Plumas Lake Elementary School District

PLUMAS LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

February 2026 | Draft Environmental Impact Report

State Clearinghouse No. 2025060992



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for Plumas Lake Elementary School District

Prepared for:

Plumas Lake Elementary School District
Contact: Jeff Robets, Superintendent
2743 Plumas School Road
Plumas Lake, California 95961
530.743.4428

Prepared by:

PlaceWorks
Contact: Malia Durand, Managing Principal
3 MacArthur Place
Suite 1100
714-966-9220
info@placeworks.com
www.placeworks.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 INTRODUCTION

This executive summary has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15123. This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the environmental effects associated with the implementation of the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project. CEQA requires that local government agencies consider the environmental consequences before acting on projects over which they have discretionary approval authority. An EIR analyzes potential environmental consequences to inform the public and support informed decisions by local and State governmental agency decision makers.

This EIR has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of CEQA and the Plumas Lake Elementary School District's CEQA procedures. The Plumas Lake Elementary School District, as the lead agency, has reviewed and revised all submitted drafts, technical studies, and reports as necessary to reflect its own independent judgment, including reliance on Plumas Lake Elementary School District technical personnel from other departments and review of all technical subconsultant reports.

ES.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCEDURES

This EIR has been prepared pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines to assess the environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project as well as anticipated future discretionary actions and approvals. CEQA established six main objectives for an EIR:

1. Disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
2. Identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage.
3. Prevent environmental damage by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures.
4. Disclose to the public reasons for agency approval of projects with significant environmental effects.
5. Foster interagency coordination in the review of projects.
6. Enhance public participation in the planning process.

An EIR is the most comprehensive form of environmental documentation in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines; it is intended to provide an objective, factually supported analysis, and full disclosure of the environmental consequences of a proposed project with the potential to result in significant, adverse environmental impacts.

An EIR is one of various decision-making tools used by a lead agency to consider the merits and disadvantages of a project that is subject to its discretionary authority. Before approving a proposed project, the lead agency must consider the information in the EIR, determine whether the EIR was prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, determine that it reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency, adopt findings concerning the project's significant environmental impacts and alternatives, and adopt a statement of overriding considerations if significant impacts cannot be avoided.

ES.2.1 Draft EIR Organization

Executive Summary. Summarizes the background and description of the proposed project, the format of this EIR, project alternatives, any critical issues that need to be resolved, and the potential environmental impacts and recommended mitigation measures identified for the project.

Chapter 1: Introduction. Describes the purpose of this EIR, background on the project, the notice of preparation, the use of incorporation by reference, and Final EIR certification.

Chapter 2: Project Description. Provides a detailed description of the project, including its objectives, its area and location, approvals anticipated to be required as part of the project, necessary environmental clearances, and the intended uses of this EIR.

Chapter 3: Environmental Analysis. Each environmental topic is analyzed in a separate section that discusses: the applicable regulatory framework; existing conditions; the significance criteria used to determine if a significant impact would occur; the methodology to identify and evaluate the potential impacts of the project; the potential adverse and beneficial effects of the project; the level of impact significance with and without mitigation; and the potential cumulative impacts of the proposed project and other existing, approved, and proposed projects in the area.

Chapter 4: Alternatives to the Proposed Project. Describes the alternatives and compares their impacts to the impacts of the proposed project. Alternatives include the No Project Alternative – Increase Enrollment Capacity at Existing Campuses, No Project Alternative – Implement a Districtwide Year-Round School Program, Early Education Campus Alternative, and Reduced Middle School Buildout Alternative.

Chapter 5: Other CEQA Considerations. Provides a discussion of effects found not to be significant, significant and unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible changes to the environment, and growth-inducing effects.

Chapter 6: Report Preparers and Organizations Consulted. Includes a list of people and organizations that prepared or were contacted during the preparation of this Draft EIR.

Appendices. The appendices for this document include the following supporting documents:

- Appendix A: Notice of Preparation Comment Letters
- Appendix B: Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Modeling
- Appendix C: Construction Health Risk Assessment
- Appendix D: Biological Resources Assessment
- Appendix E: Archaeological Resources Inventory Report
- Appendix F: Geotechnical Evaluation Report
- Appendix G: Paleontological Letter Report
- Appendix H: Geological and Evaluation Hazards Assessment
- Appendix I: Preliminary Environmental Assessment
- Appendix J: Noise Assessment
- Appendix K: Public Service Letters and Questionnaires
- Appendix L: Transportation Impact Assessment

ES.2.2 Type and Purpose of this Draft EIR

As described in the CEQA Guidelines, different types of EIRs are used for varying situations and intended uses.

This Draft EIR has been prepared as a "Project EIR," defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15161 (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3). This type of EIR examines the environmental impacts of a specific development project and should focus primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from the development project. The EIR shall examine all phases of the project, including planning, construction, and operation.

Agencies prepare Program EIRs for programs or a series of related actions that are linked geographically; logical parts of a chain of contemplated events, rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program; or individual activities carried out under the same authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

Once a Program EIR has been prepared, subsequent activities within the program must be evaluated to determine whether an additional CEQA document is necessary. However, if the Program EIR addresses the program's effects as specifically and comprehensively as possible, many subsequent activities may be within the Program EIR's scope, and additional environmental documents may not be required (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c]). When a lead agency relies on a Program EIR for a subsequent activity, it must incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives from the Program EIR into the subsequent activities (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c][3]). If a subsequent activity would have effects outside the scope of the Program EIR, the lead agency must prepare a new Initial Study leading to a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an EIR. Even in this case, the Program EIR still serves a valuable purpose as the first-tier environmental analysis. The CEQA Guidelines encourage the use of Program EIRs, citing five advantages:

- Provide a more exhaustive consideration of impacts and alternatives than would be practical in an individual EIR;
- Focus on cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis;
- Avoid continual reconsideration of recurring policy issues;
- Consider broad policy alternatives and programmatic mitigation measures at an early stage when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with them;
- Reduce paperwork by encouraging the reuse of data (through tiering). (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[h])

ES.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The approximately 25-acre project site is located near the northwest intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive in Plumas Lake. The project site includes one full parcel owned by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 016-350-021) and a portion of one parcel owned by the Olivehurst Public Utility District (APN 016-350-022).

ES.4 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The project site consists of approximately 25 acres and is located near the northwest intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive in Plumas Lake. The proposed Plumas Lake Middle School project involves constructing and operating a new middle school campus and an access road connecting to River Oaks Boulevard, with facilities including a multipurpose room, gymnasium, administration and library building, 44 classrooms, sports fields, and parking and circulation infrastructure. Construction would occur in four phases between the spring of 2026 and fall 2030, with operations beginning in fall 2027, and full buildout reaching an enrollment design capacity for 1,200 students (with an anticipated enrollment of about 972). Students currently enrolled at Riverside Meadows Middle School (Grades 6–8) would be reassigned to another new Plumas Lake Middle School. In addition, elementary students from

Cobblestone Elementary and Rio Del Oro Elementary (Grades TK–5) would be redistributed evenly across Cobblestone Elementary School, Rio Del Oro Elementary School, and Riverside Meadows Middle School. No physical improvements to any of the three existing campuses would occur.

ES.5 SUMMARY OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a) states that an EIR must address "a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." The alternatives in this Draft EIR were based, in part, on their potential to reduce or eliminate the impacts determined to be potentially significant for implementation of the proposed project (see Table ES-1, *Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures*). The project alternatives were not reviewed for financial feasibility. Project alternatives are assessed in further detail in Chapter 4, *Alternatives to the Proposed Project*.

ES.5.1 No Project Alternative – Increase Enrollment Capacity at Existing Campuses

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires that a "No Project" Alternative be evaluated. This analysis must discuss the existing site conditions as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed development for a new middle school would not be implemented, resulting in the project site remaining developed according to the Plumas Lake Specific Plan land use designation of Medium-Density Residential (RM), allowing up to four dwelling units per acre. Therefore, the project site would be developed with 100 dwelling units. Current students would remain at their respective schools without redistribution, but the absence of a new middle school would force future student growth to be managed at existing campuses, leading to increased enrollment pressures, particularly at the elementary level.

ES.5.2 No Project Alternative – Implement a Districtwide Year-Round School Program

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires that a No Project Alternative be evaluated. This analysis must discuss the existing site conditions as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed middle school would not be constructed, maintaining the project site as per the Valley Neighborhood General Plan and Plumas Lake Specific Plan, allowing for the development of up to 100 dwelling units. In response to enrollment growth, the District will implement a year-round school program starting in the 2026–27 school year, transitioning all schools to a year-round calendar with staggered instructional tracks. This plan will yield approximately 375 additional student seats and 16 classrooms districtwide, with options for a 60/20 or 45/15 schedule.

ES.5.3 Early Education Campus Alternative

Under this alternative, an early education campus would replace the proposed middle school, reducing the scale of development significantly. The number of classrooms would drop from 44 to about 22, accommodating approximately 440 students instead of 1,200. This campus would cater to transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and potentially early elementary grades. Annual evaluations by the District would be necessary to determine the distribution of grade-level allocations between the new campus and existing elementary schools based on enrollment trends.

ES.5.4 Reduced Middle School Buildout Alternative

This alternative proposes a reduced middle school buildout, decreasing the number of classrooms from 44 to 36, resulting in a design enrollment drop from approximately 1,200 to 1,000 students. The layout aligns with an earlier conceptual plan and retains all essential campus components like administrative and athletic facilities, circulation, and parking.

ES.6 ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

Section 15123(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain issues to be resolved, including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate significant impacts. For the proposed project, the major issues to be resolved include decisions by the lead agency as to:

1. Whether this EIR adequately describes the environmental impacts of the project.
2. Whether the benefits of the project override those environmental impacts which cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance.
3. Whether the proposed land use changes are compatible with the character of the existing area.
4. Whether the identified goals, policies, or mitigation measures should be adopted or modified.

5. Whether there are other mitigation measures that should be applied to the project besides the mitigation measures identified in the EIR.
6. Whether there are any alternatives to the project that would substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the proposed project and achieve most of the basic project objectives.

ES.7 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

In accordance with Section 15123(b)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR summary must identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by agencies and the public. Prior to preparation of the Draft EIR, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on June 20, 2025. The CEQA-mandated scoping period for this EIR was between Friday, June 20, 2025, and Monday, July 21, 2025, during which interested agencies and the public could submit comments about the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. During this time, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District received comment letters from State and local agencies as well as several organizations. Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation and Scoping Comments*, of this Draft EIR contains the NOP as well as the comments received by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District in response to the NOP.

ES.8 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Table ES-1 summarizes the conclusions of the environmental analysis in this EIR. Impacts are identified as significant or less than significant, and mitigation measures are identified for all significant impacts. The level of significance after imposing the mitigation measures is also presented.

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
AESTHETICS			
a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project substantially degrade the view from a scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
c) In nonurbanized areas, would the project 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 a 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to aesthetics?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES			
a) Would the project 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?	PS	No feasible mitigation measures are available.	SU
b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
c) Would the project 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))?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
e) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to agriculture and forestry resources?	PS	No feasible mitigation measures are available.	SU
AIR QUALITY			
a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project 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?	PS	**Mitigation Measure AIR-1:** The Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) shall specify in the construction bid that the project construction contractor shall implement the following Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) Standard Mitigation Measures to reduce short-term exhaust and fugitive dust PM10 emissions: ▪ Implement the Fugitive Dust Control Plan. ▪ Construction equipment exhaust emissions shall not exceed FRAQMD Regulation III, Rule 3.0, Visible Emissions limitations (40 percent opacity or Ringelmann 2.0).	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		▪ The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained prior to and for the duration of on-site operation. ▪ Limit idling time to 5 minutes - saves fuel and reduces emissions. (State idling rule: commercial diesel vehicles- 13 CCR Chapter 10 Section 2485 effective February 1, 2005; off road diesel vehicles- 13 CCR Chapter 9, Article 4.8 Section 2449 effective May 1, 2008). ▪ Utilize existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean fuel generators rather than temporary power generators. ▪ Develop a traffic plan to minimize traffic flow interference from construction activities. The plan may include advance public notice of routing, use of public transportation, and satellite parking areas with a shuttle service. Schedule operations affecting traffic for off-peak hours. Minimize obstruction of through-traffic lanes. Provide a flag person to guide traffic properly and ensure safety at construction sites. ▪ Portable engines and portable engine-driven equipment units used at the project work site, with the exception of on-road and off-road motor vehicles, may require CARB Portable Equipment Registration with the State or a local district permit. The owner/operator shall be responsible for arranging appropriate consultations with CARB or the FRAQMD to determine registration and permitting requirements prior to equipment operation at the site. ▪ These measures shall be noted in grading plans prepared by the District. The construction contractor shall implement these measures during ground-disturbing activities, and the District shall verify compliance that these measures have been implemented during normal construction site inspections.	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to air quality?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES			
a) Would the project have a substantial 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?	PS	**Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Special-Status Species.** The following general measures minimize or avoid impacts on special-status species with the potential to occur within the project site and off-site improvement area: Prior to the start of construction and earthwork activities, the project applicant shall retain a qualified biologist on an as-needed basis to assist with potential biological issues that might arise during construction. Prior to the start of construction and earthwork activities, the qualified biologist shall walk the project site and off-site improvement area with the construction project manager and establish project impact limits and avoidance areas around identified biological resources. Impact limits define the areas where ground disturbing or project-related activities may occur. Avoidance areas are areas where project activities are not allowed. Project impact limits shall be clearly demarcated prior to construction, and all workers shall be made aware of the impact limits	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		and avoidance areas. No ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities shall occur outside of the project impact limits. All vehicles and equipment shall be restricted to the project impact limits or existing designated access roads and staging areas. Erosion control measures shall be placed between avoided aquatic resources and the outer edge of the project impact limits prior to commencement of construction activities, and such measures shall be maintained until construction is completed and soils have stabilized. Plastic monofilament netting or similar material shall not be used for erosion control because smaller wildlife may become entangled or trapped in these materials; this includes products that use photodegradable or biodegradable synthetic netting, which can take several months to decompose. Acceptable materials to be used for erosion control include natural fibers such as jute, coconut, twine, or other similar fibers. A qualified biologist shall conduct mandatory worker environmental awareness training for all contractors, work crews, and any onsite personnel to aid workers in recognizing special-status species and sensitive biological resources that are known to occur or that have the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area. This program shall identify the special-status species and their habitats, describe the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review the limits of construction, environmentally sensitive areas, measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources, and possible penalties for noncompliance. The qualified biologist shall periodically visit the construction site to confirm that construction work is occurring within the demarcated	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		areas and that the proposed project impact limits and avoidance areas are maintained. The qualified biologist shall also determine if the impact limits and/or avoidance areas need to be adjusted. **Mitigation Measure BIO-2: Special-Status Plants.** To determine the presence and extent of all special-status plant species within the project site and offsite improvement area, perform floristic plant surveys according to current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) protocols prior to construction. Surveys shall be conducted throughout all suitable habitats within the proposed project impact area and a 25-foot buffer to address potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project on surrounding plant habitats. Surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist and timed according to the appropriate phenological stage for identifying target species. Known reference populations shall be visited and/or local herbaria records shall be reviewed, if available, prior to surveys to confirm the phenological stage of the target species. If special-status plants are identified within or adjacent to the proposed project impact limits, implement the following measures: If avoidance of special-status plants is feasible, establish and clearly demarcate avoidance zones for special-status plant occurrences prior to construction and maintain such zones until the completion of construction. Avoidance zones shall include the extent of the special-status plant species plus a 25-foot buffer to the extent feasible. No ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities shall occur within avoidance zones. A qualified biologist or qualified biological monitor shall be present if work must occur within the avoidance buffer to	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		ensure that special-status plants are not adversely affected by the work. If avoidance of special-status plants is not feasible, an impact assessment shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine whether project-related activities have the potential to eliminate, substantially reduce the number of, or restrict the range of special-status plant species (a significant impact) and/or conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting special-status plant species. If impacts are determined to be less than significant, no further measures shall be needed. If impacts are determined to be significant, mitigation may be required. Mitigation measures, if needed, shall be developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Mitigation measures may include the restoration or permanent preservation of onsite or offsite habitat for special-status plants and/or translocation of plants or seeds from affected areas to unaffected habitats. **Mitigation Measure BIO-3. Crotch Bumble Bees (CBB).** Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to crotch bumble bees: If CBB is no longer a candidate or listed species under the California Endangered Species Act (ESA) at the time ground-disturbing activities occur, no additional protection measures shall be required. If CBB is legally protected under the California ESA as a candidate or listed species and ground-disturbing activities are scheduled to begin between February 1 and October 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for the CBB. Based on the California	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Survey Considerations for ESA Candidate Bumble Bee Species (2023), it is recommended that three Crotch bumble bee surveys be conducted at 2- to 4 week intervals during the colony active period (April through August), if possible. If CBB are detected, any remaining surveys shall focus on nest location. If no nests are found but the species is observed during pre-construction surveys, work crews shall be informed of the possibility of CBB or their nests being in the project area. If a CBB is encountered during construction, work shall stop until the individual leaves of its own volition. If an active CBB nest is detected, an appropriate no-disturbance buffer zone, i.e. avoidance area, (including foraging resources and flight corridors essential for supporting the colony) shall be established around the nest to reduce the risk of disturbance or accidental take, and a qualified biologist shall coordinate with CDFW to determine if an Incidental Take Permit under Section 2081 of the California ESA will be required. No-disturbance buffers may be removed at the completion of the flight season (October 31) and/or once the qualified biologist deems that the nesting colony is no longer active. If initial grading does not start within 2 weeks (1 week, if prior to colony active period) of the completion date of the CBB pre-construction surveys, pre-construction surveys shall be repeated prior to ground-disturbing activities. **Mitigation Measure BIO-4: Northwestern Pond Turtle**. Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to northwestern pond turtle:	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		A qualified biologist shall perform a pre-construction clearance survey for northwestern pond turtle within 24 hours of the initiation of project activities. If a northwestern pond turtle is found within the project site and offsite improvement area, it shall be allowed to move out of the project site and offsite improvement area of its own volition. If after a reasonable period of time the turtle is not leaving the project site and offsite improvement area, a qualified biologist may move the animal to an appropriate location outside the impact area. If a northwestern pond turtle is observed on or immediately adjacent to the project site and offsite improvement area or if recommended by a qualified biologist, exclusion fencing shall be installed between the impact area and adjacent suitable northwestern pond turtle habitat. **Mitigation Measure BIO-5: Nesting Birds and Raptors.** Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to protected birds and active nests: To the extent feasible, tree and shrub removal or trimming shall be conducted outside of the bird nesting season (typically February 1 to August 31, and as early as January 1 for raptors). During the nesting season (typically February 1 to August 31, and as early as January 1 for raptors), a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted within 14 days prior to the commencement of project-related activities to identify active nests that could be affected by construction. The pre-construction nesting bird survey shall	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		include accessible areas within 100 feet of the project site and offsite improvement area, including any temporary disturbance areas. For raptors, the pre-construction nesting bird survey shall include accessible areas within 500 feet of the project site and offsite improvement area. If active nests are found, an appropriate no-disturbance buffer shall be established around the nest. A qualified biologist shall establish the buffer distance in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The buffer shall be maintained until the nestlings have fledged (i.e., are capable of flight and become independent of the nest), which shall be determined by a qualified biologist. The no-disturbance buffer can be removed—and no further measures are necessary—once the young have fledged or the nest is no longer occupied, as determined by a qualified biologist. **Mitigation Measure BIO-6: Swainson's Hawk**. Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts on the Swainson's Hawk that may be nesting nearby: If proposed project activities are scheduled during the Swainson's hawk nesting season (March 1 to August 31), then, prior to beginning work on the proposed project, a qualified biologist shall survey for Swainson's hawk nesting activity. A qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys within 14 days prior to the commencement of the proposed project-related activities to identify active nests that could be affected by construction. The pre-construction survey shall include accessible areas within 500 feet of the project site, including any temporary disturbance areas. If Swainson's hawk nesting activity is observed	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		during the survey, the survey results shall be submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for review and acceptance prior to the initiation of the proposed project activities. If the qualified biologist identifies nesting Swainson's hawks, they shall recommend a no-disturbance buffer, and the contractor shall implement this buffer under the supervision of a qualified biologist. The proposed project's activities shall be prohibited within the no-disturbance buffer from March 1 to August 31, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW, which may include consultation pursuant to the California ESA and issuance of an Incidental Take Permit, or a qualified biologist determining that the nest is no longer active. If there is a lapse in Project-related work of 14 days or longer, an additional survey shall be conducted prior to resuming the proposed project activities. **Mitigation Measure BIO-7: Burrowing Owl.** A pre-construction survey for nesting burrowing owl will be conducted by a qualified biologist within 14 days prior to commencement of project activities within the project site and offsite improvement area and a 250-foot buffer. Surveys shall be conducted at appropriate times and in appropriate weather conditions to maximize detection. If active burrowing owl burrows are found, a no-disturbance buffer will be immediately established, and an avoidance plan will be prepared in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) prior to the commencement of any ground-disturbing activities.	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
b) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project 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?	PS	See Mitigation Measures BIO-5, BIO-6, and BIO-7.	LTS
e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan; Natural Community Conservation Plan; or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to biological resources?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
CULTURAL RESOURCES			
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	PS	**Mitigation Measure CUL-1:** The District shall hire a qualified professional archaeologist to prepare and conduct a Contractor Awareness Training Program (CATP). The District shall ensure that a CATP is delivered to train equipment operators about cultural resources prior to the start of construction. The CATP shall be designed to inform construction personnel about: federal and state regulations pertaining to cultural resources and tribal cultural resources; the subsurface indicators of resources that shall require a work stoppage; procedures for notifying the District of any occurrences; project-specific requirements and mitigation measures in the event that cultural resources are found; and enforcement of penalties and repercussions for non-compliance with the program.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		The CATP shall be prepared by a qualified professional archaeologist and may be provided either through a brochure, video, or in-person tailgate meeting, as determined appropriate by the qualified professional archaeologist. The training shall be provided to all construction supervisors, forepersons, and operators of ground disturbing equipment. Personnel shall be required to sign a training roster. The District is responsible for ensuring that all required personnel receive the training. The District shall keep a copy of the signed training roster as proof of compliance. **Mitigation Measure CUL-2:** If subsurface deposits believed to be cultural or human in origin are discovered during construction, all work must halt within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. A qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for prehistoric and historic archaeology, shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. The following notifications shall apply, depending on the nature of the find: ▪ If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does not represent a cultural resource, work may resume immediately, and no agency notifications are required. ▪ If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does represent a cultural resource from any time period or cultural affiliation, the archaeologist shall immediately notify the lead agencies. The agencies shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures, if the find is determined to be a Historical Resource under CEQA, as defined by CEQA or a historic property under Section 106 NHPA, if applicable.	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
		Work may not resume within the no work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the site either: 1) is not a Historical Resource under CEQA or a Historic Property under Section 106; or 2) that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction. ▪ If the find includes human remains, or remains that are potentially human, they shall ensure reasonable protection measures are taken to protect the discovery from disturbance (AB 2641).The archaeologist shall notify the Yuba County Coroner (per § 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code). The provisions of § 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, § 5097.98 of the California PRC, and AB 2641 will be implemented. If the coroner determines the remains are Native American and not the result of a crime scene, the coroner will notify the NAHC, which then will designate a Native American Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for the Project (§ 5097.98 of the PRC). The designated MLD will have 48 hours from the time access to the property is granted to make recommendations concerning treatment of the remains. If the landowner does not agree with the recommendations of the MLD, the NAHC can mediate (§ 5097.94 of the PRC). If no agreement is reached, the landowner must rebury the remains where they will not be further disturbed (§ 5097.98 of the PRC). This will also include either recording the site with the NAHC or the appropriate Information Center; using an open space or conservation zoning designation or easement; or recording a reinternment document with the county in which the property is located (AB 2641). Work may not resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.	

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	PS	See Mitigation Measures CUL-1.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to cultural resources?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
ENERGY			
a) Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to energy?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
GEOLOGY AND SOILS			
a) Would the project subject occupants to potential seismic-related hazards, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
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.) ii) Strong seismic ground shaking. iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction. iv) Landslides			
b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?			
e) Would the project 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?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	PS	**Mitigation Measure GEO-1: Unanticipated Discovery of Paleontological Resource.** Prior to any ground-disturbing activities during construction, a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program shall be developed by a qualified paleontologist and provided to project construction personnel involved in earthwork activities in case any unanticipated paleontological resources are discovered during excavation activities. A qualified paleontologist shall be retained on an on-call basis for the duration of ground-disturbing activities. No full-time monitoring shall be required unless a paleontological resource is discovered. If a paleontological resource is discovered, the contractor shall notify the District and cease excavation within 50 feet of the find until the on-call qualified paleontologist can provide an evaluation of the find. The qualified paleontologist shall evaluate the of the find and recommend appropriate measures for the disposition of the project site (e.g., fossil recovery, curation, data recovery, and/or monitoring). Construction activities may continue in other parts of the construction site while evaluation and treatment of the paleontological resource take place.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to geological resources?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS			
a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	PS	**Mitigation Measure GHG-1:** The proposed project shall comply with the applicable 2022 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) Tier 2 standards which are a requirement under the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro AQMD) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Best Management Practices (BMPs). Plans shall identify the number of electric vehicle (EV) parking spaces with chargers that meet the 2022 CALGreen Tier 2 standards, except all EV capable spaces shall be instead EV ready.	LTS
b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to greenhouse gas emissions?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS			
a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
b) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substance, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
e) For a project 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?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	PS	See Mitigation Measure WIL-1.	LTS
g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to hazards and hazardous materials?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY			
a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
c) Would the project 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 that would: i) Result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site? ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on- or off-site? iii) Create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff? iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to hydrology or water quality?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
LAND USE AND PLANNING			
a) Would the project physically divide an established community?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to land use?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
NOISE			
a) Would the project generate 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	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?			
b) Would the project generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) For a project 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?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to noise?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
POPULATION AND HOUSING			
a) Would the project 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)?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	NI	No mitigation measures required.	NI
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to population and housing?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
PUBLIC SERVICES			
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to public services?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
RECREATION			
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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to recreation?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
TRANSPORTATION			
a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?	PS	See Mitigation Measure WIL-1.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to transportation?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES			
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource 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)?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set	PS	**Mitigation Measure TCR-1:** If tribal cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during ground disturbing activities for this project, the following procedures will be carried out for treatment and disposition of the discoveries: ▪ Upon discovery of any tribal cultural resources, construction activities shall cease in the immediate vicinity of the find (not less than the surrounding 50 feet) until the find can be assessed.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
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.		▪ All tribal cultural resources unearthed by project activities shall be evaluated by the qualified professional archaeologist. If the resources are Native American in origin, the proper Tribe(s) will retain it/them in the form and/or manner the Tribe(s) deems appropriate, for educational, cultural and/or historic purposes. Work may continue on other parts of the project site while evaluation and, if necessary, mitigation takes place (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[f]). ▪ If human remains and/or grave goods are discovered or recognized during construction activities, all ground disturbance shall immediately cease, and procedures outlined in **Mitigation Measure CUL-2** shall be implemented.	
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to tribal cultural resources?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS			
a) Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
b) Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
d) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to utilities and service systems?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
WILDFIRE			
a) Would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	PS	**Mitigation Measure WIL-1:** The project applicant shall prepare a Traffic Control Plan to ensure that alternate routes are provided and maintained during temporary road closures or construction activities along River Oaks Boulevard. The Traffic Control Plan shall detail traffic detour routes, emergency vehicle access provisions, and coordination protocols with local emergency service providers. The plan shall be submitted to the Yuba County Department of Public Works for review and approval prior to the start of construction for the roadway improvements on River Oaks Boulevard.	LTS
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, would the project exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
c) Would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

Table ES-1 Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Environmental Impact	Level of Significance without Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation
d) Would the project 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?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS
Would the project have a cumulative effect related to wildfire?	LTS	No mitigation measures required.	LTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Sections 21000 et seq. of the California Public Resources Code [PRC]) requires that all State and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before acting on those projects. This draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, Chapter 3, Sections 15000 et seq.). The EIR is the public document designed to provide decision makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed project, to indicate possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage, and to identify alternatives to the project. The EIR must also disclose significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; significant and irreversible changes; growth-inducing impacts; effects not found to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

The lead agency means "the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment" (PRC Section 21067). The Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) has the principal responsibility for approval of the Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project). For this reason, the District is the CEQA lead agency for the proposed project.

The applicant means "a person[1] who proposes to carry out a project which needs a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use or financial assistance from one or more public agencies when that person applies for the governmental approval or assistance" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15351). The District is also the person who proposes to carry out the proposed project. The District is both the applicant and lead agency for the proposed project.

The intent of the Draft EIR is to provide sufficient information on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project to allow the lead agency to make an informed decision regarding approval of the proposed project. Specific discretionary actions to be reviewed by the District are described in Section 2.7, *Intended Uses of the Draft EIR*.

[1] As defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15376, "person" is defined "any person, firm, association, organization, partnership, business, trust, corporation, limited liability company, company, district, city, county, city and county, town, the state, and any of the agencies and political subdivisions of such entities, and to the extent permitted by federal law, the United States, or any of its agencies or political subdivisions."

The overall purpose of this Draft EIR is to inform the lead agency, responsible agencies, decision makers, and the general public about the environmental effects of the construction and operation of the proposed project. This Draft EIR addresses effects that may be significant and adverse, evaluates alternatives to the proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce or avoid adverse effects.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

1.2.1 Notice of Preparation

The District determined that an EIR would be required for the proposed project and published a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for 30-day public review starting on Friday, June 20, 2025, to Monday, July 21, 2025. The NOP process helps determine the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR. Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary*, summarizes the comments received during the NOP comment period. A copy of the NOP and copies of the comment letters received during the NOP comment period are available in Appendix A to this Draft EIR.

As a part of the NOP process, the District held a public scoping meeting on Thursday, July 10, 2025, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at 2743 Plumas School Road, Plumas Lake, CA 95961. The District attended the public scoping meeting; no members from the public, agencies, or other participants attended the public scoping meeting. See Appendix A to this Draft EIR for the scoping meeting sign-in sheet.

1.2.2 Draft EIR

The scope of the Draft EIR was determined based on the comments received in response to the NOP. Pursuant to Sections 15126.2 and 15126.4 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Draft EIR should identify any potentially significant adverse impacts and recommend mitigation that would reduce or eliminate these impacts to levels of insignificance.

The information in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, establishes the basis for analyzing the proposed project-related environmental impacts.

1.2.3 Final EIR Certification

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review for 45 days. Interested agencies and members of the public are invited to provide written comments on the Draft EIR to the District address below. Upon completion of the 45-day review period, the District will review all written comments received and prepare written responses for each. A Final EIR will incorporate the

received comments, responses to the comments, and any changes to the Draft EIR that result from comments. The Final EIR will be presented to the District for potential certification as the environmental document for the project. All persons who comment on the Draft EIR will be notified of the availability of the Final EIR and the date of the District's public hearing.

The Draft EIR is available to the general public for review in person at:

- Plumas Lake Elementary School District, 2743 Plumas School Rd, Plumas Lake, CA 95961

In addition, the DEIR is available online at the Plumas Lake Elementary School District's website: https://www.plusd.org/About-Us/Our-District/Facilities--Growth/index.html.

1.3 MITIGATION MONITORING

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 requires that agencies adopt a monitoring or reporting program for any project for which it has made findings pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081 or adopted a negative declaration pursuant to Section 21080(c). Such a program is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the preparation of an EIR or negative declaration.

The Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project will be completed prior to consideration of the project by the District's School Board.

1.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Some documents are incorporated by reference into this Draft EIR, consistent with section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, and they are available for review at the designated websites.

- Plumas Lake Specific Plan, prepared by Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services, October 1992. https://www.yuba.gov/departments/community_development/planning_department/document_library.php.
- Yuba County 2030 General Plan, prepared by Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services Agency, June 2011. https://www.yuba.gov/departments/community_development/planning_department/document_library.php.
- Yuba County Municipal Code, prepared by Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services, July 2025. https://library.municode.com/ca/yuba_county/codes/code_of_ordinances.

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2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to describe the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) to the public, reviewing agencies, and decision makers. This description is provided in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, which require environmental review of a "project" as defined in Section 15378(a) of the CEQA Guidelines:

"Project," as defined by the CEQA Guidelines, means:

> ... the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following: (1)…enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, and the adoption and amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof pursuant to Government Code Sections 65100–65700. (14 Cal. Code of Reg. sec. 15378[a])

In addition, pursuant to the CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15124), an environmental impact report (EIR) should contain a description of the proposed project that includes:

a) the precise location and boundaries of the proposed project;

b) a statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project, including the underlying purpose of the project;

c) a general description of the proposed project's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics; and

d) a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR, including a list of the agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision making, a list of permits and other approvals required to implement the proposed project, and a list of related environmental review and consultation requirements required by federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or policies.

An adequate project description should not supply extensive detail beyond that needed for evaluation and review of environmental impacts. Accordingly, this chapter describes the necessary details of the proposed project that are critical in assessing the direct, indirect, long-

term, and temporary impacts associated with project implementation. This project description is organized in the following manner:

- **Introduction.** An overview of the proposed project description chapter and its organization.
- **Project Background.** A summary of background information regarding the history of the project.
- **Project Location.** A written description and graphic portrayal of the project location, boundaries, and site characteristics.
- **Environmental Setting.** A description of the existing physical, environmental, and regulatory conditions at the project site and in the surrounding area, serving as the baseline for evaluating project impacts.
- **Statement of Project Objectives.** A statement of the proposed project objectives and underlying purpose of the project.
- **Project Characteristics.** A comprehensive description of the proposed project, organized by the various project characteristics and features, including construction.
- **Intended Uses of the EIR.** Identification of the anticipated approvals required for project implementation, and identification of the proposed project's Lead Agency as well as any known Responsible Agencies.

2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The proposed project is within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area (Specific Plan). The Plumas Lake Specific Plan (1993) conceptualized the development of educational uses, including the development of a middle school and high school. The Specific Plan further states that an additional two or three middle schools and 12 to 15 elementary schools may be needed within the Specific Plan area (Yuba 1992).

In 2012, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District acquired the proposed project site, which is at a different location than the stipulated location of the proposed middle school in the Specific Plan. Following review of multiple properties in Yuba County, the District acquired the project site based on several objective criteria, including its capacity to accommodate the required school program, proximity to existing and planned residential development, availability of supporting utility infrastructure, and compatibility with circulation patterns. The District determined that the acquired project site presented fewer environmental constraints compared to the original Specific Plan location, including reduced potential impacts related to traffic congestion, access, and site preparation. In addition, the location offers improved opportunities for safe pedestrian and vehicular access and allows for a more efficient configuration of educational facilities. Selection of the project site was made to ensure the long-term viability of the proposed middle school project, to minimize environmental impacts, and to better serve the educational and operational needs of the District and the surrounding community.

2.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The approximately 25-acre project site is located near the northwest intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive in Plumas Lake. The project site includes one full parcel owned by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) (Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 016-350-021) and a portion of one parcel owned by Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) (APN 016-350-022).

2.3.1 Regional Setting

The project site is located in Plumas Lake, an unincorporated community in the southwestern portion of Yuba County. It is surrounded by unincorporated land within Yuba County. The nearest cities are Wheatland, approximately 7 miles to the east, Marysville and Yuba City, approximately 10 miles to the north, and Sacramento, approximately 30 miles south. Figure 2-1, *Regional Location*, shows the regional setting of the project site.

Regional access to the project site is provided by California State Route 70 (SR-70), located approximately 0.68 miles east. SR-70 runs north-south through the region, offering direct routes to nearby cities and other major highways including SR-65, SR-99, and SR-113.

2.3.2 Local Setting

Local access is provided by River Oaks Boulevard, east of the project site. While Blackbird Way and Finsbury Way are planned local streets located north of the project site, they are not yet operational as they are currently under construction as part of nearby residential development. Public transit access to the project site is provided by Yuba-Sutter Transit. Sacramento Commuter Express is the nearest route to the project site. The nearest bus stop is located at Plumas Lake Park & Ride, approximately 1.7 miles southeast of the project site. Pedestrian infrastructure is currently limited, and no sidewalks border the northern or the eastern portions of the project site along River Oaks Boulevard. Sidewalks are provided along the east side of River Oaks Boulevard, across the street from the project site. There are dirt roads on the west and south sides of the project site. Figure 2-2, *Local Vicinity*, shows the regional setting of the project site.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.4.1 Existing Land Use and Zoning

The project site consists of approximately 25 acres of fallow agricultural land as shown in Figure 2-3, *Aerial View with Photograph Locations*. The project is designated Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP). Valley Neighborhood is a mixed-use designation that allows a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses, including schools. As mentioned in Table 11.040.010, *General Plan Land Use Designation and Zoning District by Placetype*, of the Yuba County Municipal Code, The Valley Neighborhood aims to develop and redevelop neighborhoods by allowing residents to be within walking or bicycling distance of daily destinations, such as schools, shops, and parks. The County plans to cluster higher-activity land uses, such as schools, parks, retail, and civic uses, in an area serving the surrounding neighborhood.

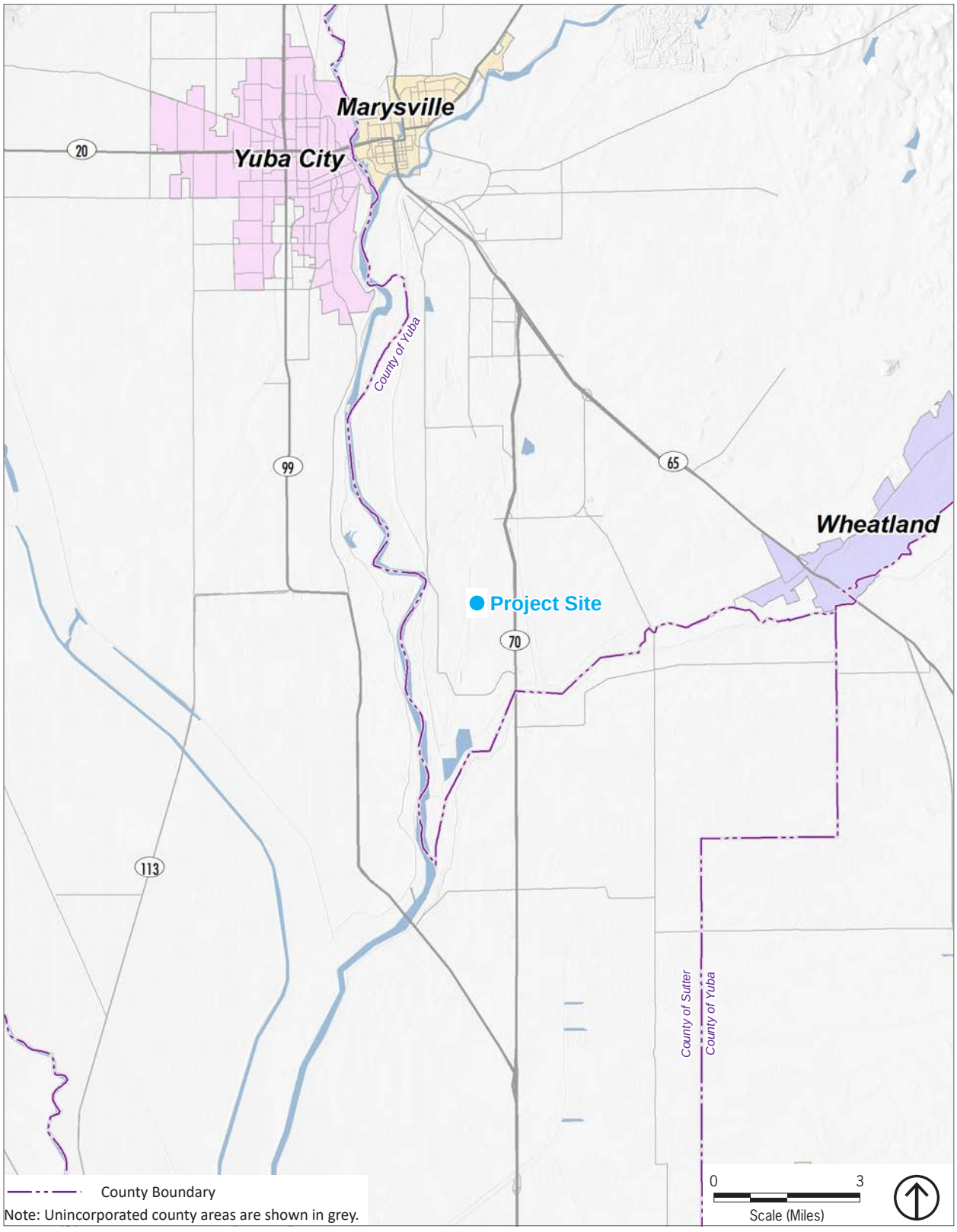
The project site is located within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is designated Medium Density Residential (RM), allowing up to four dwelling units per acre. The Plumas Lake Specific Plan functions as a transitional area between urban development to the north and agricultural uses to the south and uses detailed planning regulations to guide growth and reduce land use conflicts (Yuba 1992).

The project site is bordered by residential development to the north, active agricultural land to the west, and fallow agricultural fields to the south and east. The project site is undeveloped and does not include any buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, nor landscaping. The terrain is flat and the site is characterized as fallow agricultural land, with the northern portion exhibiting overgrown weeds and vegetation. Remnants of previous agricultural use, such as rubber tubing from former irrigation systems, are also present.

Figure 2-4, *Project Site Photographs*, depicts the existing conditions of the project site.

2.4.2 Surrounding Land Use and Zoning

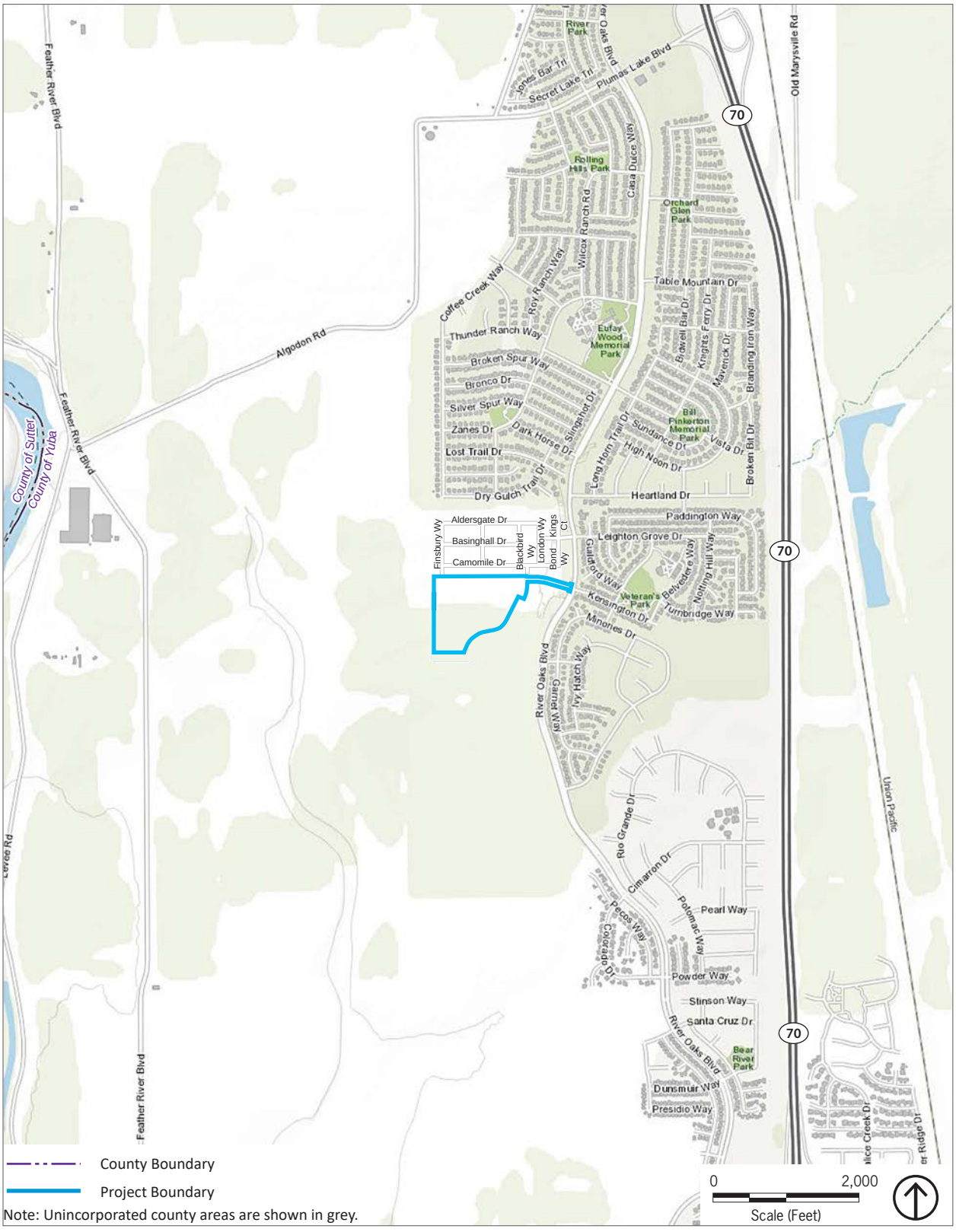
The project site is primarily surrounded by residential and agricultural land uses. To the east, single-family homes are located along River Oaks Boulevard, with ongoing residential construction to the north of the project site, progressing in multiple phases. Additional residential areas are also located further north beyond the nearby ongoing residential development. To the west and south, agricultural land predominates, complemented by a mix of suburban and rural uses in the surrounding area. Figure 2-5, *Surrounding Uses Photographs*, depicts these surrounding conditions.



Source: Generated using ArcMap 2022.

Figure 2-1
Regional Location

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Source: Generated using ArcMap 2022.

Figure 2-2
Local Vicinity

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Source: Nearmap 2025.

Figure 2-3
Aerial View with Photograph Locations

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Photo 1: Looking southeast on the northwest corner of the project site, vegetation, and weeds in the foreground.



Photo 2: Looking northwest on the southwest corner of the project site, vegetation, and weeds in the foreground with residential areas in the background.



Photo 3: Looking east on the west side of the project site. The project site is fallow and remnants of rubber from former agricultural activities are in the foreground, and residential areas are in the background.



Photo 4: Looking northwest on the southeast corner of the project site. Evidence of past tillage from former agricultural use is visible with weeds in the foreground. Residential areas and farmland in the background.



