mz}, CDOC 2015). Soils at the project site are mapped as 145—Lithic Xeropsamments-Rock outcrop association, 40 to 65 percent slopes in the northwestern side of the site, and 161—Sirretta family and Umpa family, wet, 2 to 25 percent slopes on the southeastern part of the site (NRCS 2024). The site is relatively level, ranging from approximately 7,880 to 7,896 feet in elevation (Google Earth Pro. 2024). The site slopes gently from the east to west, and there are generally higher elevations to the east of the site and lower elevations to the west of it.

3.7.3 Discussion

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?

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

iv) Landslides?

No Impact (Responses a[i] – a[iv]). Although California is a seismically active region, the project site is not in an area with significant seismic hazards. There are no Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones in the project area. The closest fault to the project site is the Round Valley Fault, located approximately 30 miles northeast of the site (CDOC 2024a). The project site is not within an area of strong seismic ground shaking (CGS and USGS 2016). The project site is not within a seismic hazard zone for seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, or for landslides (CDOC 2024a). The proposed project is a new staging area for existing OHV recreation. Project activities would not have the potential to exacerbate existing geologic conditions such as seismic-related ground failure, liquefaction, or landslides, or be likely to adversely affect existing geological conditions because the project does not involve new major structures or earthmoving and the site does not contain geologic hazards.

b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project would not result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil. Construction of the proposed staging area would result in temporary soil disturbance in and adjacent to the project site. However, resource protection measures from the NEPA EA incorporated in the project include a site-specific erosion control plan that would be implemented during construction to minimize erosion and loss of topsoil, and site drainage standards to minimize erosion and sedimentation (see Section 2.6). Once construction is completed the all-weather surface of the parking lot and trails would prevent soil erosion from occurring. The parking lot would be designed to direct runoff to an existing roadside drainage. Further, one specific purpose of the project is to mitigate the impact to soils with a higher erosion hazard risk, which causes off-site resource damage. There are currently several user-

created staging areas that are causing erosion, and these would be closed off after project completion. Therefore, the project is expected to reduce existing erosion and sedimentation in the project area over the long term.

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?

No Impact. As stated in response to Question a above, the project site is not in a seismic or geologic hazard area subject to landslides or liquefaction (CDOC 2024a). Lateral spreading involves the lateral movement of a liquefied soil layer (and overlying layers) toward a free face and caused by seismic shaking. Therefore, as the project area is not in a liquefaction hazard area, the risk of lateral spreading is also low.

Subsidence is the sinking of the Earth's surface in response to geologic or man-induced causes. Subsidence is primarily caused by groundwater extraction, aquifer-system compaction, drainage of organic soils, underground mining, hydro-compaction (i.e., shallow soil subsidence from adding water), natural compaction, sinkholes, and thawing permafrost (NOAA 2024). None of these causes of subsidence apply to the project area, and the project is not expected to result in on- or off-site subsidence. The proposed development of a staging area is surficial in nature and does not have the potential to become unstable resulting in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. Project activities would not exacerbate geologic unit or soil stability conditions.

d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?

No Impact. Expansive soil or clay is considered to be one of the more problematic soils, and it causes damage to various structures because of its swelling and shrinking potential when it comes into contact with water (Patel 2019). The soils mapped at the project site are loamy coarse sand and very gravelly coarse sandy loam (NRCS 2024), which do not have a high clay content typical of expansive soils. The proposed project is a new staging area for OHV recreation. The project is surficial in nature and does not have the potential to become unstable due to soil expansion, creating a substantial risk to life or property. Project activities would not exacerbate expansive soil conditions.

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?

No Impact. The proposed project includes the installation of a new double vault toilet that would be periodically emptied by a service truck. The project does not propose the installation of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems.

f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

No Impact. The project would not directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature. Fossils are most often found in marine sedimentary rocks such as limestone, sandstone, and shale (CDOC 2024b). The project area is underlain by volcanic rock (CDOC 2015), and no fossils have been mapped in the project area (Macrostat 2024). In addition, the project site is relatively level, and the proposed staging area would not

require extensive excavation or grading to construct. Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to impact paleontological resources. No unique geologic features are present in the project area.

3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.8.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

Gases that absorb and emit infrared thermal radiation (heat) in the atmosphere and affect regulation of the Earth's temperature are known as greenhouse gases (GHGs). There are many compounds present in the Earth's atmosphere that are GHGs, including but not limited to water vapor (H_2O), carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and nitrous oxide (N_2O). GHGs allow solar radiation (sunlight) to enter the atmosphere freely. When solar radiation strikes the earth's surface, it is either absorbed by the atmosphere, land, and ocean surface, or reflected back toward space. The land and ocean surface that has absorbed solar radiation warms up and emits infrared radiation toward space. GHGs absorb some of this infrared radiation and "trap" the energy in the earth's atmosphere. Entrapment of too much infrared radiation produces an effect commonly referred to as the "Greenhouse effect." Human activities since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (approximately 1750) have increased atmospheric GHG concentrations. Average global surface temperatures have risen as a result of GHG emissions. This increase in globally averaged surface temperatures is commonly referred to as "Global Warming," although the term "Global Climate Change" is preferred because effects associated with increased GHG concentrations are not just limited to higher global temperatures.

GHGs that contribute to climate regulation are a different type of pollutant than criteria or hazardous air pollutants because climate regulation is global in scale, both in terms of causes and effects. Some GHGs are emitted to the atmosphere naturally by biological and geological processes such as evaporation (water vapor), aerobic respiration (carbon dioxide), and off-gassing from low oxygen environments such as swamps or exposed permafrost (methane); however, GHG emissions from human activities such as fuel combustion (e.g., carbon dioxide) and refrigerants use (e.g., hydrofluorocarbons) significantly contribute to overall GHG concentrations in the atmosphere, climate regulation, and global climate change.

Scoping Plan

The CARB Scoping Plan is the comprehensive plan primarily directed at identifying the measures necessary to reach the GHG reduction targets stipulated in AB 32. First adopted 2009, the Scoping Plan has undergone several iterations with the most recent update occurring in 2022. The 2022 Scoping Plan presents a scenario and strategy for California to meet the State goal of reducing GHG emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 (CARB 2022).

3.8.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less than Significant Impact. The proposed project's GHG emissions were estimated using the same methodology (CalEEMod) employed to estimate criteria air pollutant emissions (see Section 3.3). Under worst-case conditions, the project is estimated to produce approximately 52.5 $MTCO_2e$ per year.[2] The SJVAPCD has not adopted a threshold of significance for construction-related GHG emissions; however, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD) has adopted a construction-level GHG threshold, which is 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year (SMAQMD 2020). This threshold was established by the SMAQMD to support jurisdictions' evaluation of potential construction GHG emissions levels and is considered to be most relevant to the activities proposed by the project. Given that the proposed project's estimated construction emissions (approximately 52.5 $MTCO_2e$) are substantially less than the SMAQMD 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ threshold, this impact would be less than significant.

b. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

No Impact. The project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for reducing GHG emissions. Construction vehicle and equipment GHG emissions are identified and planned for in CARB's GHG emissions inventory and 2022 Scoping Plan Update, which contains measures designed to achieve the state's GHG reduction goals outlined in SB 32 (2030 GHG reduction goal) and AB 1279 (2045 carbon neutrality goal). Further, the project would not contain any activities or emissions sources that are subject to state or federal GHG permitting or reporting regulations.

[2] The proposed project is not anticipated to result in an increase in long-term operational GHG emissions because it does not involve new land uses or new trails that could induce recreation growth.

3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	**X**	☐

3.9.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

A material is considered hazardous if it appears on a list of hazardous materials prepared by a federal, state, or local agency, or if it has characteristics defined as hazardous by such an agency. Chemical and physical properties such as toxicity, ignitability, corrosivity, and reactivity can cause a substance to be considered hazardous (22 CCR § 66261.20-66261.24). A “hazardous waste” is any hazardous material that is discarded, abandoned, or to be recycled. The criteria that render a material hazardous also make a waste product hazardous (California Health and Safety Code § 25117). According to this definition, fuels, motor oil, and lubricants in use at a typical construction site and airborne lead built up along roadways could be considered hazardous.

The project site is currently lodgepole pine forest adjacent to two Forest Service roads. No hazardous materials are currently used or stored at the site.

3.9.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

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?

Less Than Significant Impact (Responses a – b). Project construction would involve the use of hazardous fuels and fluids needed for construction equipment in the short-term; however, resource protection measures from the NEPA EA incorporated in the project include adherence to the Forest Spill Plan, a spill kit kept on-site, storage of hazardous materials (including fuels) and servicing and refueling of equipment at pre-designated locations, and removal and proper disposal of all waste oil, containers, and other materials (see Section 2.6). In addition, all hazardous construction materials would be transported, used, and disposed of by Forest Service personnel or Forest Service contractors in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

After construction, the new staging area would not involve the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials over the long-term. The use of hazardous materials during the operational phase of the project would be limited to small quantities of cleaning fluids for the vault toilet that would not be stored or disposed of onsite and would be used in accordance with applicable regulations.

c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or hazardous waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

No Impact. The project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or hazardous waste. The project site is in the Sierra National Forest, and there are no existing or proposed schools within one-quarter mile of the site (Google Earth Pro 2024).

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?

No Impact. No hazardous material sites are known to occur on or near the project site. The project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (CalEPA 2024). According to the State Water Resources Control Board Geotracker map, there are no hazardous materials sites within one mile of the project site (SWRCB 2024). Therefore, the project would not create a hazard to the public or the environment due to hazardous materials sites.

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?