Photo 5: Looking west from the end of Blackbird Way. An overgrowth of weeds is visible at the end of Blackbird Way in the foreground. Residential areas to the north and farmland to the west of the project site are also visible.



Photo 6: Looking south from the northeast corner of the project site. An overgrowth of weeds is visible in the foreground. Farmland to the south of the project site can be seen.



Photo 7: Looking south along the sidewalk on River Oaks Boulevard. Overgrown weeds, the end of the sidewalk, adjacent landscaping, and a Kensington Drive sign are visible.



Photo 8: Looking northwest from the corner of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive. Visible features include River Oaks Boulevard and overgrown weeds in the foreground, with residential development and existing homes in the background.

Source: PlaceWorks 2025.

Figure 2-4
Project Site Photographs

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Photo 9: Looking southwest from the northwest corner of the project site. A dirt road and vegetation are visible in the foreground, with farmland located west of the site in the background.



Photo 10: Looking south from the southwest corner of the project site. Fallow marks and vegetation are visible in the foreground, with farmland to the south in the background.



Photo 11: Looking east across the southern portion of the project site. Evidence of past tillage is visible, with patches of overgrown weeds in the distance. An existing residential area east of the site can be seen in the background.



Photo 12: Looking north from the upper northern portion of the project site. Fallow marks are visible in the foreground, with residential development on the north side of the site in the background.



Photo 13: Looking east from the end of Blackbird Way. Overgrown weeds are visible in the foreground, with residential development located north of the project site in the background.

Source: PlaceWorks 2025.

Figure 2-5
Surrounding Use Photographs

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The project site is primarily surrounded by land designated as Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan, with the exception of the area west of the project site, which is designated Natural Resources (Yuba 2011). The Natural Resources designation allows for limited residential and non-residential development, aimed at preserving environmental quality and protecting natural resources. The surrounding properties are also within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, except for the land to the west, which is zoned as Exclusive Agricultural District (AE-40). The AE-40 district is designed to preserve agricultural land by requiring a minimum parcel size of 40 acres and limiting residential density to one unit per parcel.

2.5 STATEMENT OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, the following objectives support the proposed project's purpose and assist the Plumas Lake Elementary School District in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to be evaluated in this EIR.

- The primary purpose of the proposed project is to construct and operate a new middle school for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District to serve the Plumas Lake community to provide adequate middle school services for the build-out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.
- Provide sufficient classroom space to accommodate current and projected enrollment growth in the Plumas Lake community, consistent with the District's long-term facilities planning goals.
- Realign enrollment boundaries to provide adequate student-to-teacher ratio to support high-quality instruction to all schools within the District, which includes repurposing the existing Riverside Meadows Middle School as an elementary school.
- Provide educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs, including science, technology, and arts education.
- Improve neighborhood access to elementary school services by siting a new school within an area of planned residential growth.
- Minimize student travel distances and promote walkability and safe routes to school for families in the surrounding area.
- Enhance opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement through the development of modern athletic and recreational facilities.

2.6 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed project would consist of two main components which would include the construction of the Plumas Lake Middle School and an access road connecting to River Oaks Boulevard to serve the school (see Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*).

2.6.1 Proposed Land Uses

SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Academic and Administrative Buildings

The proposed project would include buildings designed to support the school's academic and operational functions including a 5,347-square-foot Multi-Purpose Room (MPR), a 2,498-square-foot administration building, an 11,749-square-foot gymnasium, and a 3,273-square-foot library. The proposed academic buildings would be one story and include 44 classrooms totaling approximately 48,000 square feet (SF) of instructional space. The administrative building would also be one story but would not contain any classrooms.

Athletic and Recreational Facilities

The proposed project would also include outdoor athletic and recreational amenities to support physical education and extracurricular activities, including a 2.52-acre track and football field and a 2.64-acre multisport field. The proposed project would also include basketball courts totaling roughly 64,460 SF and six tennis/pickleball courts with a combined area of approximately 25,715 SF. Bleachers would be installed at both the track and the football field and the multisport field. No field lighting nor public address system are proposed for any of the athletic facilities.

LANDSCAPING AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The proposed project would include approximately 5.38 acres of landscaped areas distributed throughout the project site. Additionally, paved walkways would be installed to facilitate safe and efficient pedestrian circulation between school buildings, recreational facilities, and campus entry points.

ACCESS AND PARKING

The proposed project includes a 109-space parking lot on the north side of the project site with 25 electric vehicle (EV) capable spaces that are pre-wired for future chargers, 7 EV-ready spaces that are fully wired for Level 2 charging, 5 active EV charging stations with above-ground modules, and 4 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) spaces. The south side of the parking lot

would also include pick-up/drop-off zones (approximately 11,080 SF or 0.25 acres). The west side of the parking lot would end in a roundabout with a roadway connecting to Finsbury Way, north of the project site (see Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*).

CIRCULATION AND ROADWAYS

The proposed project includes the construction of an access road to serve the school. Kensington Drive would be extended west, through OPUD's property, to connect with the school's proposed parking lot and Blackbird Way. The proposed project also includes the construction of approximately 312 linear feet of Blackbird Way, along the east side of the proposed campus. Dedication of Blackbird Way was previously approved under a separate project and is not part of the proposed project.

An 11,080-square-foot drop-off area and a 61,453-square-foot fire lane (including portions of concrete and roadway) would be installed on the west side of Blackbird Way and would accommodate bus pick-ups/drop-offs. Parent/Guardian pick-up/drop-offs would occur along the pick-up/drop-off zone in the northern parking lot. As part of the proposed project, the Blackbird Way would be extended approximately 312 linear feet to the east, providing a connection to the segment of Blackbird Way located on the adjacent property to the north of the project site. Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way would provide access to the project site. Sidewalks are proposed along Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and along River Oaks Boulevard, and the intersection of Kinsington Drive and River Oaks Boulevard (see Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*). The proposed project includes approximately 78,756 SF or 1.81 acres of roadway improvements that would be constructed in phases to align with the campus buildout.

Offsite Improvements

As part of the proposed project, a series of roadway and offsite improvements would be constructed to support safe and efficient access to the proposed middle school campus. Off-site, the proposed project would include the construction of a dedicated left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard to facilitate vehicular access to the school site. Other offsite improvements would include curb enhancements along River Oaks Road, as well as the installation of a striped pedestrian sidewalk at the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

UTILITIES

Water and sewer services would be provided by OPUD. The project site is currently undeveloped and would require installation of new water, wastewater, and storm drain infrastructure consistent with OPUD design standards. On-site utility improvements would include domestic and fire service connections to existing OPUD mains in River Oaks Boulevard, along with new lateral connections to serve buildings and irrigation systems. The proposed storm drainage system is designed to collect and treat runoff through a combination of

bioretention basins (Bioretention #1 and #2, totaling approximately 23,723cubic feet of capacity) and a StormTech underground detention system (approximately 3,116 cubic feet) before discharge to the public storm drain network, consistent with the Stormwater Control Plan (see Figure 2-7, Stormwater Control Plan).

Electrical power and natural gas services would be provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) through extensions of existing distribution infrastructure along River Oaks Boulevard. Telecommunications service (e.g., internet and telephone) would be provided by local carriers operating within the Plumas Lake area. Solid waste collection and disposal services would be provided by Recology Yuba-Sutter, which operates under contract with Yuba County. All new utility installations would comply with service provider requirements, applicable building and fire codes, and the Division of the State Architect (DSA) standards for school construction.

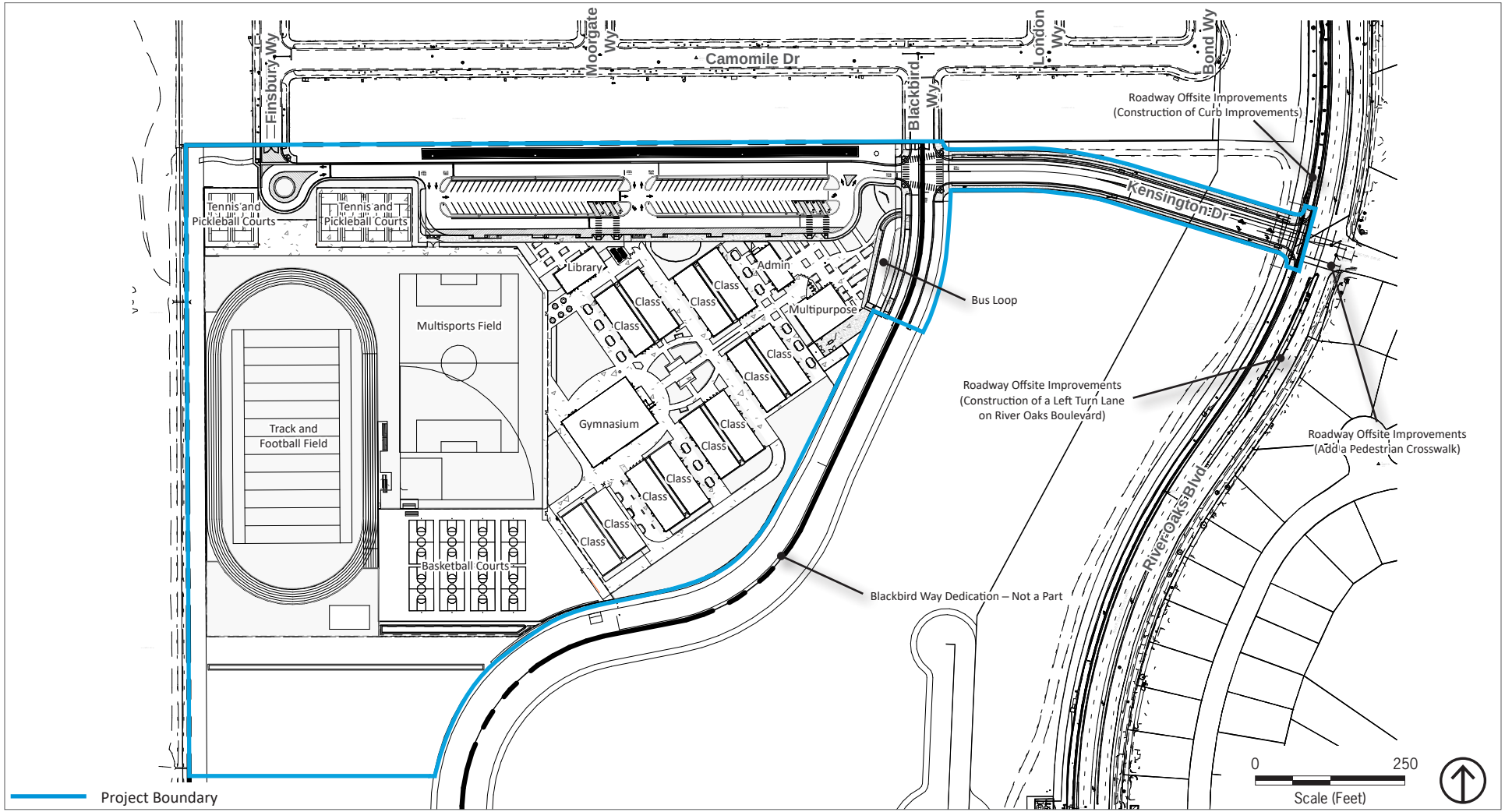
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN FEATURES

The proposed project would be designed all-electric and includes sustainability features consistent with current code requirements. Solar panels would be installed on the MPR, library, and gymnasium buildings to meet the minimum renewable energy generation thresholds required by state building codes. The parking lot would include EV infrastructure, consisting of EV-capable, EV-ready, and active EV charging spaces, in compliance with code-specified percentages. All buildings would be outfitted with energy-efficient LED lighting to reduce overall electrical demand.

2.6.2 Project Phasing

CONSTRUCTION PHASES

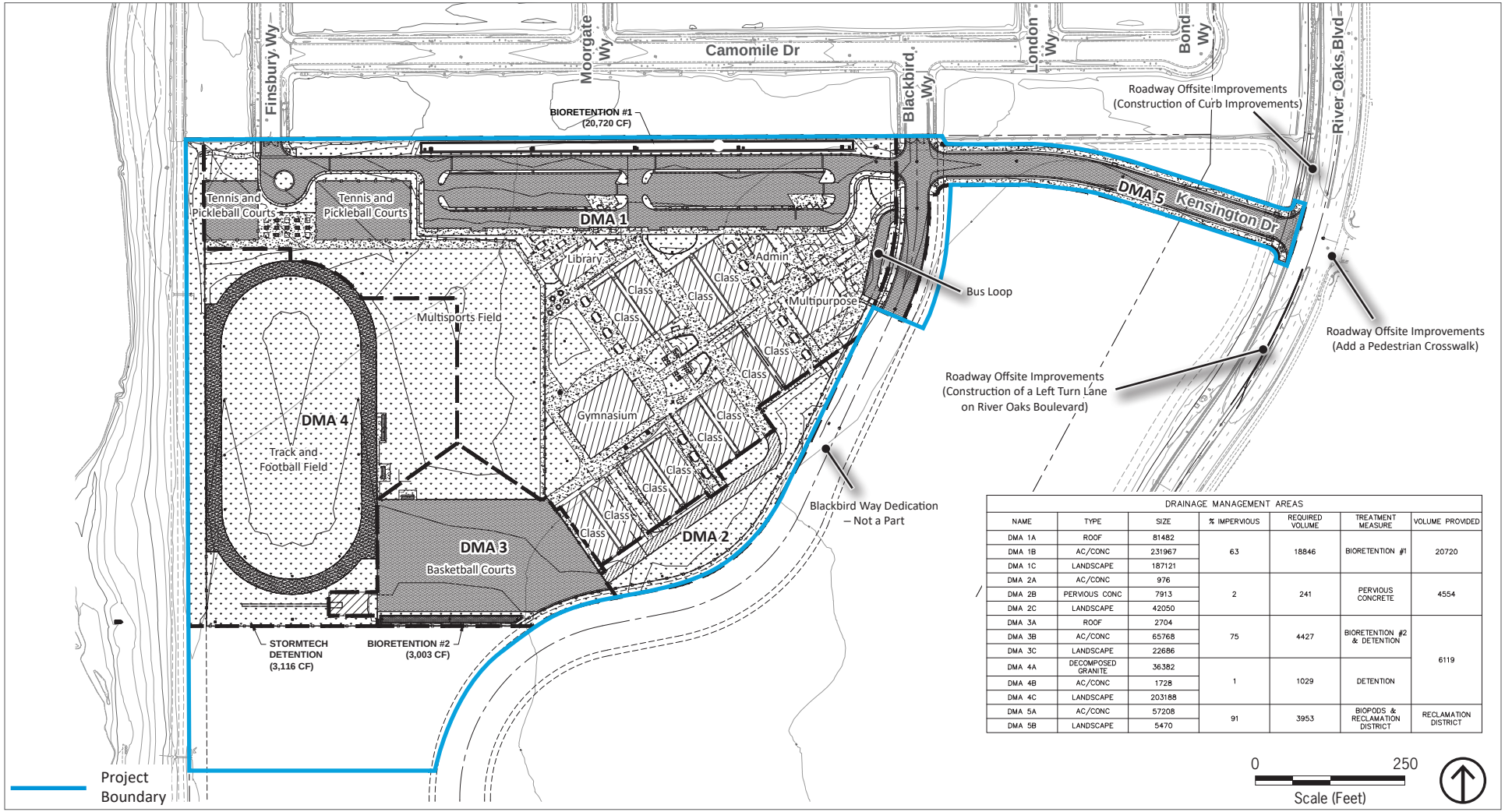
Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to begin in Spring 2026 and conclude by Fall 2030. To align with the operational needs of the campus, the proposed project would be implemented in four phases. Phase 1, scheduled from Spring 2026 to Fall 2027, would include the construction of 16 classrooms, the MPR, the administration building, and primary site infrastructure. Phase 2, anticipated to occur from Fall 2027 to Fall 2028, would involve the construction of the gymnasium building. Phase 3, anticipated to occur from Fall 2028 to Fall 2029, would construct eight classrooms. Phase 4, anticipated to occur between Fall 2029 through Fall 2030, would complete the buildout of the campus including the construction of the 3,273-square-foot library, 20 classrooms, tennis/pickleball and basketball courts, and the sports fields (track/football and multisport).



Source: The Motive Studio 2025.

Figure 2-6
Conceptual Site Plan

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DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT AREAS

NAME	TYPE	SIZE	% IMPERVIOUS	REQUIRED VOLUME	TREATMENT MEASURE	VOLUME PROVIDED
DMA 1A	ROOF	81482	63	18846	BIORETENTION #1	20720
DMA 1B	AC/CONC	231967				
DMA 1C	LANDSCAPE	187121				
DMA 2A	AC/CONC	976	2	241	PERVIOUS CONCRETE	4554
DMA 2B	PERVIOUS CONC	7913				
DMA 2C	LANDSCAPE	42050				
DMA 3A	ROOF	2704	75	4427	BIORETENTION #2 & DETENTION	6119
DMA 3B	AC/CONC	65768				
DMA 3C	LANDSCAPE	22686				
DMA 4A	DECOMPOSED GRANITE	36382	1	1029	DETENTION	
DMA 4B	AC/CONC	1728				
DMA 4C	LANDSCAPE	203188				
DMA 5A	AC/CONC	57208	91	3953	BIOPODS & RECLAMATION DISTRICT	RECLAMATION DISTRICT
DMA 5B	LANDSCAPE	5470				

Source: CORE 2025.

Figure 2-7
Stormwater Control Plan

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Construction activities are assumed to occur five days per week, Monday through Friday. Daily work hours are anticipated to be 8 hours per day, excluding a 1-hour lunch break. Per the Yuba County Municipal Code, Section 8.20.310, Construction of buildings and projects, construction is not permitted between the hours of 10:00 p.m. of one day and 7:00 a.m. of the following day. Construction equipment and material storage and staging areas will occur onsite. All construction work associated with the proposed project would comply with the allowable hours set by the County to minimize potential noise and disruption to surrounding properties.

OPERATIONAL PHASES

The proposed Plumas Lake Middle School is expected to become operational in Fall 2027. At the time of opening, enrollment is projected to be approximately 432 students, based on 16 classrooms with an average of 27 students per classroom.

As part of the proposed project, students currently enrolled at Riverside Meadows Middle School (Grades 6–8) would be reassigned to the new Plumas Lake Middle School. In addition, elementary students from Cobblestone Elementary and Rio Del Oro Elementary (Grades TK–5) would be redistributed evenly across Cobblestone Elementary School, Rio Del Oro Elementary School, and Riverside Meadows Middle School. To accommodate the redistribution, the Riverside Meadows Middle School campus would be repurposed as an elementary school. The redistribution of elementary school students would occur during Phase 1 scheduled from Spring 2026 to Fall 2027. This process would not require physical improvements to any of the three existing campuses.

As shown in Table 2-1, *PLESD Available Enrollment Capacity by Phase*, student enrollment is expected to increase gradually over the four construction phases, in line with the phased delivery of new classroom facilities. The proposed project would start operating with the completion of Phase 1 (construction of 16 classrooms, the MPR, the administration building, and the primary site infrastructure) with an enrollment capacity of up to 450 students. Phase 2 would include the construction of the gymnasium and would not change the enrollment capacity of the proposed project.. With the addition of eight classrooms in Phase 3, enrollment capacity would increase by 350 students, bringing the total enrollment capacity after the completion of Phase 3 to 800 students. The completion of Phase 4, which is the full buildout of the proposed project, includes the addition of 20 classrooms and would result in an enrollment capacity of 1,200 students. At full buildout, the proposed project is anticipated to have an actual enrollment of approximately 972 students.

Table 2-1 PLESD Available Enrollment Capacity by Phase

School	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4	
	Grades	Students	Grades	Students	Grades	Students	Grades	Students
Rio Del Oro	TK-4	600	TK-4	600	TK-4	600	TK-4	600
Cobblestone	TK-4	600	TK-4	600	TK-4	600	TK-4	600
Riverside	7-8	600	7-8	600	TK-4	600	TK-4	600
Proposed Project	5-6	450	5-6	450	5-8	800	5-8	1,200
Total Enrollment	**-**	**1,720**	**-**	**2,000**	**-**	**2,600**	**-**	**3,000**

2.7 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This Draft EIR is a project DEIR that examines the environmental impacts of the proposed project. This DEIR also addresses various actions by the District and others to adopt and implement the proposed project. This DEIR intends to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed project, thereby enabling the District, other responsible agencies, and interested parties to make informed decisions with respect to the requested entitlements. The anticipated required approvals for the proposed project are shown in Table 2-2, *Actions Required*.

2.7.1 Responsible and Trustee Agencies

LEAD AGENCY

The District is the lead agency under CEQA and has the approval authority over the proposed project. Discretionary actions for the proposed project include: (1) approval of the proposed project, (2) certification of the environmental impact report, (3) adoption of the mitigation monitoring and reporting program, (4) adoption of the findings of fact, and (5) exemption of the campus from local zoning.

OTHER AGENCY ACTION REQUESTED

The proposed project will require coordination and approval from several local agencies and departments. These include:

- **Yuba County Fire Department.** Review and approval of fire protection measures, including access, fire lanes, and hydrant placement.
- **Yuba County Health Department.** Review of health-related elements such as potable water systems, food service facilities, and sanitation standards.

- **Yuba County Public Works.** Approval of roadway infrastructure improvements, including the extension of Kensington Drive and connections to Blackbird Way and River Oaks Boulevard.
- **Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD).** For water, sewer, and solid waste service connections and compliance with service requirements.
- **Yuba County Sheriff's Department.** For school safety coordination and emergency response planning.

State and Regional Agencies

The proposed project will require approvals and compliance with requirements from several state and regional agencies:

- **California Division of the State Architect (DSA).** Review and certification of building design, including structural, accessibility, and fire/life safety compliance.
- **California Geological Survey (CGS).** Geotechnical review to ensure seismic and soil stability compliance, if applicable.
- **California Department of Education (CDE).** Approval of the school site and building design for educational program suitability and regulatory compliance.
- **California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).** Review and approval (i.e. issuance of a no further action letter) of the preliminary endangerment assessment.
- **Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRQCB).** Coverage under the General Construction Permit would be required, including the preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

2.7.2 Required Permits and Approvals

The anticipated discretionary actions required for this proposed project are listed in Table 2-2, *Actions Required*.

Table 2-2 Actions Required

Responsible Agencies	Action
Yuba County Fire Department	Review and approval of fire protection measures, including access, fire lanes, and hydrant placement.
Yuba County Health Department	Review of health-related elements such as potable water systems, food service facilities, and sanitation standards.
Yuba County Public Works	Approval of roadway infrastructure improvements, including extension of Kensington Drive and connections to Blackbird Way and River Oaks Boulevard.
California Division of the State Architect (DSA)	Review and certification of building design, including structural, accessibility, and fire/life safety compliance.

Table 2-2 Actions Required

Responsible Agencies	Action
California Geological Survey (CGS)	Geotechnical review to ensure seismic and soil stability compliance, if applicable.
California Department of Education (CDE)	Approval of the school site and building design for educational program suitability and regulatory compliance.
California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)	Review and approval (i.e. issuance of a no further action letter) of the preliminary endangerment assessment.
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRQCB)	Coverage under the General Construction Permit, including preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

2.7.3 Related Review and Consultation Requirements

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project will follow necessary consultation processes as required by state law. AB 52 (California Native American Heritage Commission) requires consultation with California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project site and have requested to be notified of projects. The proposed project will engage in formal consultation with these tribes if requested, as part of the CEQA process. Tribes that have identified traditional cultural properties or other concerns related to the project site will be given an opportunity to consult with the lead agency regarding mitigation measures for potential impacts to cultural resources.

No tribes have requested to consult on District projects nor to be added to an AB 52 list. As such, no tribes were contacted pursuant to AB 52.

2.8 REFERENCES

Yuba, County of (Yuba). 1992. Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services. https://cms7files.revize.com/yubaca/Yuba%20County/Community%20Development/Planning/Handouts/Complete%20PLSP%20-%20Clean%20Version.pdf.

_____. 2011. Yuba County 2030 General Plan. Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services. https://www.yubalafco.org/files/7616ad99a/2030_general_plan_final_-_complete_doc+%281%29.pdf

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This chapter examines the environmental setting of the proposed project, analyzes the effects of the proposed project and the significance of its impacts, and recommends mitigation measures to reduce or avoid impacts. This chapter has a separate section for each environmental topic.

The proposed project is analyzed for potential significant impacts in accordance with Appendix F, *Energy Conservation*, and Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Environmental topics and their corresponding sections and abbreviations are:

3.1 Aesthetics (AES)
3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources (AGF)
3.3 Air Quality (AIR)
3.4 Biological Resources (BIO)
3.5 Cultural Resources (CUL)
3.6 Energy (ENE)
3.7 Geology and Soils (GEO)
3.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)
3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials (HAZ)
3.10 Hydrology and Water Quality (HYD)
3.11 Land Use and Planning (LUP)
3.12 Noise (NOI)
3.13 Population and Housing (POP)
3.14 Public Services (PUB)
3.15 Recreation (REC)
3.16 Transportation (TRA)
3.17 Tribal Cultural Resources (TCR)
3.18 Utilities and Service Systems (USS)
3.19 Wildfire (WIL)

As stated in the NOP, the proposed project is not expected to impact mineral resources. Mineral resources is evaluated in Chapter 5, *Other CEQA Considerations*.

ORGANIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

To assist the reader with comparing information between environmental issues, each section is organized under the same major headings.

- **Regulatory Framework** offers an overview of applicable laws, regulations, plans, and policies relevant to each environmental topic.
- **Existing Conditions** offers a description of the existing environmental conditions, providing a baseline against which the impacts of the proposed project can be compared.
- **Standards for Analysis** refer to the quantitative or qualitative standards, performance levels, thresholds, or criteria used to evaluate whether an impact is significant. These standards are based primarily on the CEQA Guidelines unless otherwise noted. This section also provides an overview of key methods, assumptions, and considerations that inform the impact analysis.

- **Project Impact Analysis** provides a detailed discussion of the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project. Mitigation measures are included as necessary.
- **Cumulative Impact Analysis** provides an overview of the geographic setting and cumulative projects considered in the cumulative impact assessment. Significant cumulative impacts are identified and mitigation measures are included as necessary.
- **References** are provided for information sources used in the development of the discussion.

LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The level of significance is identified for each impact in this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Although the criteria for determining significance are different for each topic area, the environmental analysis applies a uniform classification of the impacts based on definitions consistent with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines:

- **No impact.** The project would result in no adverse effect on the environment.
- **Less than significant.** The project would not exceed the established significance criteria.
- **Significant.** The project would exceed the established significance criteria. For each significant impact, the EIR identifies mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate, or avoid the adverse effect. If one or more mitigation measures would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level successfully, this is stated in the EIR.
- **Significant and unavoidable.** The project would exceed the established significance criteria, and no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

SCOPING COMMENTS RECEIVED

This section summarizes agency and stakeholder comments received in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and during the scoping process for the EIR. These comments have been considered in the development of the EIR and inform the scope of environmental topics and analyses presented in this document.

Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary*, summarizes the comments received during the NOP comment period. A copy of the NOP and copies of the comment letters received during the NOP comment period are available in Appendix A to this Draft EIR.

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)	6/20/2025	▪ The NAHC advises that under CEQA, any project potentially impacting tribal cultural resources may have a significant environmental effect and require an EIR. Two laws—Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and Senate Bill (SB) 18—establish mandatory procedures for tribal consultation. ▪ AB 52 applies to CEQA projects and requires lead agencies to notify California Native American tribes within 14 days of deeming a project application complete. Tribes have 30 days to request consultation, which must begin within another 30 days and occur before any CEQA document is released. Consultation must address potential impacts, mitigation, and alternatives. If agreement is reached, mitigation must be included in the CEQA documentation. All tribal information shared must remain confidential unless consented to by the tribe. ▪ SB 18 applies to local government actions involving general or specific plans and open space designations. Agencies must notify tribes identified by the NAHC and offer consultation. Tribes have 90 days to respond. While there is no fixed deadline to conclude SB 18 consultation, good-faith efforts are required. Confidentiality of tribal cultural resource information is also mandatory. ▪ The NAHC recommends agencies conduct archaeological records searches (via the California Historical Research Information System), Sacred Lands File searches, and engage in early tribal outreach. Field surveys and tribal monitoring are encouraged in culturally sensitive areas. All cultural resource findings should be documented with care, and inadvertent discoveries (especially human remains) must be handled per State law. ▪ Early consultation, proper cultural resource assessment, confidentiality, and meaningful mitigation are central to complying with CEQA, AB 52, and SB 18 when projects may affect tribal cultural resources.	▪ Section 3.17, *Tribal Cultural Resources*
Yuba County Sheriff Civil Department (YCSO)	6/20/2025	▪ YCSO responds to the NOP email stating that they forwarded the NOP to the correct department, which was the Community Development Department.	N/A

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD)	6/23/2025	▪ OPUD asks if the agreement and property transfer occurred for the portion of land that will be dedicated to the middle school. ▪ OPUD states that water and sewer can be discussed once that phase of the project is ready.	Chapter 2, *Project Description;* Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service Systems*
The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM)	7/1/2025	▪ CalGEM regulates all well abandonment activities to protect life, health, property, and natural resources under PRC Section 3106 and related sections. It can impose civil or criminal penalties for non-compliance. ▪ CalGEM warns that construction near or over abandoned oil, gas, or geothermal wells can be dangerous and may lead to significant costs or safety risks. Even wells properly plugged in the past may leak in the future due to unpredictable subsurface changes. CalGEM states that wells should not built over or access to wells should not be blocked. If access is blocked, landowners may be forced to remove structures at their own cost. ▪ CalGEM states to test all wells for gas or fluid leaks before or during development. Report leaks and submits results to CalGEM, including GPS coordinates. ▪ CalGEM states that re-abandonment may be required and responsibility depends on: o The owner (if their construction imp o edes access). o The developer or permitting agency (if they ignore CalGEM advice or fail to consult). o Any party who disturbs the well's integrity. ▪ CalGEM states that well work requires their written approval. A Notice of Intention (NOI) must be submitted through WellSTAR. ▪ Well casings must be 5–10 feet below ground (CCR Section 1723.5). Permit is required for modification.	▪ Section 3.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		▪ CalGEM recommends recording well with the county recorder to inform future property owners. ▪ Hydrocarbon-contaminated soil must be handled per environmental laws. Notify authorities, if found. ▪ CalGEM provides their Well Finder link for well locations and details.	
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB)	7/17/2025	▪ CVRWQCB develops Basin Plans that set water quality objectives and implementation programs to protect regional waters. These plans are reviewed every three years and must align with State and federal laws. All wastewater discharges must comply with the Antidegradation Policy and Basin Plan, ensuring that discharges do not degrade water quality. ▪ For construction projects disturbing one or more acres of soil, coverage under the Construction General Permit (Order No. 2009-0009-DWQ) is required. This includes activities like grading, excavation, or stockpiling and requires a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Routine maintenance is not covered. ▪ If a project involves discharging dredged or fill material into U.S. waters or wetlands, a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) may be needed. In such cases, a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the CVRWQCB is also required to confirm compliance with state water quality standards. If only non-jurisdictional waters of the state are impacted, the Water Board may instead issue a Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) permit, with small projects potentially eligible for streamlined approval under Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ. ▪ Projects involving construction dewatering or other groundwater discharge may require National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit coverage, often under a Limited Threat General Order, with submission of an NOI. Any discharge to surface waters not routed through a sewer system also requires NPDES coverage.	▪ Section 3.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	7/18/2025	▪ The project description should outline the entire action, should include appropriate detailed exhibits disclosing the Project area including temporary impacted areas such as equipment stage area, spoils areas, adjacent infrastructure development, staging areas and access and haul roads if applicable. CDFW recommends that the EIR should include a range of reasonable and feasible alternatives that achieve project objectives and minimize significant impacts on resources under CDFW's jurisdiction. ▪ CDFW recommends that the EIR should include an assessment of all habitat types within the project footprint, and a map that identifies the location of each habitat type. ▪ CDFW recommends that floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and assessment be completed. ▪ CDFW recommends that adjoining habitat areas should also be included in this assessment of where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts off-site. ▪ CDFW recommends that a general biological inventory of the fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite and within adjacent areas that could be affected by the proposed project. ▪ CDFW recommends consulting the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) and previous studies to assess the potential presence of sensitive species and habitats in the area. A nine-minute quadrangle search is recommended to determine potential species and habitats. The CDFW also recommends completing and submitting CNDDB Field Survey Forms to document survey results. ▪ CDFW recommends that the EIR completing a complete and recent inventory of rare, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species within offsite areas with the potential to be affected, including those meeting CEQA definitions. Species-specific surveys should be conducted to identify potential threats. CDFW	▪ Section 3.4, *Biological Resources*

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		recommends following established survey protocols and consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as appropriate. ▪ CDFW recommends that the EIR include a recent (within the last two years) floristic-based assessment of special-status plants and natural communities, be completed following CDFW's protocols, focusing on regional setting and rare or unique resources. ▪ CDFW recommends that the EIR should thoroughly analyze potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to biological resources, clearly defining significance thresholds for each impact and detailing the criteria used to determine significance, as required under CEQA. ▪ CDFW recommends a discussion of potential effects from lighting, noise, human activity, and wildlife-human interactions, especially those adjacent to natural areas, exotic and/or invasive species occurrences, and drainages. They recommend the analysis also consider impacts from alterations to drainage patterns, including changes in flow volume, velocity, erosion, sedimentation, and post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site. ▪ CDFW recommends including a discussion regarding potential indirect impacts to surrounding natural habitats, public lands, conservation areas, riparian zones, and wildlife corridors. ▪ Additionally, CDFW recommends the EIR include a CEQA-compliant cumulative impact analysis that considers the combined effects of the project with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects on natural resources. ▪ CDFW recommends that the EIR include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the project. CDFW also recommends the environmental documentation provide scientifically supported discussion	

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		regarding adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address the Project's significant impacts upon fish and wildlife and their habitat. ▪ CDFW recommends the project activities described in the EIR be designed to completely avoid any fully protected species [including, but not limited to: golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), greater sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis tabida*), California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) and northern California ringtail (Bassariscus astutus ssp. raptor)] that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. If fully protected species cannot be completely avoided, the CDWF recommends the project should obtain incidental take coverage for all species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project Area. ▪ CDFW recommends the project be design to avoid any potential adverse impacts to Species of Special Concern (SCC) (e.g., northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), Marysville California kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys californicus eximius*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), and a variety of bird species). CDFW recommends the EIR should analyze potential indirect and direct impacts and describe how mitigation will reduce those impacts to SCC due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. ▪ CDFW recommends the proposed project should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect sensitive plant communities from Project-related direct and indirect impacts. ▪ CDFW recommends the EIR should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts. For unavoidable impacts, onsite habitat restoration, enhancement, or permanent protection should be evaluated and discussed in detail. If onsite mitigation is not feasible or would not be biologically viable and therefore does not adequately mitigate the loss of biological functions and values, offsite	

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		mitigation through habitat creation and/or acquisition and preservation in perpetuity should be addressed. ▪ CDFW recommends the EIR include measures to perpetually protect the targeted habitat values within mitigation areas from direct and indirect adverse impacts. Specific issues that should be addressed include restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, long-term monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, increased human intrusion, etc. ▪ CDFW recommends that habitat revegetation/restoration plans should be prepared by qualified experts with expertise in the regional ecosystems and native plant restoration techniques. The plans should identify the assumptions used to develop the proposed restoration strategy. Plan requirements are listed in full in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. ▪ CDFW notes that it is the project applicant's responsibility to comply with all applicable laws related to nesting birds and birds of prey, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish & Game Code. ▪ CDFW notes that potential habitat for nesting birds and birds of prey is present near the project site and recommends that the EIR disclose potential activities that may incur a direct or indirect take to nongame nesting birds within the project footprint and its vicinity. CDFW recommends including avoidance and minimization measures regarding take into the EIR. ▪ CDFW recommends the EIR include specific avoidance and minimization measures to ensure that impacts to nesting birds or their nests do not occur. Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures may include but not be limited to: Project phasing and timing, monitoring of Project-related noise (where applicable), sound walls, and buffers, where appropriate. The EIR should also include specific avoidance and minimization measures that will be implemented should a nest be located within the Project site. ▪ CDFW recommends that to avoid direct mortality as a potential result of clearing of natural habitats that support native species, the Plumas Lake Elementary School	

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		District should state in the EIR a requirement for a qualified biologist with the proper handling permits, will be retained to be onsite prior to and during all ground- and habitat-disturbing activities. Furthermore, the EIR should describe that the qualified biologist with the proper permits may move out of harm's way special-status species or other wildlife of low or limited mobility that would otherwise be injured or killed from Project-related activities, as needed. The EIR should also describe qualified biologist qualifications and authorities to stop work to prevent direct mortality of special-status species. CDFW recommends fish and wildlife species be allowed to move out of harm's way on their own volition, if possible, and to assist their relocation as a last resort. Note that temporary relocation is not a substitute for mitigating habitat loss. ▪ CDFW notes they generally do not consider relocation or translocation as sufficient standalone mitigation for impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species. Therefore, they recommend the EIR should describe additional mitigation measures utilizing habitat restoration, conservation, and/or preservation, in addition to avoidance and minimization measures, if it is determined that there may be impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species. ▪ CDFW notes that obtaining a permit from CDFW by itself with no other mitigation proposal may constitute mitigation deferral. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.4, subdivision (a)(1)(B) states that formulation of mitigation measures should not be deferred until some future time. To avoid deferring mitigation in this way, the EIR should describe avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures that would be implemented should the impact occur. ▪ CDFW recommends obtaining a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for projects involving State-listed species, such as tricolored blackbird and Swainson's hawk that have the potential to occur in the project area. To facilitate the issuance of an ITP, if applicable, CDFW recommends the EIR include measures to minimize and fully mitigate the impacts to any State-listed species the Project has potential to take. CDFW also encourages early consultation with staff to determine appropriate	

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		measures to facilitate future permitting processes and to engage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Marine Fisheries Service. ▪ CDFW notes that the Native Plant Protection Act prohibits the take or possession of State-listed rare and endangered plants unless authorized by CDFW or in limited circumstances. ▪ CDFW notes the EIR should identify aquatic features such as perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, lakes, other hydrologically connected aquatic features and any associated biological resources/habitats present within the entire project footprint. If it is determined the Project will result in significant impacts to these resources the EIR shall propose appropriate avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. This includes impacts to both flowing and dry streams. The agreement process is subject to CEQA, and early coordination with CDFW is advised. ▪ CDFW notes that if upon review of an entity's notification, CDFW determines that the Project activities may substantially adversely affect an existing fish or wildlife resource, a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement will be issued which will include reasonable measures necessary to protect the resource. ▪ CDFW notes that other agencies may use specific methods and definitions to determine impacts to areas subject to their authorities. However, these methods and definitions often do not include all needed information for CDFW to determine the extent of fish and wildlife resources affected by activities subject to Notification under Fish and Game Code section 1602. Therefore, CDFW does not recommend relying solely on methods developed specifically for delineating areas subject to other agencies' jurisdiction (such as United States Army Corps of Engineers) when mapping lakes, streams, wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, etc. in preparation for submitting a Notification of an LSA. For the full information of what will be required for the processing of an LSA Notification, please see Appendix A.	

Table 3-1 NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Letter Date	Summary of Comments	Issue Addressed In
		▪ CDFW notes that CEQA requires data from environmental reviews, including special-status species observations, be reported to CDFW's CNDDB. Any detections during project surveys should be submitted via CNDDB's online form. CDFW request the project report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project Surveys to CNDDB. ▪ CFDW notes that because the project would have an effect on fish and wildlife, filing fees are required upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. ▪ In conclusion, CDFW requests written notification of proposed actions and pending decisions regarding the Project. Written notifications shall be directed to: California Department of Fish and Wildlife North Central Region, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 or emailed to R2CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov.	

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064, the decision as to whether an environmental effect should be considered significant is reserved to the discretion of the lead agency, based on substantial evidence in the record as a whole, including views held by members of the public. An ironclad definition of significant effect is not always possible because the significance of an activity may vary based on the setting. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(b), the analysis in this Draft EIR is based on scientific and factual data that have been reviewed by the lead agency and represents the lead agency's independent judgment and conclusions.

The proposed project is located within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan (Specific Plan) area and, to the extent applicable, is guided by the land use policies, development standards, and infrastructure framework established by the Specific Plan and the Yuba County General Plan. Applicable federal, state, and local requirements (including the Yuba County General Plan and Specific Plan policies and standards) are referenced within each environmental topic section as part of the Regulatory Framework and applied, as relevant, in the Project Impact Analysis. Technical studies were prepared to support the analyses in this Draft EIR. The appendices are incorporated into the Draft EIR and attached as appendices.

Baseline

This EIR evaluates the impacts of the proposed project relative to existing conditions, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2. Unless otherwise noted, the baseline represents the existing conditions on the ground (i.e., physical conditions) at the time that the NOP was issued on June 20, 2025.

Potential Effects of the Project on the Environment

The California Supreme Court concluded in *California Building Industry Association vs. Bay Area Air Quality Management District* (2015) 62 Cal.4th 369 that "CEQA generally does not require an analysis of how existing environmental conditions will impact a project's future users or residents." The *CBIA vs. BAAQMD* ruling provided for several exceptions to the general rule where an analysis of the environment on the project is warranted:

1. If the project would exacerbate existing environmental hazards (such as exposing hazardous waste that is currently buried).
2. If the project qualifies for certain specified exemptions (certain housing projects and transportation priority projects pursuant to PRC Sections 21159.21 (f),(h); 21159.22 (a),(b)(3); 21159.23 (a)(2)(A); 21159.24 (a)(1),(3); or 21155.1 (a)(4),(6).

3. If the project is exposed to potential noise and safety impacts on projects due to proximity to an airport (pursuant to PRC Section 21096).
4. School projects require specific assessment of certain environmental hazards (pursuant to PRC Section 21151.8).

Therefore, the evaluation of the significance of project impacts under CEQA focuses on the potential impacts of the proposed project on the environment, including whether the proposed project may exacerbate any existing environmental hazards. Existing environmental hazards in the project include, but are not limited to, seismic hazards, hazardous materials, and wildfire. Therefore, while the effects of these hazards on the proposed project are generally not subject to CEQA review following the *CBIA vs. BAAQMD* case, a discussion of the project's potential to exacerbate these hazardous conditions is provided in Section 3.7, *Geology and Soils*; Section 3.9*, Hazards and Hazardous Materials;* and Section 3.19, *Wildfire*, of this Draft EIR.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR, together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts. CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is "cumulatively considerable." Cumulative effects could occur when future development under the project is combined with development in the surrounding area or, in some instances, in the entire region.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(a)(3), where a cumulative impact is significant when compared to baseline conditions, the analysis must address whether the project's contribution to the significant cumulative impact is "considerable." If the contribution of the project is considerable, then the EIR must identify potentially feasible measures that could avoid or reduce the magnitude of the project's contribution to a less-than-considerable level. If the project's contribution is not considerable, it is considered less than significant, and no mitigation for the project's contribution is required.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1) states that the information used in the analysis of cumulative impacts should come from one or two sources:

A. A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or
B. A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include a General Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such

projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

Depending on the environmental category, the cumulative impact analysis may use either method. The cumulative impacts analyses in this Draft EIR use a combination of both methods A and B. Generally, this Draft EIR applies method A and uses the growth projections that are identified in the Yuba County General Plan have been used for the General Plan forecast-year conditions. Table 3-2, *New Development under 2030 General Plan*, shows the development such as housing population, and jobs under the 2030 Yuba County General Plan for Plumas Lake and the County.

Table 3-2 New Development under 2030 General Plan

	Yuba County Unincorporated	Olivehurst-Plumas Lake
Single- Family Units	25,000 - 34,000	12,720 - 17,000
Multi-Family Units	4,700 - 6,400	940 - 1,300
Population	74,000 - 100,000	36,600 - 48,000
Jobs	50,000 - 67,000	15,000 - 20,400

Source: Yuba 2011

In addition, this Draft EIR cumulative analysis also considers the residential project currently under construction immediately north of the project site due to its proximity to the project site and potential to overlap with the proposed project's construction (Method B).

REFERENCES

ECORP Consulting, Inc (ECORP). 2025a. *Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project*. (Draft EIR Appendix E)

_____.2025b. *Paleontological Assessment Letter Report for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District Project*. (Draft EIR Appendix F)

GEOCON (GEOCON Consulting Inc.). 2024. *Plumas Lake Elementary School District New Middle School Campus West Side of River Oaks Boulevard at Kensington Drive Plumas Lake, California*. (Draft EIR Appendix G)

Yuba County. 2021. 2021-2029 Housing Element. https://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing-elements/docs/yuba-county-6th-draft062521.pdf.

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3.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) discusses the potential impacts to the visual character of the project site and its surroundings from development of the proposed project. This section includes a discussion of the qualitative aesthetic characteristics of the environment that could be potentially degraded by the proposed project's implementation.

The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. Aesthetics generally refers to the identification of visual resources, the quality of what can be seen, and an overall visual perception of the environment. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts. Potential aesthetic impacts can be evaluated by considering proposed grade separations, landform alteration, building setbacks, scale, massing, and landscaping features associated with the design of the proposed project.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to aesthetics were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to aesthetics and applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

State Scenic Highway Program

In 1963, California's State Scenic Highway Program was created to preserve and protect the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The state laws governing this program are in the Streets and Highway Code, Sections 260 to 263, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) oversees the program. Caltrans defines a scenic highway as any freeway, highway, road, or other public right-of-way that traverses an area of exceptional scenic quality. Suitability for designation as a State Scenic Highway is based on three criteria described in Caltrans's *Guidelines for Official Designation of Scenic Highways* (2008) (Caltrans 2025a).

- **Vividness.** The extent to which the landscape is memorable. This is associated with the distinctiveness, diversity, and contrast of visual elements.

- **Intactness.** The integrity of visual order and the extent to which the natural landscape is free from visual intrusions (e.g., buildings, structures, equipment, grading).
- **Unity.** The extent to which development is sensitive to and visually harmonious with the natural landscape.

California Building Code: Building Energy Efficiency Standards

Energy conservation standards for new residential and non-residential buildings were adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the California Energy Commission) in June 1977 and most recently revised in 2019 (California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 6). The Building Energy Efficiency Standards are designed to reduce wasteful, uneconomic, inefficient, or unnecessary energy consumption and enhance outdoor and indoor environmental quality. These standards include provisions related to lighting. For example, the Building Energy Efficiency Standards outline mandatory requirements for lighting control devices and luminaires. The standards are updated every three years to allow for the consideration and possible incorporation of new energy efficiency technologies and methods. The 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards became effective on January 1, 2023, and apply to all newly constructed buildings, additions, and alterations.

REGIONAL

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Chapter 11.04: Zones and Districts

The chapter establishes a structured and legally enforceable framework for how land is used and developed within Yuba County. The chapter serves as the link between the General Plan, a broad policy document guiding growth and land use, and the zoning regulations that govern specific properties.

The project site is designated Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP). The project site is located within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is designated as Medium Density Residential (RM) and within the Neighborhood Center. Neighborhood centers are planned areas designed to place daily destinations, like schools, parks, shops, and services, within walking or biking distance for most residents.

Chapter 11.07: Residential Districts

The purpose of the residential districts is to promote healthful and convenient distribution of the county's population with sufficient densities to maintain a high standard of physical design and community service. The project site is zoned as Medium Density Residential (RM). One of the purposes of the RM district is to provide space for community facilities and neighborhood

services needed to complement residential areas and for institutions that require a residential environment.

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD1.1:** Urban and suburban development in the unincorporated County not related to agriculture, mining, or some natural or cultural resource-oriented purpose is prohibited in valley areas outside the Valley Growth Boundary.
- **Goal CD5. Valley Neighborhoods.** Valley Neighborhoods provide a long-term, high quality of life for the County's existing and future residents
- **Policy CD5.1:** Valley Neighborhoods should provide for most daily and weekly destinations, including a mix of commercial retail and services, schools, parks, and other civic uses.
- **Policy CD6.1:** Valley Neighborhoods shall contain one or more Neighborhood Center, where medium-and higher-density residences, neighborhood commercial, and public services are focused.
- **Policy CD6.4:** Higher-density residential development and services in Neighborhood Centers should transition to less intense development at the edges of existing and planned Valley Neighborhoods.
- **Policy CD11.1:** The County will encourage provision of high-quality parks and recreational areas, schools and other public services, retail, housing options, cultural attractions, walkability, and other amenities, in order to attract future employers.

Natural Resources Element

- **Policy NR9.1:** New developments near the Yuba, Bear, and Feather Rivers should be designed and located in a way that retains or enhances scenic views of these important visual resources.
- **Policy NR9.3:** Development in Rural Communities should be designed to preserve important scenic resources, landmarks, and icons that positively contribute to the rural character.
- **Policy NR9.4:** New buildings in areas of natural and scenic beauty should be placed and designed in a way that preserves scenic vistas available from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public viewing areas.
- **Policy NR10.1:** Building placement, grading, and circulation should be planned to retain as much existing native vegetation as feasible, with a priority on preserving existing oak trees that have a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater. The County's policies and standards for fire safety may override consideration of retaining existing vegetation in certain circumstances.

- **Policy NR10.2:** The County will encourage the preservation of healthy, attractive native vegetation during land development. Where this is not feasible, the County will require landscaping that uses climate-appropriate plant materials.
- **Policy NR11.4:** To the maximum extent feasible, new developments shall avoid adverse light and glare effects on adjacent roads, neighboring properties, and pedestrian areas through careful location of on-site lighting, use of non-reflective paint and building materials, screening or shielding light at the source, use of vegetation screening, use of directional lighting, use of lower intensity lighting, use of timing devices or sound/motion-controlled lighting, or other equally effective means.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

Land Use Element

New Development

- **Policy I:** Planned Unit Development shall be encouraged as a means to conserve and protect natural resources and the character of the natural environment.

Public Services

- **Policy 5:** Yuba County shall encourage and support the development of vacant lands within existing urban areas

Goals and Policies

Goals

- **Goal 8:** It is the general goal of Yuba County in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, to direct the process of urbanization to the planning area and other existing and planned urban areas thereby relieving the pressures for scattered urban developments in other parts of the county and in particular, its agricultural lands.
- **Goal 9:** In order to achieve a single, unified development regulatory process, the Specific Plan shall be comprehensive and shall replace other local development regulations and standards as they may apply to the Plan area.

Urban Design and Development

- **Policy 3:** Flexibility shall be allowed within residential areas in product mixture and type, allowing for clustering and incentives for the incorporation of open space and innovative design concepts which add amenities for residents and meet other goals of the Plan.

Architectural Policies

- **Policy 1:** A public process for the review of the architectural design of commercial, industrial, institutional and multi-family residential developments shall be instituted.

Land Use

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan introduces customized land use categories that replace the general classifications in Yuba County's General Plan, offering a detailed framework for regulating land use, development intensity, and design quality. It includes a two-level design review process initially through subdivision map applications that define densities, roads, schools, and infrastructure, and later through architectural review to refine neighborhood design. The project site is designated Medium Density Residential District (RM).

- **Medium Density Residential District (RM).** The medium density residential area comprises most of the land in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. This area has a planned density of four dwelling units per gross acre. At this density the predominant housing type will be single-family detached units, and it is anticipated that the majority will be built on a production basis by large-scale merchant home builders. As a result, entire neighborhoods will be developed with a common and unified treatment. Where neighborhoods have an existing pattern of land division, the County will need to ensure that a measure of consistency in treatment and a workable internal road system is realized.

3.1.2 Existing Conditions

VISUAL CHARACTER

As shown in Figure 2-3, *Aerial View with Photograph Locations*, and Figure 2-4, *Project Site Photographs*, the project site contains a fallow agricultural parcel. The project site is bordered by residential development to the north, active agricultural land to the west, and fallow agricultural parcels to the south and east. A residential neighborhood is also located to the east of the project site, across River Oaks Boulevard. The project site is primarily surrounded by residential and agricultural land uses.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Yuba County is divided into three visually distinct regions (Yuba 2011):

- Valley floor: Contains most urban and agricultural areas, especially croplands. Distant views include the Sutter Buttes, Sierra Nevada foothills, rivers, and rice fields.
- Foothills: Offer views of the valley below, along with the Sutter Buttes and rivers.
- Mountainous areas: Feature ridgelines, mountain valleys, forests, reservoirs, and other water bodies.

The project site is in the valley floor region. Views along public rights-of-way near the project site are largely characterized by views of urban and agricultural uses, including residential uses to the north and east and agricultural uses, including fallow agricultural parcels, to the west and

south. Due to existing development to the north and west of the project site, no distant views of mountains are visible from the project site nor public rights-of-way near the project site.

LANDFORM

The project site is generally flat, with ground elevations ranging from about 40 to 45 feet above mean sea level (amsl); west of the project site is a drainage swale with a low point around 30 feet amsl. The banks of this swale have gentle slopes, roughly a 4:1 ratio (horizontal to vertical) or flatter in the area near the project site (GEOCON 2024). There are no significant landforms (e.g., rock outcroppings, steep or rolling hills) on or around the project site.

SCENIC VISTAS AND CORRIDORS

Yuba County seeks to protect its natural landscapes, landmark views, and the visual character of both public and rural areas by preserving key scenic resources. These include views of the Yuba, Bear, and Feather Rivers; view corridors to iconic natural features like the Sutter Buttes; and the rural character expressed through historic landmarks, cultural features, and distinctive landscapes in small communities. The County also prioritizes maintaining clear public views from parks, roads, and other shared spaces, and supports preserving the visual quality along scenic routes, especially State Route (SR) 49 (identified as an eligible State scenic highway), which it endorses for designation as a State Scenic Highway (Yuba 2011; Caltrans 2025b).

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), no officially designated State Scenic Highways are in the vicinity of the project site. The nearest officially designated State Scenic Highway segment is SR 20 in Nevada County, from Skillman Flat Campground to ½ mile east of Lowell Hill Road, located approximately 48 miles northeast of the project site (Caltrans 2025b). SR 49, located approximately 24 miles east of the project site, is an eligible but not officially designated State Scenic Highway (Caltrans 2025b).

Scenic views of the listed rivers cannot be seen from the project site, as shown in Figure 2-5, *Surrounding Use Photographs*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*. There are no historic landmarks, cultural features, or distinctive landscapes within the project site (ECORP 2025). The project site is also approximately 24 miles west of SR-49. Due to distance and topography, views of the project site cannot be seen from SR-49.

3.1.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, “Environmental Checklist Form,” of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that, “except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099,” the proposed project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

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

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

c) In nonurbanized 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 a publicly accessible vantage point.) In an urbanized area, if the project would conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.

d) Expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

THRESHOLD GUIDANCE

Under Public Resources Code (PRC) § 21071, an unincorporated area is defined as an "urbanized area" if it meets two key criteria:

1. It is either completely surrounded by incorporated cities whose combined population with the unincorporated area is at least 100,000 and the unincorporated area's population density is equal to or greater than those cities, or it is located within an urban growth boundary with a residential density of at least 5,000 persons per square mile; and
2. The county board of supervisors has found that the area's general plan, zoning, and related policies encourage compact development that promotes efficient transportation, economic growth, affordable housing, energy efficiency, a balanced jobs-housing relationship, and protects the environment, open space, and agriculture, with the draft findings submitted to the Office of Planning and Research for review prior to finalization.

METHODOLOGY

Nighttime illumination and glare impacts are the effects of a project's exterior lighting upon adjoining uses and areas. Light and glare impacts are determined through a comparison of the existing light sources with the proposed lighting plan or policies. The following provides relevant lighting assessment terminology used in this analysis.

Terminology

The foot-candle (fc) is a unit based on English measurements. Although foot-candles are considered obsolete in some scientific circles, they are nevertheless used because many existing light meters are calibrated in foot-candles. Moonlight produces approximately 0.01 fc, and sunlight can produce up to 10,000 fc. The general benchmarks for light levels are shown in Table 3.1-1, *General Light Levels Benchmark*.

Table 3.1-1 General Light Levels Benchmark

Outdoor Light	Foot-Candles
Direct Sunlight	10,000
Full Daylight	1,000
Overcast Day	100
Very Dark Day	10
Twilight	1
Deep Twilight	0.1
Full Moon	0.01
Quarter Moon	0.001
Starlight	0.0001
Overcast Night	0.00001

Source: HSI 2019.

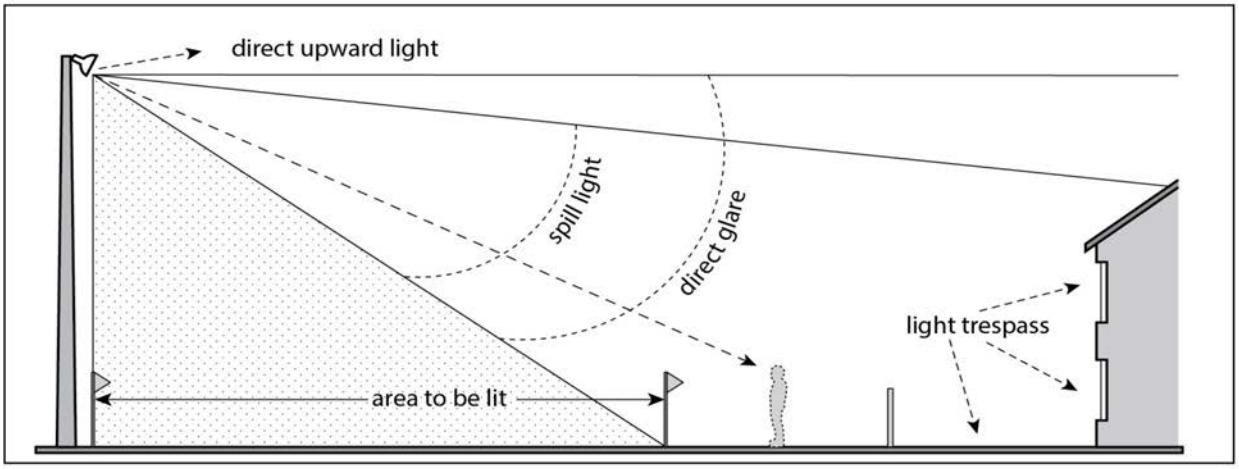
Horizontal foot-candle. The amount of light received on a horizontal surface such as a roadway or parking lot pavement.

Vertical foot-candle. The amount of light received on a vertical surface such as a billboard or building façade.

Glare means lighting entering the eye directly from a light fixture or indirectly from reflective surfaces that causes visual discomfort or reduced visibility. Glare can be generated by building-exterior materials, surface-paving materials, vehicles traveling or parked on roads and driveways, and sports lights. Any highly reflective façade material is a concern because buildings can reflect bright sunrays. The concepts of spill light, direct glare, and light trespass are illustrated in Exhibit A, Spill Light, Direct Glare, and Light Trespass, adapted from the Institution of Lighting Engineers (ILE 2003).

Direct glare is caused by looking at an unshielded lamp or a light at maximum candlepower. Direct glare is dependent on the brightness of the light source, the contrast in brightness between the light source and the surrounding environment, the size of the light source, and its position.

Exhibit A: Spill Light, Direct Glare, and Light Trespass



Illuminance is the amount of light on a surface or plane, typically expressed in a horizontal plane (e.g., on the ground) or in a vertical plane (e.g., on the side of a building).

Lumen means the unit of measure used to quantify the amount of visible light produced by a light source or emitted from a luminaire (as distinct from "watt," a measure of power consumption).

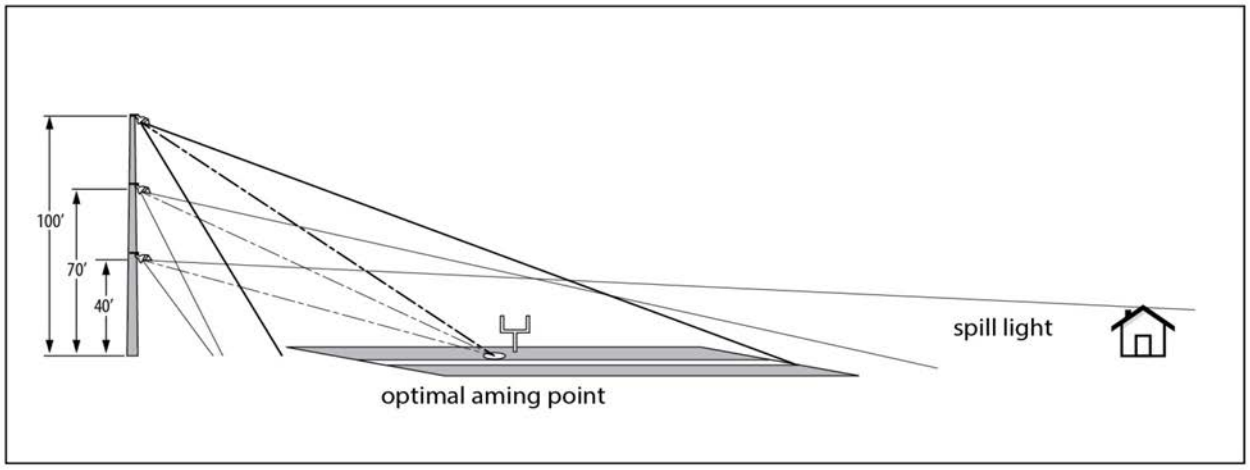
Luminaire means outdoor electrically powered illuminating devices that include a light source, outdoor reflective or refractive surfaces, lenses, electrical connectors and components, and all parts used to mount the assembly, distribute the light, and/or protect the light source, whether permanently installed or portable. An important component of luminaires is their shielding:

- Fully shielded. A luminaire emitting no light above the horizontal plane.
- Shielded. A luminaire emitting less than 2 percent of its light above the horizontal plane.
- Partly shielded. A luminaire emitting less than 10 percent of its light above the horizontal plane.
- Unshielded. A luminaire that may emit light in any direction.

Light trespass means light that falls beyond the property on which it originates. The amount of trespass is expressed in foot-candles and is measured in the vertical plane at five feet above grade at the property line of the site on which the light(s) is located. If the adjacent property is a street, alley, or sidewalk, the point at which trespassing light is measured is the center of the street, alley, sidewalk, or right-of-way. Field measurements to determine light trespass compliance do not include the effect of light produced by streetlights.

As a general rule, taller poles allow fixtures to be aimed more directly on the playing surface, which reduces the amount of light spilling into surrounding areas. Proper fixture angles ensure even light distribution across the playing area and reduce spill light, as shown in Exhibit B, Pole Heights and Lighting Angles.

Exhibit B: Pole Heights and Lighting Angles



Sky Glow is light that reflects into the night sky and reduces visibility of the sky and stars. It is a concern in many jurisdictions, especially those with observatories.

3.1.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

A scenic vista is a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the public. The proposed project involves the development of a middle school on a 25-acre fallow agricultural parcel in Plumas Lake. The Yuba County General Plan includes Natural Resources policies designed to protect the county's visual character and resources, including scenic views of rivers; view corridors to the Sutter Buttes; significant scenic landmarks and icons that contribute to the rural character; scenic vistas visible from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public viewing areas; and the visual quality along SR-49. As shown in Figure 2-5, *Surrounding Use Photographs*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and discussed in Section 3.1.2, *Existing Conditions*, above, none of these visual resources are within or visible from the project site.

The project site is surrounded by existing residential development, with homes up to two stories in height (approximately up to 20 to 25 feet above grade). The proposed middle school would include one-story academic buildings. The classroom heights would be 13 feet 5 inches, the MPR building would be 26 feet 6 inches, and the administrative building would be 19 feet

10 inches above grade. These heights are typical of modern educational facilities and would be designed to be visually compatible with the surrounding residential uses. The campus would consist of multiple smaller buildings rather than one large structure, which is reminiscent and visually consistent in massing and character as the surrounding residential communities. The proposed project's overall building height, massing, and architectural character would be consistent with the existing suburban setting.

In addition, based on the California State Scenic Highway mapping system maintained by Caltrans, there are no designated scenic highways on or near the project site. The nearest eligible scenic highway is SR-49 about 40 miles east of the project site, stretching from Route 20 near Nevada City to Route 89 near Sattley. The closest officially designated scenic highway is a 6.5-mile segment of SR-20 in Nevada County, approximately 77 miles northeast of the project site (Caltrans 2018, 2025b).

Given the project site's distance from designated or locally valued scenic vistas and the absence of notable scenic features nearby, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any scenic vista. Therefore, this impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project substantially degrade the view from a scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings?

According to the California State Scenic Highways mapping system maintained by Caltrans, there are no designated scenic highways on or near the project site or in Plumas Lake. The nearest eligible scenic highway is SR-49 about 40 miles east of the project site, stretching from Route 20 near Nevada City to Route 89 near Sattley. The closest officially designated scenic highway is a 6.5-mile segment of SR-20 in Nevada County, approximately 77 miles northeast of the project site (Caltrans 2018, 2025b).

Due to the distance, topography, and intervening development and vegetation, the project site is not visible from either route. Additionally, there are no scenic resources, such as rock outcropping or historic buildings, on-site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not alter scenic resources as viewed from a state scenic highway. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: No impact.

c) In nonurbanized areas, would the project 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 a 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?

As shown in Figure 3.1-1, *Proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Renderings*, shows the proposed renderings of the proposed project from River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive.

According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, Plumas Lake has a population of 8,424 persons (U.S. Census Bureau 2025). There are no incorporated cities contiguous to Plumas Lake, and the area does not meet the population density threshold or planning policy requirements defined under PRC § 21071. Additionally, Plumas Lake does not have its own general plan or zoning ordinances but is subject to County of Yuba regulations. Thus, Plumas Lake is considered a nonurbanized area. (See Figure 2-1, *Regional Location*.)

The proposed project involves construction and operation of a middle school and associated off-site improvements to connect the proposed project to the public right-of-way. The project site is surrounded by existing residential development, with homes up to two stories in height (approximately up to 20 to 25 feet above grade). The proposed middle school would include one-story academic buildings. The classroom heights would be 13 feet 5 inches, the MPR building would be 26 feet 6 inches, and the administrative building would be 19 feet 10 inches above grade. These heights are typical of modern educational facilities and would be designed to be visually compatible with the surrounding residential uses. The campus would consist of multiple smaller buildings rather than one large structure, which is reminiscent and visually consistent in massing and character as the surrounding residential communities. The proposed project's overall building height, massing, and architectural character would be consistent with the existing suburban setting.

The project site is in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is designated Medium Density Residential (RM). This designation supports a mix of housing types and allows for community facilities and institutions that complement residential uses. The proposed project is consistent with the RM district's intended purpose. Additionally, the planned school buildings would be limited to one story in height, maintaining compatibility with the surrounding built environment.



Street View 1: Looking west from the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive. The proposed middle school and residential development can be seen.



Street View 2: Looking northwest along River Oaks Boulevard. The proposed middle school can be seen.

Source: Plumas Lake Elementary School District 2026.

Figure 3.1-1
Proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Renderings

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The Plumas Lake Specific Plan envisions full buildout of the Plumas Lake area as a balanced community that integrates residential, commercial, institutional, and public uses. Development of a new middle school within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area supports this vision by providing essential public infrastructure that serves both existing and future residential neighborhoods. The proposed project would be consistent with several goals and policies of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan and the Yuba County General Plan. For example, the Plumas Lake Specific Plan Land Use Element Policy 5 states that Yuba County shall encourage and support the development of vacant lands within existing urban areas; the proposed project would develop a currently fallow agricultural parcel within an existing residential area, consistent with this policy. The Plumas Lake Specific Plan states that Goal 8 seeks to direct urbanization to designated planning areas such as Plumas Lake to relieve pressures for scattered rural development; Goal 9 calls for comprehensive planning and unified development standards. The proposed project contributes to the planned urbanization of the Plumas Lake area and supports unified, coordinated community development consistent with the adopted Specific Plan. Policy 1 states that a public process for the review of the architectural design of commercial, industrial, institutional and multi-family residential developments shall be instituted. The proposed project would design and landscaping would be consistent with community character.

As discussed under Impact (a), the project site is not along a scenic corridor or at a key public viewing location. It is bordered by residential and agricultural uses. The construction of the school and related road improvements would not substantially alter or degrade the visual character of the site or surrounding area.

The proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual character nor the quality of public views and would be visually consistent with surrounding land uses. Therefore, this impact is less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Lighting effects are associated with the use of artificial light during the evening and nighttime hours. There are three primary sources of light emanating from building interiors passing through windows and openings, vehicle headlights from vehicles traveling on public rights-of-way, and outdoor lighting (i.e., street lighting, architectural building illumination, security lighting, parking lot lighting, landscape lighting, and signage).

Excessive light and/or glare can impair vision, cause a nuisance, affect sleep patterns, and generate safety hazards when experienced by sensitive receptors, such as residents and drivers. Uses such as residences, elderly care facilities, schools, and hotels are considered light sensitive because occupants have expectations of privacy during evening hours and may be subject to

disturbance by bright light sources. Light spill or trespass is considered a nuisance and is typically defined as the presence of unwanted light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated.

The degree of illumination may vary widely depending on the amount of light generated, height of the light source, presence of barriers or obstructions, type of light source, and weather conditions.

Glare is primarily a daytime occurrence, caused by the reflection of sunlight or artificial light on surfaces of buildings or objects, including highly polished surfaces such as glass windows or reflective materials and, to a lesser degree, from broad expanses of light-colored surfaces. Daytime glare is common in urban areas and is typically associated with buildings that have highly reflective glass. Daytime glare can also be generated by light reflecting off passing or parked cars.

Glare is produced during evening and nighttime hours by the reflection of artificial light sources, such as automobile headlights. Evening and nighttime glare generation is typically related to either moving vehicles or sun angles, although glare resulting from reflected sunlight can occur regularly at certain times of the day and year.

Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation experienced by a person when looking directly at the glare source. Excessive glare not only impedes visibility but can also cause visual safety concerns and increase ambient heat reflectivity. Glare-sensitive uses include residences, hotels, transportation corridors, and aircraft landing corridors.

As shown in Figure 2-3, *Aerial View with Photograph Locations*, the project site is surrounded by residential uses to the north and east. The project site contains a fallow agricultural parcel and contains no sources of light or glare. However, there are sources of light and glare surrounding the project site, specifically from the north and west. Existing light sources include light emanating from windows, street lights, and headlights from vehicles travelling on public rights-of-way. Existing glare sources include light reflecting from light-colored building materials and vehicles traveling and parking on public rights-of-way. Nighttime glare sources can include vehicle headlights. The following discussion evaluates potential day- and nighttime light and glare impacts during construction and operation of the proposed project.

Project Construction Phase

Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to begin in Spring 2026 and conclude by Fall 2030, implemented in four phases to align with the operational needs of the campus. Construction would occur five days per week, Monday through Friday, with daily work hours of approximately 8 hours per day, excluding a 1-hour lunch break. Major activities would include site grading, utility installation, building construction, and paving. Construction equipment and material storage and staging areas would occur onsite.

Construction of the proposed project would include the use of construction equipment and building materials that could generate a temporary source of glare compared to existing conditions on the project site. During each phase, construction activities would temporarily introduce new sources of light and glare in comparison to existing conditions, as the project site is currently fallow agricultural land with minimal artificial lighting. Headlights from construction vehicles and worker vehicles and security lighting would generate a temporary source of lighting compared to existing conditions on the project site.

While the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare during construction, such sources would be typical of construction and would not be substantial. The construction site would be fenced with a mesh screen to further limit views of the project site and potential light and glare sources emanating to adjacent uses and public rights-of-way. Construction security lighting would be shielded and would only be used when necessary. Further, construction activities would be consistent with the Yuba County Ordinance Code, Section 8.20.310, "Construction of buildings and projects." Construction is not permitted between the hours of 10:00 p.m. of one day and 7:00 a.m. of the following day. Therefore, the proposed project's temporary construction-related light and glare would not expose people to substantial light or glare, and a less than significant impact would occur.

Project Operation Phase

Glare

Compared to current conditions (fallow agricultural parcel), development of the project site would introduce new buildings, structures, and vehicles that could reflect sunlight and generate glare. These include:

- Building materials such as stucco walls, tile or concrete tile roofing, and glass windows.
- Mechanical elements such as HVAC units, utility meters, and exterior lighting; and
- Vehicular sources, including parked cars on the site.

Except for glass windows and vehicle surfaces, most proposed materials and finishes would be nonreflective and designed to minimize glare. While glass can reflect sunlight, the proposed buildings are one story in height which limits the potential for strong, direct solar reflections toward surrounding residences or public rights-of-way. Any reflections would be short in duration, dependent on time of day and sun angle, and diffused by window treatments, interior furnishings, and landscaping. As such, glare from building windows would be minimal and consistent with that produced by nearby residential windows and school facilities within the Plumas Lake area. The proposed project's glass windows and building materials would be similar to existing windows and building materials from the surrounding residential uses. Vehicle surfaces are also inherently reflective, particularly windshields and metallic finishes; however, such glare is temporary and limited to vehicle movement during arrival and dismissal periods.

These conditions are brief, transient, and typical of traffic activity in suburban neighborhoods and typical of school campuses. Further, the vehicles onsite and traveling to and from the project site would be similar to existing vehicles currently traveling along public rights-of-way adjacent to the project site. In addition, the proposed project would be landscaped throughout, which would further block potential glare from surrounding public rights-of-way.

During nighttime hours, the proposed project would generate minimal glare sources. Potential nightlight glare would include nighttime lighting on the project site (e.g. security lighting) and from vehicle headlines on the project site and headlights from vehicles travelling on River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive potentially reflecting off reflective surfaces on the project site.

Lighting onsite would be shielded and downward facing to prevent glare. Further, given the distance between the middle school campus from River Oaks Boulevard and the north-south orientation of River Oaks Boulevard (which is parallel to the campus), it is unlikely that vehicle headlines from vehicles travelling on River Oaks Boulevard would reflect off of buildings and structures onsite. Vehicles turning left onto River Oaks Boulevard from Kensington Drive would shine headlights towards the campus. However, given the distance between the middle school campus from the intersection Kensington Drive and River Oaks Boulevard, it is unlikely that vehicle headlines would reflect off of campus buildings and vehicles onsite. Possible glare would be minimal and typical of the surrounding suburban area. These potential sources of glare would be typical of a middle school campus and would be similar to existing glare sources around the project site, including windows, existing vehicles, street lights, and residential lighting. The proposed project would be landscaped throughout, which would further block potential glare from surrounding public rights-of-way.

Furthermore, the proposed project would support with General Plan Policy NR11.4, which states that new development should reduce adverse light and glare impacts through design features such as use of non-reflective materials, screening or shielding of lights at the source, directional or lower-intensity lighting, timing devices or motion-activated lighting, and vegetative screening.

While the proposed project's operation would generate new sources of glare on the project site compared to existing conditions, the proposed project's potential glare sources would be similar to existing uses around the project site and design features, such as distance from the public rights-of-way and light shielding, would minimize glare. The operation of the proposed project would not expose people to substantial glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, and impacts would be less than significant.

Lighting

Daily operations of the proposed project would occur primarily during daylight hours. Evening activities, such as meetings or events, would be occasional and limited in duration. The proposed project would incorporate lighting throughout the project site, such as security lighting, wayfinding lighting, and accent lighting. Lights would be downward facing and shielded to focus the light source on the desired surface and would be designed to prevent unnecessary light spillover. No field lighting or public address system is proposed for any of the athletic facilities onsite. The proposed lighting would be typical of a middle school campus and would be similar to existing light sources around the project site, including street lights and residential lighting. Additionally, lighting that might emanate from windows onsite would be similar to adjacent residential uses and would be limited to the hours of operation.

Furthermore, the proposed project would comply with General Plan Policy NR11.4, which states that new development should reduce adverse light and glare impacts through design features such as use of non-reflective materials, screening or shielding of lights at the source, directional or lower-intensity lighting, timing devices or motion-activated lighting, and vegetative screening.

Vehicle headlights from vehicles traveling on on-site parking lots and leaving the project site may shine light towards the surrounding residential uses. However, the residential uses are surrounded by block walls which would prevent the vehicle headlights from reaching the residential properties. Further, given the typical hours of operation of a middle school campus, the proposed project would not generate a substantial number of vehicles leaving the project site with headlights.

Given the typical daytime hours of a middle school and the limited intensity of nighttime and use of nighttime lighting, and the existing sources of lighting in surrounding residential areas and on public rights-of-way, the proposed project's nighttime light impacts would be less than significant. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would not expose people to substantial lighting which would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. This impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is necessary**.**

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.1.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for aesthetics considers the Plumas Lake area where additional residential, commercial, and institutional developments are planned or approved. These include new housing subdivisions, road improvements, utility infrastructure, and community facilities such as parks and schools. The visual character of the cumulative setting is transitioning from

rural/agricultural to low- and medium-density suburban residential, consistent with long-range planning goals outlined in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan and the Yuba County General Plan.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to aesthetics?

The proposed project would introduce new buildings, lighting, and site improvements into an area that is presently fallow agricultural parcel but is in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is surrounded by existing or planned residential development to the north and east. The proposed project would be visually consistent with the anticipated buildout of the area and would not introduce features out of scale or character with the surrounding development.

Cumulatively, other projects in the area would also contribute to visual change, but this change is part of an expected and planned transition outlined in local planning documents. The proposed project and other development projects would include building materials and lighting designed to minimize glare and light spillover, consistent with County policies and design standards. In addition, the proposed project supports Plumas Lake Specific Plan Land Use Policy 5, which encourages development of vacant land within existing urban areas; Goals 8 and 9, which promote directing urbanization to planned growth areas; and Urban Design and Development Policy 3, which encourages incorporation of open space and design features that enhance community amenities.

Because the proposed project would not degrade scenic resources, obstruct public views, or conflict with local policies, and because its contributions would be consistent with the planned development pattern of the area, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative impact. Other development projects would undergo appropriate environmental analyses and would be required to be designed and evaluated to minimize visual impacts. Therefore, the cumulative aesthetic impact would be less than significant.

3.1.6 References

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3.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) to impact agriculture and forestry resources in Plumas Lake.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to agriculture and forestry resources were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.2.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to agriculture and forestry resources applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

California Department of Conservation: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) prepares, updates, and maintains Important Farmland Series Maps (Maps), as defined in Section 6550(f) of the Government Code, and prepares and maintains an automated map and database system to record and report changes in the use of agricultural lands every two years on even numbered calendar years. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. In preparing Maps, the DOC considers all information collected or received on the amount of land converted to or from agricultural use, and between agricultural categories (DOC 2025a). The farmland categories are defined below.

- **Prime Farmland (P):** "Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."

- **Farmland of Statewide Importance (S):** "Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."
- **Unique Farmland (U):** "Farmland of less quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."
- **Farmland of Local Importance (L):** "Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and local advisory committee."
- **Farmland of Local Potential (LP):** "Farmland of Local Potential is a subcategory of Farmland of Local Importance and aggregated with Farmland of Local Importance acreage in the land use conversion table. Four counties include Farmland of Local Potential: Glenn County, San Luis Obispo County, Santa Clara County, and Yolo County."
- **Grazing Land (G):** "Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities."
- **Urban and Built-up Land (D):** "Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes."
- **Other Land (X):** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

  The Other Land category includes rural land, which include:

  - Rural Residential Land (R)
  - Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land (SAC)
  - Vacant or Disturbed Land (V)
  - Confined Animal Agriculture (CI)
  - Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation (nv)
- **Water (W):** Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.
- **Areas Not Mapped (Z):** Area that falls outside of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey. Not mapped by the FMMP.

Optional Designation

- **Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use:** "Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use is defined as existing farmland, grazing land, and vacant areas which have a permanent commitment for development."

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 21060.1(a), "agricultural land" is defined as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.

Williamson Act Program

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open space uses as opposed to full-market value (DOC 2025b).

The DOC assists all levels of government and landowners in the interpretation of the Williamson Act-related government code. The DOC also researches, publishes, and disseminates information regarding the policies, purposes, procedures, and administration of the Williamson Act according to Government Code. Participating counties and cities are required to establish their own rules and regulations regarding implementation of the act in their jurisdiction. These rules include, but are not limited to, enrollment guidelines, acreage minimums, enforcement procedures, allowable uses, and compatible uses (DOC 2025b).

REGIONAL

Yuba County General Plan

Natural Resources Element

- **Policy NR3.2:** New developments adjacent to ongoing agricultural operations shall provide written notice to landowners and residents regarding potential noise, dust, odors, and other effects of adjacent agriculture.
- **Policy NR3.3:** The County will not consider agricultural operations to be a nuisance in cases where new development occurs in areas near ongoing agricultural operations.
- **Policy NR3.4:** New developments adjacent to ongoing agriculture shall incorporate design, construction, and maintenance techniques to minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural uses, including, but not limited to the use of agricultural buffers.

- **Policy NR3.5:** Agricultural buffers are only required at the edges of Rural Community Boundary Areas and the Valley Growth Boundary where there are adjacent ongoing agricultural operations. Buffers are not required in areas adjacent to planned urban development shown on the General Plan Land Use Diagram.
- **Policy NR3.6:** Agricultural buffers are not required for portions of developments adjacent to existing rural residential development or adjacent to other types of development on parcels of primarily five acres or less.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Land Use Diagram for the Plumas Lake Specific Plan shows a buffer strip along the entire western edge of the Plan south of the currently unnamed extension of Plumas-Arboga Road. This buffer strip is defined as having a minimum dimension of 300 feet in width. Upon review of specific development proposals and recommendation of the County Agricultural Commissioner, this buffer may be interpreted as either lesser or greater depending upon individual circumstances such as crop type, prevailing winds, and the presence of other mitigating features such as screening (Yuba 1992a). Table 3.3.6, *Land Uses in Buffer Area*, in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan shows the uses permitted within the agricultural buffer district along with special structural setbacks and other standards unique to this district.

The proposed project is not within this buffer strip.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Section 11.44.070 – Agricultural Buffers

The agricultural buffer requirement aims to ensure the sustainability of agricultural operations while minimizing conflicts with new nonagricultural developments. Buffers are mandated for new subdivisions near rural community boundaries adjacent to agricultural districts, though not required near planned urban developments or existing rural residential areas on small parcels. The buffer must be between 50 and 500 feet, determined by factors like crop type and topography, and should be situated on the subdivision property. It must incorporate vegetative barriers and cannot be used for human occupancy structures. Buffers may support compatible uses like community gardens and require a management plan approved by the County, detailing site conditions, maintenance protocols, and resource management to avoid fiscal impacts on the County.

3.2.2 Existing Conditions

Agricultural Land

Agriculture represents the single most important economic activity and most prevalent land use in Yuba County. Agriculture directly contributes to the local economy through job development, production, and exports. Agricultural production in the county and throughout the state is also closely linked to many other industries. For every 100 jobs in agriculture, it is estimated that another 94 additional jobs are created in related industries. Cropland and grazing lands account for approximately 60 percent of the county's total land area. Cropland dominates the valley floor, and although there is some grazing land present in the valley, the majority of the grazing lands are in the foothills. Most of the county's Prime Farmland is on the valley floor, particularly along the rivers, while most of the Unique Farmland is in the areas east of Marysville, Linda, and Olivehurst-Plumas Lake, but west of the foothills and Beale Air Force Base (Yuba 2011).

According to the *2023 Yuba County Crop and Livestock Report*, the total gross production value for 2023 was $256,885,785, which represents an approximately 4 percent increase as compared to 2022's production value. The increase in value can be attributed to the increase in value for kiwi fruit alone. However, peaches, almonds, walnuts, and livestock also had increases in value. Rice and prune/dried plum decreased in value due to decreases in price. The overall value of Yuba County's agricultural production remains strong with this year's value increasing by 4 percent (Yuba 2023). When farmland is converted to nonagricultural uses, it directly reduces the land available for agricultural production.

The amount of Prime Farmland in Yuba County has been declining since the DOC started compiling farmland classifications in 1998. Table 3.2-1, *Land Use Category Summary and Change*, identifies the net acres changed between 2018 and 2020 (the most recent data available). As identified in Table 3.2-1, in 2020, Yuba County had a total of 216,920 acres of agricultural land consisting of 38,969 acres of Prime Farmland, 10,526 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 33,300 acres of Unique Farmland, 0 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, and 134,125 acres of Grazing Land. Between 2018 and 2020, Yuba County lost 4,478 acres of agricultural land overall.

Table 3.2-1 Land Use Category Summary and Change

Land Use Category	Total Acreage Inventoried		2018-2020 Changes			
	2018	2020	Acres Lost	Acres Gained	Total Acreage Changed	Net Acreage Changes Between Acres Gained and Lost
Prime Farmland	38,592	38,969	346	723	1,069	377
Farmland of Statewide Importance	10,563	10,526	62	25	87	-37
Unique Farmland	32,684	33,300	141	757	898	616
Farmland of Local Importance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grazing Land	139,559	134,125	5,959	525	6,484	-5,434
Agricultural Land Subtotal	**221,398**	**216,920**	**6,508**	**2,030**	**8,538**	**-4,478**
Urban and Built-up Land	12,454	12,907	47	500	547	453
Other Land	170,432	174,397	1,075	5,040	6,115	3,965
Water Area	7,829	7,889	129	189	318	60
Total	**412,113**	**412,113**	**7,759**	**7,759**	**15,518**	**0**

Source: DOC 2020.

Williamson Act

According to the Williamson Act Enrollment Finder provided by the DOC, Yuba County is designated as non-participating (DOC 2025c).

Project Site

The project site currently includes a fallow agricultural field.[1] Previous agricultural production occurred on the project site and ceased between 2022 and 2023 (DWR 2023). The project site has been in continuous agricultural use since at least the late 1930s, as documented in historic aerial photographs reviewed in the Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) (Padre Associates 2025, included as EIR Appendix I). Throughout this period, the project site was cultivated with row and field crops, most recently planted with butternut squash at the time of the August 2024 site reconnaissance.

[1] At the time the Preliminary Environmental Assessment site reconnaissance was conducted in August 2024, the project site was in active agricultural production. The agricultural lease was terminated at the end of the season, prior to the start of this Draft EIR.

The project site is in the Plumas Lake community in unincorporated Yuba County. The Yuba County General Plan Natural Resources Element identifies the project site as being within the Valley Growth Boundary, which are areas that focus and guide long-term growth and development in the county. The Valley Growth Boundary includes existing suburban and urbanized communities, including Plumas Lake. The project site is designated Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP) for the implementation of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Valley Neighborhood is a mixed-use land use designation that allows a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses, including schools. Plumas Lake Specific Plan designates the project site as Medium-Density Residential (RM), allowing up to four dwelling units per acre (Yuba 1992a). Agricultural uses are not allowed in the Valley Neighborhood land use designation in the Yuba County General Plan nor the Medium-Density Residential designation under the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.

The 1993 Certified EIR for the Plumas Lake Specific Plan determined that the implementation and buildout of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan would result in the direct conversion of approximately 5,000 acres of agricultural land and would be a significant and unavoidable impact (Yuba 1992b, pg. I-4). No mitigation measures were provided to address the conversion of agricultural lands.

According to the DOC's Important Farmland Finder Map, the project site is classified as Prime Farmland (DOC 2025b).

Although the project site was historically used for agricultural production, the project site is not enrolled in a Williamson Act contract (DOC 2025c). Additionally, the project site is not within an agricultural preserve considered a Fire Severity Zone.

Surrounding Uses

The project site is situated amidst predominantly residential and agricultural properties. There are residential uses immediately north of the project site, and across River Oaks Boulevard, to the east of the project site. Further north, additional residential developments are present, with agricultural lands primarily occupying properties west and south of the project site. The project site falls under the Valley Neighborhood designation according to the Yuba County General Plan, except for the properties to the west, which are classified as Natural Resources. This designation permits limited development aimed at preserving environmental integrity. The surrounding properties align with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, with the properties to the west of the project site zoned as Exclusive Agricultural District (AE-40), enforcing a minimum parcel size of 40 acres and restricting residential density to one unit per parcel. Figure 2-5, *Surrounding Uses Photographs*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, depicts these surrounding conditions. Properties to the north, west, and south of the project site are designated as Prime Farmland. Properties to the east and further north of the project site are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land.

Forest Lands

Project Site

The project site does not contain any forest land. The project site consists of fallow agricultural land.

Surrounding Uses

Properties surrounding the project site do not contain any forest land.

3.2.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that, "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." The proposed project would result in a significant impact to agricultural and forestry resources if it would:

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 nonagricultural use.

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

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.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

3.2.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project 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 nonagricultural use?

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 21060.1(a), "agricultural land" is defined as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland, as defined by the USDA land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.

According to the DOC's FMMP, the project site is designated as Prime Farmland. The project site consists of fallow agricultural land that was historically used for crop production, which ceased between 2022 and 2023. Implementation of the proposed project would result in the direct conversion of approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use.

While the project site's land use designation and zoning support planned urban development consistent with the General Plan, Plumas Lake Specific Plan, and surrounding development—such as ongoing residential development north of the project site—conversion of Prime Farmland remains an environmental impact under CEQA. Therefore, the proposed project would result in the permanent loss of designated Prime Farmland and is considered to have a potentially significant impact related to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant

Impact AGF-1: The proposed project would convert approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use.

There are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce Impact AGF-1 to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measures Considered but Rejected

In compliance with CEQA, "each public agency shall mitigate or avoid the significant effects on the environment of the project it carries out or approves whenever it is feasible to do so."[2] The term "feasible" is defined in CEQA to mean, "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors."[3] CEQA Guidelines Section 15370 defines "mitigation" as: (1) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (2)

[2] Public Resources Code, Section 21002.1(b).
[3] Public Resources Code, Section 21061.1

minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of an action and its implementation; (3) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment; (4) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and (5) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments. The following is a brief discussion of the mitigation measures considered and their inability to mitigate or avoid the impact of the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses. As shown, no feasible mitigation measures are available that would reduce the agricultural resource impact to less-than-significant levels.

- **Payment of Agricultural Land Conservation Mitigation Funding.** This measure would require the District to contribute mitigation funds to offset the permanent removal of Prime Farmland. The County General Plan and the County Ordinance Code do not identify a county program to establish a funding mechanism to preserve agricultural lands. While there are nonprofits, such as the Sutter-Buttes Regional Land Trust and the Bear Yuba Land Trust, that operate in the region, these organizations do not operate a mitigation funding program. As such, there is no mechanism for the District to contribute funds. This mitigation measure would not be feasible since an agricultural land conservation mitigation program has not been established.
- **Creation of an Agricultural Conservation Easement.** This measure would require the District to purchase a property of the same size and that has a Prime Farmland designation to create an agricultural conservation easement at a one-to-one replacement ratio. The County General Plan and the County Ordinance Code do not identify a county program to establish a conservation easement. There are nonprofits, such as the Sutter-Buttes Regional Land Trust and the Bear Yuba Land Trust, that operate in the region, that help property owners establish voluntary conservation easements. However, establishing a conservation easement would not be feasible and would not mitigate this impact. First, establishing a conservation easement on-site would not be feasible because the project site is being developed as a school. Therefore, the District would need to purchase property of equal size, quality, and Prime Farmland designation to create an agricultural conservation easement. There are limited available properties for sale, and there is no known or reasonable time frame for future properties to be available that would meet the required conditions to implement this mitigation. Even if adequate land could be identified with the challenges of ensuring adequate site size, soil quality, irrigation, climatic, and economic conditions that are required to achieve for a one-to-one replacement ratio, the proposed project would still result in a net loss of Prime Farmland due to the project site being developed. As such, the creation of an agricultural conservation easement would not be feasible. Further, it would not be effective CEQA mitigation, because it would not fully nor partially mitigate the loss of Prime Farmland.

- **Relocation of Prime Farmland Topsoil.** This measure would remove the top 12 to 18 inches of topsoil from the project site and haul this soil to a farm site or several farm sites that have lower-quality soils. The Prime Farmland soils may assist in increasing crop yield at the relocated site. This measure would have its own environmental impacts, including increased truck traffic on local roadways from both hauling soil off-site and replacement of soil on-site, increased diesel truck emissions, construction noise, and increased duration of construction. The relocation of prime farmland soils on another active farm would increase other environmental impacts and is therefore considered infeasible.

As described, these measures were considered and found to be infeasible for mitigating or avoiding the impact of the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses pursuant to the definition of CEQA in that there is no guarantee that measures would result in successfully establishing Prime Farmland, if doing so could happen within a reasonable period of time, that their implementation would not potentially cause greater environmental impacts, and that acquiring additional lands to be established as Prime Farmland would be possible.

Further, even with the implementation of these mitigation measures or similar mitigation measures, development of the proposed project would still directly convert approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use. Implementation of these mitigation measures or similar mitigation measures would not reduce impacts to farmland, specifically Prime Farmland, on-site to less than significant. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Significance: Significant and unavoidable

b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

The proposed project is designated Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP). The Plumas Lake Specific Plan designates the project site as Medium Density Residential (RM). Valley Neighborhood is a mixed-use land use designation that allows a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses, including schools. Further, the RM designation does not allow for agricultural production. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with an existing zoning for agriculture, as the project site is currently zoned to allow urban development. In addition, the project site is not enrolled in a Williamson Act contract and the properties immediately abutting the project site are not enrolled in a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with an existing Williamson Act contract and no impacts would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: No impact

c) Would the project 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))?