No Impact. The project site is not within an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The closest airport is the Mammoth Yosemite Airport, located approximately 33 miles northeast of the project site. Therefore, the project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.

f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. The proposed project is a new staging area for OHV recreation. There is only one way in and out of the project area, via Forest Service Road 8S10, which connects to SR 168. There are no established emergency evacuation routes at the project site. The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an existing emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

g. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is in a forested area where wildland fires may occur but is not located in a very high fire hazard severity zone (it is in a moderate fire hazard zone, see section 3.20). The proposed project is a new staging area for OHV recreation that would serve existing visitor use and would not increase OHV recreation in the forest above existing usage levels. The existing OHV use does pose some level of wildfire risk because in general human activity and equipment usage are known factors in causing wildfire, but the new staging area would not increase this risk. The project does not propose new land uses, activities, or buildings that would introduce new fire hazards. Building materials include aggregate base, signs, pedestrian trails, picnic tables, and a double vault toilet, none of which are highly flammable. Therefore, the project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

3.10 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?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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 on- or offsite erosion or siltation;	☐	☐	**X**	☐
ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	☐	☐	**X**	☐
iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	**X**	☐
iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	**X**	☐

3.10.1 Regulatory Setting

Federal Clean Water Act, Section 402

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the primary federal legislation governing water quality and forms the basis for several state and local laws throughout the nation. The objective of the CWA is “to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation’s waters.”

The CWA authorizes the U.S. EPA to regulate water quality in California by controlling the discharge of pollutants to water bodies from point and non-point sources through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

The State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards entered into an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service that requires the agency to control non-point source discharges by implementing control actions certified by the State Board as BMPs. BMPs are designed to protect water quality including sediment, turbidity, and water temperature. All project activities would meet all applicable BMPs.

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

The Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest provides direction to maintain or restore water quality and the structure, function, composition, and connectivity of aquatic ecosystems in the SNF.

3.10.2 Environmental Setting

Unnamed tributaries of Tamarack Creek are located approximately 0.1 south and 0.2 mile north of the project site (NWI 2024). Tamarack Creek flows into Pitman Creek, which flows into Big Creek, which flows into the San Joaquin River. No streams or drainages occur on or adjacent to the project site.

3.10.3 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality. Project construction would cause temporary ground disturbance to approximately one acre that could result in erosion and sedimentation at the project site. Construction would also include construction fuels and fluids that could result in leaks or accidental spills affecting surface and groundwater at the project site. However, the project includes resource protection measures from the NEPA EA and Decision Memo to protect water quality such as compliance with the Forest Spill Plan and keeping a spill kit on-site, storage of hazardous materials (including fuels) and servicing and refueling of equipment at pre-designated locations away from streams, an erosion control plan, specific design features for surface drainage, and BMPs to protect water quality during water drafting (see Section 2.6).

Further, one specific purpose of the project is to mitigate the impact to soils with a higher erosion hazard risk. There are currently several user-created staging areas that are causing erosion, and these would be closed off after project completion. Therefore, the project is expected to reduce existing erosion and sedimentation in the project area over the long term. Educational signs and patrols would help to minimize user-created trash, and the vault toilet would eliminate or minimize human waste in the project area, further reducing water quality impacts in the operational phase of the project. Therefore, the project is not expected to result in significant impacts to water quality.

b. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

No Impact. The project is the construction of a new one-acre staging area at a site that is currently forested. The project would not use groundwater and thus would not decrease

groundwater supplies. The ¾ inch Type 2 aggregate base rock that would be used at the staging area is permeable, and thus would not affect groundwater recharge at the site. Therefore, the project would have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge.

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;

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Less Than Significant Impact. (Responses c[i] – c[iii]). The project site is relatively level and has no streams or drainages. The creation of a new staging area would not alter the course of a stream or a river or substantially change drainage patterns. Although the project could increase erosion or siltation temporarily during construction, the project is expected to decrease erosion and siltation in the long term. One specific purpose of the project is to mitigate the impact to soils with a higher erosion hazard risk caused by several user-created staging areas, which would be closed after project completion. In addition, BMPs incorporated in the project include an erosion control plan to avoid or minimize erosion and siltation during construction (see Section 2.6). The aggregate rock base as well as drainage specifications incorporated into the project would avoid erosion and siltation during project operation. Therefore, the project would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off-site.

Although the project would convert about one acre of forested area to a new staging area, the ¾ inch Type 2 aggregate base rock that would be used at the staging area is permeable. Therefore, the project is not expected to substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff from the site. In addition, drainage specifications incorporated in the project are expected to prevent ponded water on and near the site. Thus, the project is not expected to result in flooding on or off-site.

The project site is in the Sierra National Forest, and there are no existing or planned municipal stormwater drainage systems in the area. Project site runoff would be directed to an existing dirt roadside drainage and culvert on Forest Road 8S10, downhill from the site. Rock armoring would be placed in this existing drainage to accommodate any additional runoff and to avoid sedimentation or ponding. The project is not expected to create or contribute to runoff water that would exceed the capacity of the existing roadside drainage. The project would not create additional sources of polluted runoff with implementation of water quality BMPs and site drainage specifications incorporated in the project (see response to Question a above).

No Impact. (Response c[iv]) The project would not impede or redirect flood flows. The project site is not within a flood zone (FEMA 2009). The project does not propose buildings or structures that could impede or redirect flood flows.

d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

No Impact. The project site is not in a flood hazard zone (FEMA FIRM 06019C0475H). In addition, the project is not near the coast or a large body of water and thus is not at risk of inundation by tsunami or seiche.

e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not conflict with the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Valley Region for the Sacramento River Basin and the San Joaquin River Basin (Central Valley RWQCB 2019) with the resource protection measures from the NEPA EA and Decision Memo incorporated in the project for water quality protection (see Section 2.6). No sustainable groundwater management plan applies to the project area (SWRCB 2024). See responses to Questions a through c above regarding the potential impacts of the project on water quality and groundwater. All impacts were found to be less than significant.

3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.11.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

Every national forest is required to have a land management plan (forest plan) that is consistent with the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1604) and other laws. A forest plan guides the management of a national forest by establishing long-range goals, objectives, and standards for resource protection, use, and maintenance, while balancing multiple uses and addressing local, regional, and national issues. The Land Management Plan of the Sierra National Forest (Forest Plan; USFS 2023) includes six types of plan components that guide future project and activity decision-making in the Forest. Five types of plan components are required: desired conditions, objectives, suitability of lands, standards, and guidelines. Goals are included as an optional plan component. Other contents of the plan include priority watersheds for maintenance or restoration, the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape, a plan monitoring program, and proposed and possible actions that may occur in the plan area.

The project site is located within the Sierra National Forest on land that is Federal land owned and managed by the USFS. Land uses within the SNF include mining operations, timber production, and recreational uses including OHV recreation (USFS 2023).

3.11.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Physically divide an established community?

No Impact. The project proposes to construct a one-acre staging area for OHV recreation within a national forest. The project would not physically divide an established community as there are no established communities in the project area.

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?

No Impact. The NEPA EA found the proposed project is consistent with the Sierra National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan direction including all applicable standards, objectives, and guidelines. The proposed action is consistent with all other Federal, state, and local laws and requirements.

3.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.12.1 Regulatory Setting

Federal

General Mining Law of 1872

The General Mining Act of 1872 declared all valuable mineral deposits in land belonging to the United States to be free and open to exploration and purchase. This law provides citizens of the United States the opportunity to explore for, discover, and purchase certain valuable mineral deposits on federal lands that are open for mining location and patent (open to mineral entry) (US Department of the Interior 2025).

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

Mineral exploration, development, and extraction activities are heavily regulated by the Forest Plan and must be evaluated and determined to provide for public benefit. Extraction and potential development of mineral resources on SNF lands are managed in a manner that protects natural resources, public health and safety, and forest plan consistency. The Forest Plan describes desired conditions, goals, and guidelines designed to allow mineral exploration, development, and extraction activities, while minimizing adverse impacts to forest resources and protecting, water quality, sensitive habitats, and sacred sites (USFS 2023).

3.12.2 Environmental Setting

Currently the SNF contains roughly 161 active mine claims and over 2,400 abandoned mines, though none of them are in or near the project site (The Diggings 2024). According to the CDC Mines Online Map, there are no active or abandoned mines on or near the project site (CDOC 2016).

3.12.3 Discussion

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?**

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?**

No Impact (Responses a – b). The project would not include mineral extraction or affect the availability of any mineral resources in the project area.

3.13 NOISE

Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.13.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

Other than the context of wildlife disturbance, the Forest Plan does not address noise for non-wilderness areas such as the project site. Noise can be defined as unwanted sound, and sound is a detectable vibratory disturbance. On a seasonal basis, sounds of vehicle engines are common in the project area and vicinity. The project site location is in Sierra National Forest and is not located near sensitive receptors such as residences and schools.

3.13.2 Discussion

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 in other applicable standards of other agencies?

Less than Significant Impact. Noise levels would temporarily increase in proximity of the project site during construction due to the use of heavy equipment, but the temporary increase would have limited effect on recreationists. No campgrounds or hiking trails are in the immediate project vicinity. There are no sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site that would be affected by heavy equipment noise. The nearest residences, schools, and hospitals are all over a mile away from the project site, and the trails accessed by the proposed staging area are designed for OHV use. Sensitive receptors would not be impacted by any increases in ambient noise that could result from project construction. The staging area would serve existing visitor use and would not increase OHV recreation and related noise in the forest above existing usage levels. The project's noise impact would be less than significant.

b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

No Impact. Localized ground vibrations may occur during construction work to construct the staging area due to the use of heavy equipment. However, there are no sensitive receptors or structures in the vicinity of the project site that would be affected by groundborne vibration or groundborne noise. No impact would occur.

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?

No Impact. The project area is not located within two miles of a public airport or private airport or airstrip. The nearest airport, Mammoth Yosemite Airport, is approximately 33 miles northeast of the project site. The project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels. No impact would occur.

3.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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)?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.14.1 Environmental Setting

There is no existing housing in the project area. The closest town to the project site is Shaver Lake, located about 12 miles southwest of the site.

3.14.2 Discussion

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)?

No Impact. The proposed project would not induce any unplanned population growth in the project area, either directly or indirectly. The new staging area is designed to meet existing parking demand from current OHV recreation visitor use levels and avoid damage to natural resources presently occurring from informal and unmanaged parking areas. The formalization of a parking area does not expand recreation opportunity and is not expected to generate increased recreational demand in the project area. No additional trails for motorized recreation are planned for the project area. No specific projects are proposed, and any future activities would be subject to separate environmental review.

b. Displace substantial numbers of people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact. The project would not displace any housing or people as it does not involve the removal of existing housing.

3.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) 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:				
i) Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
ii) Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
iii) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
iv) Parks?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
v) Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.15.1 Environmental Setting

The SNF has a robust fire management program that includes Hotshot crews, handcrews, engine crews, water tender operators, heavy equipment operators, lookouts, helicopter crews, aviation resources, fire prevention technicians, fuels technicians, dispatchers, and management staff (USFS 2024). Law enforcement is provided in the SNF by Forest Service Rangers and the Mariposa County Sheriff's Department. The project area is national forest land, and there are no schools, parks, or other urban public facilities in the area.

3.15.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. 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:

i) Fire protection?

ii) Police protection?

iii) Schools?

iv) Parks?

v) Other public facilities?

No Impact (Responses a[i] – a[v]). The proposed project would not induce population growth or significantly increase recreational demand in the project area (see response to Question a in Section 3.14.2 of Population and Housing). Therefore, the project would not increase the demand for public services and facilities such as schools and parks compared to existing conditions. The project is not expected to increase risks to people or structures from wildfires

(see response to Question h in Section 3.9.2 of Hazards and Hazardous Materials). The project is not expected to increase crime or the need for police protection.

3.16 RECREATION

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	**X**	☐

3.16.1 Regulatory Setting

Land Management Plan for the Sierra National Forest

The Forest Plan (USFS 2023) describes desired conditions and goals related to sustainable recreation on SNF Lands. Recreation goals and objectives relevant to the project are described below and include providing recreation opportunities, increasing developed sites to accommodate increased use, managing sites to facilitate resource management, protect wildlife, meet water quality objectives and provide recreational access.

Desired Conditions

MA-DRA-DC-01 The developed area footprint within destination recreation areas is appropriate to the setting, visually appealing, and well maintained.

MA-DRA-DC-02 A natural-appearing landscape is retained outside the development footprint.

MA-DRA-DC-05 Amenities and sustainable infrastructure are provided to support a wide variety of recreation activities near each other.

MA-DRA-DC-06 Available infrastructure and amenities are consistent with user capacity.

MA-DRA-DC-08 Traffic and parking does not negatively impact visitor experience.

3.16.2 Environmental Setting

The SNF is bordered by Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest to the north, the Inyo National Forest and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks to the east, and the Sequoia National Forest to the south. In conjunction with these lands, the SNF forms one of the most active recreation areas in the world, and as a result, receives nearly 1.5 million visitors per year (USFS 2023).

The SNF encompasses more than 1.3 million acres and provides many opportunities for a wide variety of public recreation. The SNF is between 900 and 13,986 feet in elevation (USFS 2024c). The terrain includes rolling, oak-covered foothills, heavily forested middle elevation

slopes and the alpine landscape of the High Sierra. The SNF is an increasingly popular recreation destination for multiple types of recreation uses, including camping, horseback riding, swimming, picnicking, biking and hiking opportunities, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, skiing, snowshoeing, and OHV and OSV recreation. The SNF includes five wilderness areas; two nationally designated wild and scenic rivers; three nationally designated trails, and two national scenic byways (USFS 2024d), none of which intersect with the project site.

3.16.3 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact. The project is not located within an existing neighborhood or near a regional park; therefore, the project would not impact neighborhoods and regional parks. Additionally, the project is not expected to significantly increase recreational demand in the project area (see response to Question a in Section 3.14.2 of Population and Housing). The project would not increase visitor use in the SNF such that new recreational facilities would be needed, nor would the project intensify uses of other recreational facilities resulting in or accelerating physical deterioration of those facilities.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project is a new staging area to meet existing demand for OHV recreation and to avoid damage to natural resources from existing informal and unmanaged parking areas. The project would provide a formalized parking area to access existing motorized trails but does not include new or expanded trails or other recreational facilities. Adverse physical effects on the environment from the new staging area would be avoided through resource protection measures from the NEPA EA and Decision Memo incorporated in the project (see Section 2.6).

3.17 TRANSPORTATION

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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	**X**	☐
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.17.1 Regulatory and Environmental Setting

Under desired conditions as described in the Forest Plan (INFR-FW-DC; USFS 2023), infrastructure is managed to provide for the planned use and protection of resources, maintained for health and safety, minimizes soil and vegetation disturbance, and has minimal adverse effects on riparian and aquatic resources. Regional access to the project site is provided by SR 168 (Tollhouse Road), which runs north-south from Huntington Lake Road to Fresno, passing through the unincorporated communities of Lakeshore, Shaver Lake, and Prather. Local access to the site is provided by Forest Service Road 8S10, which connects to SR 168. The project site is surrounded by open forested areas. There are no transit services or airports in the project area. Currently the project area accommodates street vehicles and OHVs.

3.17.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?

No Impact. The proposed project is a new staging area to meet existing demand for OHV recreation, and to avoid damage to natural resources from existing informal and unmanaged parking areas. The project would provide a formalized parking area to access existing off-highway motorized trails but would not affect the existing local or regional circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

b. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), which pertains to vehicle miles traveled?

Less Than Significant Impact. As stated, the proposed project is a new staging area to meet existing demand for OHV recreation. The project is not expected to increase recreational demand in the project area (see response to Question a in Section 3.14.2 of Population and Housing). Additionally, the project would not induce population growth, nor does it propose the building of new roads, or other land uses that have the potential to generate an increase in

vehicle miles traveled (VMT) above existing levels associated with current visitor usage volumes. Project construction would require approximately 50 truck trips to transport materials to and from the site, but the project is not expected to increase VMT over the long term. Therefore, the project would not conflict with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b).

c. Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

No Impact. The proposed project would not include hazardous design features or incompatible uses. The project site is at the junction of two Forest Service roads and is not near any dangerous intersections, sharp curves, or busy roadways. The proposed project is a new staging area to meet existing demand for OHV recreation, and to avoid damage to natural resources from existing informal and unmanaged parking areas. The project is compatible with existing recreational and natural resources management uses of the project area.

d. Result in inadequate emergency access?

No Impact. Project related work would not affect existing traffic patterns or emergency access routes. The proposed staging area is being designed to Forest Service engineering standards, which includes appropriate access for emergency vehicles. The project would meet emergency vehicle (fire truck, ambulance) access requirements such as road width, vertical clearance, turning radius, and turnarounds. Additionally, the new parking area could serve as a staging area during a fire if needed.

3.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resources, 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:				
a) 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)?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe.	☐	**X**	☐	☐

3.18.1 Regulatory Setting

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The ARPA (16 USC §470aa-mm) prohibits the unauthorized excavation, removal, or damage of archaeological resources on federal and Indian lands and provides penalties for violations.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The NAGPRA (25 USC §§3001-3013) conveys to American Indians, of demonstrated lineal descendance, human remains and funerary or religious items that are held by federal agencies and federally-supported museums, or that have been recovered from federal lands. It also makes the sale of purchase of American Indian remains, “whether or not they derive from federal or Indian lands, illegal.”

Assembly Bill (AB) 52

AB 52 created a formal CEQA role for California Native American tribes by creating a formal consultation process and establishing that a substantial adverse change to a tribal cultural resource has a significant effect on the environment. Tribal cultural resources are defined as:

1. 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
    b) Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in PRC section 5020.1(k)

2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in PRC section 5024.1 (c). In applying the criteria set forth in PRC section 5024.1 (c) the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

In addition, a historical resource described in PRC section 21084.1, a unique archaeological resource as defined in PRC section 21083.2(g), or a "non-unique archaeological resource" as defined in PRC section 21083.2(h) may also be a tribal cultural resource if it conforms with above criteria.

AB 52 requires a lead agency, prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report for a project, to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project if (1) the California Native American tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed by the lead agency through formal notification of proposed projects in the geographic area that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the tribe; and, (2) the California Native American tribe responds, in writing, within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification, and requests the consultation. AB 52 states: "To expedite the requirements of this section, the Native American Heritage Commission shall assist the lead agency in identifying the California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area."

U.S. Forest Service Region 5 Programmatic Agreement Section 7.5

The USFS Region 5 Programmatic Agreement Section 7.5 highlights the importance of consultation with Indian Tribes and Native American Traditional Practitioners in the identification and evaluation activities conducted under the Programmatic Agreement (USDA and SHPO 2018). It stipulates that the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that consultation with Indian tribes and Native American Traditional Practitioners begins at the earliest stages of planning for an undertaking and continues throughout the process as appropriate. This section recognizes the important and unique role Indian tribes play in determining which properties the tribes assign traditional religious or cultural importance. Policy and guidance for guidance under this section is provided in Forest Service Manual 2360.

United States Forest Service Region 5 Programmatic Agreement Section 7.9

The USFS Region 5 Programmatic Agreement Section 7.9 stipulates that, in the event of inadvertent or unanticipated discoveries of human remains on Region 5's lands, the County Coroner be notified immediately in accordance with California Heal and Safety Code 7050.5(b), and if remains are determined to be Native American or Native American cultural items pursuant to NAGPRA are uncovered, the provisions of NAGPRA and its regulations at 43 CFR 10 and ARPA at 43 CFR 7 shall be followed on federal lands (USDA and SHPO 2018). If such remains or items are discovered off federal lands within California, for projects authorized by the Forest Service, the provisions of the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (California Health and Safety Code 8010-8030, and California Public Resources Code 5097.98-99) shall be followed.