The project site is not zoned for forest land, nor are surrounding properties zoned for forest land. Accordingly, the proposed project would not result in a conflict with existing zoning for forest land and no impacts would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: No impact

d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The project site is fallow agricultural land that has been historically used for agricultural production, which ceased between 2022 and 2023. The project site does not contain forest land or any vegetation communities associated with forest land and no impacts would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: No impact

e) Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The proposed project would result in the conversion of approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland into nonagricultural use. The properties to the immediate south and west of the project site are used for agricultural purposes. The property to the immediate east of the project site contains fallow agriculture land. The properties to the immediate north and across River Oaks Boulevard to the east are developed with residential uses. The District is constructing a middle school campus on the project site that would serve the Plumas Lake community and District.

Construction of the proposed project would be limited to the project site with off-site improvements in the existing public right-of-way and standard utility connections occurring within public rights-of-way. See Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*. The construction of the proposed project, roadway improvements, and utility connections would be temporary and would not affect the use of surrounding properties.

The operation of the proposed project would be limited to the project site. The proposed project's central location in Plumas Lake is intended to serve the residential communities and students within the District. It would not promote the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses nor forest land to non-forest uses. Off-site improvements in the existing public right-of-way on River Oaks Boulevard would ensure adequate access to the project site without impeding access to surrounding properties, including agricultural properties. As discussed in Section 3.16, *Transportation*, the proposed project would not conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system.

In addition, the policies in the Natural Resources Element aim to minimize conflicts between new development and existing agricultural operations by requiring design measures such as agricultural buffers (Policy NR3.4) and focusing on appropriate transitions between rural and urban areas (Policies NR3.5 and NR3.6). The proposed project places its athletics fields on the western and southern sides project site and would maintain an undeveloped area on the southern side of the project site. These low-intensity uses serve as a transition between the agricultural uses to the west and south of the buildings on the campus and residential development further north and east of the project site. The proposed project as a whole would serve as a transitional use between the existing residential development to the north and east and the ongoing agricultural operations to the south and west, consistent with the intent of these policies.

As previously discussed, the project site and surrounding area do not contain any forest land or vegetation communities associated with forest land; therefore, no impacts would occur.

As such, the proposed project would not involve other environmental changes that may result in the conversion of agricultural or forest land to nonagricultural or non-forest use. Accordingly, this impact would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant

3.2.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for agricultural and forestry resources includes Plumas Lake and Yuba County. This area has historically supported irrigated agricultural production but is undergoing a gradual transition to urban uses as envisioned under the Yuba County 2030 General Plan and related Plumas Lake Specific Plan that designate large portions of farmland for residential, commercial, and public facility development, including schools and parks.

According to the FMMP, the county has experienced incremental conversion of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural uses. Cumulative projects within this region include approved and proposed development projects that contribute to the ongoing reduction of farmland as the county transitions toward planned urban growth.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to agriculture and forestry resources?

Agriculture

Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the region, would contribute to the cumulative conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use.

The proposed project would directly convert approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to accommodate the construction of a new middle school campus. Other approved and planned development within the Plumas Lake area and the broader Valley Growth Boundary would similarly convert farmland to urban uses in accordance with adopted land use plans. Although this conversion is anticipated as part of the County's long-term growth strategy, it nonetheless represents a cumulative adverse effect on the region's agricultural land base.

The proposed project's contribution to this cumulative effect would be considerable because it would result in the permanent loss of Prime Farmland and cannot be fully mitigated through feasible measures. Accordingly, when considered together with other regional development projects that also convert Prime Farmland and other important farmland categories to nonagricultural use, the proposed project would make a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact related to the loss of farmland.

Impact AGF-2: Cumulative Loss of Farmland. Similar to Impact AGF-1, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce Impact AGF-2 to a less-than-significant level. See *Mitigation Measures Considered but Rejected* under Mitigation Measure AGF-1.

Significance with Mitigation: Significant and unavoidable. Agricultural conservation easements are a possible mitigation measure under CEQA. Programs that establish agricultural conservation easements and in-lieu fees for mitigation banking are most effective when determined concurrent with project approval. However, the effectiveness and extent to which future projects would opt-in to agricultural conservation easements as mitigation measures cannot be determined in this analysis; therefore, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Forestry Resources

The cumulative setting does not include any forest lands, timberlands, or lands zoned for forest production in the vicinity of the project site. The project site and surrounding area consist primarily of agricultural land and urban development. No portion of the project site or nearby area supports forest resources as defined by Public Resources Code Sections 12220(g) or 4526, or Government Code Section 51104(g). Accordingly, the proposed project, in combination with other cumulative developments, would not contribute to a cumulative loss or conversion of forest land.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant

3.2.6 References

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3.3 AIR QUALITY

This section of the Draft Environment Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential air quality impacts associated with the approval and implementation of the proposed project. This section describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions, identifies criteria used to determine impact significance, provides an analysis of the potential air quality impacts, and identifies feasible mitigation measures that could mitigate any potentially significant impacts. Criteria air pollutant emissions modeling is included in Appendix B, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Modeling*, of this Draft EIR.

The evaluation in this section is based on the methodology recommended by the Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) and where guidance is not provided by FRAQMD, guidance from the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro AQMD) will be borrowed for the analysis. The analysis focuses on air pollution from regional emissions and localized pollutant concentrations. In this section, "emissions" refers to the actual quantity of pollutant, measured in pounds per day (lbs./day) and "concentrations" refers to the amount of pollutant material per volumetric unit of air. Concentrations are measured in parts per million (ppm), parts per billion (ppb), or micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$).

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (School District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to air quality were raised during the NOP comment period.

Terminology

The following are definitions for terms used throughout this chapter:

- **AAQS.** Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- **CES.** CalEnviroScreen (CES) is a mapping tool that helps identify the California communities most affected by sources of pollution and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects.
- **Concentrations.** Refers to the amount of pollutant material per volumetric unit of air. Concentrations are measured in parts per million (ppm), parts per billion (ppb), or micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$).
- **Criteria Air Pollutants.** Those air pollutants specifically identified for control under the Federal Clean Air Act (currently seven—carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, lead, sulfur oxides, ozone, and coarse and fine particulates).

- **DPM.** Diesel particulate matter.
- **Emissions.** Refers to the actual quantity of pollutant, measured in pounds per day or tons per year.
- **Impacted Community**. Unincorporated communities in Yuba County that are disproportionately burdened by pollution as defined by the County in the proposed General Plan using CES data.
- **Overburdened Community**. As defined by the Air District, an area within a census tract identified by CES, Version 4, having an overall CES score at or above the 70th percentile, or within 1,000 feet of any such census tract.
- **ppm.** Parts per million.
- **Sensitive receptor.** Land use types that are considered more sensitive to air pollution than others due to the types of population groups or activities involved. These land uses include residential, retirement facilities, hospitals, and schools.
- **TAC.** Toxic air contaminant.
- **µg/m^3.** Micrograms per cubic meter.
- **VMT.** Vehicle-miles traveled.

3.3.1 Environmental Setting

CRITERIA AIR POLLUTANTS

Pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources are regulated by federal and State law under the federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and California CAA, respectively. The pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources are categorized as primary and/or secondary pollutants. Primary air pollutants are emitted directly from sources. Carbon monoxide (CO), reactive organic gases (ROG), nitrogen oxides (NO_X), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM_{10}), fine inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), and lead (Pb) are primary air pollutants. Of these, CO, SO_2, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ are "criteria air pollutants," which means that ambient air quality standards (AAQS) have been established for them. ROG and NO_X are criteria pollutant precursors that form secondary criteria air pollutants through chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Ozone (O_3) and NO_2 are the principal secondary pollutants. Each of the primary and secondary criteria air pollutants and its known health effects are described here.

- **Carbon Monoxide (CO)** is a colorless, odorless gas produced by incomplete combustion of carbon substances, such as gasoline or diesel fuel. CO is a primary criteria air pollutant. CO concentrations tend to be the highest during winter mornings with little to no wind, when surface-based inversions trap the pollutant at ground levels. The highest ambient CO concentrations are generally found near traffic-congested corridors and intersections. When inhaled at high concentrations, CO combines with hemoglobin in the blood and reduces its oxygen-carrying capacity. This results in reduced oxygen reaching the brain, heart, and other body tissues. This condition is especially critical for people with cardiovascular diseases,

chronic lung disease, or anemia, as well as for fetuses. Exposure of CO concentrations can lead to fatigue, headaches, confusion and dizziness (FRAQMD 2010).

- **Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)** are a by-product of fuel combustion and contribute to the formation of ground-level O_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. The two major forms of NOx are nitric oxide (NO) and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). NO is a colorless, odorless gas formed from atmospheric nitrogen and oxygen when combustion takes place under high temperature and/or high pressure. The principal form of NOx produced by combustion is NO, but NO reacts quickly with oxygen to form NO_2, creating the mixture of NO and NO_2 commonly called NOx. NO_2 is an acute irritant and more injurious than NO in equal concentrations. Exposure to NO_2 along with other traffic-related pollutants, is associated with respiratory symptoms, episodes of respiratory illness and impaired lung functioning. Clinical studies of human subjects suggest that NO_2 exposure may worsen the effect of allergens in allergic asthmatics, especially in children (FRAQMD 2010).
- **Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)** is a colorless, pungent, irritating gas formed when sulfur-containing fuel is burned by mobile sources, such as locomotives, ships, and off-road diesel equipment. SO_2 is also emitted from several industrial processes, such as petroleum refining and metal processing (FRAQMD 2010).
- **Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10})** is a complex mixture of tiny particles that consists of dry solid fragments, solid cores with liquid coatings, and small droplets of liquid. These particles vary greatly in shape, size and chemical composition, and can be made up of various materials (e.g., metals, soot, soil, and dust). Respirable particulate matter or PM_{10}, include the particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns (i.e., 10 millionths of a meter or 0.0004 inch) or less. Fine particles or $PM_{2.5}$, have an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 microns or less (i.e., 2.5 millionths of a meter or 0.0001 inch) and can contribute greatly to regional haze and reduction of visibility in California.

  Extended exposure to particulate matter can increase the risk of hospitalization for lung and heart-related respiratory illness, including emergency room visits for asthma. PM exposure is also associated with increased risk of premature deaths, especially in elderly people and those with pre-existing cardiopulmonary disease. The acidic portion of PM can also harm crops, forests, aquatic, and other ecosystems (FRAQMD 2010).
- **Ozone (O_3)** is a key ingredient of "smog" and is a gas that is formed when ROGs and NOx, both by-products of internal combustion engine exhaust, undergo photochemical reactions in sunlight. O_3 is a secondary criteria air pollutant. O_3 concentrations are generally highest during the summer months when direct sunlight, light winds, and warm temperatures create favorable conditions for its formation. Exposure to levels of ozone can lead to human health effects, such as lung inflammation, tissue damage, and impaired lung functioning. Ozone exposure can also be associated with symptoms such as coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and worsening of asthma symptoms. The greatest risk for harmful health effects is to outdoor workers, athletes, children, and others who spend more time

outdoors during smoggy periods. Ozone can also damage materials such as rubber, fabrics, and plastics (FRAQMD 2010).

- **Reactive Organic Gases (ROGs)/Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** are compounds composed primarily of hydrogen and carbon atoms. Internal combustion associated with motor vehicle usage is the major source of ROGs. Other sources of ROGs include evaporative emissions from paints and solvents, the application of asphalt paving, and the use of household consumer products such as aerosols. Adverse effects on human health are not caused directly by ROGs, but rather by reactions of ROGs to form secondary pollutants such as O_3. There are no AAQS established for ROGs. However, because they contribute to the formation of O_3, the FRAQMD has established a significance threshold for this pollutant (FRAQMD 2010).
- **Lead (Pb)** is a metal found naturally in the environment as well as in manufactured products. The major sources of lead emissions have historically been mobile and industrial sources. As a result of the phasing out of leaded gasoline, metal processing is currently the primary source of lead emissions. However, lead is present in many soils (especially urban soils) and can get re-suspended into the air. The highest levels of lead in air are generally found near lead smelters. Other stationary sources are waste incinerators, utilities, and lead-acid battery manufacturers. Because lead emissions are found only in projects that are permitted by the FRAQMD, lead is not an air quality of concern for the proposed project (FRAQMD 2010).

Table 3.3-1, *Criteria Air Pollutant Health Effects Summary*, summarizes the potential health effects associated with the criteria air pollutants.

Table 3.3-1 Criteria Air Pollutant Health Effects Summary

Pollutant	Health Effects	Examples of Sources
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	▪ Chest pain in heart patients ▪ Headaches, nausea ▪ Reduced mental alertness ▪ Death at very high levels	▪ Any source that burns fuel such as cars, trucks, construction and farming equipment, and residential heaters and stoves
Ozone (O_3)	▪ Cough, chest tightness ▪ Difficulty taking a deep breath ▪ Worsened asthma symptoms ▪ Lung inflammation	▪ Atmospheric reaction of organic gases with nitrogen oxides in sunlight
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	▪ Increased response to allergens ▪ Aggravation of respiratory illness	▪ Same as carbon monoxide sources
Particulate Matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$)	▪ Hospitalizations for worsened heart diseases ▪ Emergency room visits for asthma ▪ Premature death	▪ Cars and trucks (particularly diesels) ▪ Fireplaces and woodstoves ▪ Windblown dust from overlays, agriculture, and construction

Table 3.3-1 Criteria Air Pollutant Health Effects Summary

Pollutant	Health Effects	Examples of Sources
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	▪ Aggravation of respiratory disease (e.g., asthma and emphysema) ▪ Reduced lung function	▪ Combustion of sulfur-containing fossil fuels, smelting of sulfur-bearing metal ores, and industrial processes
Lead (Pb)	▪ Behavioral and learning disabilities in children ▪ Nervous system impairment	▪ Contaminated soil

Sources: CARB 2025a; South Coast AQMD 2005.

TOXIC AIR CONTAMINANTS

People exposed to TACs at sufficient concentrations and durations may have an increased chance of getting cancer or experiencing other serious health effects. These health effects can include damage to the immune system as well as neurological, reproductive (e.g., reduced fertility), developmental, respiratory, and other health problems (USEPA 2025a). By the last update to the TAC list in December 1999, California Air Resources Board (CARB) had designated 244 compounds as TACs (CARB 1999). Additionally, CARB has implemented control measures for several compounds that pose high risks and show potential for effective control. There are no air quality standards for TACs. Instead, TAC impacts are evaluated by calculating the health risks associated with a given exposure. Most of the estimated health risks from TACs can be attributed to relatively few compounds, the most relevant to the proposed project being particulate matter from diesel-fueled engines.

Diesel Particulate Matter

In 1998, CARB identified DPM as a TAC. Previously, the individual chemical compounds in diesel exhaust were considered TACs. Almost all diesel exhaust particles are 10 microns or less in diameter. Because of their extremely small size, these particles can be inhaled and eventually trapped in the bronchial and alveolar regions of the lungs. Long-term (chronic) inhalation of DPM is likely a lung cancer risk. Short-term (i.e., acute) exposure can cause irritation and inflammatory symptoms and may exacerbate existing allergies and asthma symptoms (USEPA 2002).

3.3.2 Regulatory Framework

Federal and State agencies and local air districts have passed laws and regulations intended to control and enhance air quality. The proposed project would be subject to the rules and regulations imposed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), CARB, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), and the FRAQMD. Federal, State, and regional laws,

regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized in this section.

FEDERAL AND STATE

Ambient Air Quality Standards

The Clean Air Act (CAA) was passed in 1963 by the United States (US) Congress and has been amended several times. The 1970 CAA amendments strengthened previous legislation and laid the foundation for the regulatory scheme of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977, Congress again added several provisions, including nonattainment requirements for areas not meeting National AAQS and the Prevention of Significant Deterioration program. The 1990 amendments represent the latest in a series of federal efforts to regulate the protection of air quality in the United States. The CAA allows states to adopt more stringent standards or include other pollutants. The California CAA, enacted in 1988, requires all areas of the state to achieve and maintain the California AAQS by the earliest practical date. The California AAQS tends to be more restrictive than the National AAQS, based on even greater health and welfare concerns.

Both California and the federal government have established health-based AAQS for seven air pollutants, which are shown in Table 3.3-2, *Ambient Air Quality Standards for Criteria Pollutants*. These pollutants are ozone (O_3), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM_{10}), fine inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), and lead (Pb). In addition, the State has set standards for sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, vinyl chloride, and visibility-reducing particles.

Table 3.3-2 Ambient Air Quality Standards for Criteria Pollutants

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standard [1]	Federal Primary Standard [2]	Major Pollutant Sources
Ozone (O_3) [3]	1 hour	0.09 ppm	*	Motor vehicles, paints, coatings, and solvents.
	8 hours	0.070 ppm	0.070 ppm	
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	1 hour	20 ppm	35 ppm	Internal combustion engines, primarily gasoline-powered motor vehicles.
	8 hours	9.0 ppm	9 ppm	
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Annual Arithmetic Mean	0.030 ppm	0.053 ppm	Motor vehicles, petroleum-refining operations, industrial sources, aircraft, ships, and railroads.
	1 hour	0.18 ppm	0.100 ppm	
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	Annual Arithmetic Mean	*	0.010 ppm	Fuel combustion, chemical plants, sulfur recovery plants, and metal processing.
	1 hour	0.25 ppm	0.075 ppm	
	24 hours	0.04 ppm	*	
Respirable Coarse Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	Annual Arithmetic Mean	20 µg/m^3	*	Dust and fume-producing construction, industrial, and agricultural operations, combustion, atmospheric photochemical reactions, and natural activities (e.g., wind-raised dust and ocean sprays).
	24 hours	50 µg/m^3	150 µg/m^3	
Respirable Fine Particulate Matter($PM_{2.5}$) [4,5]	Annual Arithmetic Mean	12 µg/m^3	9 µg/m^3	Dust and fume-producing construction, industrial, and agricultural operations, combustion, atmospheric photochemical reactions, and natural activities (e.g., wind-raised dust and ocean sprays).
	24 hours	*	35 µg/m^3	
Lead (Pb)	30-Day Average	1.5 µg/m^3	*	Present source: lead smelters, battery manufacturing, and recycling facilities. Past source: combustion of leaded gasoline.
	Calendar Quarter	*	1.5 µg/m^3	
	Rolling 3-Month Average	*	0.15 µg/m^3	
Sulfates (SO_4) [6]	24 hours	25 µg/m^3	No Federal Standard	Industrial processes.
Visibility Reducing Particles	8 hours	ExCo =0.23/km visibility of 10≥ miles	No Federal Standard	Visibility-reducing particles consist of suspended particulate matter, which is a complex mixture of tiny particles that consists of dry solid fragments, solid cores with liquid coatings, and small droplets of liquid. These particles vary greatly in shape, size and chemical

Table 3.3-2 Ambient Air Quality Standards for Criteria Pollutants

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standard [1]	Federal Primary Standard [2]	Major Pollutant Sources
				composition, and can be made up of many different materials such as metals, soot, soil, dust, and salt.
Hydrogen Sulfide	1 hour	0.03 ppm	No Federal Standard	Hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) is a colorless gas with the odor of rotten eggs. It is formed during bacterial decomposition of sulfur-containing organic substances. Also, it can be present in sewer gas and some natural gas, and can be emitted as the result of geothermal energy exploitation.
Vinyl Chloride	24 hours	0.01 ppm	No Federal Standard	Vinyl chloride (chloroethene), a chlorinated hydrocarbon, is a colorless gas with a mild, sweet odor. Most vinyl chloride is used to make polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic and vinyl products. Vinyl chloride has been detected near landfills, sewage plants, and hazardous waste sites, due to microbial breakdown of chlorinated solvents.

Sources: CARB 2024; USEPA 2025b.

Note: ppm: parts per million; µg/m3: micrograms per cubic meter; *Standard has not been established for this pollutant/duration by this entity.

1. California standards for O_3, CO (except 8-hour Lake Tahoe), SO_2 (1 and 24 hour), NO_2, and particulate matter (PM_{10}, $PM_{2.5}$, and visibility-reducing particles), are values that are not to be exceeded. All others are not to be equaled or exceeded. California AAQS are listed in the Table of Standards in Section 70200 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations.
2. National standards (other than O_3, PM, and those based on annual arithmetic mean) are not to be exceeded more than once a year. The O_3 standard is attained when the fourth highest 8-hour concentration measured at each site in a year, averaged over three years, is equal to or less than the standard. For PM_{10}, the 24-hour standard is attained when the expected number of days per calendar year with a 24-hour average concentration above 150 $\mu g/m^3$ is equal to or less than one. For $PM_{2.5}$, the 24-hour standard is attained when 98 percent of the daily concentrations, averaged over 3 years, are equal to or less than the standard.
3. On October 1, 2015, the national 8-hour ozone primary and secondary standards were lowered from 0.075 to 0.070 ppm.
4. On December 14, 2012, the national annual $PM_{2.5}$ primary standard was lowered from 15 $\mu g/m^3$ to 12.0 $\mu g/m^3$. The existing national 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards (primary and secondary) were retained at 35 $\mu g/m^3$, as was the annual secondary standard of 15 $\mu g/m^3$. The existing 24-hour PM_{10} standards (primary and secondary) of 150 $\mu g/m^3$ also were retained. The form of the annual primary and secondary standards is the annual mean, averaged over 3 years.
5. On February 7, 2024, the national annual $PM_{2.5}$ standard was lowered from 12 $\mu g/m^3$ to 9 $\mu g/m^3$. The existing national 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards (primary and secondary), secondary annual $PM_{2.5}$ standard, and PM_{10} standards (primary and secondary) were retained.
6. On June 2, 2010, a new 1-hour SO_2 standard was established, and the existing 24-hour and annual primary standards were revoked. The 1-hour national standard is in units of parts per billion (ppb). California standards are in units of parts per million (ppm). To directly compare the 1-hour national standard to the California standard the units can be converted to ppm. In this case, the national standard of 75 ppb is identical to 0.075 ppm.

These National and California AAQS are the levels of air quality considered to provide a margin of safety in the protection of public health and welfare. They are designed to protect "sensitive receptors" most susceptible to further respiratory distress, such as asthmatics, the elderly, very young children, people already weakened by other disease or illness, and persons engaged in strenuous work or exercise. Healthy adults can tolerate occasional exposure to air pollutant concentrations considerably above these minimum standards before adverse effects are observed.

California has also adopted a host of other regulations that reduce criteria pollutant emissions.

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 1493: Pavley Fuel-Efficiency Standards**. Pavley I is a clean-car standard that reduces emissions from new passenger vehicles (light-duty auto to medium-duty vehicles) from 2009 through 2016. In January 2012, CARB approved the Advanced Clean Cars program (formerly known as Pavley II) for model years 2017 through 2025.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 1078 and SB 107: Renewables Portfolio Standards**. A major component of California's Renewable Energy Program is the renewables portfolio standard established under SB 1078 (Sher) and SB 107 (Simitian). Under this standard, certain retail sellers of electricity were required to increase the amount of renewable energy each year by at least 1 percent to reach at least 20 percent by December 30, 2010.
- **California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 20: Appliance Energy-Efficiency Standards**. The 2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations (20 CCR 1601–1608) were adopted by the California Energy Commission on October 11, 2006, and approved by the California Office of Administrative Law on December 14, 2006. The regulations include standards for both federally regulated appliances and non–federally regulated appliances. This code reduces natural gas use from appliances.
- **24 CCR, Part 6: Building and Energy-Efficiency Standards**. Energy conservation standards for new residential and nonresidential buildings adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the California Energy Commission) in June 1977. This code reduces natural gas use from buildings.
- **24 CCR, Part 11: Green Building Standards Code**. Establishes planning and design standards for sustainable site development, energy efficiency (in excess of the California Energy Code requirements), water conservation, material conservation, and internal air contaminants. This code reduces natural gas use from buildings.

Tanner Air Toxics Act and Air Toxics Hot Spot Information and Assessment Act

Public exposure to TACs is a significant environmental health issue in California. In 1983, the California legislature enacted a program to identify the health effects of TACs and reduce exposure to them. Under State law, the CalEPA, acting through CARB, is authorized to identify a substance as a TAC if it is an air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness, or may pose a present or potential hazard to human health.

TACs are primarily regulated through AB 1807 (Tanner Air Toxics Act) and AB 2588 (Air Toxics "Hot Spot" Information and Assessment Act of 1987). The Tanner Air Toxics Act set up a formal procedure for CARB to designate substances as TACs. Once a TAC is identified, CARB adopts an "airborne toxics control measure" for sources that emit that TAC. If there is a safe threshold for a substance (i.e., a point below which there is no toxic effect), the control measure must reduce exposure to below that threshold. If there is no safe threshold, the measure must incorporate "toxics best available control technology" to minimize emissions. To date, CARB has established formal control measures for 11 TACs that are identified as having no safe threshold.

CARB has promulgated the following specific rules to limit TAC emissions:

- **13 CCR Chapter 10 Section 2485, Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fueled Commercial Motor Vehicle Idling**. Restricts on-road diesel-powered commercial motor vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of greater than 10,000 pounds from idling more than five minutes.
- **13 CCR Chapter 10 Section 2480, Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit School Bus Idling and Idling at Schools**. Restricts a school bus or transit bus from idling for more than five minutes when within 100 feet of a school.
- **13 CCR Section 2477 and Article 8, Airborne Toxic Control Measure for In-Use Diesel-Fueled Transport Refrigeration Units (TRU) and TRU Generator Sets and Facilities Where TRUs Operate.** Regulations established to control emissions associated with diesel-powered TRUs.

Idling Restrictions

Section 2449 of the CCR, Title 13, Article 4.8, Chapter 9, was adopted on May 2, 2008, and limits nonessential idling of fleets to no more than five consecutive minutes at any location. This idling restriction applies to all vehicles in California with a diesel-fueled or alternative diesel-fueled off-road engine, unless a waiver provides sufficient justification that such idling is necessary. The airborne toxic control measure helps reduce public exposure to NO_X, DPM, and other criteria pollutant emissions from off-road diesel-fueled vehicles.

REGIONAL

Feather River Air Quality Management District

The FRAQMD is the primary agency responsible for ensuring that the National and California AAQS are attained and maintained in the Yuba and Sutter Counties (FRAQMD 2025a). This is a bi-county district that was formed in 1991 to administer local, state, and federal air quality management programs for these counties (FRAQMD 2025b). The FRAQMD prepares air quality management plans (AQMPs) in coordination with other local air districts in the northern Sacramento Valley region to comply with the CAA.

Air Quality Plans

The USEPA requires states with areas that do not meet the National AAQS to prepare and submit air quality plans showing how the National AAQS will be met. If the states cannot show how the National AAQS will be met, then the states must show progress toward meeting the National AAQS. These plans are referred to as the State Implementation Plans (SIP). CARB requires regions that do not meet California AAQS for ozone to submit clean air plans that describe measures to attain the standard or show progress toward attainment. The following describes the most recent AQMPs prepared by the FRAQMD and other districts in the northern Sacramento Valley region:

- **2023 Sacramento Regional Plan for the 2015 8-hour Ozone NAAQS Plan.** The air districts of the Sacramento Federal Nonattainment Area (SFNA), which comprises Sacramento and Yolo Counties, the western portion of El Dorado and Placer Counties, southern portion of Sutter County, and northeastern portion of Solano County, adopted this plan in October 2023. The 2015 Ozone NAAQS Plan addresses attainment demonstration requirements based on the severe classification of the SFNA for the 2015 ozone NAAQS of 70 ppb and will be part of California's SIP (Sac Metro AQMD 2023).
- **2023 Yuba City-Marysville $PM_{2.5}$ Second Maintenance Plan.** This plan is intended to provide necessary data and analyses to show maintenance of the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS from 2024 through 2035 (FRAQMD 2023).
- **2021 Northern Sacramento Valley Planning Area Triennial Air Quality Attainment Plan (2021 Plan).** The Air Pollution Control Districts and Air Quality Management Districts (Districts) for the counties in the northern portion of the Sacramento Valley together establish the Northern Sacramento Valley Planning Area (NSVPA). The 2021 triennial update of the 2021 Plan assesses the progress made in implementing the previous triennial update and proposes modifications to the strategies necessary to attain the CAAQS by the earliest predictable date. The 2021 Plan includes an assessment of progress towards achieving the control measure commitments in the previous Triennial Plan, a summary of the last three years of ozone data, a comparison of the expected versus actual emission reductions for each measure committed to in the previous Triennial Plan, updated control measure commitments, and updated growth rates of population, industry, and vehicle-related emissions (SVAQEEP 2021).
- **2014 Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT) Analysis and Negative Declaration (2014 RACT SIP).** FRAQMD prepared the 2014 RACT SIP for sources located in the south Sutter County portion of the Sacramento Metro nonattainment area. This area was designated as severe nonattainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS. CARB submitted the 2014 RACT SIP to the USEPA as a revision to the California SIP (FRAQMD 2014).
- **2008 8-hour Ozone NAAQS Plan.** This plan demonstrates how SFNA will meet CCAA reasonable further progress requirements and demonstrate attainment of the 2008 ozone NAAQS (Sac Metro AQMD 2017a).

- **Implementation of SB 656 Measures to Reduce Particulate Matter.** FRAQMD adopted this plan in July 2005 to reduce emissions of course particulate matter (PM_{10}) to achieve attainment of the CAAQS PM standards (FRAQMD 2005).
- **1-hour Ozone NAAQS Plan.** In 1991, the Sacramento region was designated a "serious" nonattainment area for the 1-hour ozone NAAQS with a November 15, 1999, attainment deadline. The SFNA included Sacramento and Yolo Counties, Placer and El Dorado Counties (except Lake Tahoe Basin portions), Solano County (eastern portion), and Sutter County (southern portion). On October 18, 2012, USEPA officially determined that SFNA attained the revoked 1-hour ozone NAAQS and to exclude certain 2008 data caused by wildfire exceptional events. This determination is effective as of November 19, 2012. On August 24, 2017, the Sac Metro AQMD adopted the Sacramento Federal Ozone Nonattainment Area Redesignation Substitution Request for the 1979 1-hour Ozone Standard. The request establishes that the region meets the CAA substitution requirements for revoked standards because it has attained the standard through permanent and enforceable measures and will continue to maintain the standard for 10 years (Sac Metro AQMD 2017b).

AIR DISTRICT RULES AND REGULATIONS

FRAQMD Regulations

FRAQMD administers several specific regulations on various sources of pollutant emissions that would apply to the proposed project (CARB 2025b; FRAQMD 2021):

- Regulation IV, Stationary Emission Sources Permit System and Registration
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.0, Visible Emissions
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.2, Particulate Matter Concentration
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.3, Dust and Fumes
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.9, Organic Liquid Storage and Transfer
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.15, Architectural Coatings
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.16, Fugitive Dust Emissions
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.17, Wood Burning Devices
- Regulation III, Prohibition, Rule 3.23, Natural Gas-Fired Water Heaters, Small Boilers, and Process Heaters
- Regulation VII, Fees, Rule 7.10, Indirect Source Fee
- Regulation X, New Source Review, Rule 10.1, New Source Review
- Regulation X, New Source Review, Rule 10.7, Toxic New Source Review
- Regulation XI, Air Toxic Control Measures, Rule 11.1, State Airborne Toxic Control Measures

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) is a 20-year plan for transportation investment and land use strategy to support the Sacramento region. Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is designated by the federal government as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Sacramento region, which requires SACOG to update and maintain the MTP/SCS every four years in coordination with each local government.

Under SB 375, SACOG is responsible for conducting land use and transportation planning in a way that reduces GHG emissions from cars and light-duty trucks to meet CARB's regional transportation-related GHG reduction goals. CARB assigned SACOG a target of 19 percent per-capita GHG reduction target. Supporting policies to reduce GHG emissions include focusing communities where services and transportation already exist, transit-oriented development, investing in transit and active transportation, and prioritizing transportation infrastructure that benefits environmental justice communities and reduces VMT (SACOG 2019).

Yuba County 2030 General Plan

The Yuba County 2030 General Plan includes goals and policies aimed to improve air quality and reduce associated air pollution sources within the county. The goals and policies specific to air quality are mainly in Chapter 6, *Public Health & Safety*, and Chapter 7, *Natural Resources Element* (YCCDSA 2011).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code includes various directives pertaining to air quality. The code is organized by title, chapter, and section. Most provisions related to air quality impacts are included in Title XI, *Development Code.*

- Chapter 9.90, *Trip Reduction Ordinance*, establishes trip reduction program to increase the average vehicle ridership from home-to-work commuting and help improve the region's air quality by reducing single-occupant motor vehicle trips.
- Chapter 10.05, *Building Standards Construction Code*, adopts the current triennial version of the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, published by the California Building Standards Commission.
- Chapter 11.24, *Landscape*, Section 11.24.010, *Purpose*, provides landscaping regulations in part to improve air quality by replenishing oxygen and reducing smog.

- Chapter 11.26, *Performance Standards*, Section 11.26.100, *Air Contaminants*, prohibits the use and processes that would emit excessive dust, fumes, smoke, or particulate matter. Sources of air pollution shall comply with rules identified by the USEPA (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40), CARB, and the FRAQMD.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan was prepared by Yuba County and includes various policies, land use classifications, and development standards tailored to the plan area. Many of these policies are derived from general policies of the Yuba County General Plan. The policies specific to air quality are mainly under Urban Design and Development, Circulation, and Public Services (YCPC 1993).

3.3.3 Existing Conditions

SACRAMENTO VALLEY AIR BASIN CONDITIONS

California is divided geographically into air basins for the purpose of managing the air resources of the state on a regional basis. An air basin generally has similar meteorological and geographic conditions throughout. The state is divided into 15 air basins.

The Plumas Lake Elementary School District is within the Sacramento Valley Air Basin (SVAB), which includes the counties of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo, Yuba and portions of Placer and Solano, which are under the regulatory jurisdiction of FRAQMD for attaining State and federal AAQS (FRAQMD 2010). The following discussion identifies the natural factors (i.e., topography, meteorology, and climate) in the SVAB that affect air pollution in this region.

Meteorology

The SVAB is bounded on the north by the Cascade Range, on the south by the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin, on the east by the Sierra Nevada, and on the west by the Coast Range (FRAQMD 2010). These mountain ranges reach heights over 6,000 feet above mean sea level (MSL), with individual peaks rising much higher (SVAQEEP 2021).

Wind Patterns

Summer conditions are typically characterized by high temperatures and low humidity, with prevailing winds from the south. During the winter, north winds become more frequent but winds from the south predominate (FRAQMD 2010).

Temperature

Summer temperatures in the SVAB average approximately 90 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) during the day and 50°F at night. Winter daytime temperatures average in the low 50s and nighttime temperatures average in the upper 30s (FRAQMD 2010).

Precipitation

Winter conditions are characterized by occasional rainstorms interspersed with stagnant and sometimes foggy weather. Rainfall occurs mainly from late October to early May, averaging 17.2 inches per year, but varies significantly each year (FRAQMD 2010).

Inversions

An inversion is a layer of warmer air over a layer of cooler air. Inversions affect air quality conditions significantly because they influence the mixing depth (i.e., the vertical depth in the atmosphere available for diluting air contaminants near the ground). In addition to prevailing wind patterns that control the rate of dispersion of local pollutant emissions, Yuba and Sutter Counties experience two types of inversions that affect air quality. The first type of inversion layer contributes to photochemical smog problems by confining pollution to a shallow layer near the ground. This occurs in the summer, when sinking air forms a “lid” over the region. The second type of inversion occurs when the air near the ground cools while the air aloft remains warm. These inversions occur during winter nights and can cause localized air pollution “hot spots” near emission sources because of poor dispersion (FRAQMD 2010).

Summer subsidence inversions occur on summer days and tend to intensify during the afternoon. Winter radiation inversions occur on winter nights but are usually destroyed by daytime heating, bringing a rapid improvement in air quality by afternoon. Both types of inversion mechanisms may exist at any time of the year, and in the fall, both may occur together to produce the heaviest pollution potential (SVAQEEP 2021).

ATTAINMENT STATUS OF THE SVAB

The Air Quality Plans (AQPs) in the region provide the framework for air quality basins to achieve attainment of the State and federal AAQS through the State Implementation Plan. Areas that meet AAQS are classified as attainment areas, and areas that do not meet these standards are classified as nonattainment areas. Severity classifications for O_3 range from marginal, moderate, and serious, to severe and extreme.

- **Unclassified.** A pollutant is designated unclassified if the data are incomplete and do not support a designation of attainment or nonattainment.
- **Attainment.** A pollutant is in attainment if the AAQS for that pollutant was not violated at any site in the area during a three-year period.

- **Nonattainment.** A pollutant is in nonattainment if there was at least one violation of an AAQS for that pollutant in the area.
- **Nonattainment/Transitional.** A subcategory of the nonattainment designation. An area is designated nonattainment/transitional to signify that the area is close to attaining the AAQS for that pollutant.

The attainment status for the SVAB is shown in Table 3.3-3, *Attainment Status of Criteria Pollutants in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin.* The SVAB is currently designated as a nonattainment-transitional area for California O_3 and nonattainment area for California PM_{10} AAQS.

Table 3.3-3 Attainment Status of Criteria Pollutants in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin

Pollutant	State	Federal
Ozone – 1-hour	S. Sutter County – Serious Nonattainment; Remainder of District – Nonattainment-Transitional	Classification revoked (2005)
Ozone – 8-hour	Nonattainment-Transitional	S. Sutter County – Serious Nonattainment; Sutter Buttes – Attainment; Remainder of District – Unclassified/Attainment
PM_{10}	Nonattainment	Unclassified/Attainment
$PM_{2.5}$	Attainment	Yuba City-Marysville NAA – Maintenance; Remainder of Yuba County – Attainment
CO	Sutter County – Attainment; Yuba County – Unclassified	Unclassified/Attainment
NO_2	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
SO_2	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
Lead	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
Hydrogen Sulfide	Unclassified	NA
Visibility Reducing Particles	Unclassified	NA

Sources: CARB 2025c; FRAQMD 2025c.

Note: NA = Not Available

EXISTING AMBIENT AIR QUALITY

Existing levels of ambient air quality and historical trends and projections in the vicinity of the planning area have been documented and measured by FRAQMD. FRAQMD has two permanent monitoring stations run by CARB. One site is on Almond Street in Yuba City and is indicative of air quality levels in the Yuba City-Marysville area. The second monitoring site is on top of the South Butte in the Sutter Buttes mountain range, approximately 2,000 feet above the valley floor. This site is a special purpose monitoring site, designed to record transport ozone from populated areas into the Northern Sacramento Valley (FRAQMD 2025d).

The station nearest to the project site is the Yuba City-Almond Street Monitoring Station, which monitors O_3, NO_2, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. Data from this monitoring station is summarized in Table 3.3-4, *Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Summary*. The data shows rare violations of the State and federal O_3 standards and regular violations of the State PM_{10} standard and federal $PM_{2.5}$ standard.

Table 3.3-4 Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Summary

Pollutant/Standard [1,2]	Number of Days Thresholds Were Exceeded and Maximum Levels During Such Violations			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ozone (O_3)				
State 1-Hour ≥ 0.09 ppm (days exceed threshold)	0	0	0	0
State & Federal 8-hour ≥ 0.07 ppm (days exceed threshold)	4	0	0	0
Maximum 1-Hour Conc. (ppm)	0.088	0.083	0.075	0.071
Maximum 8-Hour Conc. (ppm)	0.077	0.064	0.067	0.065
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)				
State 1-Hour ≥ 0.18 ppm (days exceed threshold)	0	0	0	0
Maximum 1-Hour Conc (ppm)	0.0470	0.0501	0.0383	0.0348
Coarse Particulates (PM_{10})				
State 24-Hour > 50 µg/m^3 (days exceed threshold)	11	9	7	4
Federal 24-Hour > 150 µg/m^3 (days exceed threshold)	0	0	0	0
Max. 24-Hour Conc. (µg/m^3)	110.1	73.4	59.2	60.9
Fine Particulates ($PM_{2.5}$)				
Federal 24-Hour > 35 µg/m^3 (days exceed threshold)	11	2	0	2
Maximum 24-Hour Conc. (µg/m^3)	89.9	36.3	30.9	41.0

Source: CARB 2025d.

Notes: ppm = parts per million; ppb = parts per billion; µg/m^3 = micrograms per cubic meter; * = insufficient data

1. Data for O_3, NO_2, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ was obtained from the Yuba City-Almond Street Monitoring Station.
2. Latest available data as of September 2025.

SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

Some land uses are considered more sensitive to air pollution than others due to the types of population groups or activities involved. Sensitive population groups for the purposes of air quality analysis include children, the elderly, the acutely ill, and the chronically ill, especially those with cardiorespiratory diseases.

Residential areas are also considered sensitive receptors to air pollution because residents (including children and the elderly) tend to be at home for extended periods of time, resulting in sustained exposure to any pollutants present. Other sensitive receptors for the purposes of air quality analysis can include retirement facilities, hospitals, and schools. Recreational land uses are considered moderately sensitive to air pollution. Although exposure periods are generally short, exercise places a high demand on respiratory functions, which can be impaired by air pollution. In addition, noticeable air pollution can detract from the enjoyment of recreation. Industrial, commercial, retail, and office areas are considered the least sensitive to air pollution. Exposure periods are relatively short and intermittent since the majority of the workers tend to stay indoors most of the time. In addition, the working population is generally the healthiest segment of the population. Sensitive receptors near the project site include single-family residences and the Incredible Cubs Preschool & Childcare to the east along River Oaks Boulevard as well as Cobblestone Elementary School and Veterans Park to the east along Churchill Way.

3.3.4 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that, "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." The proposed project would result in a significant air quality impact if it would:

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

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.

c) 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.

THRESHOLD GUIDANCE

The FRAQMD *Indirect Source Review Guidelines* (Guidelines) were prepared to assist in the evaluation of air quality impacts of land use projects under CEQA (FRAQMD 2010). The Guidelines provide recommended procedures for evaluating potential air impacts during the environmental review process, consistent with CEQA requirements, and include recommended thresholds of significance, mitigation measures, and background air quality information. They also include recommended assessment methodologies for air toxics, odors, and GHG emissions. Where guidance is not provided by FRAQMD, guidance from the Sac Metro AQMD will be borrowed for the analysis.

The FRAQMD distinguishes two types of projects, Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 projects are land use projects in which an operational phase exists, and Type 2 projects have no land use component (e.g., road construction and levee projects). The proposed project would be categorized as a Type 1.

Criteria Air Pollutant Emissions Screening Criteria and Thresholds

Table 5-1: Screening Criteria for Operational Air Quality Impacts in FRAQMD's Guidelines shows the project types not expected to exceed regional significance thresholds as shown in Table 3.3-5, *FRAQMD Regional Criteria Air Pollutant Significance Thresholds* (FRAQMD 2010). The "junior high school" land use category has an operational screening criteria of 115,000 square feet.

For projects that exceed the screening tables, involve multiple land use types, present exceptional circumstances, or do not otherwise fit into the defined land use categories, a project-specific air quality analysis shall be completed using a FRAQMD-approved model. The analysis shall incorporate best-available mitigation measures (BAMMs) to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

FRAQMD's regional significance criteria for projects are shown in Table 3.3-5 for both the construction and operational phases of the project.

Table 3.3-5 FRAQMD Regional Criteria Air Pollutant Significance Thresholds

Project Phase	NO_X (average lbs/day)[1]	ROG (average lbs/day)[1]	PM_{10} (max lbs/day)
Construction	25 lbs/day multiplied by project length, not to exceed 4.5 tons/year	25 lbs/day multiplied by project length, not to exceed 4.5 tons/year	80
Operational	25	25	80

Source: FRAQMD 2010.

Note:

1. FRAQMD's recommended construction-related threshold for NO_X and ROG emissions are an average 25 lbs/day and a maximum of 4.5 tons/year

Measures Recommended by FRAQMD

FRAQMD recommends that a series of construction measures be included as project mitigation under the following scenarios. FRAQMD does not have any specific measures it recommends for projects that exceed operational thresholds; therefore, the measures below apply to project construction only, as applicable.

Standard Mitigation Measures: Projects That Do Not Exceed Construction Thresholds

If project emissions of Type 1 projects (i.e., the proposed project) do not exceed the operational and construction thresholds, then FRAQMD recommends the following construction phase standard mitigation measures:

- Implement the Fugitive Dust Control Plan
- Construction equipment exhaust emissions shall not exceed FRAQMD Regulation III, Rule 3.0, *Visible Emissions limitations* (40 percent opacity or Ringelmann 2.0).
- The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained prior to and for the duration of on-site operation.
- Limit idling time to 5 minutes - saves fuel and reduces emissions. (State idling rule: commercial diesel vehicles, 13 CCR Chapter 10 Section 2485, effective February 1, 2005; off-road diesel vehicles, 13 CCR Chapter 9 Article 4.8, Section 2449, effective May 1, 2008).
- Utilize existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean fuel generators rather than temporary power generators.
- Develop a traffic plan to minimize traffic flow interference from construction activities. The plan may include advance public notice of routing, use of public transportation, and satellite parking areas with a shuttle service. Schedule operations affecting traffic for off-peak hours. Minimize obstruction of through-traffic lanes. Provide a flag person to guide traffic properly and ensure safety at construction sites.
- Portable engines and portable engine-driven equipment used at the project work site, except for on-road and off-road motor vehicles, may require CARB Portable Equipment Registration with the State or a local district permit. The owner/operator shall be responsible for arranging appropriate consultation with CARB or the FRAQMD to determine registration and permitting requirements prior to equipment operation at the site.