In addition to these outlined codes and regulations specific to Tribal Cultural Resources, the NHPA, NRHP, CRHR, CEQA, Health and Safey Code Sections 7050 and 7052, Penal Code Section 622.5, and Government Code Sections 6254(r) and 6250 *et seq.* also provide the regulatory setting for Tribal Cultural Resources. See Section _Ref196472379 for descriptions of these regulations.

3.18.2 Environmental Setting

The geographic region of the Sierra Nevada exhibits archaeological evidence of multi-season occupation going back at least 13,500 years (USFS 2025a). The proposed project site in southern Sierra is ethnographically known to have been inhabited by the Western Mono people for generations. Linguistic evidence suggests that the ancestors of the Mono people occupied an area on the east slopes of the Sierra approximately 1000 years ago, before dividing into the regional dialect groups of the Eastern Mono and Western Mono (Dallavalle 1989). The Western Mono are estimated to have migrated approximately 550 years ago to inhabit the western slopes of the Sierra (including the vicinity of the project area) and utilized routes spanning the Sierra Nevada crest to travel and trade with other Indigenous groups (Dallavalle 1989). The post-contact Shaver Trail traverses the east side of Tamarak Mountain (west of the proposed project area) and the Mono Trail connecting Shaver Lake to Huntington Lake (west of the project area) may follow Indigenous routes in the area. Tamarack Creek may have been and access route to Red Mountain, the Blayney Meadow area, and Paiute Pass. The exact locations of pre-contact trails are unverified (Dallavalle 1989).

During the early 1800s the Spanish government of Alta California raided villages in the San Joaquin Valley, including the western foothills of the southern Sierra. The raids disrupted Indigenous lifeways and forced the relocation of many people into the California Missions system. Disruption and displacement was further exasperated under the subsequent Mexican government, as changes to the local landscape and ecology resulted in lack of access to food and medicine and the local Indigenous population experienced a malaria epidemic in 1832-1833 (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007).

In 1848 California became a state and the gold rush began one year later, with the Sierra at the center of nation-wide speculation. Indigenous groups living near the gold mines were severely impacted through contact with settlements via the introduction of diseases and violent disputes over access to land and resources (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007). In 1850, possibly to solidify land claims in the region, California passed the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians that codified the indenture of Indigenous children and some adults (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007).

In 1853, the United States congress established permanent reservations, or rancherias, for California Indians. The Mono were one of the largest affected groups with hundreds relocated to the Fresno River Farm reserve (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007). The reservation lost federal funding a few years later, and the ancestors of present day Western Mono dispersed to new locations. Some individuals and families remained in the region working on farms or in the timber industry (USFS 2025a). Several Bands of Indigenous peoples organized for federal recognition during the 1990s and 2000s (North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians 2007).

Recorded archaeological sites and ethnographic and linguistic evidence suggest that pre-contact settlement sites will be found in the vicinity of permanent water sources such as springs and streams, particularly near the confluence of two or more sources. These areas are considered highly sensitive. Trade was also a significant aspect of pre-contact Mono culture and trading sites such as temporary camps, exchange sites, and trails are expected finds in the region. The Huntington Lake Basin, north of the project site, is thought to have been a major trading hub for the Western Mono people during pre-contact occupation, and was used as a temporary rancheria settlement during the early American period (Dallavalle 1989). The lake was filled ca. 1913 by as part of a Big Creek hydroelectric project (USFS 2025b).

3.18.3 Discussion:

Would the project:

Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resources, 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:

a. 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)?

No Impact. MIG conducted a Sacred Lands File (SLF) search through the NAHC. The search was initiated on October 29, 2024, and was returned with negative results on November 7, 2024. Tribal representatives were contacted by certified mail in December 2024 and by email in January 2025 using the NAHC's contact list. Responses are described below under discussion (b). In sum, no Tribal Cultural Resources were identified within the project area or a 0.25-mile buffer zone. Because the SLF search was negative and no affiliated tribes who were contacted disclosed any California Register-eligible Tribal Cultural Resources, it may be assumed that no known eligible or listed (previously evaluated) resources are located within the project area or would be affected by the project.

See Mitigation Measure TRIB-1 under discussion (b) to stop work in the case of inadvertent, unanticipated discovery of potential Tribal Cultural Resources.

b. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe.

Less Than Significant with Mitigation. As described above under discussion item (a), MIG conducted a SLF search through the NAHC on October 29, 2024, which was returned with negative results on November 7, 2024. Tribal representatives were contacted by certified mail in December 2024 and by email in January 2025 using the NAHC's contact list. The letters and emails to tribal representatives requested pertinent information regarding cultural and tribal resources in the project vicinity and included a description of the project and a map showing the project location and project boundary and buffer, plus representative photos of the project site taken in 2024. The Tribes contacted include the Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians, the North Fort Rancheria of Mono Indians, the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians, and the Wuksachi Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band. Responses are described below. In sum, no Tribal Cultural Resources were identified within the project area or buffer, but the responses to outreach combined with the environmental setting and the results of the CHRIS records search described under Cultural Resources discussion in Section 3.5.3(b) indicate a level of sensitivity at the site for associated Tribes.

The Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Tribe and the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians confirmed receipt of the letters and email. The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians requested a tribal monitor be on site during earth moving, which was incorporated into the project as a BMP (see Section 2.6 Project Design Criteria and BMPs Incorporated into Project).

If the Tribal Monitor identifies potential Tribal Cultural Resources during demolition or construction activities for the proposed project, Mitigation Measure TRIB-1 requires that all project activities within 100 feet of the find are halted until further investigation can be completed. The BMPs and USFS stipulations outlined under Section 3.5 further support this protective effort to stop work in case of inadvertent discovery of potential Tribal Cultural Resources. These measures are considered sufficient mitigations to protect unknown or undisclosed Tribal Cultural Resources. As such, there is a less-than significant impact on potentially eligible Tribal Cultural Resources with mitigation.

> **Impact TRIB-1:** Project construction could disturb or damage unknown Tribal Cultural Resources resulting in an adverse change in the significance of the resource.
>
> **Mitigation Measure TRIB-1:** If any suspected TCRs or resources of cultural significance to affiliated Tribes, including but not limited to features, anthropogenic/cultural soils, cultural belongings or objects (artifacts), shell, bone, shaped stones or bone, or ash/charcoal deposits are discovered by any person during construction activities including ground disturbing activities, all work shall pause immediately within 100 feet of the find, or an agreed upon distance based on the project area and nature of the find. Work shall cease in and within the immediate vicinity of the find, regardless of whether the construction is being actively monitored by a Tribal Monitor, cultural resources specialist, or professional archaeologist.
>
> Tribal Representatives, the OHMVR Division as CEQA Lead Agency, and SNF shall be immediately notified. The Tribal Representative in coordination with the Lead Agency and SNF shall determine if the find is a TCR (PRC §21074), and the Tribal Representative shall make recommendations for further evaluation and treatment as necessary. As such, all Native American tribal finds are to be considered significant until the lead agency has enough evidence to make a determination of significance. Work at the TCR discovery location shall not resume until authorization is granted by the Lead Agency in coordination with the culturally affiliated Tribe.

3.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
e) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.19.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is on National Forest land, and there are no existing water, wastewater, solid waste, electricity, gas, or telecommunications facilities or services in the project area. Stormwater drainage in the project area is primarily through natural percolation in the soil or runoff to natural streams and drainages. Some manmade drainage structures such as rolling dips, culverts, and roadside drainages are present near the site for road drainage.

3.19.2 Discussion

Would the project:

a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

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?

No Impact (Responses a – c). The proposed project is a new staging area to provide formal parking access for OHV recreation and avoid damage to natural resources from the existing informal and unmanaged parking areas. The project would not include new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. The new staging area would not include water, lighting, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities. The project would use water from South Tamarack Creek for compaction and dust control during construction but would not require water use after construction. The operating project facilities would not require water supplies or wastewater treatment. A double vault toilet would be installed at the site, which is a self-contained unit, and no installation or connection to water or sewer utility lines is proposed. The toilets would be serviced periodically. The Forest Service regional engineer is designing the staging area to Forest Service engineering drainage specifications to provide for adequate storm water management. The site surface would be a permeable aggregate base, and site runoff would be directed to an existing roadside drainage and culvert downhill from the site. Therefore, the project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded utilities or service systems and would not impact water supplies or wastewater treatment providers.

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?

e. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No Impact (Responses d – e). The proposed project would not generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair attainment of solid waste reduction goals. No dumpster or solid waste receptacle would be provided at the staging area; therefore, the project is not expected to generate solid waste over the long term. Recreationalists are expected to take their trash home. In addition, the proposed project is not expected to significantly increase recreational demand in the project area (see response to Question a in Section 3.14.2 of Population and Housing), and therefore would not result in a significant increase in solid waste generated by recreationists. Solid waste generated during the short-term construction period is expected to be minimal. The project would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.

3.20 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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
c) Require the installation 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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
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?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.20.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is in a forested area that could experience wildfires. The site is on federal property (National Forest) in a federal responsibility area and not within in a state responsibility area (CAL Fire 2024). According to the USFS Wildfire Hazard Potential online map, the project site is in an area of moderate wildfire hazard (USFS 2020). The SNF has a robust fire management program with various types of fire resources suppression resources including, hot shot crew, hand crews, 12 fire engines, heavy equipment operators, fire prevention technicians, fuel technicians, and aviation resources.

3.20.2 Discussion

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. The project is not located in a state responsibility area or a very high fire hazard severity zone. The project site entrance is at the junction of Forest Service Roads 8S10 and 8S42. Forest Service Roads 8S10 connects to SR 168 and is the only way to evacuate from the site. There are no established emergency evacuation routes. There are no established emergency evacuation routes. The project would not impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, as there are no established emergency evacuation routes in the project area and all construction activities would be short-term and confined to the project site. Emergency access to the project site would be maintained during construction, and the expanded staging area would accommodate emergency vehicles.

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?

No Impact. The project is not located in a state responsibility area or a very high fire hazard severity zone. The project would clear one acre of forest vegetation to create an OHV staging area. The project does not introduce new land uses, potential ignition sources, or change in topography that could exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose site visitors to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. The proposed project does not include structures for human habitation, and building materials (e.g., aggregate base, signs, and vault toilet) are not highly flammable. The project area is relatively level, and there are no nearby steep slopes that could increase the risk of uncontrolled wildfire spread.

c. Require the installation 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?

No Impact. The project is not located in a state responsibility area or a very high fire hazard severity zone. In addition, the project would not include the installation of roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities. The proposed staging area could potentially act as a small fuel break in the project area, but is not designed for that purpose.

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?

No Impact. The project area is relatively level and is not prone to wildfire induced landslides or slope instability. In addition, the project site is not in a flood hazard zone and is not subject to downstream flooding (see responses to Questions c[iv] and d in Section 3.10.3 of Hydrology and Water Quality).

3.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	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?	☐	**X**	☐	☐
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the efforts of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☐	**X**
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☐	**X**

3.21.1 Discussion

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?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. As explained in response to Question a in Section 3.4.3 of Biological Resources, the BMPs incorporated into the project would ensure impacts on biological resources are less than significant (see Section 3.4). With implementation of these BMPs, the project would not 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, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

As explained in response to Question a in Section 3.5.3 of Cultural Resources, no historical or archeological resources were identified in the project area in the cultural resources report prepared for the project by the Sierra National Forest (ARR R2011051552065) or in the CHRIS search or SLF search performed to meet CEQA requirements. If any previously unknown cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are discovered during project implementation, operations would cease until analysis is conducted and protections measures are implemented as needed consistent with Mitigation Measure TRIB-1, BMPs incorporated into the project, and

the Cultural Resources Programmatic Agreement. Therefore, the project would not eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the efforts of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

No Impact. The project does not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. The project is designed to address resource damage and safety concerns associated with currently unmanaged parking/staging areas. Resource protection measures from the NEPA EA (USFS 2015) and Decision Memo (USFS 2024a) incorporated in the project would prevent significant impacts during project construction (see Section 2.6). There are no other past, current, or probable future projects in the project area that could combine with the project to result in cumulatively considerable impacts.

c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

No Impact. The project does not have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on humans, either directly or indirectly. The project is a new staging area to meet existing recreational needs and reduce resource damage from informal parking. The project does not include structures for human habitation, hazardous materials, ongoing emissions, loud noises, or other features that could impact human beings. All potential project-related impacts to human beings would be less than significant with resource protection measures from the NEPA EA and Decision Memo incorporated in the project (see Section 2.6).

Chapter 4. REFERENCES

4.1 REFERENCES

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4.2 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Kevin Woods, Off Highway and Over Snow Vehicle Manager, U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District, October 2024.

Chapter 5. REPORT PREPARATION

MIG, Inc.

2055 Junction Avenue, Suite 205
San Jose, CA 95131
(650) 327-0429
www.migcom.com

Environmental Analysis and Document Preparation

Paula Hartman – Principal
Megan Kalyankar – Senior Biologist/Environmental Analyst
Philip Gleason – Senior Project Manager (Air Quality, GHG, Energy, & Noise)
Eleanor Cox – Project Manager/Preservation Specialist, Cultural Places Group
Sang Bae – Project Associate, Cultural Places Group
Rose Redlich – CEQA Analyst/GIS Specialist
Barbara Beard – Senior Project Manager

CDPR

Scott Soares
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
PO Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Appendix A. Special-Status Species Tables

Red Mountain OHV Staging Area Project

Appendix A: Special-Status Species Tables

Table A-1. Special-Status Plant Species with the Potential to Occur in the Project Area