Best-Available Mitigation Measures: Projects That Exceed Construction Thresholds

If operational emissions of a Type 1 project (i.e., the proposed project) do not exceed the operational thresholds, but the construction phase emissions exceed the construction thresholds, then FRAQMD recommends the standard mitigation measures listed above, in addition to the following BAMMs for the construction phase:

- All grading operations on a project shall be suspended when winds exceed 20 miles per hour or when winds carry dust beyond the property line despite implementation of all feasible dust-control measures.
- Construction sites shall be watered as directed by the Department of Public Works or Air Quality Management District and as necessary to prevent fugitive dust violations.
- An operational water truck shall be available at all times. Apply water to control dust as needed to prevent visible emissions violations and off-site dust impacts.
- On-site dirt piles or other stockpiled particulate matter shall be covered, wind breaks installed, and water and/or soil stabilizers employed to reduce windblown dust emissions. Incorporate the use of approved non-toxic soil stabilizers according to the manufacturer's specifications to all inactive construction areas.
- All transfer processes involving a free fall of soil or other particulate matter shall be operated in such a manner as to minimize the free-fall distance and fugitive dust emissions.
- Apply approved chemical soil stabilizers according to the manufacturer's specifications, to all-inactive construction areas (previously graded areas that remain inactive for 96 hours), including unpaved roads and employee/equipment parking areas.
- To prevent track-out, wheel washers shall be installed where project vehicles and/or equipment exit onto paved streets from unpaved roads. Vehicles and/or equipment shall be washed prior to each trip. Alternatively, a gravel bed may be installed as appropriate at vehicle/equipment site exit points to effectively remove soil buildup on tires and tracks to prevent/diminish track-out.
- Paved streets shall be swept frequently (water sweeper with reclaimed water recommended; wet broom) if soil material has been carried onto adjacent paved, public thoroughfares from the project site.
- Provide temporary traffic control as needed during all phases of construction to improve traffic flow, as deemed appropriate by the Department of Public Works and/or Caltrans and to reduce vehicle dust emissions. An effective measure is to enforce vehicle traffic speeds at or below 15 miles per hour.
- Reduce traffic speeds on all unpaved surfaces to 15 miles per hour or less and reduce unnecessary vehicle traffic by restricting access. Provide appropriate training, on-site enforcement, and signage.
- Reestablish ground cover on the construction site as soon as possible and prior to final occupancy, through seeding and watering.
- Disposal by Burning: Open burning is yet another source of fugitive gas and particulate emissions and shall be prohibited at the project site. No open burning of vegetative waste (natural plant growth wastes) or other legal or illegal burn materials (e.g., trash, demolition debris) may be conducted at the project site. Vegetative wastes should be chipped or delivered to waste to energy facilities (permitted biomass facilities), mulched, composted, or used for firewood. It is unlawful to haul waste materials offsite for disposal by open burning.

If a project exceeds the emissions in Table 3.3-5, that project would cumulatively contribute to the nonattainment status and would contribute to elevating health effects associated with these criteria air pollutants. Known health effects related to ozone include worsening of bronchitis, asthma, and emphysema, and a decrease in lung function. Health effects associated with particulate matter include premature death of people with heart or lung disease, nonfatal heart attacks, irregular heartbeat, decreased lung function, and increased respiratory symptoms. Reducing emissions would further contribute to reducing possible health effects related to criteria air pollutants.

However, for projects that exceed the emissions in Table 3.3-5, it is speculative to determine how exceeding the regional thresholds would affect the number of days the region is in nonattainment since mass emissions are not correlated with concentrations of emissions or how many additional individuals in the SVAB would be affected by the health effects cited previously. FRAQMD is the primary agency responsible for ensuring the health and welfare of sensitive individuals to elevated concentrations of air quality in the SVAB, and at the present time, it has not provided methodology to assess the specific correlation between mass emissions generated and the effect on health in order to address the issue raised in *Sierra Club v. County of Fresno* (Friant Ranch, L.P.) (2018) 6 Cal.5th 502, Case No. S21978 (Friant Ranch).

Ozone concentrations depend on a variety of complex factors, including the presence of sunlight and precursor pollutants, natural topography, nearby structures that cause building downwash, atmospheric stability, and wind patterns. Because of the complexities of predicting ground-level ozone concentrations in relation to the national AAQS and California AAQS, it is not possible to link health risks to the magnitude of emissions exceeding the significance thresholds. To achieve the health-based standards established by the USEPA, the air districts prepare AQMPs that detail regional programs to attain the AAQS. However, if the proposed project exceeds the regional significance thresholds, it could contribute to an increase in health effects in the basin until such time the attainment standards are met in the SVAB.

Special Considerations for Construction Phases

In addition to FRAQMD's construction air quality thresholds and mitigation measures, there are a number of special conditions, local regulations, or state and federal rules that apply to construction activities. These requirements or conditions must be identified and addressed during project construction.

Sensitive Receptors

The proximity of sensitive receptors to a construction site constitutes a special consideration and may require an evaluation of toxic DPM. Examples include schools, day care centers, parks/playgrounds, hospitals or nursing centers, and residential units. If a project is within 1,000 feet of a sensitive receptor location, the impact of DPM should be included in the environmental analysis.

Asbestos

Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) and asbestos-containing material may be encountered during construction activities. NOA is most likely to be found in the foothills and mountainous portions of the FRAQMD. Asbestos-containing materials can be present during demolition and remodeling, as well as found in utility pipes or pipelines.

Permits

Portable engines of 50 horsepower (HP) or greater, and certain types of equipment commonly used during construction activities, may require California statewide portable engine equipment registration (issued by CARB) or a FRAQMD permit. The following is an example of types of equipment/operations that may require this type of permit:

- Power screens, conveyors, diesel engines, and/or crushers;
- Portable generators and equipment with engines that are 50 horsepower (HP) or greater;
- Internal combustion engines;
- Unconfined abrasive blasting operations;
- Concrete batch plants;
- Rock and pavement crushing;
- Tub grinders; and
- Trommel screens.

Toxic Air Contaminants

FRAQMD recommends analyzing potential impacts resulting from exposure of TACs from (1) a new or modified source of TACs is proposed for a location near an existing residential area or other sensitive receptor and (2) a residential development or other sensitive receptor is proposed for a site near an existing source of TACs. Facilities and equipment that require a permit to operate from FRAQMD are screened for risks from TACs and must comply with FRAQMD's Risk Management Policy. Federal major sources for TACs may be required to install Toxic Best-Available Control Technology (T-BACT). Sources of TAC emissions must also comply with all applicable Air Toxic Control Measures (ATCMs) issued by CARB and the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPS) issued by USEPA. For a project that includes a residential development or other sensitive receptor locating near an existing, non-permitted source of TACs (e.g., roadway, truck stop, railroad yard), the FRAQMD recommends the lead agency use CARB's Air Quality and Land Use Handbook and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association's (CAPCOA) Health Risk Assessments for Land Use Projects.

Project-level emissions of TACs from individual sources that exceed any of the thresholds listed below are considered a potentially significant health risk:

- An excess (i.e., increased) cancer risk level of more than 10 in one million
- Noncancer (i.e., chronic or acute) hazard index greater than 1.0

CO Hotspots

Congested intersections have the potential to create elevated concentrations of CO, referred to as CO hotspots. The significance criteria for CO hotspots are based on the California AAQS for CO, which are 9.0 ppm (8-hour average) and 20.0 ppm (1-hour average). With the turnover of older vehicles, the introduction of cleaner fuels, and implementation of control technology, CO concentrations in the SVAB have steadily declined. The SVAB was designated as attainment for CO under both the California AAQS in 1997 and National AAQS in 1998 (Sac Metro AQMD 2016).

Since FRAQMD currently does not have an adopted CO hotspot screening criteria, Sac Metro AQMD's preliminary screening methodology was used in this analysis. If a project does not meet all of the screening criteria discussed in Section 4.3.2, *Assessing Local Emission Concentrations*, of the *Sac Metro AQMD CEQA Guide*, then Sac Metro AQMD recommends use of the On-Road Mobile-Source Emission Factor (EMFAC) and the California Line Source Dispersion Model (CALINE4), in accordance with the methodology recommended in the University of California (UC) Davis Transportation Project-Level Carbon Monoxide Protocol (Sac Metro AQMD 2014, 2016).

Odor Impacts

FRAQMD's *Indirect Source Review Guidelines, A Technical Guide to Assess the Air Quality Impact of Land Use Projects under the California Environmental Quality Act,* Table 7-1: Recommended Odor Screening Distances, provides FRAQMD's odor-screening criteria for land uses that have the potential to generate substantial odor complaints, including wastewater treatment plants, sanitary landfills or transfer stations, composting facilities, food processing facilities, and chemical manufacturing plants (FRAQMD 2010). Odor impacts shall be considered from two different situations:

- The proposed project would locate receptors near an existing source of odor.
- The proposed project would locate a source of odor near existing receptors.

Sources of odor are subject to the Prohibited Discharges regulation in California Health and Safety Code (HSC) 41700, which states that "no person shall discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property" (FRAQMD

2021). However, agricultural operations and some composting operations are exempt from these regulations. The agricultural industry is prevalent throughout Yuba and Sutter Counties, and, as such, FRAQMD recommends that a project analyze potential odor impacts of agricultural operations when locating sensitive receptors near agricultural areas.

METHODOLOGY

This air quality evaluation was prepared in accordance with the requirements of CEQA to determine if significant air quality impacts are likely to occur with the proposed project. FRAQMD has published guidelines that provide local governments with guidance for analyzing and mitigating air quality impacts. Where guidance is not provided by FRAQMD, guidance from the Sac Metro AQMD was borrowed for the following analysis.

Regional Emissions Modeling

The proposed project criteria air pollutant emissions inventory was modeled using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2022.1 and includes the following sectors:

- **On-Road Transportation.** Transportation emissions are based on the trip generation for the proposed project provided by Kittelson (see Appendix L, *Transportation Impact Assessment*, of this Draft EIR).
- **Area Sources.** Area sources generated from use of consumer products and cleaning supplies are based on CalEEMod default emission rates and on the assumed building square footage.
- **Energy.** The CalEEMod default energy rates were used for the electricity use of the proposed project. Default natural gas use generated in CalEEMod was converted to electricity use and added to the total electricity use for the proposed project to account for all-electric building design.
- **Construction.** The project-related construction emissions are based on information provided by the School District and CalEEMod defaults. Construction is modeled across four phases over an approximately 54-month duration: Phase 1 (Spring 2026 to Fall 2027), Phase 2 (Fall 2027 to Fall 2028), Phase 3 (Fall 2028 to Fall 2029), and Phase 4 (Fall 2029 to Fall 2030). Construction activities are assumed to occur five days per week. The construction equipment mix and worker/vendor trips were based on CalEEMod default assumptions. Hauling trips were calculated based on the estimated volume of soil import and export, as provided by the School District.

Localized Emissions Modeling

A construction Health Risk Assessment (HRA) for TACs associated with construction equipment exhaust was prepared for the proposed project and is included in Appendix C, *Construction Health Risk Assessment*, of this Draft EIR. This HRA considers the health risk impact to receptors from exposure to DPM generated from diesel-fueled hauling trucks and off-road construction equipment. Pollutant concentrations were estimated using USEPA's AERMOD atmospheric

dispersion model, and excess lifetime cancer risks and chronic non-cancer hazard indexes were calculated using the CARB Hotspots Analysis and Reporting Program (HARP). In the absence of adopted FRAQMD thresholds or guidance for CEQA HRAs, thresholds and guidance adopted by the Sac Metro AQMD were utilized for this HRA. Health risks were compared to Sac Metro AQMD significance thresholds of a cancer risk of 10 in one million and a hazard index of 1.0. Further details on the HRA methodology are provided in Appendix C.

3.3.5 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

FRAQMD is the primary agency responsible for ensuring that the National and California AAQS are attained and maintained in Yuba County (FRAQMD 2025a). A consistency determination plays an important role in local agency project review by linking local planning and individual projects to the 2023 Sacramento Regional Plan for the 2015 8-Hour Ozone Standard (2023 Plan). It fulfills the CEQA goal of informing decision makers of the environmental efforts of the project under consideration early enough to ensure that air quality concerns are fully addressed. It also provides the local agency with ongoing information as to whether they are contributing to the attainment deadline in the 2023 Plan. Five local air districts in the Sacramento region prepared the 2023 Plan, which stands as the applicable air quality plan for the region, as a revision to the California SIP (Sac Metro AQMD 2023). The 2023 Plan demonstrated that the SFNA would attain 2015 ozone NAAQS by the attainment year of 2032 and contained the required planning elements including an updated emission inventory, reasonable further progress (RFP) demonstration with a baseline year of 2017, transportation conformity budgets, and contingency provisions that will go into effect if USEPA finds that the SFNA has failed to meet RFP or failed to attain the NAAQS by the attainment deadline.

The SIP plans and control measures are based on information derived from regional growth projections based on general plans developed by Yuba County to forecast future emission levels in the SVAB. As such, projects that propose development consistent with the growth anticipated or development that is less dense than is associated with the Yuba County General Plan would be consistent with the SIP. Changes in population, housing, or employment growth projections have the potential to affect FRAQMD's demographic projections and therefore the assumptions in SIP. Typically, only large, regionally significant projects have the potential to affect regional growth projections.

The proposed project involves the construction and operation of a new middle school by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District and limited off-site road improvements to serve the school. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the new middle school would accommodate anticipated student enrollment associated with the buildout of the Plumas Lake

Specific Plan area. While the proposed project would increase student capacity, it is consistent with planned development and is intended to serve existing and future residents within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and School District boundaries. Further, the proposed project is not a residential project and does not include residential units, which would result in direct population growth. Therefore, the proposed project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth, either directly or indirectly, and this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project 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?

Construction

Development of the proposed project would result in short-term construction-related criteria pollutant emissions that have the potential to have an adverse effect on air quality. Short-term criteria pollutant emissions would occur across four development phases including site preparation, site preparation soil import/export, rough grading, rough grading soil import/export, fine grading, fine grading soil import/export, utility trenching, building construction, paving, and architectural coating activities. ROG and NO_X emissions are primarily associated with gasoline and diesel equipment exhaust and the application of architectural coatings. Fugitive dust emissions (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) are primarily associated with site preparation and vary as a function of such parameters as soil silt content, soil moisture, wind speed, acreage of disturbance, and vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) by construction vehicles on- and off-road. Typical construction equipment associated with development and redevelopment projects includes dozers, graders, excavators, loaders, and trucks.

Construction Fugitive Dust

Ground-disturbing activities during construction would generate fugitive dust (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$). The amount of dust generated during construction would be highly variable and depends on the amount of material being disturbed, the type of material, moisture content, and meteorological conditions. If uncontrolled, PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ levels downwind of actively disturbed areas could possibly exceed State standards.

The proposed project is required to comply with all FRAQMD rules and regulations related to particulate matter listed under *FRAQMD Regulations*, including Rule 3.16*, Fugitive Dust Emissions*. In accordance with FRAQMD recommendations, the proposed project shall implement construction-phase standard mitigation measures, regardless of whether construction thresholds are exceeded. Since the SVAB is designated as nonattainment for the State PM_{10} AAQS, additional fugitive dust emissions generated by construction activities could

contribute to existing violations of the State PM_{10} AAQS and further degrade regional air quality. Implementation of the standard construction phase mitigation measures would minimize these fugitive dust emissions. Therefore, without implementation of these measures, the proposed project could result in a potentially significant impact.

Construction Exhaust Emissions

Construction activities were modeled in CalEEMod over four phases spanning an approximately 54-month period. Phase 1 (Spring 2026 to Fall 2027) consists of the construction of the new 16 classroom buildings, the multipurpose room (MPR), the administration building, and primary site infrastructure. Phase 2 (Fall 2027 to Fall 2028) consists of the construction of the gymnasium building. Phase 3 (Fall 2028 to Fall 2029) involves the construction of eight classroom buildings and start on the construction of sport fields (track/football and multisport)[1]. Phase 4 (Fall 2029 to Fall 2030) would complete the buildout of the campus with the construction of the last 20 classroom buildings and tennis/pickleball and basketball courts, and complete the construction of the sport fields. As such, the proposed project was modeled under four phases reflecting the activities and timing summarized here.

Potential construction-related air quality impacts are determined by comparing the daily criteria air pollutants emissions generated by the project-related construction activities to the FRAQMD significance thresholds in Table 3.3-6, *Construction-Related Criteria Air Pollutant Emissions Estimates*. For this analysis, maximum daily emissions were used for PM_{10}, while average daily emissions were used for NO_X and ROG, consistent with FRAQMD's recommended construction-related thresholds of 25 lbs/day and a maximum of 4.5 tons/year for NO_X and ROG.

As shown in Table 3.3-6, criteria air pollutant emissions from construction emissions would not exceed the FRAQMD construction-related daily thresholds. However, because the SVAB is designated as nonattainment for State PM_{10} standards, additional PM_{10} emissions would contribute to the SVAB's existing nonattainment status. Fugitive dust generated by ground-disturbing construction activities and construction equipment exhaust are primary sources of PM_{10} emissions from land use development projects that would contribute to the SVAB's nonattainment status. Therefore, without implementation of the FRAQMD's standard mitigation measures, construction activities would result in a potentially significant impact to regional air quality.

[1] The sports fields were modeled as part of Phase 3 in the CalEEMod assumptions. Shifting the sports fields and library building to Phase 4 would alter the temporal distribution of daily and annual construction emissions; however, total acreage disturbed and overall construction workdays remain unchanged. Development phases do not overlap, and the phase shift affects only the timing of construction activities rather than the overall scale of construction. As a result, this discrepancy would not substantially affect the conclusions of the current analysis

Table 3.3-6 Construction-Related Criteria Air Pollutant Emissions Estimates

Construction Activity	Daily Criteria Air Pollutants		
	NO_X (lbs/day)	ROG (lbs/day)	PM_{10} (lbs/day)
Phase 1	56	11	12
Phase 2	9	6	7
Phase 3	28	4	23
Phase 4	14	14	9
Max Daily Emissions	**56**	**14**	**23**
Average Daily Emissions[1]	**12**	**2**	**2**
FRAQMD Construction Threshold	25 average daily (lbs/day)	25 average daily (lbs/day)	80 max daily (lbs/day)
Exceeds Maximum Daily Threshold?	No	No	No

Source: CalEEMod, Version 2022.1, FRAQMD 2010, Appendix B.

Note:

1. FRAQMD's recommended construction-related threshold for NO_X and ROG emissions are an average 25 lbs/day and a maximum of 4.5 tons/year. Average daily emission estimates take the total annual tonnage, multiply by 2,000 lbs per ton, and divided by total 1,154 workdays for entire construction period.
2. Air quality modeling based on a construction schedule and information provided by the District. Where specific information regarding project-related construction activities was not available, construction assumptions were based on CalEEMod defaults, which are based on construction surveys conducted by South Coast AQMD of construction equipment and phasing for comparable projects. Shifting the sports fields and library building to Phase 4 would alter the temporal distribution of daily and annual construction emissions; however, total acreage disturbed and overall construction workdays remain unchanged. Development phases do not overlap, and the phase shift affects only the timing of construction activities rather than the overall scale of construction. As a result, this discrepancy would not substantially affect the conclusions of the current analysis.
3. Includes implementation of fugitive dust control measures required by FRAQMD under Rule 3.16, including watering disturbed areas and unpaved roads a minimum of two times per day.

Operational Impacts

Typical long-term air pollutant emissions are generated by area sources (e.g., landscape fuel use, aerosols, architectural coatings, and asphalt pavement), mobile sources (i.e., on-road vehicles), and energy use (natural gas) associated with the land use. The primary source of long-term criteria air pollutant emissions generated by the proposed project would be emissions produced from project-generated vehicle trips. Based on the traffic study, the proposed project would generate 2,520 average daily vehicle trips at full buildout (Appendix L).

The FRAQMD has adopted operational screening criteria to determine whether new land use development projects would present a potential to exceed FRAQMD significance thresholds (FRAQMD 2010). The proposed project involves construction of a new middle school; therefore, the appropriate FRAQMD screening criteria would be the "junior high school" land use criteria of 115,000 square feet. The proposed project would involve construction of new buildings

totaling approximately 70,867 square feet and would be below FRAQMD's operation-related screening criteria. Therefore, the proposed project would not exceed FRAQMD's operation-related thresholds and would not cumulatively contribute to the nonattainment designations of the SVAB. As a result, impacts from project-related operation activities on the regional air quality would be less than significant.

In summary, the proposed project would have a potentially significant short-term construction impact without the implementation of mitigation measures. The proposed project would have a less-than-significant long-term operational impact.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact AIR-1: Construction activities could generate fugitive dust emissions that would contribute to the SVAB's nonattainment status for State PM_{10} standards.

Mitigation Measure AIR-1: The Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) shall specify in the construction bid that the project construction contractor shall implement the following Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) Standard Mitigation Measures to reduce short-term exhaust and fugitive dust PM_{10} emissions:

- Implement the Fugitive Dust Control Plan.
- Construction equipment exhaust emissions shall not exceed FRAQMD Regulation III, Rule 3.0, Visible Emissions limitations (40 percent opacity or Ringelmann 2.0).
- The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained prior to and for the duration of on-site operation.
- Limit idling time to 5 minutes - saves fuel and reduces emissions. (State idling rule: commercial diesel vehicles, 13 CCR Chapter 10, Section 2485, effective February 1, 2005; off-road diesel vehicles, 13 CCR Chapter 9, Article 4.8, Section 2449, effective May 1, 2008).
- Utilize existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean-fuel generators rather than temporary power generators.
- Develop a traffic plan to minimize traffic flow interference from construction activities. The plan may include advance public notice of routing, use of public transportation, and satellite parking areas with a shuttle service. Schedule operations affecting traffic for off-peak hours. Minimize obstruction of through-traffic lanes. Provide a flag person to guide traffic properly and ensure safety at construction sites.

- Portable engines and portable engine-driven equipment units used at the project work site, with the exception of on-road and off-road motor vehicles, may require CARB Portable Equipment Registration with the State or a local district permit. The owner/operator shall be responsible for arranging appropriate consultations with CARB or the FRAQMD to determine registration and permitting requirements prior to equipment operation at the site.
- These measures shall be noted in grading plans prepared by the District. The construction contractor shall implement these measures during ground-disturbing activities, and the District shall verify compliance that these measures have been implemented during normal construction site inspections.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AIR-1 would reduce fugitive dust emissions generated by project construction activities to a less-than-significant level.

c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Construction Off-Site Community Risk and Hazards

The proposed project would elevate concentrations of TACs in the vicinity of sensitive land uses during construction activities. The nearest air quality receptors to the project site include single-family residences adjacent to the project site to the north, the single-family residential uses approximately 130 feet from the project site to the east across from River Oaks Boulevard, a day care approximately 900 feet to the east of the project site across from River Oaks Boulevard, and Cobblestone Elementary School approximately 900 feet east of the project site. Accordingly, multiple nearby receptors are adjacent to or in close proximity to the project site, and therefore could be potentially impacted by the proposed construction activities. Consequently, a site-specific construction HRA of TACs was prepared (see EIR Appendix C, *Construction Health Risk Assessment*).

A quantified analysis of the proposed project's construction emissions was conducted using the CalEEMod, Version 2022.1. Construction emissions were based on the approximately 53-month construction duration. The USEPA's AERMOD, Version 13.0.0, dispersion modeling program was used to estimate the maximum annual concentrations of DPM at the maximally exposed receptor (MER) of each receptor type. CARB's Hot Spots Analysis and Reporting Program (HARP) calculator was used to estimate cancer risk and chronic hazard for receptors exposed during project construction. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.3-7, *Unmitigated Construction Risk Summary*.

Table 3.3-7 Unmitigated Construction Risk Summary

Receptor	Cancer Risk (per million) [1]	Chronic Hazards
MER – Resident	3	<0.1
MER – Day care	<1	<0.1
MER – Elementary Student	<1	<0.1
FRAQMD Threshold	10	1.0
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No

Source: Lakes AERMOD View, Version 13.0.0, Appendix C.

Note:

1. In accordance with the latest OEHHA (2015) guidance, the calculated total cancer risk conservatively assumes that the risk for the residential MER consists of a pregnant woman in the third trimester that subsequently gives birth to an infant during the approximately 4.42-year construction period; therefore, calculated risk values used OEHHA-recommended age sensitivity factors.

As shown in Table 3.3-7, cancer risk for all analyzed receptors during project construction was calculated to be an estimated 3 in one million, which would not exceed the 10 in one million significance threshold. Additionally, the Hazard Index at all receptor locations would be well below the FRAQMD threshold of 1.0. As a result, construction health risk impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Operation Phase Community Risk and Hazards

Types of land uses that typically generate substantial quantities of criteria air pollutants and TACs include industrial (stationary sources), manufacturing, and warehousing (truck idling) land uses. While the project operation may involve temporary idling from delivery vehicles, the magnitude of the potential impact would be nominal as these types of major air pollutant emissions sources (e.g., warehouses) are not included as part of the proposed facility. The proposed project would not include stationary sources that emit TACs and would not generate a significant amount of heavy-duty truck trips (a source of DPM). Therefore, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial concentrations of air pollutant emissions during operation, and impacts would be less than significant.

Carbon Monoxide Hotspot Analysis

Sac Metro Screening Criteria

Areas of vehicle congestion have the potential to create pockets of carbon monoxide (CO) called hotspots. These pockets have the potential to exceed the State 1-hour standard of 20 ppm or the 8-hour standard of 9 ppm. Since FRAQMD currently does not have an adopted CO hotspot

screening criteria, Sac Metro AQMD's preliminary screening methodology was used in this analysis (Sac Metro AQMD 2014).

Sac Metro AQMD's preliminary screening criteria states that a project would result in a less-than-significant impact on air quality for local CO if the following conditions are met.

First Tier

- Traffic generated by the proposed project would not result in deterioration of intersection level of service (LOS) to LOS E or F; and
- The project would not contribute additional traffic to an intersection that already operates at LOS of E or F.

If the first tier of screening criteria is not met, then the second tier of screening criteria shall be examined.

Second Tier

- The project would not result in an affected intersection experiencing more than 31,600 vehicles per hour;
- The project would not contribute traffic to a tunnel, parking garage, bridge underpass, urban street canyon, or below-grade roadway; or other locations where horizontal or vertical mixing of air will be substantially limited; and
- The mix of vehicle types at the intersection is not anticipated to be substantially different from the county average (as identified by the EMFAC or CalEEMod models).

In Phase 1 opening year (2027), the proposed project would not generate traffic that would result in deterioration of intersection LOS E or F, nor would it contribute to additional traffic to an intersection that already operates at LOS E or F (refer to Table 9 and Table 10 in Appendix L). However, under cumulative background growth (2040), several intersections are forecasted to operate at LOS E or F both with and without the project (refer to Table 13 and Table 14 in Appendix L). This is largely due to land development, primarily in the Plumas Lake area.

As a result, Sac Metro AQMD's Second Tier screening was evaluated. The proposed project would not cause any affected intersection to experience more than 31,600 vehicles per hour (refer to Figure 18 and Figure 19 in Appendix L), would not contribute traffic to locations where air mixing is substantially limited (due to roadway configuration or topography), and the vehicle mix at intersections is not anticipated to differ significantly from the County average.

Therefore, the proposed project would comply with both First and Second Tier screening criteria for CO hotspots established by Sac Metro AQMD and would not have the potential to substantially increase CO hotspots at intersections in the SVAB. Impacts would be less than significant.

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

An overarching goal of the 2020 MTP/SCS for the Sacramento region is to concentrate development within existing urban areas rather than allocate new growth in outlying areas where substantial transportation investments would be necessary to achieve the per-capita passenger vehicle VMT and associated GHG emissions reductions (SACOG 2019). The proposed project would support the anticipated student enrollment associated with the buildout of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and serve both existing and future residents. Thus, the proposed project would support the growth and land use goals of the 2020 MTP/SCS and would not hinder the capital improvements outlined in SACOG's Congestion Management Process (CMP).

In addition, the potential for CO hotspots to be generated in the SVAB is extremely unlikely because of the improvements in vehicle emission rates and control efficiencies. Most land use development projects would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations and analysis of CO hotspots is not warranted. Furthermore, the proposed project would not increase exposure at the project site from proximity to the surrounding roadways and freeways. Overall, the proposed project would not have the potential to substantially increase CO hotspots at intersections in the project vicinity and impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Construction and operation of the proposed project would not generate odors that would affect a substantial number of people. The type of facilities that are considered to have objectionable odors include wastewater treatments plants, compost facilities, landfills, solid waste transfer stations, fiberglass manufacturing facilities, paint/coating operations (e.g., auto body shops), dairy farms, petroleum refineries, asphalt batch plants, chemical manufacturing, and food manufacturing facilities. The proposed project uses are not associated with foul odors that constitute a public nuisance and would meet FRAQMD's recommended odor screening distance.

Sources of odors are also regulated and subject to the Prohibited Discharges regulations under HSC 41700, which states that "no person shall discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property."

During construction activities, construction equipment exhaust and application of asphalt and architectural coatings would temporarily generate odors. However, any construction-related odor emissions would be temporary and intermittent. Additionally, odors would typically be confined to the immediate vicinity of the construction equipment. By the time such emissions reach any sensitive receptor sites, they would be diluted well below any level of air quality concern.

In summary, the proposed project would not be considered a use that would generate odors that would affect a substantial number of people, and the proposed project would be required to comply with the Prohibited Discharges regulations under HSC 41700 to reduce odor-related impacts. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.3.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative area of analysis is the SVAB. As identified in Section 3.3.1*, Environmental Setting*, California is divided into air basins for the purpose of managing the air resources of the state on a regional basis based on meteorological and geographic conditions. Similar to GHG emissions impacts, air quality impacts are regional in nature as no single project generates enough emissions that would cause an air basin to be designated as a nonattainment area.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to air quality?

Air Quality Plan Consistency

As discussed in impact discussion (a) under Section 3.3.5, *Project Impact Analysis*, the proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of the 2023 Plan, which is a part of California's SIP. The proposed project is consistent with planned development and is intended to serve existing and future residents within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and School District. Additionally, the VMT and air quality emissions contributed by the proposed project are considered less than significant under the applicable thresholds. Other projects in the SVAB would also be required to demonstrate consistency with the 2023 Plan and ensure that regional emissions generated by the project are reduced to below FRAQMD's emissions thresholds. Therefore, the proposed project would not have any cumulatively considerable impacts with respect to AQP consistency, and impacts would be less than significant.

Criteria Air Pollutants

Impact discussion (b) under Section 3.3.5, *Project Impact Analysis*, analyzes potential cumulative impacts to air quality that could occur from construction and operation of the proposed project in the context of regional growth projections in the SVAB. As shown in Tables

3.3-6 and 3.3-7, construction and operation of the proposed project would not exceed FRAQMD's significance criteria. Furthermore, the proposed project, along with all other projects in Yuba County, would be required to implement the applicable FRAQMD rules and regulations related to particulate matter and follow FRAQMD's standard construction mitigation measures. However, because the SVAB is designated as nonattainment for State PM_{10} standards, fugitive dust and equipment exhaust PM_{10} would contribute to the SVAB's nonattainment status. Consequently, Mitigation Measure AIR-1 would be required to ensure that the project does not contribute to the SVAB's existing PM_{10} nonattainment status. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AIR-1, the proposed project would not cumulatively contribute to the nonattainment designations of the SVAB, and this cumulative impact would be less than significant.

Toxic Air Contaminants

As shown in Table 3.3-7, the proposed project's construction activities would not exceed Sac Metro AQMD's health risk thresholds and would not result in health risk impacts to nearby sensitive receptors. Additionally, the operation of the proposed project would not include stationary sources that emit TACs or generate a significant amount of heavy-duty truck trips. Additionally, as discussed in impact discussion (c) in Section 3.3.5, *Project Impact Analysis*, the proposed project would comply with the Sac Metro screening criteria for CO hotspots and would support the land use goals of the 2020 MTP/SCS. Thus, cumulative localized health risk impacts would be less than significant.

Odors

As discussed in impact discussion (d) under Section 3.3.5, *Project Impact Analysis*, the land use type of the proposed project is not one that typically produces objectionable odors and would meet FRAQMD's recommended odor screening distance. Furthermore, the proposed project and all other projects in the SVAB would comply with Prohibited Discharges regulations under HSC 41700 that prohibits the discharge of nuisance odors in the vicinity of receptors. While construction activities associated with the proposed project and other similar projects in the air basin would temporarily generate odors, these odors would be confined to the vicinity of the construction site. Therefore, the proposed project would not have any cumulatively significant impacts related to odors and impacts would be less than significant.

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3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section of the DEIR evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) to impact biological resources.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical reports(s):

- Biological Resources Assessment for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project, ECORP Consulting Inc., July 2025.

A complete copy of this study is included in Appendix D to this DEIR.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION PUBLIC COMMENTS

During the NOP public comments period, one comment letter from the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation (dated July 18, 2025) addressed biological resources. The relevant issues raised in this comment letter are addressed throughout this section. Refer to Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary*, in Chapter 3, Environmental Analysis, for a full summary of all comments received and Appendix A for the contents of the NOP comment letters.

3.4.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to biological resources and applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

Endangered Species Act

The federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (US Code, Title 16, §§ 1531–1543) (ESA), as amended, protects plants and animals that are listed as endangered or threatened by USFWS or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Section 9 of the ESA prohibits the taking of listed wildlife, where take is defined as “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in such conduct” (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 17.3). For plants, the ESA prohibits removing or possessing any listed plant on federal land, maliciously damaging or destroying any listed plant in any area, or removing, cutting, digging up, damaging, or destroying any such species in knowing violation of state law (16 U.S. Code [USC] 1538). Under Section 7 of ESA, federal agencies are required to consult with USFWS and/or NMFS if their actions, including permit approvals or funding, may affect a listed species (including plants) or its designated critical habitat. Through consultation and the issuance of a Biological Opinion (formal consultation), USFWS and/or NMFS may authorize take of a listed species that is incidental to an otherwise legal activity provided the activity will not jeopardize the continued

existence of the species. The USFWS and/or NMFS may issue a letter of concurrence through an informal consultation process if the federal agency demonstrates that the action is not likely to adversely affect a listed species. Section 10 of the ESA provides for issuance of incidental take permits where no other federal actions are necessary provided a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is developed.

Section 9: Prohibited Acts

Once a species is listed, section 9 of the ESA makes it unlawful for any person, including private and public entities, to "take" species listed as endangered or without a permit issued pursuant to section 10 or an incidental take statement issued pursuant to section 7. Section 9 defines "take" as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct." The term "harm" is defined as "an act which actually kills or injures wildlife. Such an act may include substantial habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering."

ESA Section 9's take prohibitions apply to listed wildlife and fish species, but not to plants. Endangered plants are not protected from take, although it is unlawful to remove, possess, or maliciously damage or destroy them on federal lands. Removing or damaging listed plants on state and private lands in knowing violation of state law, or in the course of violating a state criminal trespass law, also is illegal under the ESA.

Section 10: Incidental Take Permits and Habitat Conservation Plans

An incidental take permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) is required when non-federal, otherwise lawful activities, including lawful project development, will result in take of threatened or endangered wildlife. Under this provision, the USFWS and/or NMFS may, where appropriate, authorize the taking of federally listed wildlife or fish if such taking occurs incidentally during otherwise legal activities. Section 10(a)(2)(B) requires an application for an incidental take permit to include an HCP. The HCP process ensures adequate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to address the effects of the authorized incidental take. Section 10 provides a clear regulatory mechanism to permit the incidental take of federally listed fish and wildlife species by private interests and non-federal governmental agencies.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements international treaties between the United States and other nations devised to protect migratory birds, any of their parts, eggs, and nests from activities such as hunting, pursuing, capturing, killing, selling, and shipping, unless expressly authorized in the regulations or by permit. The protections of the MBTA have been interpreted to extend to disturbances that result in abandonment of a nest with eggs or young. The USFWS may issue permits to qualified applicants as authorized by the MBTA for the

following types of activities: falconry, raptor propagation, scientific collecting, special purposes (rehabilitation, education, migratory game bird propagation, and salvage), take of depredating birds, taxidermy, and waterfowl sale and disposal. The regulations governing migratory bird permits can be found in 50 CFR part 13, General Permit Procedures, and 50 CFR part 21, Migratory Bird Permits.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 US Code Section 668), as amended, provides for the protection of bald eagle and golden eagle by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit (16 USC 668[a]; 50 CFR 22). The USFWS may authorize take of bald eagles and golden eagles for activities where the take is associated with, but not the purpose of, the activity and cannot practicably be avoided (50 CFR 22.26).

Clean Water Act

The purpose of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters" (ECORP 2025). Section 404 of the CWA prohibits the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. without a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The definition of waters of the U.S. includes rivers, streams, estuaries, the territorial seas, ponds, lakes, and wetlands. Wetlands are defined as areas that:

> … are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. (33 CFR 328.3 7b)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also has authority over wetlands and may override a USACE permit.

Substantial impacts to wetlands may require an individual permit. Projects that only minimally affect wetlands may meet the conditions of one of the existing Nationwide Permits. Section 404 permit actions require a Water Quality Certification or waiver pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA; the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) issues this certification or waiver.

Section 404: Discharge of Dredge and Fill Requirements

Section 404 of the CWA establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. The USACE implementing regulations define "dredged material" as material that is excavated or dredged from waters of the U.S. The CWA's implementing regulations define "fill material" as material placed in waters of the U.S. where the material has the impact of either replacing any portion of waters of the U.S. with dry land or changing the

bottom elevation of any portion of waters of the U.S. Examples include discharges into waters of the U.S. of rock, sand, soil, clay, plastics, construction debris, wood chips, overburden from mining or other excavation activities, and materials used to create any structure or infrastructure for development projects.

Section 401: Water Quality Certification

Although the CWA is a federal law, Section 401 of that law recognizes that states have the primary authority and responsibility for setting surface water quality standards and requires the USACE to obtain a state certification that their permits for discharge or dredge and fill material do not violate state water quality standards. Section 401 of the CWA requires every applicant for a Section 404 permit resulting in any discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S. to provide certification that any discharges will comply with the applicable state water quality standards set pursuant to the CWA and applicable state law.

STATE

California Endangered Species Act

The California ESA (California Fish and Game Code Sections 2050–2116) generally parallels the main provisions of the federal ESA, but unlike its federal counterpart, California ESA applies the take prohibitions to species proposed for listing (called candidates by the state). Section 2080 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibits the taking, possession, purchase, sale, and import or export of endangered, threatened, or candidate species, unless otherwise authorized by permit or in the regulations. Take is defined in Section 86 of the California Fish and Game Code as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." Section 2081 allows CDFW to authorize incidental take permits if species-specific minimization and avoidance measures are incorporated to fully mitigate the impacts of a project.

Fully Protected Species

The State of California first began to designate species as fully protected prior to the creation of the federal and California ESAs. Lists of fully protected species were initially developed to protect animals that were rare or faced possible extinction, including fish, amphibians and reptiles, birds, and mammals. Most fully protected species have since been listed as threatened or endangered under the state and/or federal ESAs. Previously, the regulations that implement the Fully Protected Species Statute (California Fish and Game Code Sections 4700 for mammals, 3511 for birds, 5050 for reptiles and amphibians, and 5515 for fish) provided that fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time. However, on July 10, 2023, Senate Bill 147 was signed into law, authorizing CDFW to issue take permits under the California ESA for fully protected species for qualifying projects through 2033. Qualifying projects include:

- A maintenance, repair, or improvement project to the State Water Project, including existing infrastructure, undertaken by the Department of Water Resources.
- A maintenance, repair, or improvement project to critical regional or local water agency infrastructure.
- A transportation project, including any associated habitat connectivity and wildlife crossing project, undertaken by a state, regional, or local agency, that does not increase highway or street capacity for automobile or truck travel.
- A wind project and any appurtenant infrastructure improvement, and any associated electric transmission project carrying electric power from a facility in the state to a point of junction with any California-based balancing authority.
- A solar photovoltaic project and any appurtenant infrastructure improvement, and any associated electric transmission project carrying electric power from a facility in the state to a point of junction with any California-based balancing authority.

CDFW may also issue licenses or permits for take of these species for necessary scientific research or live capture and relocation, and may allow incidental take for lawful activities carried out under an approved Natural Community Conservation Plan that covers such species.

California Native Plant Protection Act

The California Native Plan Protection Act of 1977 was created with the intent to "preserve, protect and enhance rare and endangered plants in this State" (ECORP 2025). The NPPA is administered by CDFW and provided in California Fish and Game Code Sections 1900 to 1913. The Fish and Wildlife Commission has the authority to designate native plants as endangered or rare and to protect endangered and rare plants from take. The California ESA of 1984 (California Fish and Game Code Sections 2050–2116) provided further protection for rare and endangered plant species, but the NPPA remains part of the California Fish and Game Code.

Special Protections for Birds

Sections 3503, 3513, and 3800 of the California Fish and Game Code specifically protect birds. Section 3503 prohibits the take, possession, or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird. Subsection 3503.5 prohibits the take, possession, or destruction of any birds in the orders Strigiformes (owls) or Falconiformes (hawks and eagles), as well as their nests and eggs. Section 3513 prohibits the take or possession of any migratory nongame bird as designated in the MBTA. Section 3800 states that, with limited exceptions, it is unlawful to take any nongame bird, defined as all birds occurring naturally in California that are not resident game birds, migratory game birds, or fully protected birds. These provisions, along with the federal MBTA, serve to protect all nongame birds and their nests and eggs, except as otherwise provided in the code.

Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreements

Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code requires an entity to notify CDFW of activities that may:

> ... substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river stream or lake; substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or deposit or dispose of debris, waste or other materials containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake.

The statute has been interpreted by CDFW to include modification of adjacent wetland and riparian habitat. If CDFW determines the activity may "substantially adversely affect a fish or wildlife resource" (ECORP 2025), the entity may not commence the activity without a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement, which establishes measures necessary to protect the resource and is mutually agreed upon by CDFW and the applicant.

California Oak Woodlands Conservation Act

The California Oak Woodlands Conservation Act was passed in 2001 to address loss of oak woodland habitats throughout the state. As a result, the Oak Woodland Conservation Program was established to provide funding for conservation and protection of California oak woodlands. Public Resources Code Section 21083.4 went into effect as of January 1, 2005, and requires lead agencies to analyze potential effects to oak woodlands during the CEQA process. The lead agency must implement one of several mitigation alternatives, including conservation of oak woodland through conservation easements, planting or restoration of oak woodlands, contribution of funds to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund, or other appropriate mitigation measures if it is determined that a project may have a significant effect on oak woodlands.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act

The RWQCB implements water quality regulations under the federal CWA and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act. These regulations require compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), including compliance with the California Storm Water NPDES General Construction Permit for discharges of stormwater runoff associated with construction activities. General Construction Permits for projects that disturb one or more acres of land require development and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act, the RWQCB also regulates actions that would involve "discharging waste, or proposing to discharge waste, within any region that could affect the water of the state" (Water Code 13260[a]). Waters of the State are defined as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state" (Water Code 13050[e]). The RWQCB regulates all such activities, as well as dredging, filling, or discharging materials into waters of the State, that are not regulated by the USACE due to a lack of

connectivity with a navigable water body. The RWQCB may require issuance of Waste Discharge Requirements for these activities.

Species of Special Concern

Species of Special Concern (SSC) are defined by CDFW as a species, subspecies, or distinct population of an animal native to California that is not legally protected under the ESA, the California ESA, or the California Fish and Game Code, but currently satisfies one or more of the following criteria.

- The species has been completely extirpated from the state or, as in the case of birds, it has been extirpated from its primary seasonal or breeding role.
- The species is listed as federally (but not state) threatened or endangered and meets the state definition of threatened or endangered but has not formally been listed.
- The species has or is experiencing serious (noncyclical) population declines or range retractions (not reversed) that, if continued or resumed, could qualify it for state-threatened or -endangered status.
- The species has naturally small populations that exhibit high susceptibility to risk from any factor that, if realized, could lead to declines that would qualify it for state threatened or -endangered status.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bird of Conservation Concern

The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates USFWS to "identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under ESA" (ECORP 2025). To meet this requirement, USFWS published a list of "birds of conservation concern" (BCC) for the U.S. (ECORP 2025). The list identifies the migratory and nonmigratory bird species (beyond those already designated as federally threatened or endangered) that represent USFWS's highest conservation priorities. Projects that result in substantial impacts to BCCs may be considered significant under CEQA.

Watch List Species

The CDFW maintains a list of taxa that were previously designated Species of Special Concern but no longer merit that status, or that do not yet meet SSC criteria but elicit concern and more information is needed to clarify status.

Depending on the policy of the lead agency, projects that result in substantial impacts to species on the CDFW Watch List may be considered significant under CEQA.

California Rare Plant Ranks

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) maintains the Rare Plant Inventory (ECORP 2025), which provides a list of plant species native to California that are threatened with extinction, have limited distributions, or have low populations. Plant species meeting one of these criteria are assigned one of six California Rare Plant Ranks (CRPR). The rank system was developed in collaboration with government, academic and non-governmental organizations, and private-sector botanists and is jointly managed by CDFW and the CNPS. The CRPRs are currently recognized in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) and have the following definitions.

- Rare Plant Rank 1A: Presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere
- Rare Plant Rank 1B: Rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
- Rare Plant Rank 2A: Presumed extirpated in California, but more common elsewhere
- Rare Plant Rank 2B: Rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere
- Rare Plant Rank 3: A review list of plants about which more information is needed
- Rare Plant Rank 4: A watch list of plants of limited distribution

Additionally, the CNPS has defined Threat Ranks, which are added to the CRPR to designate the level of threat on a scale of 0.1 through 0.3, with 0.1 being the most threatened and 0.3 being the least threatened. Threat ranks are assigned to all plants ranked 1B, 2B, or 4, and to the majority of plants ranked 3. Plant species ranked 1A and 2A (presumed extirpated in California) and some species ranked 3 that lack threat information do not typically have a threat rank extension. The following are definitions of the CNPS Threat Ranks:

- Threat Rank 0.1: Seriously threatened in California (greater than 80 percent of occurrences threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat)
- Threat Rank 0.2: Moderately threatened in California (20 to 80 percent occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
- Threat Rank 0.3: Not very threatened in California (less than 20 percent of occurrences threatened/low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)

Factors such as habitat vulnerability and specificity, distribution, and condition of occurrences are considered in setting the threat rank; and differences in threat ranks do not constitute additional or different protection (CNPS 2025a). Substantial impacts to plants ranked 1A, 1B, 2A, or 2B are typically considered significant under CEQA Guidelines Section 15380. Significance under CEQA is typically evaluated on a case-by-case basis for plants ranked 3 or 4.

Sensitive Natural Communities

Sensitive natural communities are vegetation communities that are imperiled or vulnerable to environmental effects of projects. CDFW maintains the California Natural Community List (ECORP 2025), which provides a list of vegetation alliances, associations, and special stands, as defined in *A Manual of California Vegetation* (online edition), along with their respective state and global rarity ranks, if applicable. Natural communities with a state rarity rank of S1, S2, or S3 are considered sensitive natural communities. Substantial impacts to sensitive natural communities may be considered significant under CEQA.