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Non-vascular species					
Upswept moonwort *Botrychium ascendens*	CRPR 2B.3, USFS-S	Alaska, California, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming	Lower montane coniferous forest, meadows, and seeps. Grassy fields, coniferous woods near springs and creeks. 1115-3265 m.	perennial rhizomatous herb; (Jun)Jul-Aug	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. No ferns were observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Scalloped moonwort *Botrychium crenulatum*	CRPR 2B.2, USFS-S	Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming	Bogs and fens, meadows and seeps, upper montane coniferous forest, lower montane coniferous forest, marshes and swamps. Moist meadows, freshwater marshes, and near creeks. 1185-3110 m.	perennial rhizomatous herb; Jun-Sep	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of scalloped moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. No ferns were observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Slender moonwort *Botrychium lineare*	CRPR 1B.1, USFS-S	Alaska, California, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming	Meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest (often disturbed areas). 2560-2600 m.	perennial herb; Unk	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of slender moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. No ferns were observed during the October 2024 site visit.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Mingan moonwort *Botrychium minganense*	CRPR 2B.2, USFS-S	Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest, bogs and fens, meadows, and seeps. Creekbanks in mixed conifer forest. 1190-3295 m.	perennial rhizomatous herb; Jul-Sep	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. No ferns were observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Western goblin *Botrychium montanum*	CRPR 2B.1, USFS-S	Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest, meadows, and seeps. Creekbanks in old-growth forest. 1430-2430 m.	perennial rhizomatous herb; Jul-Sep	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. No ferns were observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Bolander's bruchia *Bruchia bolanderi*	CRPR 4.2, USFS-S	California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah	Damp soils within Lower montane coniferous forest, Meadows and seeps, and Upper montane coniferous forest. Moss, which grows on damp clay soils. Seems to colonize bare soil along streambanks, meadows, fens, and springs. This species has an ephemeral nature and is disturbance adapted. 1610-3340 m.	moss	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. Moss was not observed during the October 2024 site visit.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
California beard-moss *Didymodon californicus*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno, Glenn, Lake, and Madera counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest (openings). Rocky, streambeds.	moss	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. Moss was not observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Three-ranked hump moss *Meesia triquetra*	CRPR 4.2	California, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin	Bogs and fens, meadows and seeps, upper montane coniferous forest, subalpine coniferous forest. Moss growing on mesic soil. Saturated bogs, fens, seeps and meadows in coniferous to subalpine forests. 1300-2955 m.	moss; July	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site. Moss was not observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Western waterfan lichen *Peltigera gowardii*	CRPR 4.2, USFS-S	California, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington	Riparian forest. On rocks in cold water creeks with little or no sediment or disturbance. Often associated with rich bryophyte flora. 1065-2375 m.	foliose lichen (aquatic); unknown	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of upswept moonwort within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Tundra thread moss *Pohlia tundrae*	CRPR 2B.3	California, Colorado, Oregon, Wyoming	Alpine boulder and rock field (gravelly, damp soil). 2700-3000 m.	moss	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of tundra thread moss within five miles of the project site from 2000. However, there is no suitable habitat in or near the site. This species was not observed during the October 2024 site visit.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
GYMNOSPERMS					
White bark pine *Pinus albicaulis*	FT, USFS-S	Western North America from the eastern Sierras of California, USA to British Columbia, CAN	Subalpine plant communities generally mixed-conifer associations. 2350-2750 m.	tree; May-June	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of white bark pine within five miles of the project site. There is some suitable habitat in site, but this species was not observed during the October 2024 site visit and is unknown from the project area.
ANGIOSPERM: MONOCOTS					
Abram's onion *Allium abramsii*	CRPR 1B.2	California in Fresno, Madera, and Tulare counties	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Often granitic sand. On sandy soils, derived from disintegrated granite. 885-3050 m.	Perennial bulbiferous herb; May-Jul	**May be Present.** Two CNDDB records of Abram's onion within five miles of the project site from 1955 and 2009 exist. There is some suitable habitat, but the dense forest at the site may preclude this species.
Wheat sedge *Carex athertodes*	CRPR 2B.2	Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Meadows and seeps, marshes and swamps, and pinyon and juniper woodland. Mesic. 1300-1540 m.	Perennial rhizomatous herb; Jun-Aug	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of wheat sedge within five miles of the project site, and there is no suitable habitat in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Mud sedge *Carex limosa*	CRPR 2B.2	Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Bogs and fens, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, marshes and swamps, upper montane coniferous forest. In floating bogs, soggy meadows, and the edges of lakes. 1370-2790 m.	perennial rhizomatous herb; Jun-Aug	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of mud sedge within five miles of the project site from 1952. However, there is no suitable habitat in or near the site. Sedges were not observed during the October 2024 site visit.
Bolander's woodreed *Cinna bolanderi*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tulare counties.	Meadows and seeps, upper montane coniferous forest. Mesic, streambanks, and streamsides. 1670-2440 m.	Perennial herb; Jul-Sep	**Absent.** There are three CNDDB records of Bolander's woodreed within five miles of the project site from 1951 and 2013. However, there is no suitable habitat in or near the site.
Prairie wedge grass *Sphenopholis obtusata*	CRPR 2B.2	Throughout the U.S., Baja California and Sonora, Mexico.	Cismontane woodland, meadows and seeps. Mesic. Open moist sites, along rivers and springs, alkaline desert seeps. 300-2000 m.	Perennial herb; Apr-July	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of prairie wedge grass within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
ANGIOSPERMS: DICOTS					
Tulare rockcress *Boechera tularensis*	CRPR 1B.3, USFS-S	California in El Dorado, Fresno, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, and Tulare counties.	Subalpine coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Rocky slopes. 1825-3350 m.	Perennial herb; (May)Jun-Jul(Aug)	**Not Expected.** There is one CNDDB record of Tulare rockcress within five miles of the project site from 2015. However, there are no rocky slopes in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Watershield *Brasenia schreberi*	CRPR 2B.3	Found throughout the U.S. except the southwest and in the southern Canadian provinces.	Marshes and swamps (freshwater). Aquatic known from water bodies both natural and artificial in California. 0-2200 m.	Perennial rhizomatous herb (aquatic); Jun-Sep	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of watershield within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Mono Hot Springs evening-primrose *Camissonia sierrae* ssp. *Alticola*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, and Tuolumne counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Sand pans. Granitic, gravelly. In sand or gravel over granite in mixed conifer forest; with *Gayophytum, Collinsia*, etc. 1035-2410 m.	Annual herb; May-Aug	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Mono Hot Springs evening-primrose within five miles of the project site. There in some suitable habitat at the site but the tree density may preclude this species.
Yosemite evening-primrose *Camissonia sierrae* ssp. *Sierrae*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tuolumne counties.	Cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. It can be locally abundant. 500-1645 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jun	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Yosemite evening-primrose within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.
Tree-anemone *Carpenteria californica*	ST, CRPR 1B.2	California in Fresno and Madera counties.	Chaparral, cismontane woodland. Granitic (usually). Special management is necessary since reproduction is fire-dependent. A very localized endemic found on well-drained granitic soils, mostly in north-facing ravines and drainages. 340-1340 m.	Perennial evergreen shrub; (Apr)May-Jul	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of tree anemone within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Fresno ceanothus *Ceanothus fresnensis*	CRPR 4.3	Ridges and peaks on the western side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California (CA) from Sequoia NF to Plumas NF.	Cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. In openings. 900-2105 m.	perennial evergreen shrub; (Apr)May-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Fresno ceanothus within five miles of the project site, and the dense forest at the site likely precludes this species.
Marsh claytonia *Claytonia palustris*	CRPR 4.3	California in Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Lassen, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare counties.	Meadows and seeps (mesic), marshes and swamps, upper montane coniferous forest. Sunny areas in meadows, marshy slopes, and streamside veg. Known from two disjunct regions. 1000-2500 m.	Perennial herb; May-Oct	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of marsh claytonia within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Rawson's flaming trumpet *Collomia rawsoniana*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California, in Madera County.	Lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, riparian forest. Mesic. On stabilized alluvium in riparian zones. 780-2200 m.	Perennial rhizomatous herb; Jul-Aug	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of Rawson's flaming trumpet within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Fresno County bird's-beak *Cordylanthus tenuis* ssp. *Barbatus*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno County.	Lower montane coniferous forest. 1300-2000 m.	Annual herb (hemiparasitic); Jul-Aug	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Fresno County bird's beak within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.
Ewan's larkspur *Delphinium hansenii* ssp. *Ewanianum*	CRPR 4.2	California in Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland. Rocky soils. To be expected in other foothill areas of the Sierra Nevada. 60-600 m.	Perennial herb; Mar-May	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of Ewan's larkpur within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Subalpine fireweed *Epilobium howellii*	CRPR 4.3	Sierra Nevada Mtns of California from Kings Canyon NF to Plumas NF	Meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest. Mesic. 2000-3120 m.	perennial stoloniferous herb; Jul-Aug	**Not Expected.** There are 17 CNDDB records of subalpine fireweed within five miles of the project site from 2005 to 2007. However, there is no suitable mesic habitat in or near the site.
Southern Sierra woolly sunflower *Eriophyllum lanatum* var. *Obovatum*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno, Kern, Madera, San Bernardino, and Tulare counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Loam, sandy. 1114-2500 m.	Perennial herb; Jun-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Southern Sierra woolly sunflower within five miles of the project site. There is some suitable habitat for this species at the site, but it's unknown from the Huntington Lake Quad.
Kings River monkeyflower *Erythranthe acutidens*	CRPR 3	California in Calaveras, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, and Tulare counties.	Cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Moist places. 305-1220 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Kings River monkeyflower within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.
Slender-stalked monkeyflower *Erythranthe gracilipes*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Madera, and Mariposa counties.	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Burned areas (often), decomposed granitic, disturbed areas (often). Also on thin granitic soil in cracks in large granite rocks. 500-1300 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jun	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of slender-stalked monkeyflower within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Gray's monkeyflower *Erythranthe grayi*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Mesic; moist places, sandy soil, often along streams. 550-2900 m.	Annual herb; May-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Gray's monkeyflower within five miles of the project site. The site is not mesic or along any streams.
Small-flowered monkeyflower *Erythranthe inconspicua*	CRPR 4.3	California in Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Mariposa, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Mesic; moist or shaded places. 274-760 m.	Annual herb; May-Jun	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of small-flowered monkeyflower within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.
Cut-leaved monkeyflower *Erythranthe laciniata*	CRPR 4.3	California in Alameda, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Decomposed granite, mesic sandy places. 490-2650 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of cut-leafed monkeyflower within five miles of the project site. The site is not mesic or along any streams.
Short-leaved hulsea *Hulsea brevifolia*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Sandy (sometimes), granitic (sometimes), gravelly or volcanic (sometimes) soil of forest openings and road cuts. 1500-3200 m.	Perennial herb; May-Aug	**May be Present.** There are 13 CNDDB records of subalpine fireweed within five miles of the project site from 1936 to 2008. The site has some suitable habitat, though the forest may be too dense to support this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Yosemite ivesia *Ivesia unguiculata*	CRPR 4.2	California in Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne counties.	Meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Moist open slopes and meadows. 1500-1925 m.	Perennial herb; Jun-Sep	**Not Expected.** Four CNDDB records of subalpine fireweed were within five miles of the project site from 1943 to 1991. However, no moist open slopes or meadows exist in or near the site.
Yosemite tarplant *Jensia yosemitana*	CRPR 3.2	California in Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Nevada, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps. Granite. 1200-2300 m.	Annual herb; (Apr)May-Jul	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Yosemite tarplant within five miles of the project site. There are no meadows or seeps in or near the site.
Sierra Nevada leptosiphon *Leptosiphon oblanceolatus*	CRPR 4.3	California in Fresno, Inyo, Madera, Tulare, and Tuolumne counties.	Subalpine coniferous forest. Mountain flats near meadows and lakes. 2800-3700 m.	Annual herb; Jul-Aug	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of Sierra Nevada leptosiphon within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Madera leptosiphon *Leptosiphon serrulatus*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, and Tulare counties.	Cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Dry slopes, often on decomposed granite in woodland. 300-1300 m.	Annual herb; Apr-May	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Madera leptosiphon within five miles of the project site. The site is above the usual elevation range for this species.
Yosemite lewisia *Lewisia disepala*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, and Tulare counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, pinyon and juniper woodland, upper montane coniferous forest. Granitic and sandy. Fine gravel on rock outcrops, ridges or domes. 1035-3500 m.	Perennial herb; Mar-Jun	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Yosemite lewisia within five miles of the project site. No rocky outcrops, ridges, or domes exist in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Orange lupine *Lupinus citrinus* var. *Citrinus*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, and Madera counties.	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Granitic. Rocky, decomposed granitic outcrops, usually open areas, on flat to rolling terrain. 380-1700 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jul	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of orange lupine within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.
Yosemite popcornflower *Plagiobothrys torreyi* var. *Torreyi*	CRPR 1B.2	California in Fresno, Mariposa, and Tuolumne counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, meadows, and seeps. Wetland. Known only from Yosemite Valley. 1200-1370 m.	Annual herb; Apr-Jun	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of Yosemite popcornflower within five miles of the project site from 1949. The site is outside of the known range for this species.
Bolander's clover *Trifolium bolanderi*	CRPR 1B.2, USFS-S	California in Fresno, Madera, and Mariposa counties.	Lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, upper montane coniferous forest. Mesic. Moist mountain meadows. 2039-2600 m.	Perennial herb; Jun-Aug	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of Bolander's clover within five miles of the project site, and no suitable habitat exists in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution[1, 3, 5]	Habitat Requirements[2, 3, 5]	Life Form; Blooming Period[3]	Potential Occurrence in the Project Area[3, 4, 5]
Flat-leaved bladderwort *Utricularia intermedia*	CRPR 2B.2	Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming	Bogs and fens, meadows and seeps (mesic), marshes and swamps (lake margins), vernal pools. 1200-2700 m.	Perennial stoloniferous herb (carnivorous) (aquatic); Jul-Aug	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of flat-leaved bladderwort within five miles of the project site from 1958. There is no suitable habitat for this species in or near the site.
Grey-leaved violet *Viola pinetorum* ssp. *Grisea*	CRPR 1B.2	California in Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Madera, San Bernardino, Tulare, and Ventura counties.	Meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest. Dry mountain peaks and slopes. 1500-3400 m.	Perennial herb; April-July	**Not Expected.** There is one CNDDB record of flat-leaved bladderwort within five miles of the project site from 1950. There are no dry mountain peaks or slopes in or near the site.

STATUS KEY:
Federal
FT: listed as Threatened under Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)
USFS-S: United States Forest Service - Sensitive

State
ST: listed as Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

California Native Plant Society (CNPS) California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR):
1B: Plants designated as rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
2B: Plants designated rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but common elsewhere
3: Plants about which more information is needed
4: Plants of limited distribution, a watch list

CNPS CRPR added a decimal threat rank to the List rank to parallel that used by the CNDDB. This extension replaces the E (Endangerment) value from the R-E-D Code. CRPR ranks therefore read like this: 1B.1, 1B.2, etc. Threat code extensions and their meanings are as follows:
.1 – Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened / high degree and immediacy of threat)
.2 – Moderately threatened in California (20-80% occurrences threatened / moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
.3 – Not very threatened in California (<20% of occurrences threatened / low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)

SOURCES:

1.United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC) Species List (October 31, 2024).

2. California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) Rarefind 5 search of Huntington Lake USGS Quad and eight surrounding quads; BIOS five mile radius search (October 28, 2024).

3. California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rare and Endangered Plant Inventory search of Huntington Lake USGS Quad and eight surrounding quads (October 28, 2024).

4. USFS Sierra. 2024. Habitat Management Program for Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Department of Parks and Recreation, Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program

Table A-2. Special-Status Animal Species with the Potential to Occur in the Project Area

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
INVERTEBRATES				
Obscure bumblebee *Bombus caliginosus*	CNDDB†	Coastal areas from Santa Barbara County north to Washington state.	Food plant genera include *Baccharis, Cirsium, Lupinus, Lotus, Grindelia* and *Phacelia.*	**Not Expected.** There is one CNDDB record of obscure bumblebee within five miles of the project site from 1984, but no recent nearby observations according to Bumblebee Watch. Food plants are absent from the project area.
Crotch's bumblebee *Bombus crotchii*	SCE	Coastal California east to the Sierra-Cascade crest and south into Mexico.	Food plant genera include *Antirrhinum, Phacelia, Clarkia, Dendromecon, Eschscholzia,* and *Eriogonum.*	**Not Expected.** According to Bumblebee Watch, Crotch's bumblebee was observed about four miles northwest of the project site (near Huntington Lake Rd.) in 2023. However, the site is densely forested with a minimal understory, and food plants were not observed during the October 2024 site visit.
An isopod *Calasellus longus*	CNDDB†	This species is reported only from springs around Shaver Lake, Fresno County.	Springs.	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of this isopod within five miles of the project site from 1977. However, there are no springs in or near the project site that would provide suitable habitat for this species.
Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	FC, USFS-S	North America, from southern Canada south to South America, and the Caribbean. Winter roost sites extend along the coast from northern Mendocino to Baja California, Mexico.	Roosts are located in wind-protected tree groves (eucalyptus, Monterey pine, cypress), with nectar and water sources nearby.	**Not Expected.** The project site is outside the range for winter roost sites, and no milkweed was observed during the October 2024 site visit. The site may be too densely forested to support milkweed, and the forest density may also preclude many nectar plants.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Amphibious caddisfly *Desmona bethula*	CNDDB†	Sierra Nevada, including Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Nevada, Placer counties. Plumas and Sierra counties, and Tulare County in Sequoia National Park	Mostly small, first-order streams in open, wet meadows. Also found in beaver ponds and second-order streams. Final instar larvae leave the water at night to feed on riparian vegetation and return to the water at sunrise.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of amphibious caddisfly within five miles of the project site, and there is no aquatic habitat in or near the site.
FISH				
Lahontan cutthroat trout *Oncorhynchus clarkii henshawi*	FT, CSSC	Historically in all accessible cold waters of the Lahontan Basin in a wide variety of water temps and conditions.	Cannot tolerate presence of other salmonids. Requires gravel riffles in streams for spawning.	**Absent.** There is one CNDDB record of Lahontan cutthroat trout within five miles of the project site from 1990. However, there is no aquatic habitat in or near the site.
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS				
Northwestern pond turtle *Actinemys marmorata*	FPT CSSC USFS-S	Found from Baja California, Mexico, north through Klickitat County, Washington. In California, it is found west of the Sierra-Cascade crest. Absent from desert regions, except the Mojave Desert along the Mojave River and its tributaries.	Requires permanent or nearly permanent bodies of water, including ponds, marshes, rivers, streams, and irrigation ditches below 6,000 feet in elevation. Requires basking sites, such as submerged rocks, logs, open mud banks, or floating vegetation mats. Needs basking sites and suitable (sandy banks or grassy open fields) upland habitat up to 0.5 kilometers from water for egg-laying.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of northwestern pond turtle within five miles of the project site, and there is no aquatic habitat in or near the site.
Yosemite toad *Anaxyrus canorus*	FT CSSC USFS-S	Vicinity of wet meadows in central High Sierra, 6,400 to 11,300 feet in elevation.	Primarily found in montane wet meadows but also found in seasonal ponds associated with lodgepole pine and subalpine conifer forest.	**Not Expected.** There are two CNDDB records of Yosemite toad within five miles of the project site from 1993 and 1943. However, no wet meadows or seasonal ponds exist in or near the project site. The EA for the project found that there was no dispersal habitat for this species at the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Kings River slender salamander *Batrachoseps regius*	USFS-S	Endemic to California. Found on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada in Fresno County on the south and east sides of the North Fork of the Kings River, and from Summit Meadow in the drainage of the South Fork of the Kings River. Also found on the middle fork of the Kaweah River drainage in Tulare County.	Mixed chaparral with buckeye, laurel, canyon, blue oak, ponderosa, and lowland pine. Found under rocks in areas of talus.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of Kings River slender salamander within five miles of the project site, and the site is above the usual elevation range for this species. There is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area.
Mount Lyell salamander *Hydromantes platycephalus*	WL	Endemic to California, with a fairly continuous range from the Sonora Pass area south to the Franklin Pass area, Tulare County, and along the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Low elevation records are from the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa County.	Massive rock areas in mixed conifer, red fir, lodgepole pine, and subalpine habitats, 4000 to 11,600 feet in elevation. Active on the surface only when free water is available, such as seeps, drips, or spray. Rocky habitat, including cliff faces and cave walls. Occasionally found under woody debris.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Mount Lyell salamander within five miles of the project site. There is no rocky habitat in or near the site.
Foothill yellow-legged frog-south Sierra DPS *Rana boylii* pop. 5	FE, SE, USFS-S	Sierra Nevada from the South Fork American River subbasin (HU 8) in El Dorado County south to the Tehachapi Mountains in Kern County.	Partly shaded shallow streams and riffles with a rocky substrate in various habitats. Needs at least some cobble-sized substrate for egg-laying and at least 15 weeks to attain metamorphosis.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of foothill yellow-legged frog within five miles of the project site, and there is no aquatic habitat in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog *Rana sierrae*	FE, ST, USFS-S	Diamond Mountains northeast of the Sierra Nevada in Plumas County, CA, south through the Sierra Nevada to Matlock Lake just east of Kearsarge Pass, Inyo County	Always encountered within a few feet of water. Tadpoles may require 2 - 4 years to complete their aquatic development.	**Not Expected.** There are three extant CNDDB records of Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog within five miles of the project site from 2019, 2021, and 2023. One of these is from the headwaters of Tamarack Creek, but the SNF District Aquatic Specialist confirmed no suitable habitat at the water drafting location. There is no aquatic habitat in or near the project site.
BIRDS				
American goshawk *Accipiter atricapillus*	CSSC, USFS-S	Inhabits forested areas all around the northern hemisphere, including both North America and Eurasia.	Within, and in vicinity of, coniferous forest. Uses old nests and maintains alternate sites. Usually nests on north slopes, near water. Red fir, lodgepole pine, Jeffrey pine, and aspens are typical nest trees.	**Not Expected.** There is one CNDDB record of American goshawk within five miles of the project site from 1981. Habitat surveys completed for the 2005 EA determined that there is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area, and the 2020 Creek Fire has since further degraded potential habitat in the area. There are no known nearby nest sites.
Willow flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*	SE, USFS-S	North, South, and Central America	Inhabits extensive thickets of low, dense willows on edge of wet meadows, ponds, or backwaters; 2000-8000 ft elevation. Requires dense willow thickets for nesting/ roosting. Low, exposed branches are used for singing posts/hunting perches.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of willow flycatcher within five miles of the project site and no willow thickets in or near the site.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
California condor *Gymnogyps californianus*	FE	Central California along the Big Sur coast or Pinnacles National Monument, and southern California inland from Ventura in the Sespe wilderness.	It requires vast expanses of open savannah, grasslands, and foothill chaparral in mountain ranges of moderate altitude. Deep canyons containing clefts in the rocky walls provide nesting sites. Forages up to 100 miles from roost/nest, typically in open grasslands and oak savannahs.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of California condor within five miles of the project site, and there is no suitable nesting or foraging habitat in or near the site.
Bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalis*	SE, CFP, USFS-S	Year-round resident in northern California, winters throughout the rest of the state.	Ocean shore, lake margins, and rivers for both nesting and wintering. Most nests are within 1 mile of water. Nests in large, old-growth, or dominant live tree with open branches, primarily ponderosa pine. Roosts communally in winter.	**Absent.** There are no CNDDB records of bald eagle within five miles of the project site, and there is no suitable nesting or foraging habitat in or near the site.
Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*	WL	From Canada to Southern America.	Ocean shore, bays, freshwater lakes, and larger streams. Large nests are built in tree-tops within 15 miles of a good fish-producing body of water.	**Absent.** There are 13 CNDDB records of osprey within five miles of the project site near Huntington Lake. However, no suitable nesting or foraging habitat exists in or near the site.
Black-backed woodpecker *Picoides arcticus*	CNDDB†	Boreal and coniferous forests in the Sierra Nevada and Cascades to the Siskiyou Mountains.	Recently burned coniferous forest, areas with dense standing dead trees, and less commonly in unburned forests. Forages primarily on beetles and is typically found on red and white firs, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, and lodgepole pine.	**Not Expected.** One CNDDB record of a black-backed woodpecker within five miles of the project site from 2012 is present. Red firs, white firs, and lodgepole pines are present in the site, but it was not recently burned (nearby areas burned in 2020).