Wildlife Movement Corridors and Nursery Sites

Impacts on wildlife movement corridors or nursery sites may be considered significant under CEQA. As part of the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, CDFW and the California Department of Transportation maintain data on essential habitat connectivity areas. This data is available within CNDDB. The goal is to map large intact habitat or natural landscapes and potential linkages that could provide corridors for wildlife. In urban settings, riparian vegetated stream corridors can serve as wildlife movement corridors. Nursery sites include but are not limited to concentrations of nest or den sites such as heron rookeries, bat maternity roosts, and mule deer critical fawning areas. These data are available through CDFW's Biogeographic Information and Observation System database or as occurrence records in the CNDDB; they are supplemented with the results of the field reconnaissance from the proposed project .

LOCAL

Yuba County 2030 Countywide General Plan

Biological Resources Element

The Yuba County 2030 Countywide General Plan is a statement of the community's land use values that guides land use decisions in Yuba County. Zoning, specific plans, area plans, subdivisions, capital improvements, development agreements, and many other land-use actions must be consistent with the adopted Yuba County General Plan. The Yuba County General Plan is a comprehensive plan for development and conservation in the unincorporated areas of Yuba County. The Yuba County General Plan fulfills the requirements of state law and guidelines adopted by the California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation. State law requires that the Yuba County General Plan provide the framework for Yuba County to exercise its land-use entitlement authority in unincorporated areas. Policy number NR5.1 of the Biological Resources Element dictates that new development projects avoid impacts to the habitat of special-status species, follow guidance from regulatory agencies regarding appropriate pre-construction procedures, and provide mitigation if necessary.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan Design Guidelines

The project site and offsite improvement area are in an area covered by the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. The Plumas Lake Specific Plan covers unincorporated Yuba County south of McGown Parkway, west of State Route (SR)-70, north of Bear River, and east of Feather River Boulevard.

The design guidelines in Appendix 1 of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan provide a general blueprint for development decisions affecting the siting of buildings, landscaping, parking, and other design details. The Native Oaks Section A-1.8 provides guidelines for native oaks in the area governed by the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Because native oaks are a scarce resource in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan Area, no development or improvement shall take place within the dripline of any native oak tree that is greater than six inches in diameter, measured four feet above the existing grade. Alteration to the ground surface in the area around a protected oak shall not result in an increase to the surface runoff over the existing dripline of that tree.

3.4.2 Existing Conditions

SITE CHARACTERISTICS AND LAND USE

The project site and offsite improvement area are on level terrain in an urban-agricultural interface area and is situated at an elevational range of approximately 40 to 50 feet above mean sea level (MSL) in the Great Central Valley region of the California floristic province (ECORP 2025). The Marysville Yuba County Airport station[1] is approximately 6.7 miles southeast of the project site and the average winter low temperature is 48.1 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) the average summer high temperature is 76.5°F, and the average annual precipitation is approximately 20.1 inches (ECORP 2025). The project site currently includes a fallow agricultural field, and the offsite improvement areas include a small portion of the asphalt and planted median of River Oaks Boulevard; these landcover types are classified as Agriculture and Urban, respectively.

Figure 3.4-1, *Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types*, shows the distribution of the vegetation communities and land cover types on the project site.

[1] The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather information for the Marysville/Yuba County Airport which is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Detailed forecasts, hourly conditions, and other data on the NWS website by searching for the airport code or for the location Marysville/Yuba City, CA (NOAA 2025).



Source: ECORP Consulting 2025.

Figure 3.4-1
Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

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Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

The following sections describe vegetation communities and land cover types within the project site and offsite improvement area as observed during the site reconnaissance.

Agriculture

The majority of the project site is an agricultural field that is dominated by non-native plants and crop species. This field has been tilled and plowed and appeared to be fallow at the time of the site reconnaissance. Bare ground in this land cover type within the project site ranged from 20 percent in densely weedy areas to 100 percent in freshly tilled areas at the southern end of the project site. Dominant ruderal herbaceous species in this land cover type within the project site include velvet leaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*), cultivated cucumber (*Cucurbita sp.*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), yellow wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), and yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*).

Urban/Landscaped

The off-site improvement area is an urban/landscaped area that includes asphalt and a planted median of River Oaks Boulevard. The asphalt is devoid of vegetation, and the median is landscaped, mulched, and irrigated. The median of River Oaks Boulevard is landscaped with trees and shrubs, including London plane tree (*Platanus × hispanica*), Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), and Indian hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis indica*).

Aquatic Resources

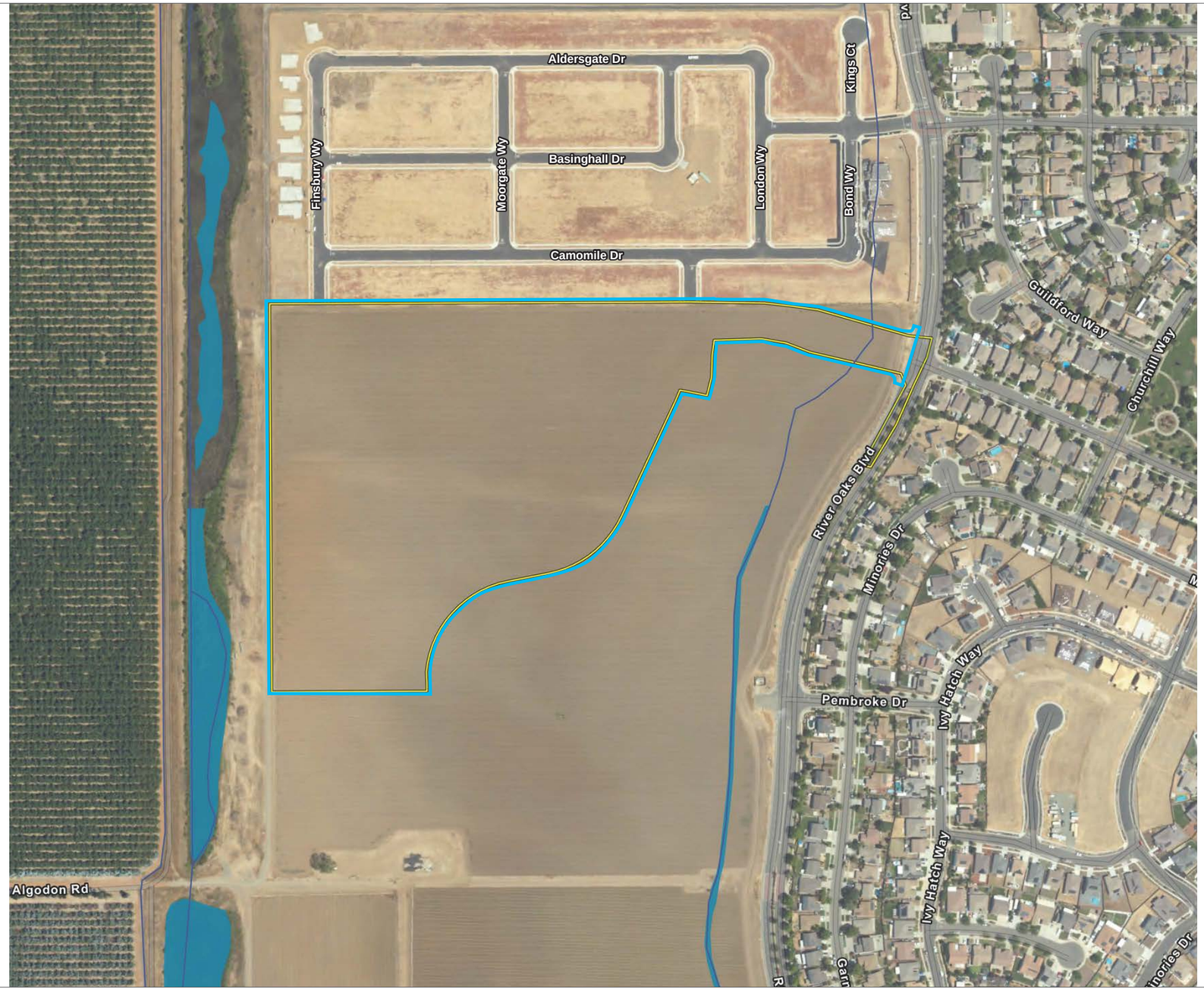
Figure 3.4-2, *California Aquatic Resources Inventory*, shows the California Aquatic Resources Inventory (CARI) of the project site. The CARI indicates a single feature within the project site with the designation “WRU,” which represents a seasonally flooded wetland. CARI is a statewide geographic information system (GIS)-based dataset that compiles surface water and riparian area information from multiple sources and standardizes it to a common classification system. It is intended to provide landscape-scale information useful for local land use planning, but it is not a substitute for on-the-ground verification. Because of this, mapped features may not always be present, or their boundaries may differ from what is observed in the field (ECORP 2025).

During a site visit conducted by ECORP, a preliminary assessment of aquatic resources within the project site and off-site improvement areas was performed. No evidence of the CARI-mapped feature was observed, and no other aquatic resources were identified within the project site (ECORP 2025). This indicates that, while the CARI dataset suggested a potential wetland, the field investigation did not confirm its presence.

The wetland to the west of the project site and off-site improvement area and the adjacent upland within the project site provide marginally suitable habitat to the northwestern pond turtle. In addition, two CNDDB occurrences of northwestern pond turtles are located within 5 miles of the project site and off-site improvement area (ECORP 2025).

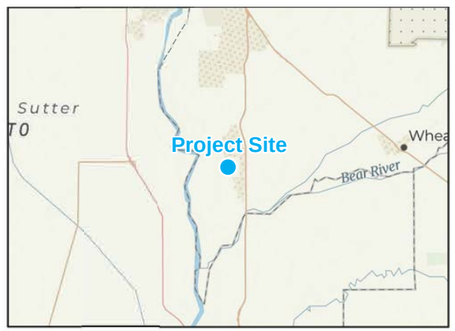
Special-Status Species

Table 3.4-1, *Potential Special-Status Species*, presents the full list of special-status plant and animal species identified through the literature review. For each species, Table 3.4-1 provides the listing status, a brief description of habitat requirements and/or species ecology, a determination of the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area, and the rationale for that determination. Appendix D provides further details and criteria on the potential for each species to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.



Project Boundary
Biological Study Area - 27.20 ac
California Aquatic Resources Inventory
Ephemeral Drainage (WRU)*
Wetland

*The ephemeral drainage was not found during the site visit.



0 300
Scale (Feet)

Source: ECORP Consulting 2025.

Figure 3.4-2
California Aquatic Resources Inventory

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Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Plants					
Ferris' milk-vetch (Astragalus tener var. ferrisiae)	-	-	1B.1	Vernally mesic meadows and seeps and in sub–alkaline flats within valley and foothill grasslands. Elevation: 5–245 feet Bloom Period: April–May	Presumed Absent. No suitable vernal pools or mesic habitats on the project site and offsite improvement area
Valley brodiaea (Brodiaea rosea subsp. vallicola)	-	-	4.2	Occurs in old alluvial terraces and silt, sandy, or gravelly soils in vernal pools and swales within valley and foothill grassland. Elevation: 35–1,100 feet Bloom Period: April–May	Presumed Absent. No suitable vernal areas or grasslands on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Parry's rough tarplant (Centromadia parryi subsp. rudis)	-	-	4.2	Alkaline, vernally mesic areas, seeps in valley and foothill grassland and vernal pools, sometimes found on roadsides, also in disturbed sites (Baldwin 2012) Elevation: 0–330 feet Bloom Period: May–October	Present. One individual was found in a disturbed area along the northeastern boundary of the project site.
Red-stemmed cryptantha (Cryptantha rostellata)	-	-	4.2	Often gravelly volcanic openings and roadsides of cismontane woodland and valley and foothill grassland. Elevation: 130–2,625 feet Bloom Period: April–June	Low Potential. The disturbed roadside adjacent to the agricultural field provides marginally suitable habitat.
California pitcher plant (Darlingtonia californica)	-	-	4.2	Mesic areas in generally serpentine seeps of bogs and ferns, and meadows and seeps. Elevation: 0–8,480 feet Bloom Period: April–August	Presumed Absent. No suitable mesic habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Recurved larkspur (Delphinium recurvatum)	-	-	1B.2	Alkaline habitats within chenopod scrub, cismontane woodland, and valley and foothill grasslands. Elevation: 10–2,590 feet Bloom Period: March–June	Presumed Absent. No alkaline soil on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Dwarf downingia (Downingia pusilla)	-	-	2B.2	Mesic areas in valley and foothill grassland, and vernal pools. Species has also been found in disturbed areas such as tire ruts and scraped depressions Elevation: 5–1,460 feet Bloom Period: March–May	Presumed Absent. No suitable mesic habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area
Stinkbells (Fritillaria agrestis)	-	-	4.2	Clay and sometimes serpentine soils in chaparral, cismontane woodland, pinyon and juniper woodland, and valley and foothill grassland. Elevation: 35–5,100 feet Bloom Period: March–June	Presumed Absent. Suitable habitats were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Boggs Lake hedgehyssop (Gratiola heterosepala)	-	CE	1B.2	Clay substrates of marshes and swamps (lake margins) and vernal pools. Elevation: 35–7,790 feet Bloom Period: April–August	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Hogwallow starfish (Hesperevax caulescens)	-	-	4.2	Mesic areas with clay soil within valley and foothill grassland, shallow vernal pools, and sometimes alkaline areas. Elevation: 0–1,655 feet Bloom Period: March–June	Presumed Absent. Suitable mesic microhabitats were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Woolly rose-mallow (Hibiscus lasiocarpos var. occidentalis)	-	-	1B.2	Marshes and freshwater swamps (riverbanks and low peat islands in sloughs), and riprap on sides of levees. Elevation: 0–395 feet Bloom Period: June–September	Presumed Absent. There is no suitable habitat within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Legenere (Legenere limosa)	-	-	1B.1	Various seasonally inundated areas including wetlands, wetland swales, marshes, vernal pools, artificial ponds, and floodplains of intermittent drainages (USFWS 2005). Elevation: 5–2,885 feet Bloom Period: April–June	Presumed Absent. There were no suitable mesic habitats observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Veiny monardella (Monardella venosa)	-	-	1B.1	Heavy clay soils in cismontane woodland and valley and foothill grasslands. Elevation: 195–1,345 feet Bloom Period: May–July	Presumed Absent. Suitable grassland and woodland habitats were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Baker's navarretia (Navarretia leucocephala subsp. bakeri)	-	-	1B.1	Vernal pools and swales with adobe or alkaline soils in cismontane woodlands, lower montane coniferous forests, meadows and seeps, and valley and foothill grasslands. Elevation: 15–5,710 feet Bloom Period: April–July	Presumed Absent. There are no suitable mesic habitats within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Hartweg's Golden Sunburst (Pseudobahia bahiifolia)	FE	CE	1B.1	Clay, often acidic soils in cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grasslands. Elevation: 50–490 feet Bloom Period: March–April	Presumed Absent. Suitable grassland and woodland habitats were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Sanford's arrowhead (Sagittaria sanfordii)	-	-	1B.2	Shallow marshes and freshwater swamps. Elevation: 0–2,135 feet Bloom Period: May–October	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Suisun Marsh aster (Symphyotrichum lentum)	-	-	1B.2	Brackish and freshwater marshes and swamps. Elevation: 0–10 feet Bloom Period: May–November	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area
Invertebrates					
Crotch bumble bee (Bombus crotchii)	-	CC	-	Primarily nests underground, found in variety of habitats including open grasslands, shrublands, chaparral, desert margins, and semi-urban settings, from the California coast east to the Sierra Cascade and from Redding south to Mexico. Survey Period: February- October (Preferably April-August)	Low Potential. Disturbed semi-urban areas observed within the project site provide marginally suitable habitat.
Conservancy fairy shrimp (Branchinecta conservatio)	FE	-	-	Vernal pools/wetlands. Survey Period: November-April	Presumed Absent. Vernal pools and wetlands were not observed within the project sit and offsite improvement area e.
Vernal pool fairy shrimp (Branchinecta lynchi)	FT	-	-	Vernal pools/wetlands. Survey Period: November–April	Presumed Absent. Vernal pools and wetlands were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Monarch butterfly (Danaus plexippus)	FPT	-	-	Adult monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains typically overwinter in sheltered wooded groves of Monterey pine, Monterey cypress, and gum eucalyptus along coastal California, then disperse in spring throughout California, Nevada, Arizona, and parts of Oregon and Washington. Adults require milkweed and additional nectar sources	Low Potential. The project site is not within the range of overwintering sites. The disturbed edges of the project site and offsite improvement area provide marginally suitable foraging and breeding habitat. No milkweed plants were observed in the project site and offsite improvement area

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
				during the breeding season. Larval caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed. Survey Period: Any season	but the site visit occurred before the typically blooming period for the species.
Valley elderberry longhorn beetle (Desmocerus californicus dimorphus)	FT	-	-	Elderberry shrubs. Survey Period: Any season	Presumed Absent. Elderberry shrubs were not observed on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Vernal pool tadpole shrimp (Lepidurus packardi)	FE	-	-	Vernal pools/wetlands. Survey Period: November-April	Presumed Absent. Vernal pools and wetlands were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.
Fish					
Green sturgeon (Acipenser medirostris)	FT	-	SSC	Anadromous; undammed coldwater rivers having relatively deep pools with large substrates. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is not accessible by anadromous fish and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Steelhead (CA Central Valley DPS) (Oncorhynchus mykissirideus)	FT	-	SSC	Fast-flowing, well-oxygenated rivers and streams below dams in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River systems. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is not accessible by anadromous fish and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Chinook salmon (Central Valley springrun ESU) (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha)	FT	CT	-	Undammed rivers, streams, creeks in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River systems. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is not accessible by anadromous fish and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Chinook salmon (Sacramento River winter-run ESU)	FE	CE	-	Undammed reaches of the mainstem and tributaries to the Sacramento River downstream of Shasta Reservoir. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is not accessible by anadromous fish and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
(Oncorhynchus tshawytscha)					
Longfin smelt – San Francisco Bay-Delta DPS (Spirinchus thaleichthys)	FE	CT	SSC	Occurs primarily in the brackish zones of the San Francisco Bay-Delta region of California. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is outside the known range of the species and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Pacific eulachon - southern DPS Thaleichthys pacificus	FT	-	-	Undammed rivers, streams, creeks, including the Klamath River, Mad River, Redwood Creek, and Smith River. Survey Period: N/A	Presumed Absent. The project site is outside the known range of the species and does not provide suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Amphibians					
Western spadefoot (Northern DPS) (Spea hammondii)	FPT	-	SSC	California endemic species of vernal pools, swales, and seasonal wetlands in grassland, scrub and woodland habitats throughout the Central Valley and South Coast Ranges. Prefers open areas with sandy or gravelly soils. Survey Period: Winter-Spring.	Presumed Absent. Suitable aquatic habitat was not observed on the project site and adjacent parcels are developed or agricultural and offsite improvement area.
Reptiles					
Northwestern pond turtle (Actinemys marmorata)	FPT	-	SSC	Requires basking sites and upland habitats up to 0.5 kilometers from water for egg laying. Uses ponds, streams, detention basins, and irrigation ditches. Survey Period: April-September	Low Potential. The wetland to the west of the project site and the adjacent upland within the project site provide marginally suitable habitat.
Giant garter snake (Thamnophis gigas)	FT	CT	-	Freshwater ditches, sloughs, and marshes in the Central Valley. Almost extirpated from the southern parts of its range. Survey Period: April-October	Presumed Absent. No suitable aquatic habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Birds					
Aleutian cackling goose (Branta hutchinsii leucopareia)	Delisted	-	CDFW WL	Overwintering habitat includes mudflats, shallow tidal waters, salt marsh, wet grasslands, freshwater marsh, lakes, reservoirs and rivers (breeds in Alaska on various Aleutian Islands; winters in California's Central Valley, with a small wintering population in southwestern Oregon, and migration staging areas around Humboldt Bay and Crescent City in California and New River bottoms in Oregon. Wintering: October-March	Presumed Absent. No suitable wintering habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Western grebe (Aechmophorus occidentalis)	-	-	BCC	Winters on salt or brackish bays, estuaries, sheltered sea coasts, freshwater lakes, and rivers. Nests on freshwater lakes and marshes with open water bordered by emergent vegetation. Nesting: June-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Yellow-billed cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus)	FT	CE	-	Breeding habitat is generally open woodland with clearings and low, dense, scrubby vegetation associated with watercourses, and includes desert riparian woodlands with willow, Fremont's cottonwood, alder, walnut, box-elder, and dense mesquite. Nests are generally found in deciduous hardwoods with thick bushes, vines, or hedgerows providing dense foliage within 10 meters (33 feet) of ground; prefer riparian patches of at least 81 hectares (200 acres) (Hughes 2020). Winters in South America. Nesting: June 15-August 15	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
California black rail (Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus)	-	CT	CFP	Salt marsh, shallow freshwater marsh, wet meadows, and flooded grassy vegetation. In California, primarily found in coastal and Bay-Delta communities, but also in Sierran foothills (Butte, Yuba, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado counties). Nesting: March-September	Low Potential. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site, but adjacent freshwater ponds may be occupied by this species.
Mountain plover (Anarhynchus montanus)	-	-	BCC, SSC	Breeds in the Great Plains/Midwestern U.S.; winters in California, Arizona, Texas, and Mexico; wintering habitat in California includes tilled fields, heavily grazed open grassland, burned fields, and alfalfa fields. Wintering: September-March	Low Potential. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but potential wintering habitat is on the project site
California gull (nesting colony) (Larus californicus)	-	-	BCC, CDFW WL	Nesting occurs in the Great Basin, Great Plains, Mono Lake, and south San Francisco Bay. Breeding colonies located on islands on natural lakes, rivers, or reservoirs. Winters along Pacific Coast from southern British Columbia south to Baja California and Mexico. In California, winters along coast and inland (Central Valley, Salton Sea). Nesting: April-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat to support a rookery on or in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area.
Black tern (Chlidonias niger)	-	-	BCC, SSC	Breeding range includes northeastern California, Central Valley, Great Plains of U.S. and Canada; winters in Central and South America; nesting habitat includes shallow freshwater marsh with emergent vegetation, prairie sloughs, lake margins, river islands, and cultivated rice fields. Nesting: May-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
White-tailed kite (Elanus leucurus)	-	-	CFP	Nesting occurs within trees in low elevation grassland, agricultural, wetland, oak woodland, riparian, savannah, and urban habitats. Hunting habitats include agricultural fields (e.g., pasture, alfalfa, sugar beet, row crops), ruderal vegetation and grasslands. Communal roosts are found in a vegetation within a variety of urban, agricultural and natural habitats. Nesting: March-August	Low Potential. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but foraging habitat is on the project site.
Golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos)	-	-	CFP, CDFW WL	Nesting habitat includes mountainous canyon land, rimrock terrain of open desert and grasslands, riparian, oak woodland/savannah, and chaparral. Nesting occurs on cliff ledges, river banks, trees, and human-made structures (e.g., windmills, platforms, and transmission towers). Breeding occurs throughout California, except the immediate coast, Central Valley floor, Salton Sea region, and the Colorado River region, where they can be found during Winter. Nesting: February-August. Wintering in Central Valley: October-February	Low Potential. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but foraging habitat is on the project site.
Northern harrier (Circus hudsonius)	-	-	BCC, SSC	Nests on the ground in open wetlands, marshy meadows, wet/lightly grazed pastures, (rarely) freshwater/brackish marshes, tundra, grasslands, prairies, croplands, desert, and shrub-steppe. Hunts in agricultural, grassland and natural grasslands and also roost communally in these cover types. Nesting: April-September	Low Potential. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but foraging habitat is on the project site.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)	Delisted	CE	CFP	Typically nests in forested areas near large bodies of water in the northern half of California; nest in trees and rarely on cliffs; wintering habitat includes forest and woodland communities near water bodies (e.g., rivers, lakes), wetlands, flooded agricultural fields, open grasslands. Nesting: February-September	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Swainson's hawk (Buteo swainsoni)	-	CT	-	Nesting occurs in trees in agricultural, riparian, oak woodland, scrub, and urban landscapes. Forages over grassland, agricultural lands, particularly during disking/harvesting, irrigated pastures. Nesting: March-August	Low Potential. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but foraging habitat is on the project site.
Burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia)	-	CC	BCC, SSC	Nests in burrows or burrow surrogates in open, treeless, areas within grassland, steppe, and desert biomes. Often with other burrowing mammals (e.g., prairie dogs, California ground squirrels). May also use human landscapes such as agricultural fields, golf courses, cemeteries, roadside, airports, vacant urban lots, and fairgrounds. Nesting: February-August	Low Potential. The agricultural field within the project site provides marginally suitable foraging habitat; however, no potentially suitable nest burrows or features were observed within or around the edges of the project site.
Nuttall's woodpecker (Dryobates nuttallii)	-	-	BCC	Resident from northern California south to Baja California. Nests in tree cavities in oak woodlands and riparian woodlands. Nesting: April-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Prairie falcon (Falco mexicanus)	-	-	CDFW WL	Found in open habitat at all elevations up to 3,350 meters (Steenhof 2024). Nests on cliffs and bluffs in arid plains and steppes; In California, nesting throughout the state except northwest corner, along immediate coast, and the Central Valley floor. Winters throughout California, in open habitats, such as grasslands in Central Valley. Nesting: March-July. Wintering in Central Valley: September-February	Low Potential. Potentially suitable wintering habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Olive-sided flycatcher (Contopus cooperi)	-	-	SSC, BCC	Nests in montane and northern coniferous forests, in forest openings, forest edges, semi-open forest stands. In California, nests in coastal forests, Cascade and Sierra Nevada region. Winters in Central to South America. Nesting: May-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Least Bell's vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus)	FE	CE	-	In California, breeding range includes Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Diego, and San Bernardino counties, and rarely Stanislaus and Santa Clara counties. Nesting habitat includes dense, low shrubby vegetation in riparian areas, brushy fields, young second-growth woodland, scrub oak, coastal chaparral and mesquite brushland. Winters in southern Baja California Sur. Nesting: April 1-July 31	Presumed Absent. No suitable habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Yellow-billed magpie (Pica nuttallii)	-	-	BCC	Endemic to California; found in the Central Valley and coast range south of San Francisco Bay and north of Los Angeles County; nesting habitat includes oak savannah with large expanses of open ground; also found in urban parklike settings. Nesting: April-June	Low Potential. Suitable oak woodland habitat is not on the project site; however, the open ground and agricultural field within the project site are marginally suitable foraging habitat.
Oak titmouse (Baeolophus inornatus)	-	-	BCC	Nests in tree cavities within dry oak or oak-pine woodland and riparian; where oaks are absent, they nest in juniper woodland, open forests (gray, Jeffrey, Coulter, pinyon pines and Joshua tree). Nesting: March-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
California horned lark (Eremophila alpestris actia)	-	-	CDFW WL	San Joaquin Valley, coast range from Sonoma County south to Baja California; grassland, agricultural. Nesting: March-July	Low Potential. The agricultural area observed within the project site provides a marginally suitable habitat and offsite improvement area.
Bank swallow (Riparia riparia)	-	CT	-	Nests colonially along coasts, rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands in vertical banks, cliffs, and bluffs in alluvial, friable soils. May also nest in sand, gravel quarries and road cuts. In California, breeding range includes northern and central California. Nesting: May-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Wrentit (Chamaea fasciata)	-	-	BCC	Coastal sage scrub, northern coastal scrub, chaparral, dense understory of riparian woodlands, riparian scrub, coyote brush and blackberry thickets, and dense thickets in suburban parks and gardens. Nesting: March-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable dense shrub habitat for nesting or foraging on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
California thrasher (Toxostoma redivivum)	-	-	BCC	Resident and endemic to coastal and Sierra Nevada- Cascade foothill areas of California. Nests are usually well hidden in dense shrubs, including scrub oak, California lilac, and chamise. Nesting: February-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable dense shrub habitat for nesting or foraging on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Lawrence's goldfinch (Spinus lawrencei)	-	-	BCC	Breeds in Sierra Nevada and inner Coast Range foothills surrounding the Central Valley and the southern Coast Range to Santa Barbara County east through southern California to the Mojave Desert and Colorado Desert into the Peninsular Range. Nests in arid and open woodlands with chaparral or other brushy areas, tall annual weed fields, and a water source (e.g., small stream, pond, lake), and to a lesser extent riparian woodland, coastal scrub, evergreen forests, pinyon-juniper woodland, planted conifers, and ranches or rural residences near weedy fields and water. Nesting: March-September	Presumed Absent. This species lives at higher elevations, and no suitable nesting habitats are on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Belding's savannah sparrow (Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi)	-	CE	BCC	Resident coastally from Point Conception south into Baja California; coastal salt marsh. Year-round resident; nests March-August	Presumed Absent. The range of this species does not overlap with the project site and offsite improvement area.
Song sparrow "Modesto" (Melospiza melodia heermanni)	-	-	SSC	Resident in central and southwest California, including Central Valley; nests in marsh, scrub habitat. Nesting: April-June	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Bullock's oriole (Icterus bullockii)	-	-	BCC	Breeding habitat includes riparian and oak woodlands. Nesting: March-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Tricolored blackbird (Agelaius tricolor)	-	CT	BCC, SSC	Breeds locally west of Cascade-Sierra Nevada and southeastern deserts from Humboldt and Shasta counties south to San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties. Central California, Sierra Nevada foothills and Central Valley, Siskiyou, Modoc and Lassen counties. Nests colonially in freshwater marsh, blackberry bramble, milk thistle, triticale fields, weedy (mustard, mallow) fields, giant cane, safflower, stinging nettles, tamarisk, riparian scrublands and forests, fiddleneck and fava bean fields (Beedy et al 2023). Nesting: March-August	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting habitat on the project site, but potentially suitable foraging habitat is on the project site.
Saltmarsh common yellowthroat (Geothlypis trichas sinuosa)	-	-	BCC, SSC	Breeds in salt marshes of San Francisco Bay; winters San Francisco south along coast to San Diego County. Nesting: March-July	Presumed Absent. No suitable nesting or foraging habitat on the project site and offsite improvement area.
Mammals					
Pallid bat (Antrozous pallidus)	-	-	SSC	Crevices in rocky outcrops and cliffs, caves, mines, trees (e.g., basal hollows of redwoods, cavities of oaks, exfoliating pine and oak bark, deciduous trees in riparian areas, and fruit trees in orchards). Also roosts in various human structures such as bridges, barns, porches, bat boxes, and human occupied as well as vacant buildings (WBWG 2025). Survey Period: April-September	Presumed Absent. Suitable roosting or nesting structures were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Table 3.4-1 Potential Special-Status Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Status			Habitat Description/ Species Ecology	Potential to Be Found on the Project Site and Offsite Improvement Area
	ESA	CESA/ NPPA	Other		
Western red bat (Lasiurus frantzii)	-	-	SSC	Roosts in foliage of trees or shrubs; Day roosts are commonly in edge habitats adjacent to streams or open fields, in orchards, and sometimes in urban areas. There may be an association with intact riparian habitat (particularly willows, cottonwoods, and sycamores) (WBWG 2025). Survey Period: April-September	Presumed Absent. Suitable roosting or nesting structures were not observed within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Source: ECORP 2025 (Appendix D).

Note:

project site = Biological Study Area; CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife;
CESA = California Endangered Species Act; CNPS = California Native Plant Society;
DPS = Distinct Population Segment; ESA = federal Endangered Species Act;
ESU = Evolutionarily Significant Unit; N/A = Not Applicable; NPPA = Native Plant Protection Act;
USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; WBWG = Western Bat Working Group.

Status Codes:

1A CRPR/Presumed extinct
1B CRPR/Rare or Endangered in California and elsewhere
2A CRPR/Plants presumed extirpated in California but common elsewhere
2B CRPR/Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere
3 CRPR/Plants About Which More Information is Needed – A Review List
4 CRPR/Plants of Limited Distribution – A Watch List
.1 Threat Rank/Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat)
.2 Threat Rank/Moderately threatened in California (20-80% occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
.3 Threat Rank/Not very threatened in California (<20% of occurrences threatened/low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)
BCC Bird of Conservation Concern
CC Candidate for CESA listing as Endangered or Threatened
CDFW WL CDFW Watch List
CE CESA- or NPPA listed, Endangered

CFP California Fish and Game Code Fully Protected Species (§ 3511-birds, § 4700-mammals, §5050-reptiles/amphibians)
CT CESA- or NPPA-listed, Threatened
Delisted Formally delisted
FE ESA listed, Endangered
FPT Formally Proposed for ESA listing as Threatened
FT ESA listed, Threatened
SSC CDFW Species of Special Concern

Plants

The literature review identified 17 special-status plant species as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area (see Table 3.4-1). During the site visit, Parry's rough tarplant (*Centromadia parryi subsp. rudis*, CRPR 4.2) was found at the northern edge of the project site, as shown in Figure 3.4-3, *Location of Parry's Rough Tarplant*. The red-stemmed cryptantha (*Cryptantha rostellata*) has a low potential to occur on the project site and offsite improvement area or in its vicinity. Habitat for the red-stemmed cryptantha (*Cryptantha rostellata*) was found on the edge of the project site; however, no red-stemmed cryptantha specimens were found. The remaining 15 special status plants are considered absent from the project site and offsite improvement area due to the lack of suitable habitat or because the project site and offsite improvement area is outside the known geographical or elevational range for the species.

Brief descriptions of Parry's rough tarplant and red-stemmed cryptantha are provided below.

Parry's Rough Tarplant

Parry's rough tarplant (*Centromadia parryi subsp. rudis*) is not listed pursuant to either the federal or California ESAs but is designated a CRPR 4.2 species which means this species is on a watch list of plants of limited distribution and moderately threatened in California. This species is an herbaceous annual that occurs in vernal pools; valley and foothill grassland with alkaline and vernally mesic soils; seeps; and sometimes roadsides. Parry's rough tarplant blooms from May through October and is known to grow at elevations from 0 to 330 feet above MSL. Parry's rough tarplant is endemic to California; its current range includes Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Merced, Modoc, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Stanislaus, and Yolo counties (ECORP 2025).

As shown in Figure 3.4-3, a single individual of Parry's rough tarplant was found growing in the disturbed area between the agricultural field of the project site and the construction area to the north of the project site. Parry's rough tarplant also grows within 50 feet of the project site.

Red-Stemmed Cryptantha

Red-stemmed cryptantha (*Cryptantha rostellata*) is not listed pursuant to either the federal or California ESAs but is designated a CRPR 4.2 species which means this species is on a watch list of plants of limited distribution and moderately threatened in California. This species is an herbaceous annual that grows on gravelly, volcanic openings as well as roadsides in cismontane woodland and valley and foothill grassland. Red-stemmed cryptantha blooms from April through June and is known to live at elevations ranging from 130 to 2,625 feet above MSL. The current range of the species includes Butte, Colusa, Napa, and Sutter counties (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of red-stemmed cryptantha are within 5 miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). One collection location is approximately 15 miles to the northwest of the project site and offsite improvement area in the Sutter Buttes, documented via an herbarium collection (L. Ahart 5263–CHSC). The disturbed roadside adjacent to the agricultural field approximates roadside grassland and provides marginally suitable habitat within the project site. Red-stemmed cryptantha has a low potential to occupy the project site.

Invertebrates

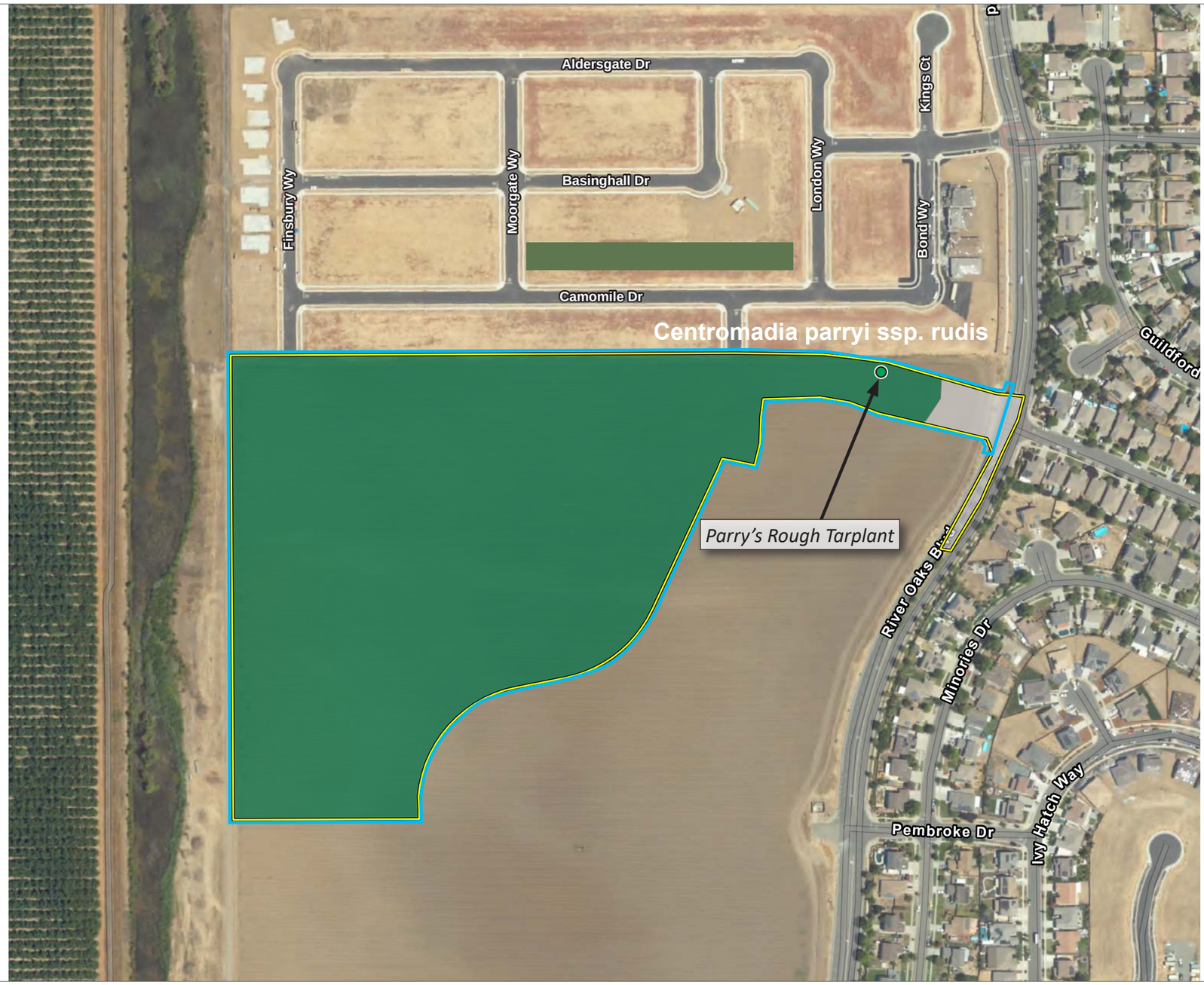
As shown in Table 3.4-1, six special-status invertebrate species were identified as having the potential to be found in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area. Upon further analysis and after the site visit, four of the six species were found to be absent from the project site due to lack of suitable habitat or because the project site and offsite improvement area is outside of the geographic range for the species.

The following sections briefly describe the remaining two species that have the potential to be on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Crotch Bumble Bee

The Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) is a candidate for listing as endangered under the California ESA. The historic range of the Crotch bumble bee extends from coastal areas east to the edges of the desert in central California south to Baja California del Norte, Mexico, excluding mountainous areas (ECORP 2025). This species was historically common throughout the southern two-thirds of its range but is now largely absent from much of that area and is nearly extirpated from the center of its historic range, the Central Valley (ECORP 2025).

The Crotch bumble bee inhabits open grassland and scrub habitats (ECORP 2025). The species visits a wide variety of flowering plants, although its very short tongue makes it best suited to forage at open flowers with short corollas (ECORP 2025). Plant families most associated with Crotch bumble bees include Fabaceae, Apocynaceae, Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, and Boraginaceae (ECORP 2025). The species primarily nests underground (ECORP 2025). Little is known about overwintering sites, but bumble bees generally overwinter in soft, disturbed soils or under leaf litter or other debris (ECORP 2025). The flight period for Crotch bumble bee queens in California is from late February to late October, peaking in early April with a second pulse in July (ECORP 2025). The flight period for workers and males in California is from late March through September with peak abundance in early July (ECORP 2025).



Project Boundary

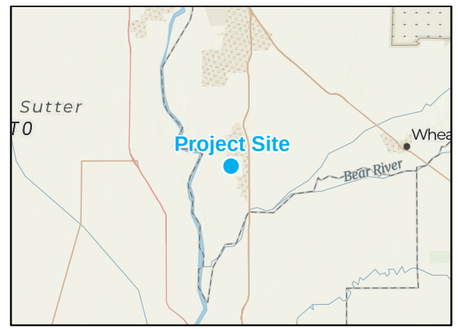
Biological Study Area - 27.20 ac

Vegetation - Great Valley Ecoregion

AGR - Agriculture

URB - Urban

Plant Point



0 300
Scale (Feet)

Source: ECORP Consulting 2025.

Figure 3.4-3
Location of Parry's Rough Tarplant

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No documented CNDDB occurrences of Crotch bumble bee are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). The disturbed, urban, and agricultural areas on the project site and offsite improvement area may provide marginally suitable habitat for this species. Flowering plants on the project site and offsite improvement area provide appropriate flower resources for Crotch bumble bees; these include multiple species in the legume family (*Fabaceae*) and Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*). Crotch bumble bee has a low potential to be on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Monarch

The monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) is formally proposed for listing as threatened under the federal ESA. This butterfly is present throughout a variety of habitats and requires blooming nectar resources for adults to feed on during breeding and migration; it also requires milkweed (*Asclepias spp*.) for oviposition and larval feeding. During the breeding season, monarchs lay their eggs on their obligatory milkweed host plant (primarily *Asclepias spp*.). Larvae emerge after 2 to 5 days and develop through five larval instars over a period of 9 to 18 days, feeding on milkweed and sequestering toxic cardenolides as a defense against predators. The larvae then pupate into chrysalis before emerging 6 to 14 days later as an adult butterfly. Multiple generations of monarchs are produced during the breeding season, with most adult butterflies living approximately 2 to 5 weeks. Overwintering adults enter reproductive diapause and live 6 to 9 months (ECORP 2025).

Individual monarchs in temperate climates, including western North America, undergo long-distance migration. Migratory individuals of eastern and western North America require a specific microclimate at overwintering sites that provide moderate temperatures and protection from the elements. Migratory monarchs in the western population primarily overwinter in groves of a variety of tree species along the coast of California and Baja California. Summer breeding habitats for the western population of monarchs are throughout California where milkweed is present (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of monarch butterfly are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). Flowering plants on the project site and offsite improvement area can provide suitable foraging resources for monarchs. The project site and offsite improvement area may provide suitable breeding habitat for monarchs. No milkweed species were observed within the project site and offsite improvement area, but the site visit was not within the appropriate flowering window. The project site and offsite improvement area is not in the coastal zone that has suitable overwintering conditions for monarchs. Monarch butterfly has a low potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Fish

Table 3.4-1 shows that six special-status fish species or management units were identified as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area; however, the project site and offsite improvement area lacks the stream features necessary to provide habitat for fish. All the special-status fish are considered absent from the project site and offsite improvement area.

Amphibians

One special-status amphibian species was identified as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area: western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*). Based on the site visit and further analysis, western spadefoot is considered absent from the project site and offsite improvement area due to lack of appropriate habitat.

Reptiles

Table 3.4-1 identified two special-status reptile species as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area. Upon further analysis and after the site visit, one of those species is considered absent from the project site and offsite improvement area due to the lack of suitable habitat.

The following section briefly describes the remaining species—northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*)—and its potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Northwestern Pond Turtle

The northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) is proposed for listing as threatened pursuant to the federal ESA and is considered an SSC by CDFW. The range of the northwestern pond turtle in California extends from the Coast Ranges on the Oregon border southward to Marin County, throughout the lower elevations and foothills of the southern Cascades and Sierra Nevada, and within the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys (ECORP 2025). The elevation range for the species extends from near MSL to 4,690 feet above MSL (ECORP 2025).

This species can live in a variety of waters, including ponds, lakes, streams, reservoirs, rivers, settling ponds of wastewater treatment plants, and other permanent and ephemeral wetlands (ECORP 2025). However, in streams and other lotic features, this species generally requires slack- or slow-water aquatic microhabitats (ECORP 2025). Northwestern pond turtle also requires basking areas such as logs, rocks, banks, and brush piles for thermoregulation (ECORP 2025). Nesting sites for this species are typically in annual grasslands adjacent to a watercourse with little slope and hard, dry soil (ECORP 2025). Nesting habitat soils typically display high clay

or silt fraction, with few nests in sandy soils. Nests are usually within 400 meters of a watercourse, with the majority being within 50 meters of the water's edge (ECORP 2025).

Two CNDDB occurrences of northwestern pond turtles are identified within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). The wetland area that occurs to 0.05 mile west of the project site provides marginally suitable habitat for northwestern pond turtle. Northwestern pond turtles have a low potential to occur within or near the project site.

Birds

As shown in Table 3.4-1, 29 special-status bird species were identified as having potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area. Upon further analysis and after the site visit, 19 of those species are considered absent from the project site and offsite improvement area due to the lack of suitable habitat or because the project site and offsite improvement area are outside of the geographic range for the species.

The following sections briefly describe each of the remaining 10 species that have the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

California Black Rail

California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) is listed as a threatened pursuant to the California ESA and as fully protected pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 3511. Typical habitat for California black rail includes coastal saltmarsh, shallow freshwater marsh, wet meadows, and flooded, grassy vegetation (ECORP 2025). This species occurs in marshes and meadows where the water depth is less than three centimeters, and the difficulty of maintaining these shallow depths may limit distribution (ECORP 2025). California black rails are a year-round resident in the San Francisco Bay region and a discontinuous resident breeding population in the Sierra Nevada foothills (elevation range of 300 feet to 1,000 feet above MSL) within Placer, Yuba, Butte, and Nevada counties (ECORP 2025). California black rails were also reported to have nested in El Dorado Hills, El Dorado County in 2017 (ECORP 2025). Nesting for this species typically occurs from March through September (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of California black rail are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting or foraging habitat occurs within the project site, but the freshwater wetland located 0.05 mile west of the project site does not support the dense stands of vegetation preferred by this species. California black rail has a low potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Mountain Plover

The mountain plover (*Anarhynchus montanus*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESAs; however, it is designated as a BCC by USFWS and an SSC by CDFW. The breeding range for this species includes Montana, eastern Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma; the wintering range extends from northern central California to Mexico (ECORP 2025). Within their wintering (September through March) range, which consists primarily of the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Imperial valleys, mountain plovers can be found in plowed fields, heavily grazed annual grassland, and burned fields (ECORP 2025). Mountain plovers do not nest in California but may occasionally forage in grassland communities (or plowed agricultural fields) during winter.