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Great gray owl *Strix nebulosa*	CSSC, USFS-S	Within California, the range is in the northern and central Sierra Nevada mountains.	Resident of mixed conifer or red fir forest habitat, in or on the edge of meadows. Requires large diameter snags in a forest with high canopy closure, which provide a cool sub-canopy microclimate.	**Not Expected.** There is one CNDDB record of a black-backed woodpecker within five miles of the project site from 1979. Habitat surveys completed for the 2005 EA determined that there is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area, and the 2020 Creek Fire has since further degraded potential habitat in the area. There are no known nearby nest sites.
California spotted owl *Strix occidentalis occidentalis*	FPT	Sierra Nevada mountains and southern California coast mountain ranges.	Mixed conifer forest, often with an understory of black oaks and other deciduous hardwoods. Canopy closure >40%. Most often found in deep-shaded canyons, on north-facing slopes, and within 300 meters of water.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of a California spotted owl within five miles of the site. Habitat surveys completed for the 2005 EA determined that there is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area, and the 2020 Creek Fire has since further degraded potential habitat. There are no known nearby nest sites, and 2021 call back surveys within 0.25 miles of the site did not detect this species.
MAMMALS				
Pallid bat *Antrozous pallidus*	CSSC USFS-S	Deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands and forests. Most common in open, dry habitats with rocky areas for roosting.	Roosts must protect bats from high temperatures. Very sensitive to disturbance of roosting sites.	**May be Present.** Two CNDDB records of pallid bats within five miles of the project site from 2002 indicate that there is some suitable habitat in the project area, but the site lacks the open habitat preferred by this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Townsend's big-eared bat *Corynorhinus townsendii*	CSSC USFS-S	Throughout California in a wide variety of habitats. Most common in mesic sites.	Roosts in the open, hanging from walls and ceilings. Roosting sites are limited. Extremely sensitive to human disturbance.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of Townsend's big-eared bat within five miles of the project site; the HMP indicates it occurs near Shaver Lake. No roosting habitat exists for this species in or adjacent to the site.
North American porcupine *Erethizon dorsatum*	CNDDB†	Forested habitats in the Sierra Nevada, Cascade, and Coast ranges, with scattered observations from forested areas in the Transverse Ranges.	Wide variety of coniferous and mixed woodland habitat.	**May be Present.** There is one CNDDB record of North American porcupine within five miles of the project site from 2014. There is suitable habitat for this species in the project area.
Spotted bat *Euderma maculatum*	CSSC	Within California, the range is the central and southern Sierras and southern California.	Occupies various habitats from arid deserts and grasslands through mixed conifer forests. Feeds over water and along washes. Feeds almost entirely on moths. Needs rock crevices in cliffs or caves for roosting.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of spotted bat within five miles of the project site. No roosting habitat exists for this species in or adjacent to the site.
Western mastiff bat *Eumops perotis californicus*	CSSC	Within California, the range is the central and southern coast and parts of the Sierra foothills.	Many open, semi-arid to arid habitats, including conifer and deciduous woodlands, coastal scrub, grasslands, chaparral, etc. Roosts in crevices in cliff faces, high buildings, trees and tunnels.	**May be Present.** There is one CNDDB record of western mastiff bat within five miles of the project site from 2002. The project area has some suitable habitat, but the site lacks open habitat preferred by this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Wolverine *Gulo gulo*	FT, ST, CFP, USFS-S	Found in the north coast mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Found in a wide variety of high elevation habitats.	Needs a water source. Uses caves, logs, and burrows for cover and a den area. Hunts in more open areas. Can travel long distances.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of wolverine within five miles of the project site. This species has not been observed in the Sierra National Forest in many years, and the most recent sightings are in high-elevation wilderness. Suitable burrows are absent from the project site.
Hoary bat *Lasiurus cinereus*	CNDDB†	Throughout California in suitable habitats.	It prefers open habitats or habitat mosaics, with access to trees for cover and open areas or habitat edges for feeding. It roosts in dense foliage of medium—to large trees. It feeds primarily on moths and requires water.	**May be Present.** No CNDDB records are hoary bat within five miles of the project site. area. The project area has some suitable habitat, but the site lacks open habitat preferred by this species.
Sierra marten *Martes caurina sierrae*	USFS-S	Mixed evergreen forests with more than 40% crown closure along Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountains.	Needs variety of different-aged stands, particularly old-growth conifers and snags which provide cavities for dens/nests.	**Not Expected.** There are nine CNDDB records of Sierra martens within five miles of the project site, ranging from 1965 to 1990. Habitat surveys completed for the 2005 EA determined that there is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area, and the 2020 Creek Fire has since further degraded potential habitat in the area. There are no known nearby den sites.
Western small-footed myotis *Myotis ciliolabrum*	CNDDB†	Within California, the range is coastal southern California and the lower elevations of the Sierra Nevada.	A wide range of habitats, mostly arid, wooded, and brushy uplands near water. Seeks cover in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices. Prefers open stands in forests and woodlands. Requires drinking water. Feeds on a wide variety of small flying insects.	**May be Present.** There is one CNDDB record of western small-footed myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002. The project area has some suitable habitat, but it lacks open stands and roosting sites preferred by this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Long-eared myotis *Myotis evotis*	CNDDB†	Within California, the range is coastal California and the northern and central Sierra Nevada.	Found in all brush, woodland and forest habitats from sea level to about 9000 ft. Prefers coniferous woodlands and forests. Nursery colonies in buildings, crevices, spaces under bark, and snags. Caves used primarily as night roosts.	**May be Present.** Three CNDDB records of long-eared myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002 exist. The project site contains this species' preferred coniferous forest.
Fringed myotis *Myotis thysanodes*	USFS-S	Within California, the range is coastal California, the northern and central Sierra Nevada, and a few pockets of the Mojave Desert.	. This species may use a wide variety of habitats; however, the optimal habitats for this species are pinyon-juniper, valley foothill hardwood, and hardwood-conifer. It uses caves, mines, buildings, or crevices for maternity colonies and roosts.	**May be Present.** One CNDDB record of fringed myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002 exists. The project area has some suitable habitat, but preferred roosting sites may be lacking.
Long-legged myotis *Myotis volans*	CNDDB†	Western North America from Alaska to central Mexico.	Most common in woodland and forest habitats above 4000 ft. near water sources. Trees are important day roosts, whereas caves and mines are night roosts. Nursery colonies are usually under bark or in hollow trees, but occasionally in crevices or buildings.	**May be Present.** There is one CNDDB record of long-legged myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002. There is some suitable habitat in the project area, but no water is in or adjacent to the site.
Yuma myotis *Myotis yumanensis*	CNDDB†	Within California, the range is the entire state except the most of the southeastern part of the state.	Optimal habitats are open forests and woodlands with water sources over which to feed. Distribution is closely tied to bodies of water. Maternity colonies in caves, mines, buildings or crevices.	**May be Present.** One CNDDB record of Yuma myotis within five miles of the project site from 2002 exists. The project area has some suitable habitat, but it lacks open forest and waterbodies preferred by this species.

Species	Status	Geographic Distribution	Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
Gray-headed pika *Ochotona princeps schisticeps*	CNDDB†	California (CA), Oregon (OR) Nevada (NV), and Utah (UT). Sierra Nevada to mountainous regions in the Great Basin.	Mountainous areas, generally at higher elevations, often above the treeline up to the limit of vegetation. At lower elevations, found in rocky areas within forests or near lakes. Talus slopes, occasionally on mine tailings. Prefers talus-meadow interface.	**Not Expected.** There are no CNDDB records of gray-headed pika within five miles of the project site, and there is no suitable habitat for this species in or near the site.
Fisher- Southern Sierra Nevada ESU *Pekania pennanti* pop. 2	FE, ST, CSSC, USFS-S	Northern US to CAN; many populations extirpated in its southern range	Intermediate to large-tree stages of coniferous forests and deciduous-riparian areas with high percentage canopy closure. Uses cavities, snags, logs, and rocky areas for cover and denning. Needs large areas of mature, dense forest.	**Not Expected.** Four CNDDB records of fisher within five miles of the project site, ranging from 1913 to 1990, are available. Habitat surveys completed for the 2005 EA determined that there is no suitable habitat for this species in the project area, and the 2020 Creek Fire has since further degraded potential habitat in the area. There are no known nearby den sites.
Sierra Nevada red fox *Vulpes vulpes necator*	FE, ST, USFS-S	Historically, it has been found in the Cascades down to Sierra Nevada.	Use multiple habitat types in the alpine and subalpine zones including high-elevation conifer dominated by whitebark pine, mountain hemlock and lodgepole pine, as well as meadows and fell-fields; typically in areas of heavy snow cover. Generally above 1,200 meters (3,900 feet).	**Not Expected.** Nine CNDDB records of Sierra Nevada red fox within five miles of the project site, ranging from 1985 to 1992, exist. There is some suitable conifer forest in the project area. However, currently there are only two known populations of this species: near Lassen Peak and near Sonora Pass, and the overall population is very small.

STATUS KEY:
Federal
FE: listed as Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)
FT: listed as Threatened under FESA
FPT: Proposed for listing as Threatened under FESA
USFS-S: United States Forest Service – Sensitive Species

State
SE: listed as Endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

ST: listed as Threatened under the CESA
SCE: Candidate for listing as Endangered under CESA
CSSC: California Species of Special Concern
CFP: California Fully Protected
WL: California Watch List
CNDDB: Species tracked by the CNDDB; included for informational purposes only

Notes:
† Species tracked by the CNDDB that do not meet the definition of a special-status species are included in the table for informational purposes only and are not included in the CEQA analysis.

SOURCES:

1. CDFW California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). Rarefind 5. Accessed October 28, 2024.

2. CDFW Species accounts available at https://wildlife.ca.gov/

3. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC). Accessed October 31, 2024.

4. Xerces Society, Wildlife Preservation Canada, and York University Environmental Studies. 2024. Bumblebee Watch. Accessed November 2024 at: https://www.bumblebeewatch.org/.

5. United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 2015 (January). Red Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle Staging Area Environmental Assessment, High Sierra Ranger District, Sierra National Forest, Fresno County, CA.

6. iNaturalist. 2024. Accessed November 12, 2024 at: https://www.inaturalist.org/

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9. Woods, Kevin, Off Highway and Over Snow Vehicle Manager, Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District. 2024. Personal communication on December 4, 2024 (email).