No documented CNDDB occurrences of mountain plover are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting habitat for this species is on the project site and offsite improvement area, but wintering habitat is present. The Mountain Plover has a low potential to appear on the project site and offsite improvement area.

White-Tailed Kite

White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESAs; however, the species is fully protected pursuant to Section 3511 of the California Fish and Game Code. This species is a common resident in the Central Valley and throughout the entire length of the California coast as well as all areas up to the Sierra Nevada foothills and southeastern deserts (ECORP 2025). In northern California, white-tailed kite nesting is from March through early August, with nesting activity peaking from March through June. This species nests in trees in riparian, oak woodland, savannah, and agricultural communities that are near foraging areas such as low elevation grasslands, agricultural, meadows, farmlands, savannahs, and emergent wetlands (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of white-tailed kite are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting habitat for this species is on the project site and offsite improvement area, but foraging habitat is present. White-tailed kite has a low potential to appear on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Golden Eagle

The Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESAs; however, it is fully protected according to Section 3511 of the Fish and Game Code of California and the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and is designated as a CDFW Watch List species. Golden eagles generally nest on cliff ledges and/or large lone trees in rolling to mountainous terrain. Golden eagles nest throughout California except in the flat portions of the Central Valley, the immediate coast, and portions of southeastern California (ECORP 2025). Occurrences of this species within the Central Valley are usually dispersing post-breeding birds,

nonbreeding subadults, or migrants. Foraging habitat for this species includes open grassland and savannah. Nesting for this species is from February through August.

No documented CNDDB occurrences of golden eagle are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting habitat for this species is on the project site and offsite improvement area, but foraging habitat is present. Golden eagle has a low potential to appear on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Northern Harrier

The northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESAs; however, it is designated a USFWS BCC and a CDFW SSC. This species is known to nest in the Central Valley, along the Pacific Coast, and in northeastern California. The northern harrier is a ground-nesting species that typically nests in emergent wetlands/marsh, open grasslands, or savannah communities, usually in areas with dense vegetation (ECORP 2025). This species forages in a variety of open environments such as marshes, agricultural fields, and grasslands. Nesting for this species is from April through September.

No documented CNDDB occurrences of northern harrier are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting habitat for this species is on the project site and offsite improvement area, but foraging habitat is prresent. Northern harriers have a low potential to occur on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Swainson's Hawk

The Swainson’s hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) is listed as a threatened species and is protected pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act. This species nests in North America (Canada, the western U.S., and Mexico) and typically winters from South America north to Mexico; however, a small population has been observed wintering in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (ECORP 2025). In California, the nesting season for Swainson’s hawk ranges from mid-March to late August.

Swainson’s hawks nest in tall trees in a variety of wooded communities, including riparian, oak woodland, roadside landscape corridors, urban areas, and agricultural areas. Foraging habitat includes open grassland, savannah, low-cover row crop fields, and livestock pastures. In the Central Valley, Swainson’s hawks typically feed on a combination of California vole (*Microtus californicus*), California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), many passerine birds, and grasshoppers (*Melanopulus species*). Swainson’s hawks are opportunistic foragers and will readily forage in association with agricultural mowing, harvesting, discing, and irrigating (ECORP 2025). The removal of vegetative cover by such farming activities results in more readily available prey items for this species.

Thirty-four CNDDB occurrences of Swainson's hawk are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). The nearest reported occurrences are located between one to two miles away to the north, east and south. The disturbed agricultural field within the project site and offsite improvement area provides suitable foraging habitat for this species. Mature street trees within and adjacent to the project site and offsite improvements, including Aleppo pine (Pinus halepensis), provide marginally suitable nesting habitat. As is evident by the number of occurrences within 5 miles of the project site and offsite improvements. The project site and offsite improvements are located within an area that has high Swainson's Hawk density. However, Swainson's hawk has a low potential to occur within or adjacent to the project site and offsite improvement area due to the lack of suitable nesting trees.

Burrowing Owl

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) is not listed pursuant to the federal ESA but is currently a candidate for listing under the California ESA; in addition, it is designated a BCC by USFWS and an SSC by CDFW. Burrowing owls inhabit dry open rolling hills, grasslands, desert floors, and open bare ground with gullies and arroyos. This species can also inhabit developed areas such as golf courses, cemeteries, roadsides in cities, airports, vacant lots in residential areas, school campuses, and fairgrounds (ECORP 2025). This species typically uses burrows created by fossorial mammals, most notably the California ground squirrel, but may also use human-made structures such as concrete culverts or pipes; concrete, asphalt, or wood debris piles; or openings beneath concrete or asphalt pavement (ECORP 2025). The breeding season for this species typically occurs between February 1 and August 31 (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of burrowing owl are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). Animal burrows greater than four inches in diameter were not observed within the project site and off-site improvement area. No suitable nesting habitat for this species occurs within the project site and offsite improvement area, but it does provide potential foraging habitat. Burrowing owl has a low potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Prairie Falcon

Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESAs; however, it is designated as a CDFW Watch List species. The breeding distribution of prairie falcons includes the majority of the state except the extreme northwestern part of the State and coastal areas (ECORP 2025). Nesting occurs from March through July. Prairie falcons have not been documented to nest in the Central Valley but may occur in this area as migrants and wintering birds. This species nests primarily on shelves, ledges, or potholes in cliffs, but may also use trees, power line structures, buildings, mine highwalls, caves, or stone quarries (ECORP 2025). Breeding habitat for this species includes open habitat at elevations up to 3,350 meters above MSL in arid plains and steppes, wherever cliffs or bluffs are present (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of prairie falcon are within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). No suitable nesting habitat for this species is on the project site and offsite improvement area, but wintering habitat is. Prairie falcon has a low potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area.

Yellow-Billed Magpie

The yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) is not listed pursuant to either the California or federal ESA but is designated as a USFWS BCC. This endemic species is a yearlong resident of the Central Valley and Coast Ranges from San Francisco Bay to Santa Barbara County. Yellow-billed magpies build large, bulky nests in trees in a variety of open woodland habitats, typically near grassland, pastures, or cropland. Nest building for this species begins between late-January and mid-February and may take up to eight weeks to complete, with eggs laid from April through May, and fledging from May through June (ECORP 2025). The young leave the nest about 30 days after hatching (ECORP 2025). Yellow-billed magpies are highly susceptible to West Nile virus, which may have been the cause of death to thousands of magpies from 2004 to 2006 (ECORP 2025).

No documented CNDDB occurrences of yellow-billed magpie occur within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). Suitable oak woodland nesting habitat for this species is not on the project site and offsite improvement area; however, the open ground and agricultural field on the project site and offsite improvement area is marginally suitable foraging habitat for this species. Yellow-billed magpie has a low potential to occur on the project site and offsite improvement area.

California Horned Lark

The California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) is not listed and protected pursuant to either the California or federal ESA but is designated a CDFW Watch List species. Horned larks are widely distributed throughout North America with 21 recognized subspecies (ECORP 2025). The California horned lark is one of approximately nine subspecies that breeds and/or winters in California and is found in the Coast Range and southern San Joaquin Valley south into northern Baja California (ECORP 2025). The California horned lark is resident and nonmigratory. This species inhabits grasslands and other open habitats with sparse vegetation. Nests are grass lined and built on the ground. The breeding season ranges from March through July, with a peak of activity in May.

No documented CNDDB occurrences of California horned lark occur within five miles of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). The agricultural area observed within the project site and offsite improvement area provides marginally suitable habitat. California horned lark has a low potential to appear on the project site and offsite improvement area.

Mammals

As listed in Table 3.4-1, two special-status mammal species were identified as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area. Based on the site visit and further analysis, both species were determined to be absent from the project site and offsite improvement area due to lack of suitable habitat.

Critical Habitat or Essential Fish Habitat

No designated critical habitat is mapped within the project site and offsite improvement area for taxa other than fish (ECORP 2025).

The literature review identified anadromous fish critical habitat for Chinook salmon (Central Valley Spring Run), steelhead (California Central Valley), and green sturgeon (southern distinct population segment) as well as essential fish habitat for Chinook salmon in the Upper Bear Watershed below Camp Far West on the Olivehurst, California, and the Nicolaus, California, 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles (ECORP 2025). However, no potential habitat for special-status fish species is on the project site and offsite improvement area because it has no riverine habitats.

Wildlife Movement Corridors and Nursery Sites

The project site and offsite improvement area does not intersect an essential connectivity area. The Essential Connectivity Map depicts large, relatively natural habitat blocks that support native biodiversity and areas essential for ecological connectivity between them (ECORP 2025). No nursery sites have been documented within or in the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025) and no nursery sites were observed during the site reconnaissance.

A list of animal species observed on-site during the site visit is provided in Appendix D.

Protected Trees/Oak Woodlands

No oak trees or other protected sensitive natural communities were observed within the project site and offsite improvement area during the site visit.

3.4.3 Standards for Analysis

Appendix G, “Environmental Checklist Form,” of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

a) Have a substantial 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

3.4.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project have a substantial 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?

The project site and off-site improvement area primarily consists of a fallow agricultural parcel dominated by non-native and ruderal vegetation, while the off-site improvement area includes asphalt roadway and a landscaped median along River Oaks Boulevard with ornamental trees and shrubs. A wetland is located 0.05 west of the project site, along with adjacent uplands. The project site and the off-site improvement area are not within a critical habitat (ECORP 2025). A total of 62 special-status species were evaluated for potential occurrence within the project site and off-site improvement area as listed in Table 3.4-1. These include 17 plant species, 6 invertebrates, 6 fish species, 1 amphibian, 2 reptiles, 29 bird species, and 2 mammal species.

Of the 62 species, one plant species (Parry's rough tarplant) was observed on-site, and 12 species (10 birds, one reptile, and one invertebrate) were determined to have low potential to occur based on marginally suitable habitat. The remaining 49 species were presumed absent due to a lack of suitable habitat conditions. No federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species were observed within the project site and off-site improvement area.

Multiple special-status species have the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area; therefore, they may be affected by the proposed project. The project site and offsite improvement area is located within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan Area, and construction of homes, schools and businesses has occurred or is currently active on the adjacent properties to the east and north. The project site and offsite improvement area are therefore subject to impacts from noise, human activity, and night lighting from adjacent areas under existing conditions. The project site and offsite improvement area have been actively used for agricultural crops and have been tilled and plowed. The vegetation is dominated by non-native plants and crop species. No sensitive habitats or aquatic resources are present in the project site and offsite improvement area. However, open space lands with agricultural fields and natural habitats occur to the west, and the project site and offsite improvement area could be used as foraging habitat by raptors and other birds nesting in these areas. The project site and offsite improvement area could also occasionally be used as foraging or dispersal habitat for other species of wildlife.

Special Status Plants

During the site visit, Parry's rough tarplant was found at the northern edge of the project site (see Figure 3.4-3). Potential habitat for another special status plant, red-stemmed cryptantha (*Cryptantha rostellata*), was found on the project site.

Parry's rough tarplant is a CRPR list 4.2 taxon that was found at the northern boundary of the project site. The CRPR list 4 identifies taxa that are relatively uncommon throughout California and warrant monitoring. Threat to Parry's rough tarplant currently appears low and impacts to CRPR 4 plants are typically not considered significant under CEQA; however, these taxa warrant regular monitoring to determine if there is evidence of local or rapid global decline, which would necessitate their transfer to a more sensitive rank (ECORP 2025).

CDFW does not typically review and track the occurrences of CRPR 4 taxa (ECORP 2025); however, the CNDDB has unprocessed data for Parry's rough tarplant. Unprocessed occurrences are records submitted to CNDDB but not yet evaluated or incorporated into the main dataset. The unprocessed dataset includes 15 instances of Parry's rough tarplant (ECORP 2025), and these occurrences document an estimated 16,200 individuals of Parry's rough tarplant. The closest unprocessed occurrence is 16 miles southwest of the project site and offsite improvement area and is estimated to include 500 or more individuals. The largest unprocessed occurrence of the taxon is within the Yolo Bypass area, where R. E. Preston recorded an estimated 10,000 or more individuals.

There is no indication that Parry's rough tarplant is exhibiting a substantial decline locally. It is unlikely that impacts to the population in the vicinity of the project site would result in a loss of viability for the species or otherwise increase its endangerment. Because the project site is centrally located within the distribution of taxon and within 20 miles of other large occurrences,

and given that only a single individual was observed near the project site, impacts would not substantially affect overall viability of the species. However, given the potential for the Parry's rough tarplant and the red-stemmed cryptantha to occur onsite, the implementation of the proposed project would be potentially significant to special-status plant species.

Special-Status Wildlife Species

The project site and offsite improvement area and surrounding area support potential habitat for special-status wildlife species, including invertebrates, a reptile, and nesting habitat for special-status birds, including raptors.

Crotch Bumble Bees

The Crotch bumble bee *(Bombus crotchii*) is a candidate for listing as endangered under the California ESA. Historically widespread across central and southern California, the species is now largely absent from much of its former range, including the Central Valley. It typically inhabits open grassland and scrub habitats, nesting underground and foraging on a variety of flowering plants, particularly from the legume, milkweed, aster, mint, and borage families. No documented occurrences of the species are recorded within five miles of the project site and off-site improvement area. The disturbed agricultural and urban conditions of the project area provide only marginally suitable habitat, and the species has a low potential to occur. However, construction and ground-disturbing activities could result in the take of individual Crotch bumble bees if present. The implementation of the proposed project would be potentially significant to the crotch bumble bee.

Northwestern Pond Turtle

The northwestern pond turtle (Actinemys marmorata) is threatened by the federal ESA and considered an SSC by CDFW. Its range in California spans from the Oregon border to Marin County, the lower elevations of the southern Cascades and Sierra Nevada, and the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The species can live in various water bodies, including ponds, lakes, streams, reservoirs, rivers, and wetlands. In streams, it requires slack- or slow-water aquatic microhabitats and basking areas for thermoregulation. Nesting sites are typically in annual grasslands adjacent to a watercourse with hard, dry soil. Two CNDDB occurrences of the species are identified within five miles of a project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025).

The aquatic features immediately 0.05 west of the project site and offsite improvement area provide marginally suitable aquatic habitat for northwestern pond turtle, and the project site and offsite improvement area supports marginally suitable upland habitat for the species. Project implementation could result in direct effects to this species, such as death or injury of individual turtles through construction-associated vehicular traffic or mortality of eggs or juveniles in nests as a result of ground disturbance. Should the northwestern pond turtle be

federally listed prior to initiation of project activities, consultation with USFWS would be required.

Nesting Birds and Raptors

A total of 29 special-status bird species were identified as having potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site and off-site improvement area (Table 3.4-1). Following site reconnaissance, 19 species were determined to be absent due to unsuitable habitat or location outside their geographic range. The remaining 10 species— California black rail, mountain plover, white-tailed kite, golden eagle, northern harrier, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, prairie falcon, yellow-billed magpie, and California horned lark— were considered to have a low potential to occur within the project site and off-site improvement area. No suitable nesting habitat was observed for these species, though the disturbed agricultural and open habitats provide limited foraging or wintering opportunities. Swainson's hawk is the only state-listed threatened bird species with known occurrences within five miles of the project site and off-site improvement area.

Swainson's Hawk

The project site and offsite improvement area is within an area that has a high density of Swainson's hawks, and the agricultural field in the project site and offsite improvement area provides suitable foraging habitat for the species. The mature street trees within and adjacent to the project site and offsite improvement area provide marginal nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk. If an active nest is present in or near the project site and offsite improvement area, high levels of noise and human presence from construction activity could cause a nesting pair to abandon their nest, potentially resulting in incidental take of eggs or nestlings.

The project is located immediately adjacent to existing developed portions of Plumas Lake, and construction has been actively occurring on the parcel to the north. With these existing ongoing sources of noise and human activity, proposed project's construction would represent a minimal additional disturbance, particularly for birds nesting at greater distances from the project site.

Burrowing Owl

The project site and offsite improvement areas provides suitable foraging habitat for burrowing owls, but no burrows suitable for nesting habitat were observed on the project site and offsite improvement areas. Burrowing owls have potential to occur in suitable habitats west and south of the project site and offsite improvement area. If present within the vicinity of the project site and offsite improvement area, noise and human activity from construction could result in disturbance leading to abandonment of an active nest.

The project site and off-site improvement area and immediately adjacent area contains potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat for 10 special-status bird species, including migratory birds, non-migratory non-game birds, and raptors protected under the California Fish and Game Code and Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). If proposed project-related activities occur during the nesting season, the removal of active nests or disruption of nesting activities could lead to take of a protected bird or an active nest with eggs or young, which would be considered a significant impact.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact BIO-1: The proposed project would have a potentially significant impact on special status wildlife, birds, and plants.

> **Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Special-Status Species.** The following general measures minimize or avoid impacts on special-status species with the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area:
>
> Prior to the start of construction and earthwork activities, the project applicant shall retain a qualified biologist on an as-needed basis to assist with potential biological issues that might arise during construction. Prior to the start of construction and earthwork activities, the qualified biologist shall walk the project site and offsite improvement area with the construction project manager and establish project impact limits and avoidance areas around identified biological resources. Impact limits define the areas where ground disturbing or project-related activities may occur. Avoidance areas are areas where project activities are not allowed.
>
> Project impact limits shall be clearly demarcated prior to construction, and all workers shall be made aware of the impact limits and avoidance areas. No ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities shall occur outside of the project impact limits. All vehicles and equipment shall be restricted to the project impact limits or existing designated access roads and staging areas.
>
> Erosion control measures shall be placed between avoided aquatic resources and the outer edge of the project impact limits prior to commencement of construction activities, and such measures shall be maintained until construction is completed and soils have stabilized. Plastic monofilament netting or similar material shall not be used for erosion control because smaller wildlife may become entangled or trapped in these materials; this includes products that use photodegradable or biodegradable synthetic netting, which can take several months to decompose. Acceptable materials to be used for erosion control include natural fibers such as jute, coconut, twine, or other similar fibers.

A qualified biologist shall conduct mandatory worker environmental awareness training for all contractors, work crews, and any onsite personnel to aid workers in recognizing special-status species and sensitive biological resources that are known to occur or that have the potential to occur within the project site and offsite improvement area. This program shall identify the special-status species and their habitats, describe the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review the limits of construction, environmentally sensitive areas, measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources, and possible penalties for noncompliance.

The qualified biologist shall periodically visit the construction site to confirm that construction work is occurring within the demarcated areas and that the proposed project impact limits and avoidance areas are maintained. The qualified biologist shall also determine if the impact limits and/or avoidance areas need to be adjusted.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2: Special-Status Plants. To determine the presence and extent of all special-status plant species within the project site and offsite improvement area, perform floristic plant surveys according to current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) protocols prior to construction. Surveys shall be conducted throughout all suitable habitats within the proposed project impact area and a 25-foot buffer to address potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project on surrounding plant habitats. Surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist and timed according to the appropriate phenological stage for identifying target species. Known reference populations shall be visited and/or local herbaria records shall be reviewed, if available, prior to surveys to confirm the phenological stage of the target species.

If special-status plants are identified within or adjacent to the proposed project impact limits, implement the following measures:

If avoidance of special-status plants is feasible, establish and clearly demarcate avoidance zones for special-status plant occurrences prior to construction and maintain such zones until the completion of construction. Avoidance zones shall include the extent of the special-status plant species plus a 25-foot buffer to the extent feasible. No ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities shall occur within avoidance zones. A qualified biologist or qualified biological monitor shall be present if work must occur within the avoidance buffer to ensure that special-status plants are not adversely affected by the work.

If avoidance of special-status plants is not feasible, an impact assessment shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine whether project-related activities would have the potential to eliminate, substantially reduce the number of, or restrict the range of special-status plant species (a significant impact) and/or conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting special-status plant species.

If impacts are determined to be less than significant, no further measures shall be needed. If impacts are determined to be significant, mitigation may be required. Mitigation measures, if needed, shall be developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Mitigation measures may include the restoration or permanent preservation of onsite or offsite habitat for special-status plants and/or translocation of plants or seeds from affected areas to unaffected habitats.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3. Crotch Bumble Bees (CBB). Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to crotch bumble bees:

If CBB is no longer a candidate or listed species under the California Endangered Species Act (ESA) at the time ground-disturbing activities occur, no additional protection measures shall be required.

If CBB is legally protected under the California ESA as a candidate or listed species and ground-disturbing activities are scheduled to begin between February 1 and October 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for the CBB. Based on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Survey Considerations for ESA Candidate Bumble Bee Species (2023), it is recommended that three Crotch bumble bee surveys be conducted at 2- to 4-week intervals during the colony active period (April through August), if possible.

If CBB are detected, any remaining surveys shall focus on nest location. If no nests are found but the species is observed during pre-construction surveys, work crews shall be informed of the possibility of CBB or their nests being in the project area. If a CBB is encountered during construction, work shall stop until the individual leaves of its own volition. If an active CBB nest is detected, an appropriate no-disturbance buffer zone, i.e. avoidance area, (including foraging resources and flight corridors essential for supporting the colony) shall be established around the nest to reduce the risk of disturbance or accidental take, and a qualified biologist shall coordinate with CDFW to determine if an Incidental Take Permit under Section 2081 of the California ESA will be required. No-disturbance buffers may be removed at the completion of the flight season (October 31) and/or once the qualified biologist deems that the nesting colony is no longer active.

If initial grading does not start within 2 weeks (1 week, if prior to colony active period) of the completion date of the CBB pre-construction surveys, pre-construction surveys shall be repeated prior to ground-disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4: Northwestern Pond Turtle. Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to northwestern pond turtle:

A qualified biologist shall perform a pre-construction clearance survey for northwestern pond turtle within 24 hours of the initiation of project activities.

If a northwestern pond turtle is found within the project site and offsite improvement area, it shall be allowed to move out of the project site and offsite improvement area of its own volition. If after a reasonable period of time the turtle is not leaving the project site and offsite improvement area, a qualified biologist may move the animal to an appropriate location outside the impact area.

If northwestern pond turtle is observed on or immediately adjacent to the project site and offsite improvement area or if recommended by a qualified biologist, exclusion fencing shall be installed between the impact area and adjacent suitable northwestern pond turtle habitat.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5: Nesting Birds and Raptors. Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to protected birds and active nests:

To the extent feasible, tree and shrub removal or trimming shall be conducted outside of the bird nesting season (typically February 1 to August 31, and as early as January 1 for raptors).

During the nesting season (typically February 1 to August 31, and as early as January 1 for raptors), a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted within 14 days prior to the commencement of project-related activities to identify active nests that could be affected by construction. The pre-construction nesting bird survey shall include accessible areas within 100 feet of the project site and offsite improvement area, including any temporary disturbance areas. For raptors, the pre-construction nesting bird survey shall include accessible areas within 500 feet of the project site and offsite improvement area.

If active nests are found, an appropriate no-disturbance buffer shall be established around the nest. A qualified biologist shall establish the buffer distance in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The buffer shall be maintained until the nestlings have fledged (i.e., are capable of flight and become independent of the nest), which shall be determined by a qualified biologist. The no-disturbance buffer can be removed—and no further measures are necessary—once the young have fledged or the nest is no longer occupied, as determined by a qualified biologist.

Mitigation Measure BIO-6: Swainson's Hawk. Implement the following measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts on the Swainson's Hawk that may be nesting nearby:

If proposed project activities are scheduled during the Swainson's hawk nesting season (March 1 to August 31), then, prior to beginning work on the proposed project, a qualified biologist shall survey for Swainson's hawk nesting activity.

A qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys within 14 days prior to the commencement of the proposed project-related activities to identify active nests that could be affected by construction. The pre-construction survey shall include accessible areas within 500 feet of the project site, including any temporary disturbance areas. If Swainson's hawk nesting activity is observed during the survey, the survey results shall be submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for review and acceptance prior to the initiation of the proposed project activities.

If the qualified biologist identifies nesting Swainson's hawks, they shall recommend a no-disturbance buffer, and the contractor shall implement this buffer under the supervision of a qualified biologist. The proposed project's activities shall be prohibited within the no-disturbance buffer from March 1 to August 31, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW, which may include consultation pursuant to the California ESA and issuance of an Incidental Take Permit, or a qualified biologist determining that the nest is no longer active. If there is a lapse in Project-related work of 14 days or longer, an additional survey shall be conducted prior to resuming the proposed project activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-7: Burrowing Owl. A pre-construction survey for nesting burrowing owl will be conducted by a qualified biologist within 14 days prior to commencement of project activities within the project site and offsite improvement area and a 250-foot buffer. Surveys shall be conducted at appropriate times and in appropriate weather conditions to maximize detection. If active burrowing owl burrows are found, a no-disturbance buffer will be immediately established, and an avoidance plan will be prepared in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) prior to the commencement of any ground-disturbing activities.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through Mitigation Measure BIO-7 would reduce the potential for direct or indirect impacts to special-status species through habitat modification, construction disturbance, or accidental take. These measures include pre-construction biological surveys, establishment of avoidance areas, worker environmental training, and seasonal timing restrictions to avoid sensitive periods such as nesting or active breeding seasons. Additionally, site-specific protection protocols for species such as Parry's rough tarplant, Crotch bumble bee, northwestern pond turtle, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owl ensure that the proposed project would not result in population-level effects, loss of viability, or contribute to the decline of these species. As a result, impacts to candidate, sensitive, or special-status species would be minimized or avoided, and the proposed project would not substantially affect these species or conflict with applicable biological resource regulations. Therefore, with implementation of the identified mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a less than significant level.

b) Would the project 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?

As shown in Figure 3.4-2, the CARI indicates a single feature within the project site with the designation "WRU," which represents a seasonally flooded wetland. However, during a site visit conducted by ECORP, a preliminary assessment of aquatic resources within the project site and off-site improvement areas was performed. No evidence of the CARI-mapped feature was observed, and no other aquatic resources were identified within the project site (ECORP 2025). This indicates that, while the CARI dataset suggested a potential wetland, the field investigation did not confirm its presence. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Because the project site is dominated by a fallow agricultural parcel and urbanized lands with limited native vegetation, it does not provide suitable conditions for riparian or other sensitive natural communities. Project implementation would not involve impacts on wetlands, streams, or other sensitive habitats, and no hydrologic features would be altered. Therefore, based on the absence of these resources and the lack of critical habitat onsite, the project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities identified by local, state, or federal agencies. This impact is considered less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

c) Would the project 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?

As shown in Figure 3.4-2, the CARI indicates a single feature within the project site with the designation "WRU," which represents a seasonally flooded wetland. However, during a site visit conducted by ECORP, a preliminary assessment of aquatic resources within the project site and off-site improvement areas was performed. No evidence of the CARI-mapped feature was observed, and no other aquatic resources were identified within the project site (ECORP 2025). This indicates that, while the CARI dataset suggested a potential wetland, the field investigation did not confirm its presence.Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

The project site consists primarily of a fallow agricultural parcel and developed areas, which do not support characteristics typical of protected wetland habitats. Consequently, project implementation would not result in direct removal, filling, hydrologic disruption, or other impacts to wetlands. Based on the absence of wetlands or aquatic resources onsite, the project would have a less than significant impact on state or federally protected wetlands. Therefore, less than significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

d) Would the project 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?

No known migratory wildlife corridors or nursery sites occur within the project site and offsite improvement area (ECORP 2025). However, the project site and off-site improvement area contains disturbed agricultural and open areas that provide marginal foraging and nesting opportunities for birds, including migratory and non-migratory species. Project construction activities, particularly ground disturbance and vegetation removal during the nesting season, could temporarily disrupt local wildlife movement and result in take of active nests or dependent young. Therefore, a potentially significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant.

Impact BIO-2: The proposed project would have a potentially significant impact on migratory birds and nursey sites.

See Mitigation Measures BIO-5, BIO-6, and BIO-7.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-5 through Mitigation Measure BIO-7 would reduce the potential for direct or indirect impacts to migratory birds and nursey site. Mitigation Measures BIO-5 through BIO-7 require pre-construction surveys and establishment of no-disturbance buffers for nesting birds, raptors, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owls, with tree or shrub removal and ground-disturbing activities timed or managed to avoid impacts until nests are inactive. Therefore, with implementation of the identified mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a less than significant level.

e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

The Biological Resource Report did not identify native trees within the project impact limits; therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with local conservation policies or tree protection ordinances. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan; Natural Community Conservation Plan; or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

The project site and offsite improvement area is not within a habitat conservation plan. The project site and offsite improvement area is in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area which provides guidelines to protect biological resources such as the Native Oaks Section A-1.8 provides guidelines for native oaks in the area governed by the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. The project site and offsite improvement area does not include any native oaks. The proposed project would not conflict with native oaks provisions within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

3.4.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The proposed project site is in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area in southern Yuba County. The project site and offsite improvement area consist primarily of disturbed agricultural and urban land use types, though it supports suitable habitat for several special-status species, including Parry's rough tarplant, Crotch bumble bee, northwestern pond turtle, burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk (a state-threatened species), northern harrier (a USFWS bird of conservation concern and state species of special concern), and various nesting birds. The project site and offsite improvement area contains no riparian habitat, wetlands, or sensitive natural communities, and no jurisdictional waters of the State or U.S. are found on-site. A field reconnaissance found no evidence of the CARI-mapped wetland or other aquatic resources within the project site, confirming that potential impacts would be less than significant. Given the disturbed nature of the project site and offsite improvement area and the project site's proximity to major roads and residential and commercial development, the project site and offsite improvement area does not provide significant function as a wildlife corridor or movement area. The project site and offsite improvement area is situated in a region undergoing continued development associated with implementation of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to biological resources?

The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis encompasses both nearby development projects and regional habitat loss trends. While cumulative development in the region could result in incremental habitat loss and reduced foraging or nesting opportunities for special-status species, the proposed project itself would not remove substantial habitat. The proposed project includes mitigation measures —such as pre-construction biological surveys, establishment of no-disturbance buffers, implementation of avoidance strategies, and

coordination with regulatory agencies. To avoid, minimize or compensate for impacts on biological resources in compliance with the California ESA, MBTA, and the California Fish and Game Code. Other projects in the region would be subject to similar regulatory requirements and likely implement comparable mitigation measures, such as pre-construction biological surveys. Because project site and offsite improvement area do not contain unique or irreplaceable biological resources, implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through Mitigation Measure BIO-7 would ensure that the project avoids or minimizes its contribution to cumulative impacts on biological resources. Impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.4.6 References

ECORP Consulting Inc. (ECORP). 2025. *Biological Resources Assessment for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project*. ECORP Consulting Inc. (Appendix D)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). 2025. *Historical Observing Metadata Repository*. https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/homr/#ncdcstnid=20002846&tab=MSHR.

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3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources comprise archaeological and historical resources. Archaeology studies human artifacts, such as places, objects, and settlements that reflect group or individual religious, cultural, or everyday activities. Historical resources include sites, buildings/structures, objects, or places that are at least 50 years old and are significant for their engineering, architecture, cultural use or association, etc. In California, historic resources cover human activities over the past 12,000 years. Cultural resources provide information on scientific progress, environmental adaptations, group ideology, or other human advancements. This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed Plumas Lake School Middle Project (proposed project) to impact cultural resources (historical and archaeological resources).

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical report:

- Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project, ECORP Consulting, Inc. July 2025.

A complete copy of this report would be included as Appendix E in this DEIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20 , 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to cultural resources were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.5.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to biological resources that are applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

National Environmental Policy Act

NEPA (42 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.) establishes national policy for the protection and enhancement of the environment. Per NEPA, part of the responsibility of the federal government is to “use all practicable means…to improve and coordinate federal plans, functions

programs, and resources" to "preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage" (42 U.S.C. 4331[b]).

NEPA requires that federal agencies consider "reasonably foreseeable environmental effects" of major federal actions (42 U.S.C. 4332[C][i]). When determining the level of NEPA review, federal agencies must analyze and disclose whether the major federal action does or does not have a "reasonably foreseeable significant effect on the quality of the human environment," including "important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage" (42 U.S.C. 4336[b] and 42 U.S.C. 4331[b]). NEPA does not limit consideration of impacts to cultural resources to only those resources that have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) through the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended). NEPA also requires that the federal lead agency consult with and obtain the comments of any federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to a particular environmental resource (42 U.S.C. 4332[C]).

National Historic Preservation Act

The federal law that covers cultural resources that could be affected by federal undertakings is the NHPA of 1966, as amended. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that federal agencies consider the effects of a federal undertaking on properties listed in or eligible for the NRHP. The agencies must afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking. A federal undertaking is defined in Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 800.16(y):

> A federal undertaking means a project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency, including those carried out by or on behalf of a federal agency; those carried out with Federal financial assistance; and those requiring a Federal permit, license, or approval.

The regulations that stipulate the procedures for complying with NHPA Section 106 are in 36 CFR 800. The NHPA Section 106 regulations require:

- definition of the area of potential effect (APE);
- identification of cultural resources within the APE;
- evaluation of the identified resources within the APE using NRHP eligibility criteria;
- determination of whether the effects of the undertaking or project on eligible resources will be adverse; and
- agreement on and implementation of efforts to resolve adverse effects, if necessary.

The federal agency must seek comment from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and, in some cases, the ACHP, for its determinations of eligibility, effects, and proposed mitigation measures. NHPA Section 106 procedures for a specific project can be modified by negotiation of

a Memorandum of Agreement or Programmatic Agreement between the federal agency, the SHPO, and, in some cases, the project proponent.

Effects to a cultural resource are potentially adverse if the lead federal agency, with the SHPO's concurrence, determines that the resource is eligible for the NRHP, making it a Historic Property, and if application of the Criteria of Adverse Effects (36 CFR 800.5[a][2] et seq.) results in the conclusion that the effects will be adverse. The NRHP eligibility criteria, contained in 36 CFR 60.4, are as follows:

> The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of state and local importance that possess aspects of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and:
>
> A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
>
> B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
>
> C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
>
> D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory.

In addition, the resource must be at least 50 years old, barring exceptional circumstances (36 CFR 60.4). Resources that are eligible for or listed on the NRHP are *Historic Properties*.

Regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR 800.5) require that the federal agency, in consultation with the SHPO, apply the Criteria of Adverse Effect to Historic Properties within the APE. According to 36 CFR 800.5(a)(1), an adverse effect is defined as when an undertaking may:

> …alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of a Historic Property that qualify the property for inclusion in the [NRHP] in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulations

If a project would affect Waters of the United States, the project proponent must meet requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, and/or Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, in addition to seeking authorization from the USACE. Apart from the requirements of the

NHPA, all Historic Properties are subject to consideration under the USACE's NEPA processes (Appendix B of 33 CFR Part 325), and the USACE's public interest review requirements contained in 33 CFR 320.4. Historic Properties, therefore, are included as a factor in the district engineer's decision on each CWA 404 permit application.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

CEQA is the state law that applies to a project's impacts on cultural resources. A project is an activity that may cause a direct or indirect physical change in the environment and that is undertaken or funded by a state or local agency, or that requires a permit, license, or lease from a state or local agency. CEQA requires that impacts to Historical Resources be identified and, if the impacts would be significant, then apply mitigation measures to reduce the impacts.

Per CEQA, a Historical Resource is a resource that:

1. Is listed in or is eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) by the State Historical Resources Commission, or has been determined historically significant by the CEQA lead agency because it meets the eligibility criteria for the CRHR;
2. is included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Public Resources Code (PRC) 5020.1(k); or
3. has been identified as significant in a historical resources survey, as defined in PRC 5024.1(g) (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, Section 15064.5[a]).

Per CCR Title 14, Section 4852(b), the eligibility criteria for the CRHR are:

1. The resource is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
2. the resource is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
3. the resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values; or
4. the resource has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the Nation.

In addition, the resource must retain integrity, which is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association (CCR Title 14, Section 4852[c]). Resources that have been determined eligible for the NRHP are automatically eligible for the CRHR. Impacts to a Historical Resource, as defined by CEQA (listed in an official historic inventory or survey or eligible for the CRHR), are significant if the resource is demolished or destroyed, or if the characteristics that made the resource eligible are materially impaired (CCR

Title 14, Section 15064.5[b]). Demolition or alteration of eligible buildings, structures, and features such that they would no longer be eligible would result in a significant impact. Whole or partial destruction of eligible archaeological sites would also result in a significant impact. In addition to impacts from construction resulting in destruction or physical alteration of an eligible resource, impacts to the integrity of setting (sometimes termed visual impacts) of physical features within a project area could also result in significant impacts.

Tribal cultural resources (TCRs) are defined in Section 21074 of the California PRC as sites, features, places, cultural landscapes (geographically defined in terms of the size and scope), sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either listed in or eligible for the CRHR, or are included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of Section 5020.1, or are 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 Section 5024.1. Section 1(b)(4) of Assembly Bill (AB) 52 established that only California Native American tribes, as defined in Section 21073 of the California PRC, are experts in the identification of TCRs and impacts thereto. Because ECORP does not meet the definition of a California Native American tribe, it only addresses information in this report for which it is qualified to identify and evaluate, and that which is needed to inform the cultural resources section of CEQA documents. This report, therefore, does not identify or evaluate TCRs. If any California Native American tribe ascribes additional importance or interpretation to archaeological resources described herein, or if the tribe provides information about non-archeological TCRs, such information would be documented separately in the AB 52 tribal consultation record between the tribe and lead agency and summarized in the TCRs section of the CEQA document, if applicable.

LOCAL

Yuba County General Plan

Natural Resources Element

- **Policy NR6.1:** The County will require environmental assessment and mitigation to reduce or avoid impacts to significant cultural resources, as feasible, per state and federal legislation and regulations.
- **Policy NR6.2:** If potential paleontological or prehistoric resources are detected during construction, work shall stop and consultation is required to avoid further impacts.
- **Policy NR6.3:** New developments, roads, water and sewer lines, and stormwater infrastructure should be located to avoid impacts to significant cultural resources.
- **Policy NR6.4:** The County will encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures in a way that maintains the character defining elements of the historic structure.

- **Policy NR6.5:** Priority investment should go to preserving or rehabilitating historic structures that are grouped in close proximity, are particularly good examples of a specific architectural style, or are associated with important people or events in the County's history.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

- **Goal:** It shall be the goal of Yuba County to ensure that new development is planned and occurs in a manner that will minimize: grading, vegetation disturbance, intrusion onto natural water courses, and encroachment onto archaeological, historical or rare and endangered species sites.
- **Policy 4:** Significant Historical and archaeological sites shall be preserved and protected

3.5.2 Existing Conditions

REGIONAL PRE-CONTACT HISTORY

It is generally believed that human occupation of California began at least 10,000 before present (BP). The archaeological record indicates that between approximately 10,000 and 8,000 BP, a predominantly hunting economy existed, characterized by archaeological sites containing numerous projectile points and butchered large animal bones. Animals that were hunted probably consisted mostly of large species still in existence today. Bones of extinct species have been found throughout the region but cannot definitively be associated with human artifacts. Although small animal bones and plant grinding tools are rarely found within archaeological sites of this period, small game and floral foods were probably exploited on a limited basis. A lack of deep cultural deposits from this period suggests that groups included only small numbers of individuals who did not often stay in one place for extended periods.

Around 8,000 BP, there was a shift in focus from hunting toward a greater reliance on plant resources. Archaeological evidence of this trend consists of a much greater number of milling tools (e.g., metates and manos) for processing seeds and other vegetable matter. This period, which extended to around 5,000 BP, is sometimes referred to as the Millingstone Horizon. Projectile points are found in archaeological sites from this period, but they are far fewer in number than from sites dating to before 8,000 BP. An increase in the size of groups and the stability of settlements is indicated by deep, extensive middens at some sites from this period.

In sites dating to after about 5,000 BP, archaeological evidence indicates that reliance on both plant gathering and hunting continued as in the previous period, with more specialized adaptation to particular environments. Mortars and pestles were added to metates and manos for grinding seeds and other vegetable material. Flaked-stone tools became more refined and specialized, and bone tools were more common. During this period, new peoples from the Great Basin began entering southern California. These immigrants, who spoke a language of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic stock, seem to have displaced or absorbed the earlier population of

Hokan-speaking peoples. During this period, known as the Late Horizon, population densities were higher than before, and settlement became concentrated in villages and communities along the coast and interior valleys. Regional subcultures also started to develop, each with its own geographical territory and language or dialect. These were most likely the basis for the groups encountered by the first Europeans during the eighteenth century. Despite the regional differences, many material culture traits were shared among groups, indicating a great deal of interaction. The introduction of the bow and arrow into the region sometime around 2,000 BP is indicated by the presence of small projectile points (ECORP 2025).

LOCAL PRE-CONTACT HISTORY

The project site and the offsite improvement area are in the Central Valley, and there is currently no single cultural-historical framework that covers the entirety of the Central Valley in pre-contact times. Although detailed chronologies exist for some portions of the lower Sacramento Delta, other portions of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys including the project site and the offsite improvement area lack a cohesive pre-contact chronological framework. The following discussion summarizes the cultural patterns and the different local developments that are represented in archaeological deposits in the Central Valley region surrounding the current project site and the offsite improvement area.

California's Great Central Valley has long held the attention of archaeologists and was a focus of early research in California. Archaeological work during the 1920s and 1930s led to the cultural chronology for central California. This chronology was based on the results of excavations conducted in the lower Sacramento River Valley. This chronology identified three archaeological cultures, named Early, Transitional, and Late.

In 1949, continued research redefined the description of these three cultures, and the three cultural groups were subsumed into three time periods, designated as the Early, Middle, and Late horizons. The Early Horizon was also known as "Windmiller."

Following years of documenting artifact similarities among sites in the San Francisco Bay region and the Delta, a cultural model was developed known as the Central California Taxonomic System (CCTS). This system proposed a linear, uniform sequence of cultural succession in Central California, and explicitly defined Early, Middle, and Late horizons for cultural change. Archaeological researchers have subsequently refined and redefined aspects of the CCTS. For instance, further research reviewed general economic, technological, and mortuary traits between archaeological assemblages across the region, which lead to separate cultural, temporal, and spatial units from each other and assigned them to six chronological periods: Paleo-Indian (12,000-8,000 BP); Lower, Middle, and Upper Archaic (8,000 BP to AD 500) and Upper and Lower Emergent (AD 500 to 1800).

This research further defined three cultural patterns: The Windmiller, the Berkeley, and the Augustine patterns, and assigned them to the Early, Middle, and Late horizons of the CCTS. These patterns were defined to reflect the general sharing of lifeways within groups in a specific geographic region. The Windmiller pattern of the Early Horizon included cultural patterns dating from 5,000 to 3,000 BP; the Berkeley Pattern of the Middle Horizon (also known as the Cosumnes cultural pattern), included cultural patterns dating from 3,000 BP to AD 500, and the Augustine Pattern of the Late Horizon included the cultural patterns from AD 500 to the historic period.

The cultural sequence was further redefined in the early 2000s. Early 2000 research's recalibrated sequence is divided into three broad periods: The Paleo-Indian Period (11,550 to 8,550 cal. BC); the three-staged Archaic period, consisting of the Lower Archaic (8,550 to 5,550 cal. BC), Middle Archaic (5,550 to 550 cal. BC), and Upper Archaic (550 cal. BC to cal. AD 1100); and the Emergent Period (cal. AD 1100 to Historic). The three divisions of the Archaic Period correspond to climate changes. This is the most recently developed sequence and is now commonly used to interpret Central California prehistory. The aforementioned periods are characterized by the following:

Paleo-Indian Period

This period began when the first people began to inhabit what is now known as the California culture area. It was commonly believed these first people subsisted on big game and minimally processed foods, (i.e., hunters and gatherers), presumably with no trade networks. More recent research indicates these people may have been more sedentary, relied on some processed foods, and traded. Populations likely consisted of small groups traveling frequently to exploit plant and animal resources (ECORP 2025).

Archaic Period

This period was characterized by an increase in plant exploitation for subsistence, more elaborate burial accoutrements, and increase in trade network complexity. The three divisions that correspond to prehistoric climate change are characterized by the following aspects (ECORP 2025).

- **Lower Archaic Period—**this period is characterized by cycles of widespread floodplain and alluvial fan deposition. Artifact assemblages from this period include chipped stone crescents and early wide-stemmed points, marine shell beads, eastern Nevada obsidian, and obsidian from the north Coast Ranges. These types of artifacts found on sites dating to this period indicate trade was occurring in multiple directions. A variety of plant and animal species were also utilized, including acorns, wild cucumber, and manzanita berries.
- **Middle Archaic Period—**this period is characterized by a drier climate period. This period is characterized by two distinct settlement/subsistence patterns: the Foothill Tradition and the Valley Tradition. Functional artifact assemblages consisting primarily of locally sourced

flaked-stone and groundstone cobbles characterize the Foothill Tradition, while the Valley Tradition was generally characterized by diverse subsistence practices and extended periods of sedentism. The current project site and the offsite improvement area would fall into the Valley Tradition.

- **Upper Archaic Period—**this period is characterized by abrupt change to wetter and cooler environmental climate conditions. Much greater cultural diversity is evident from this period. More specialized artifacts, such as bone tools, ceremonial blades, polished and groundstone plummets, saucer and saddle Olivella shell beads, Haliotis shell ornaments, and a variety of groundstone implements are characteristic of this period.

Emergent Period

This period is most notably marked by the introduction of the bow and arrow, the emergence of social stratification linked to wealth, and more expansive trade networks signified by the presence of clam disk beads that were used as currency. The Augustine pattern (the distinct cultural pattern of the Emergent Period) is characterized by the appearance of small projectile points (largely obsidian), rimmed display mortars, flanged steatite pipes, flanged pestles, and chevron-designed bird-bone tubes. Large mammals and small seeded resources appear to have made up a larger part of the diet during this period.

The Windmiller Pattern of the Early Horizon (as defined by ECORP 2025), dates to the Middle Archaic and may be the most extensively studied of all the cultural patterns defined for the Central Valley. In fact, the similarity noted between elements of Windmiller and materials from other sites may have been the catalyst for early archaeologists identifying the material cultural "blending" of groups in the Central Valley during this period. The temporal span for Windmiller has been updated and reanalyzed several times in the archaeological literature. The date originally proposed for the emergence of Windmiller was 4,500 BP, because the culture at 4,000 years ago appeared to have been fully developed and seemed to have been well integrated into the regional economic system.

Most notable characteristics that identify the Windmiller pattern are:

- large, heavy stemmed and leaf-shaped projectile points commonly made of a variety of materials other than obsidian;
- perforate charmstones;
- Haliotis and Olivella shell beads and ornaments;
- trident fish spears;
- baked clay balls (presumably for cooking in baskets);
- flat slab milling stones;
- small numbers of mortars; and
- ventrally extended burials oriented toward the west.

The subsistence pattern of Windmiller groups probably emphasized hunting and fishing, with supplemental seed collecting (possibly including acorns).

Windmiller groups acquired obsidian from at least two Coast Ranges and three trans-Sierran sources, Haliotis and Olivella shells and ornaments from the coast, and quartz crystals from the Sierra Nevada foothills. It is widely hypothesized that the bulk of these materials were acquired through trade; however, some may have been acquired as part of seasonal movements between the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The succeeding Middle Horizon, namely the Cosumnes Culture, the Berkeley Pattern, and absorbed into the Middle and Upper Archaic designations by researchers in 2007 was first recognized at site CA-SAC-66. Much less published material discusses the patterns defined for this era than does Windmiller; nonetheless, some of the most notable characteristics are:

- tightly flexed burials with variable orientation;
- red ochre stains in burials;
- distinctive Olivella and Haliotis beads and ornaments;
- distinctive charmstones;
- cobble mortars and evidence of wooden mortars;
- numerous bone tools and ornaments;
- large, heavy foliate and lanceolate concave base projectile points made of materials other than
- obsidian; and
- objects of baked clay.

Further classification of the Middle Archaic (as defined by ECORP 2025) into the Foothill Tradition and Valley Tradition helped to clarify the different types of cultural sequences that occurred during these time periods. Sites that represent the Valley Tradition are generally characterized by much more diverse subsistence practices and extended periods of sedentism. Specialized tools, trade goods, and faunal refuse that indicate year-round occupation are evident on sites of the Valley Tradition. Distinct artifacts attributed to this tradition include one of the oldest dated shell bead lots in central California (4,160 BP) and a particular type of pestle used with a wooden mortar. Sites representing the early Middle Archaic Valley Tradition (5550 to 2050 cal. BC) are rare because of the geomorphic conditions, under which later Holocene soil deposits covered earlier Holocene archaeological deposits. Sites from the later Middle Archaic Valley Tradition are well represented in the Sacramento Valley and Delta, and components include diverse dietary remains and technological assemblages along with elaborate material culture, as seen at sites near the project site and the offsite improvement area, such as CA-BUT-233, CA-COL-247, and SAC-107.

The next era in the region is identified as the Late Horizon, the Hotchkiss Culture, and the Augustine Pattern. The culture was formed by populations during the later Upper Archaic and Emergent Periods, and ranges in age from around 550 cal. BC to contact (dates vary between the different models of prehistory developed for the region). The Upper Archaic, as discussed above, corresponds with the late Holocene change in environmental conditions to a wetter and cooler climate. Specialized technologies including bone tools, wands, and tube ornaments, and widespread manufactured goods such as Olivella beads, Haliotis ornaments, and polished and ground stone plummets are characteristic of this period. Sites surrounding the project site and the offsite improvement area exhibiting these aspects include CA-COL-247, CA-SAC-133, and CA-SOL-379. The Emergent Period and Late Horizon are markedly represented by the introduction of bow-and-arrow technology, as well as more pronounced cultural diversity as reflected in diversity of burial posturing, artifact styles, and material culture. Cultural patterns for this era are represented in the northern Sacramento Valley, namely within the Whiskeytown Pattern at sites in Shasta County.

This era primarily represents both local innovation and the blending of new cultural traits introduced into the Central Valley. The Emergent Occupation coincides with the Augustine Pattern in the lower Sacramento Valley/Delta region, and with the Sweetwater and Shasta complexes in the northern Sacramento Valley. The emergence of the Augustine Pattern appears to have been associated with the expansion of Wintun populations from the north, which appears to have led to an increase in settlements in the area after 550 BP.

Despite the varying designations, this emergent era is distinguished in the archaeological record by intensive fishing, extensive use of acorns, elaborate ceremonialism, social stratification, and cremation of the dead. Artifacts associated with the defined patterns (Augustine, Emergent, Hotchkiss) include bow-and-arrow technology (evidenced by small projectile points), mortars and pestles, and fish harpoons with unilaterally or bilaterally placed barbs in opposed or staggered positions. Mortuary patterns include flexed burials and cremations, with elaborate material goods found in association with prestigious individuals. Mound villages and smaller settlements were established along major tributaries represented at sites such as CA-BUT-1, CA-BUT-12, CA-BUT-288, CA-COL-11, CA-SAC-16, and CA-YOL-69.

A local form of pottery, Cosumnes brown ware, emerged in the lower Sacramento Valley. Sites containing this ceramic type in their artifact assemblage near the project site vicinity include CA-SAC-6, CA-SAC-67, CA-SAC-107, CA-SAC-265, and CA-SAC-329. Human animal effigies are also a marker of this emergent era around the project site and are present at sites CA-SAC-6, CA-SAC-16, and CA-SAC-267.

Recent research suggests that population change and cultural change in the Emergent Period just before contact in the Sacramento Valley is largely marked by a general increase in intensification of resource procurement, tool and goods manufacture, and trade (ECORP 2025).

Ethnohistory

Ethnographically, the project site and the offsite improvement area are in the territory occupied by the Penutian-speaking Nisenan. Nisenan were observed by early ethnographers to inhabit the drainages of the Yuba, Bear, and American rivers, and also the lower reaches of the Feather River, extending from the east banks of the Sacramento River on the west to the mid to high elevations of the western flank of the Sierra Nevada to the east. The territory extended from the area surrounding the current city of Oroville on the north to a few miles south of the American River in the south. The Sacramento River bounded the territory on the west, and in the east, it extended to a general area located within a few miles of Lake Tahoe. The descendants of traditional Nisenan, including the United Auburn Indian Community, continue to reside in the region. Much of what anthropologists know about the traditional Nisenan lifeways comes from ethnographic research, summarized below (refer to the Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for a full description in Appendix E).

As a language group, Nisenan (meaning “from among us” or “of our side”) are members of the Maiduan Family of the Penutian stock and are generally divided into three groups based on dialect differences: the Northern Hill (mountain) Nisenan in the Yuba River drainage; the Valley Nisenan along the Sacramento River; and the Southern Hill (foothills) Nisenan along the American River.

At the time of contact, ethnographers identified that the basic social and economic group for the Nisenan was the family or household unit. The nuclear and/or extended family formed a corporate unit. These basic units were combined into distinct village or hamlet groups, each largely composed of consanguine relatives. Lineage groups were important political and economic units that combined to form tribelets, which were the largest sociopolitical unit identified for Nisenan. Each tribelet had a chief or headman who exercised political control over all villages within it. Villages typically included family dwellings, acorn granaries, a sweathouse, and a dance house, owned by the chief. The role of chief seems to have been an advisory role with little direct authority but with the support of the shaman and the elders, the word of the chief became virtually the law. Tribelets assumed the name of the head village where the chief resided.

The office of tribelet chief is hereditary, with the chieftainship being the property of a single patrilineage within the tribelet. Tribelet populations of Valley Nisenan were as large as 500 persons at contact, while foothill and mountain tribelets ranged between 100 and 300 persons. Each tribelet owned a bounded tract of land and exercised control over its natural resources. It is estimated that Nisenan tribelet territories averaged approximately 10 miles along each boundary, or 100 square miles, with foothill territories tending to encompass more area than mountain territories. In many instances, these boundaries were indicated by piles of stones. Regardless, ethnographers noted that Nisenan groups tended to stay within their village areas

except during the summer season when groups of people would sojourn into the mountains to hunt and gather.

Early Nisenan groups practiced seasonal migration, a subsistence strategy involving moving from one area or elevation to another to harvest plants, fish, and hunt game across contrasting ecosystems that were in relatively close proximity to each other. Valley Nisenan generally did not range beyond the valley and lower foothills, while foothill and mountain groups ranged across a more extensive area that included jointly shared territory, whose entry was subject to traditional understandings of priority of ownership and current relations between the groups.

Ethnographers noted that during most of the year, Nisenan usually lived in permanent villages located below about 2,500 feet that generally had a southern exposure, were surrounded by an open area, and were located above, but close to watercourses. The rather large uninhabited region between the 3,000-foot contour and the summit of the Sierra Nevada was considered open ground that was only used by communities living along its edge. Permanent villages in the foothills and mountains were usually located on high ground between rivers. Valley villages were also usually located on raised areas to avoid flooding. At one time there were settlements located on every small stream within Nisenan territory, but permanent villages were not located in steep, dark, narrow canyons of large rivers, or at altitudes where deep snows persisted throughout the winter. In fact, permanent occupation sites above 3,500 feet were only located in protected valleys.

The availability of resources influenced the location of Nisenan permanent villages, since they acquired a proportion of their food resources from the general surrounding area. Other essential and critical food resources were obtained during the summer, when small base camps were established at higher altitudes in proximity to a water source. Individuals would stage expeditions to acquire natural, faunal, and plant resources from these camps.

Communally organized Nisenan task groups exploited a wide variety of resources prior to European colonization. Communal hunting drives were undertaken to obtain deer, quail, rabbits, and grasshoppers. Bears were hunted in the winter when their hides were at their best condition. Runs of salmon in the spring and fall provided a regular supply of fish, while other fish such as suckers, pike, whitefish, and trout were obtained with snares, fish traps, or with various fish poisons such as soaproot. Birds were caught with nooses or large nets and were also occasionally shot with bow and arrow. Game was prepared by roasting, baking, or drying. In addition, salt was obtained from a spring near modern-day Rocklin.

Acorns were gathered in the fall and stored in granaries for use during the rest of the year. Although acorns were the staple of the Nisenan diet, they also harvested roots like wild onion and “Indian potato,” which were eaten raw, steamed, baked, or dried and processed into flour cakes to be stored for winter use. Buckeye, pine nuts, hazelnuts, and other edible nuts further

supplemented the diet. Key resources such as acorns, salmon, and deer were ritually managed through ceremonies to facilitate successful exploitation and equitable distribution of resources.

Prior to the era when European colonization dominated California, trade was an important facet of Nisenan society, with goods traveling back and forth between the coast and valleys and Sierra Nevada and beyond to the east. Coastal items like shell beads, salmon, salt, and foothill pine nuts were traded for resources from the mountains and farther inland, such as bows and arrows, deer skins, and sugar pine nuts. In addition, obsidian was imported from the north.

Early Nisenan built residential dwellings, ceremonial structures, semi-subterranean sweat lodges, and menstruation huts. The typical hill and mountain dwelling was the conical bark house made by overlapping three or four layers of bark with no interior support. A thatched house was used at lower elevations, consisting of a conical framework of poles covered by brush, grass, or tules. Semi-subterranean earth lodge roundhouses were also built by hill and mountain groups and used for ceremonial gatherings, assemblies, local feasts, and for housing visitors.

Flaked- and ground-stone tools were common among the early Nisenan and included knives, arrow and spear points, club heads, arrow straighteners, scrapers, rough cobble and shaped pestles, bedrock mortars, grinding stones (metates), pipes, charms, and short spears. Certain colored stone points were considered lucky and could be traded for four or five other projectile points. In addition, obsidian was highly valued and imported. In some instances, soapstone was used for bowl mortars.

Nisenan groups at contact used wood for a variety of tools and weapons, including both simple and sinew-backed bows, arrow shafts and points, looped stirring sticks, flat-bladed mush paddles, pipes, and hide preparation tools. Cordage was made from plant material and was used to construct fishing nets and braided and twined tumplines. Soaproot brushes were commonly used during grinding activities to collect meal or flour. Specialized food processing and cooking techniques included the grinding and leaching of ground acorn and buckeye meal; burning of umbelliferae, a plant with cabbage-like leaves, to obtain salt; and roasting various foods in earth ovens. Both hill and valley groups were observed having used the bedrock mortar and pestle (both rough cobble and shaped) to grind acorns, pine nuts, seeds, other plant foods, and meat. A soaproot brush was used to sweep ground meal into mortar cups and collect flour. Fist-sized heated stones were used to cook or warm liquid-based foods such as acorn gruel and pine nut meal. Whole acorns were stored in granaries, and pine nuts were stored in large pine bough covered caches.

Like many indigenous groups, Nisenan managed many wild plants, primarily by controlled burning, which removed underbrush and encouraged growth of edible grasses, seed producing plants, and other useful plant resources (e.g., basketry materials). The use of fire for environmental modification and as an aid in hunting is frequently mentioned in the

ethnographic literature relating to the Nisenan. The lower foothills in the valley oak zone were thickly covered with herbaceous vegetation that was annually burned by the Nisenan before it was halted by Euro Americans.

Nisenan used baskets for a variety of tasks, including storage, cooking, serving and processing foods, traps, cradles, hats, cages, seed beaters, and winnowing trays. Other woven artifacts include tule matting and netting made of milkweed, sage fibers, or wild hemp.

Like most indigenous cultures, Nisenan groups at contact had a holistic epistemology: a theorem of holistic knowledge in which any subject is a composite of all other subjects, and every aspect of knowledge is interconnected. The Nisenan world contains many ineffable supernatural beings and spirits, and all natural objects are endowed with potential supernatural powers. The Kuksu cult was the major religious system in Central California and was practiced by the Nisenan in various forms around the contact period. Further, early ethnographers observed that the Nisenan had two types of doctors or shamans, curing and religious, both of whom performed their rituals publicly in the village dance house.

The Spanish arrived on the central California coast in 1769. Early contact with the first Spanish explorers to enter California was limited to the peripheries of Nisenan territory; they occurred mainly to the south, on lands of the Miwok, which had been explored by José Canizares in 1776, with only ephemeral explorations into Nisenan lands. There are no records of Nisenan groups being removed to the missions. They did, however, receive escapees from the missions, as well as pressure from displaced Miwok populations on their southern borders. The first known occupation by Euro-Americans was marked by American and Hudson Bay Company fur trappers in the late 1820s establishing camps in Nisenan territories. This occupation was thought to have been peaceful.

In 1833 a deadly epidemic (probably malaria) swept through the Sacramento Valley and had a devastating effect on Nisenan populations. Entire villages were lost, and many surviving Nisenan retreated into the hills. An estimated 75 percent of their population was wiped out, and only a handful were left to face the gold miners and settlers who were soon to follow. Captain John Sutter settled in Nisenan territory in 1839, and through force and persuasion he coerced most of the remaining Valley Nisenan to be on peaceful terms.

The mountain Nisenan groups encountered Europeans in their territory but were not adversely affected by the epidemics and early settlers. The discovery of gold, however, led to their territory being overrun within a matter of a few years. James Marshal's 1848 gold discovery was in the middle of Nisenan territory, and thousands of miners were soon living in the area. As Europeans flooded Northern California after 1849 and mining methods changed, the assistance of the native population was less relied on and was viewed as an obstacle to settlement of land. This dynamic led to widespread killing, destruction, and persecution of the Nisenan and their culture. The survivors were relegated to working in agriculture, logging, ranching, or domestic

pursuits. A native culture resurgence occurred around 1870 with influence from the Ghost Dance revival, but by the 1890s, the movement had all but ended in dissolution. By the Great Depression, it was said that no living Nisenan could remember a time before White contact.

The turn of the twentieth century was fraught with deplorable conditions for the surviving Nisenan populations, marked by low educational attainment, high unemployment, poor housing and sanitation, and prevalence of alcoholism. The 1960 U.S. census reported 1,321 Native Americans resided in the counties originally held as Nisenan territory, but none had tribal affiliation. Sacramento County listed 802 Native Americans, of which only four were known descendants of the Valley Nisenan. El Dorado, Placer, Yuba, and Nevada counties had several Nisenan families in the 1970s who descended from mountain groups and could speak the language and retained knowledge of traditional lifeways.

Despite enduring over a century of adversity and hardship, descendants of the pre-contact Nisenan exist today. They are members of modern society and some people still practice Nisenan customs despite the old ways having been largely lost. Nisenan and other modern Native American populations participate in pan-Indian activities and celebrations. Nisenan descendants continue to be active in social movements and organizations that seek to improve the Native American situation in the dominant America culture (ECORP 2025).

Regional History

The first European to visit California was Spanish maritime explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. Cabrillo was sent north by the Viceroy of New Spain (Mexico) to look for the Northwest Passage. Cabrillo visited San Diego Bay, Catalina Island, San Pedro Bay, and the northern Channel Islands. The English adventurer Francis Drake visited the Miwok Native American group at Drake's Bay or Bodega Bay in 1579. Sebastian Vizcaíno explored the coast as far north as Monterey in 1602. He reported that Monterey was an excellent location for a port.

Colonization of California began with the Spanish Portolá land expedition. The expedition, led by Captain Gaspar de Portolá of the Spanish army and Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary, explored the California coast from San Diego to the Monterey Bay Area in 1769. As a result of this expedition, Spanish missions to convert the native population, presidios (forts), and pueblos (towns) were established. The Franciscan missionary friars established 21 missions in Alta California (the area north of Baja California) beginning with Mission San Diego in 1769 and ending with the mission in Sonoma established in 1823.

The purpose of the missions and presidios was to establish Spanish economic, military, political, and religious control over the Alta California territory. The Spanish did not establish any missions or settlements in the Central Valley. The nearest missions were in the vicinity of San Francisco Bay and included Mission San Francisco de Asis (Dolores) established in 1776 on the San Francisco peninsula, Mission Santa Clara de Asis at the south end of San Francisco Bay in 1777, Mission San Jose in 1797, Mission San Rafael, established as an asistencia in 1817 and a

full mission in 1823, and Mission San Francisco Solano in Sonoma in 1823. Presidios were established in San Francisco and Monterey.

After Mexico became independent from Spain in 1821, what is now California became the Mexican province of Alta California with its capital at Monterey. In 1827, American trapper Jedediah Smith traveled along the Sacramento River and into the San Joaquin Valley to meet other trappers of his company who were camped there, but no permanent settlements were established by the fur trappers.

The Mexican government closed the missions in the 1830s and former mission lands, as well as previously unoccupied areas, were granted to retired soldiers and other Mexican citizens for use as cattle ranches. Much of the land along the coast and in the interior valleys became part of Mexican land grants or "ranchos". During the Mexican period there were small towns at San Francisco (then known as Yerba Buena) and Monterey. The rancho owners lived in one of the towns or in an adobe house on the rancho. The Mexican Period includes the years 1821 to 1848.

John Sutter, a European immigrant, built a fort at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers in 1839 and petitioned the Mexican governor of Alta California for a land grant, which he received in 1841. Sutter built a flour mill and grew wheat near the fort. Gold was discovered in the flume of Sutter's lumber mill at Coloma on the South Fork of the American River in January 1848. The discovery of gold initiated the 1849 California Gold Rush, which brought thousands of miners and settlers to the Sierra foothills east and southeast of Sacramento.

The American period began when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed between Mexico and the U.S. in 1848. As a result of the treaty, Alta California became part of the U.S. as the territory of California. Rapid population increase occasioned by the Gold Rush of 1849 allowed California to become a state in 1850. Most Mexican land grants were confirmed to the grantees by U.S. courts, but usually with more restricted boundaries, which were surveyed by the U.S. Surveyor General's office. Land outside the land grants became federal public land that was surveyed into sections, quarter-sections, and quarter-quarter sections. The federal public land could be purchased at a low fixed price per acre or could be obtained through homesteading (after 1862) (ECORP 2025).

Yuba County History

John Sutter's New Helvetia colony stretched north of Sacramento to encompass the land that was eventually to become Yuba County. Yuba City, located approximately 10 miles north of the project site, was established on the west bank of the Feather River in what was to become Sutter County. Marysville was the first Gold Rush boom town established on the east bank and overshadowed Yuba City because it was more accessible to miners arriving from San Francisco by boat.

Marysville was established on land leased from Sutter by Theodore Cordua, who had the land for 19 years and established a stock ranch called New Mecklenberg. In 1842-1843 he built an adobe house with a trading room and outbuildings, at what is now the foot of D Street in Marysville, known as Nye's Ranch. By 1847, Cordua's adobe had become an important way station for hunters, emigrants, and eventually miners. Cordua was employing both Native American and Euro-Americans through 1851, when a fire destroyed the property.

Named after Mary Murphy, wife of Charles Covillaud, and a surviving member of the Donner Party, Marysville became the head of navigation on the Feather River, and a center of trade for the northern mines. These factors were a boon to the burgeoning settlement, which grew quickly. In December 1849, the town was surveyed, and by January 1850, lots were selling rapidly. Yuba County, which originally included present-day Sierra and Nevada counties, was formed in February 1850, and the following year the City of Marysville was incorporated. By January 1850, there were about 300 individuals living in Marysville, which reached 500 permanent residents by February, with 1,000 temporary inhabitants (ECORP 2025).

Project Site History

The project site and the offsite improvement area are located in the census-designated community of Plumas Lake, which is a master-planned town for commuters that began construction in 2003. The area was historically swampland that was prone to seasonal flooding.

In 1850, the original Yuba County was divided into the present-day Yuba, Sierra, and Nevada counties, and townships were formed in Yuba County. The lower Bear River area, which includes the project site and the offsite improvement area, was called Town (Township) No. 12, with no name. Plumas Landing was an area on the Feather River just north of Plumas Ranch where a man named Robinson and his son settled at a landing below the mouth of Reed Dry Creek in 1850. Plumas Landing was made a steamboat landing, and a small town called Plumas was laid out in the spring of 1850 by John Sutter and George H. Beach. At the time, the only building in Plumas was Robinson's hotel. Plumas Lake was advertised in the Placer Times of Sacramento as "the paradise of California," and was said to be the emporium of trade on the Feather River. A schoolhouse was built at Plumas Landing in 1853 and rebuilt in 1856. Maps from 1879 indicate that the area was known as Plumas Ranch and was owned by Andrew Rutland.

Flooding at the turn of the 20th century created a large lake called Plumas Lake. In 1908, Reclamation District (RD) 784 was created to manage the flooding. An intricate system of levees, drainage canals, and pumping stations were implemented to manage the flooding; this system transformed the area into an agricultural community. RD 784 is bound by the Yuba River to the north, the Bear River to the south, the Feather River to the west, and the Western Pacific Interceptor Canal to the east.

The project site vicinity experienced annual flooding from the Yuba, Bear, and Feather rivers after the winter rains. Natural levees formed on the banks of the rivers while the river bottoms rose, resulting in basins beyond the natural levees that were lower than the rivers. These lands were unsuitable for agriculture, even after they dried in the summer. During the Gold Rush, millions of tons of sediment runoff from hydraulic mining choked the river basins, and the rivers rose substantially, worsening the effects of the floods.

The reclamation and land modifications were key elements to both the physical transformation of the region and its social and economic transformation. For the first time, the flooding in the Sacramento Valley was contained and under control, and permanent settlements in the Yuba County area were no longer threatened. Agricultural lands were settled by farmers and quickly became the most productive agricultural lands in California.

At the same time, the completion of the Western Pacific and Sacramento Northern railroads along the eastern side of RD 784 allowed crops to be more easily shipped to market. The Western Pacific Railroad was completed in 1909; it ran from Oakland to Salt Lake City and used the Feather River Canyon to cross the Sierra Nevada. The Sacramento Northern Railroad was an interurban electric railway and a subsidiary of the Western Pacific Railroad; it transported both passengers and freight from San Francisco to Chico via Sacramento. The Sacramento Northern Railroad began as the Northern Electric Railway from Oroville to Chico in 1906 and was extended to Sacramento during the 1910s. It became the Sacramento Northern Railroad in 1918 and was acquired by the Western Pacific in 1925 (ECORP 2025).

HISTORY OF PLUMAS LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Maps from 1879 and 1885 depict the project site and the offsite improvement area within the West Bear River Township and the Plumas School District (ECORP 2025). The schoolhouse for the Plumas School District was located approximately two miles north of the project site, in the southwestern quarter of Section 28 of Township 14 North, Range 4 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDBM). Despite the name, the earlier Plumas School District is not related to the present-day Plumas Lake Elementary School District. The present-day school district was established in 2003 from parts of the Marysville School District (ECORP 2025).

3.5.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, “Environmental Checklist Form,” of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact on cultural resources if it would:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

METHODOLOGY

Literature review, record searches, and an intensive pedestrian survey were used for the Archaeological Resources Inventory Report (Appendix E) and to inform this Section.

A records search for the project site and the offsite improvement area at the North Central Information Center (NCIC) of the CHRIS was requested on April 11, 2025. The purpose of the records search is to determine the extent of previous surveys within a 0.5-mile (800-meter) radius of the project site and the offsite improvement area, in addition to whether previously documented pre-contact or historic archaeological sites, architectural resources, or traditional cultural properties exist within the project site and the offsite improvement area.

In addition to the official records and maps for archaeological sites and surveys in Yuba County, the following historical references were reviewed: Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD) for Yuba County; the National Register Information System; Office of Historic Preservation, California Historical Landmarks; California Points of Historical Interest; California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] Local Bridge Survey; Caltrans State Bridge Survey; and Historic Spots in California. Other references were also reviewed, such as historic General Land Office (GLO) land patent records and historical maps and historical aerial photographs for any indications of usage and built environment. A search for a local historical registry was done, but no local historical registry was found to encompass the project site and the offsite improvement area.

The Yuba Historical Society was contacted on May 5, 2025, to solicit comments or obtain historical information that the repository might have regarding events, people, or resources of historical significance in the project site and the offsite improvement area.

An intensive pedestrian survey of the project site and the offsite improvement area was done on May 13, 2025, using 15-meter transects.

3.5.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

The project site has been used for agricultural purposes and currently contains fallow agricultural land. The offsite improvement area is developed with a roadway and associated access infrastructure. Records search and field survey did not yield any historic-period or pre-contact cultural resources within the project site; therefore, no known Historic Properties under Section 106 of the NHPA or Historical Resources under CEQA would be affected by the proposed project (ECORP 2025). Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than Significant Impact.

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

The confluence of the Feather River and Bear River is located approximately two miles south of the project site. The Feather River flows south approximately one mile west of the project site and Bear River flows west approximately three miles south of the project site. Pre-contact archaeological sites are known to occur along such waterways. Given the presence of Holocene alluvium within the project site and the offsite improvement area and the soils and hydrology data, the project site and the offsite improvement area could be considered to have a high potential for buried precontact archaeological resources; however, this likelihood is diminished by the following factors:

- The Feather River basin, which includes the project site and the offsite improvement area, was substantially affected by hydraulic mining activities during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The introduction of debris into the Feather River resulted in rapid infill of the channel with sediment and caused a substantial decrease of the river channel's capacity. This further resulted in extensive flooding and overbank sediment deposition on urban and agricultural lands within the project site. The soils within the basin, therefore, include fine-grained slickens from hydraulic mining debris far from their original contexts (ECORP 2025).
- Modern and historic-era agricultural activities within the project site and the offsite improvement area would have obliterated all but the most deeply buried pre-contact materials that may have been present.

The overall likelihood of encountering intact and in situ pre-contact cultural material within the project site and the offsite improvement area is moderate to low.

Although the project site has been used for agriculture since at least the 1940s, agricultural fields do not typically contain significant historic-era archaeological materials; therefore, the likelihood of encountering any intact and in situ historic-period archaeological material within the project site is also low.

Because there is a moderate to low potential to encounter pre-contact resources during construction, this impact would be potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact CUL-1: The proposed project has a moderate to low potential in uncovering pre-contact resources during construction.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1: The District shall hire a qualified professional archaeologist to prepare and conduct a Contractor Awareness Training Program (CATP). The District shall ensure that a CATP is delivered to train equipment operators about cultural resources prior to the start of construction. The CATP shall be designed to inform construction personnel about: federal and state regulations pertaining to cultural resources and tribal cultural resources; the subsurface indicators of resources that shall require a work stoppage; procedures for notifying the District of any occurrences; project-specific requirements and mitigation measures in the event that cultural resources are found; and enforcement of penalties and repercussions for non-compliance with the program.

The CATP shall be prepared by a qualified professional archaeologist and may be provided either through a brochure, video, or in-person tailgate meeting, as determined appropriate by the qualified professional archaeologist. The training shall be provided to all construction supervisors, forepersons, and operators of ground disturbing equipment. Personnel shall be required to sign a training roster. The District is responsible for ensuring that all required personnel receive the training. The District shall keep a copy of the signed training roster as proof of compliance.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2: If subsurface deposits believed to be cultural or human in origin are discovered during construction, all work must halt within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. A qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for prehistoric and historic archaeology, shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. The following notifications shall apply, depending on the nature of the find:

- If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does not represent a cultural resource, work may resume immediately, and no agency notifications are required.

- If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does represent a cultural resource from any time period or cultural affiliation, the archaeologist shall immediately notify the lead agencies. The agencies shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures, if the find is determined to be a Historical Resource under CEQA, as defined by CEQA or a historic property under Section 106 NHPA, if applicable. Work may not resume within the no work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the site either: 1) is not a Historical Resource under CEQA or a Historic Property under Section 106; or 2) that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.
- If the find includes human remains, or remains that are potentially human, they shall ensure reasonable protection measures are taken to protect the discovery from disturbance (AB 2641).The archaeologist shall notify the Yuba County Coroner (per § 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code). The provisions of § 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, § 5097.98 of the California PRC, and AB 2641 will be implemented. If the coroner determines the remains are Native American and not the result of a crime scene, the coroner will notify the NAHC, which then will designate a Native American Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for the Project (§ 5097.98 of the PRC). The designated MLD will have 48 hours from the time access to the property is granted to make recommendations concerning treatment of the remains. If the landowner does not agree with the recommendations of the MLD, the NAHC can mediate (§ 5097.94 of the PRC). If no agreement is reached, the landowner must rebury the remains where they will not be further disturbed (§ 5097.98 of the PRC). This will also include either recording the site with the NAHC or the appropriate Information Center; using an open space or conservation zoning designation or easement; or recording a reinternment document with the county in which the property is located (AB 2641). Work may not resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Historic hydraulic mining and long-term agriculture have disturbed site soils, reducing the likelihood of intact archaeological deposits. However, buried resources could still be encountered. Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 provides training and stop-work procedures to ensure any discoveries are properly identified and treated under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. With these mitigation measures, potential impacts to archaeological resources would be less than significant.

c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

The project site has been used for agricultural purposes and currently contains fallow agricultural land. The offsite improvement area is developed with a roadway and associated access infrastructure. Nevertheless, there remains the potential for ground-disturbing activities to expose previously unrecorded cultural resources, including the potential for unknown buried human remains. Both CEQA and Section 106 of the NHPA require the lead agency, the District, to address any unanticipated cultural resource discoveries during project construction. Therefore, this impact would be **potentially significant**.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact CUL-2: The proposed project has the potential in uncovering cultural resources during construction.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2 (see Threshold a, above)

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Although ground disturbance could expose unknown cultural resources, Mitigation Measure CUL-2 ensures work stoppage, professional evaluation, and required state and federal procedures for treatment or protection. These measures reduce potential impacts on historical resources to a less-than-significant level.

3.5.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for cultural resources includes the Plumas Lake area and adjacent portions of Yuba County where ongoing and future urban development, infrastructure upgrades, and agricultural conversions may result in ground disturbance. Such activities collectively increase the potential to damage or destroy unknown historic or archaeological resources and human remains.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to cultural resources?

As discussed above, the proposed project does not include historic built resources. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulative effect on historic resources.

Although the region is generally disturbed by historic hydraulic mining and long-term agriculture, buried pre-contact resources could still occur along the Feather and Bear River corridors. Each project that involves substantial earthwork therefore contributes to a region-wide cumulative risk of cultural resource loss.

Similar to the proposed project, other development projects would involve grading, excavation, utility trenching, and other earthwork that could inadvertently uncover previously unknown archaeological resources or human remains. Each development project would be required to comply with applicable regulatory requirements. Under existing applicable law, site-specific cultural resources investigations would be required for other discretionary development projects before permit ground disturbances or demolition or substantial alteration of existing structures can occur. Such investigations would include some degree of surface-level surveying and identify resources on the affected project sites that are or appear to be eligible for listing on the national or state registers for historic resources. Such investigations would also be required to mitigate impacts (where needed) to reduce impacts and protect and preserve any identified cultural and/or historic resources. As a part of the investigations, a cultural resources records search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) and a Sacred Land Files search would also be required.

As discussed above, the proposed project incorporates Mitigation Measures CUL-1 (Contractor Awareness Training) and CUL-2 (stop-work, qualified archaeological evaluation, and treatment/consultation procedures) to ensure that any unanticipated finds are properly identified, evaluated, and protected in compliance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5, the NHPA, and state laws governing human remains. With these measures in place, the proposed project's incremental contribution to cumulative cultural-resource impacts would be less than significant, and the proposed project's impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts would therefore be less than significant.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.5.6 References

ECORP Consulting, Inc (ECORP). 2025. Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project. (Appendix E).

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3.6 ENERGY

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions of the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SVAB) related to energy, and the potential impacts of the proposed project. A summary of the relevant regulatory framework and existing conditions is followed by a discussion of potential impacts and cumulative impacts related to implementation of the proposed project.

Section 21100(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an EIR include a detailed statement with mitigation measures proposed to minimize significant effects on the environment, including, but not limited to, measures to reduce the wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy. Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines states that, in order to ensure that energy implications are considered in project decisions, the potential energy implications of a project shall be considered in an EIR, to the extent relevant and applicable to the project. Appendix F further states that a project's energy consumption and proposed conservation measures may be addressed, as relevant and applicable, in the project description, environmental setting, and impact analysis portions of technical sections, as well as through mitigation measures and alternatives.

In accordance with Appendix F and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR includes relevant information and analyses that address the energy implications of the proposed project. This section summarizes the proposed anticipated energy needs, impacts, and conservation measures associated with development and activities under the proposed project. The information in this section and other aspects of the proposed project's energy implications is also discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, Section 3.3, *Air Quality*, Section 3.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Section 3.16, *Transportation*, and Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service Systems*, of this Draft EIR. The energy usage and transportation fuel usage are included in Appendix B, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Modeling*, of this Draft EIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (School District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to energy were raised during the NOP comment period.

Terminology

The following are definitions for terms used throughout this section:

- **CBSC.** California Building Standards Code.
- **CALGreen.** California Green Building Standards Code.
- **Ccf.** Hundred cubic feet.
- **CNG.** Compressed natural gas.
- **BTU.** British thermal units.
- **kBTU.** Kilo-British thermal units.
- **kW.** Kilowatt.
- **kWh.** Kilowatt-hours.
- **VMT.** Vehicle-miles traveled.

3.6.1 Regulatory Framework

FEDERAL

Federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 was established in response to the 1973 oil crisis. The act created the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, established vehicle fuel economy standards, and prohibited the export of United States crude oil (with a few limited exceptions). It also created Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for passenger cars starting in model year 1978. The CAFE standards are updated periodically to account for changes in vehicle technologies, driver behavior, and/or driving conditions.

The federal government issued new CAFE standards in 2012 for model years 2017 to 2025 that required a fleet average of 54.5 miles per gallon (MPG) for model year 2025. However, on March 30, 2020, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) finalized an updated CAFE and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks and established new standards, covering model years 2021 through 2026, known as the Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Final Rule for Model Years 2021 through 2026.

On December 21, 2021, under direction of Executive Order (EO) 13990 issued by President Biden, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration repealed Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient Vehicles Rule Part One, which had preempted state and local laws related to fuel economy standards. In addition, on March 31, 2022, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration finalized new fuel standards in response to EO 13990. Fuel efficiency under the standards proposed would increase 8 percent annually for model years 2024 to 2025 and 10

percent annual for model year 2026. Overall, the new CAFE standards require a fleet average of 49 MPG for passenger vehicles and light trucks for model year 2026, which would be a 10 MPG increase relative to model year 2021 (NHTSA 2022).

On June 7, 2024, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced final CAFE standards for passenger cars and light trucks built in model years 2027 to 2031 and final fuel-efficiency standards for heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans built in model years 2030 to 2035. The final rules establish standards that would require an industry fleetwide average of approximately 50.4 MPG for passenger cars and light trucks in model year 2031, by increasing fuel economy by 2 percent year over year for passenger cars (model years 2027–2031) and for light trucks (model years 2029–2031). For heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans, the final rule would increase fuel efficiency at a rate of 10 percent per year (model years 2030–2032) and 8 percent per year (model years 2033–2035) (NHTSA 2024a).

In June 2025, NHTSA published a final rule, "Resetting the Corporate Average Fuel Economy Program." The rule identifies factors statutorily prohibited from consideration when setting maximum feasible fuel economy standards under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, and other applicable laws. It also describes NHTSA's authority to bring the CAFE program into compliance with relevant statutory requirements, in accordance with President Trump's "Unleashing American Energy" Executive Order and the Secretary's "Fixing the CAFE Program" Memorandum. The rule also describes NHTSA's interpretation of its authority for a commercial medium- and heavy-duty on-highway vehicle and work truck fuel-efficiency improvement program, to establish the necessary legal foundation to bring that program into compliance with law. This rule does not itself change existing CAFE or medium- and heavy-duty standards. During the rulemaking process for replacement standards, NHTSA will exercise its enforcement authority regarding all existing CAFE and medium- and heavy-duty standards in accordance with the interpretation set forth in this rulemaking (NHTSA 2024b).

Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-140) seeks to provide the nation with greater energy independence and security by increasing the production of clean renewable fuels; improving vehicle fuel economy; and increasing the efficiency of products, buildings, and vehicles. It also seeks to improve the energy performance of the federal government. The act sets increased CAFE Standards; the Renewable Fuel Standard; appliance energy-efficiency standards; building energy-efficiency standards; and accelerated research and development tasks on renewable energy sources (e.g., solar energy, geothermal energy, and marine and hydrokinetic renewable energy technologies), carbon capture, and sequestration (USEPA 2024).

Energy Policy Act of 2005

Passed by Congress in July 2005, the Energy Policy Act includes a comprehensive set of provisions to address energy issues. This Act includes tax incentives for energy conservation improvements in commercial and residential buildings, fossil fuel production and clean coal facilities, and construction and operation of nuclear power plants, among other things. Subsidies are also included for geothermal, wind energy, and other alternative energy producers.

National Energy Policy

Established in 2001 by the National Energy Policy Development Group, the National Energy Policy is designed to help the private sector and state and local governments promote dependable, affordable, and environmentally sound production and distribution of energy for the future. Key issues addressed by the energy policy are energy conservation, repair, and expansion of energy infrastructure, and ways of increasing energy supplies while protecting the environment.

Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968

The Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 authorizes the United States Department of Transportation to regulate pipeline transportation of flammable, toxic, or corrosive natural gas and other gases as well as the transportation and storage of liquefied natural gas. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration within the United States Department of Transportation develops and enforces regulations for the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.6-million-mile pipeline transportation system.

STATE

Warren-Alquist State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Act

Established in 1974, the Warren-Alquist Act created the California Energy Commission (CEC) in response to the energy crisis of the early 1970s and the State's unsustainable growing demand for energy resources. The CEC's core responsibilities include advancing State energy policy, encouraging energy efficiency, certifying thermal power plants, investing in energy innovation, developing renewable energy, transforming transportation, and preparing for energy emergencies. The Warren-Alquist Act is updated annually to address current energy needs and issues, and its latest edition was in January 2023.

California Energy Commission

The CEC is the State's principal energy planning organization, created to meet the energy challenges facing the state in response to the 1973 oil embargo. The CEC is charged with six basic responsibilities when designing State energy policy:

- Forecast statewide electricity needs.
- License power plants to meet those needs.
- Promote energy conservation and efficiency measures.
- Develop renewable energy resources and alternative energy technologies.
- Promote research, development, and demonstration.
- Plan for and direct the state's response to energy emergencies.

California Energy Commission California Energy Demand Forecast

The CEC assesses and forecasts the state's energy systems and trends. This includes forecasts for electricity consumption, retail sales, and peak demand for each of the five major electricity planning areas and the whole state. The CEC Forecast includes three demand scenarios (low, mid, and high) to capture a reasonable range of demand outcomes over the next 14 years.[1]

- **Low-Demand.** The low-demand energy scenario includes lower economic or demographic growth and assumes higher rates and higher self-generation impacts.
- **Mid-Demand.** The mid-demand energy scenario uses input assumptions at levels between low and high scenarios. These scenarios are referred to as the baseline cases, meaning they do not include the additional achievable energy-efficiency savings.
- **High-Demand.** The high-demand energy scenario incorporates relatively high economic or demographic growth and climate change impacts as well as relatively low electricity rates and self-generation impacts.

The most recent update to CEC Forecasts was in 2023 for the mid-demand scenario.

California Public Utilities Commission

In September 2008, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) adopted the Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan, which provides a framework for energy efficiency in California through the year 2020 and beyond. It articulates a long-term vision, as well as goals for each economic sector, identifying specific near-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies to assist in achieving these goals. This Plan sets forth the following four goals, known as Big Bold Energy Efficiency Strategies, to achieve significant reductions in energy demand:

[1] The latest low-demand scenario forecast as of this analysis is from CEC's 2021-2035 forecast while baseline scenarios have been updated annually.

- All new residential construction in California will be zero net energy by 2020.[2]
- All new commercial construction in California will be zero net energy by 2030.
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) will be transformed to ensure that its energy performance is optimal for California's climate.
- All eligible low-income customers will be given the opportunity to participate in the low-income energy-efficiency program by 2020.

With respect to the commercial sector, the Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan notes that commercial buildings, which include schools, hospitals, and public buildings, consume more electricity than any other end-use sector in California. The commercial sector's five-billion-plus square feet of space account for 38 percent of the state's power use and over 25 percent of natural gas consumption. Lighting, cooling, refrigeration, and ventilation account for 75 percent of all commercial electric use, while space heating, water heating, and cooking account for over 90 percent of gas use. In 2006, schools and colleges were in the top-five facility types for electricity and gas consumption, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the state's electricity and gas use (CPUC 2011).

The CPUC and CEC have adopted the following goals to achieve zero net energy levels by 2030 in the commercial sector:

- **Goal 1**: New construction will increasingly embrace zero net energy performance (including clean, distributed generation), reaching 100 percent penetration of new starts in 2030.
- **Goal 2**: 50 percent of existing buildings will be retrofit to zero net energy by 2030 through achievement of deep levels of energy efficiency and with the addition of clean distributed generation.
- **Goal 3**: Transform the commercial lighting market through technological advancement and innovative utility initiatives.

Renewable Portfolio: Carbon Neutrality Regulations

Senate Bills 1078, 107, X1-2, and Executive Order S-14-08

The California Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) was established in 2002 under Senate Bill (SB) 1078 and was amended in 2006, 2011, and 2018. The RPS program requires investor-owned utilities, electric service providers, and community choice aggregators to increase the use of eligible renewable energy resources to 33 percent of total procurement by 2020. Initially under the RPS, certain retail sellers of electricity were required to increase the amount of renewable energy each year by at least 1 percent in order to reach at least 20 percent by December 30, 2010. Executive Order S 14 08 was signed in November 2008, which expanded

[2] Zero net energy buildings are buildings that the total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis is equal to or less than the amount of renewable energy created on the site.

the state's Renewable Energy Standard to 33 percent renewable power by 2020. This standard was adopted by the California legislature in 2011 (SB X1-2). The CPUC is required to provide quarterly progress reports on progress toward RPS goals. This has accelerated the development of renewable energy projects throughout the state.

Senate Bill 350

Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 350 on October 7, 2015, which expands the RPS by establishing a goal of 50 percent of the total electricity sold to retail customers in California per year by December 31, 2030. In addition, SB 350 includes the goal to double the energy-efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas final end uses (such as heating, cooling, lighting, or class of energy uses upon which an energy-efficiency program is focused) of retail customers through energy conservation and efficiency. The bill also requires the CPUC, in consultation with the CEC, to establish efficiency targets for electrical and gas corporations consistent with this goal. SB 350 also provides for the transformation of the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) into a regional organization to promote the development of regional electricity transmission markets in the western states and to improve the access of consumers served by the CAISO to those markets, pursuant to a specified process.

Senate Bill 100

On September 10, 2018, Governor Brown signed SB 100, which replaces the SB 350 requirements. Under SB 100, the RPS for publicly owned facilities and retail sellers consist of 44 percent renewable energy by 2024, 52 percent by 2027, and 60 percent by 2030. Additionally, SB 100 also established a new RPS requirement of 50 percent by 2026. Furthermore, the bill establishes an overall State policy that eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources supply 100 percent of all retail sales of electricity to California end-use customers and 100 percent of electricity procured to serve all State agencies by December 31, 2045. Under the bill, the State cannot increase carbon emissions elsewhere in the western grid or allow resource shuffling to achieve the 100 percent carbon-free electricity target.

Senate Bill 1020

SB 1020 was signed into law on September 16, 2022. It requires renewable energy and zero-carbon resources to supply 90 percent of all retail electricity sales by 2035 and 95 percent by 2040. Additionally, SB 1020 requires all State agencies to procure 100 percent of electricity from renewable energy and zero-carbon resources by 2035.

2023 Integrated Energy Policy Report

The CEC published the 2023 Integrated Energy Policy Report to identify pathways to deeply decarbonize the state's electricity system in response to meeting the SB 100 goal of zero-carbon by 2045. The report provides an analysis of electricity sector trends, building decarbonization and energy-efficient, zero-emission vehicles, energy equity, climate change adaptation,

electricity reliability, natural gas assessment, and electricity, natural gas, and transportation energy demand forecasts. The aim is to leverage California's clean electricity system to decarbonize, or remove carbon from, other portions of the state's energy system. SB 1389 (Chapter 568, Statutes of 2002) requires the CEC to conduct assessments and forecasts of all aspects of energy industry supply, production, transportation, delivery, distribution, electricity demand, and price to develop energy policies that conserve resources, protect the environment, ensure energy reliability, enhance the State's economy, and protect public health and safety.

Energy-Efficiency Regulations

2008 California Energy Action Plan Update

The 2008 Energy Action Plan Update provides a status update to the 2005 Energy Action Plan II, which is the state of California's principal energy planning and policy document. The update continues the original Energy Action Plan (adopted in 2003), describes a coordinated implementation plan for state energy policies, and identifies specific action areas to ensure that California's energy is adequate, affordable, technologically advanced, and environmentally sound. First-priority actions to address California's increasing energy demands are energy efficiency, demand response (i.e., reduction of customer energy usage during peak periods in order to address system reliability and support the best use of energy infrastructure), and the use of renewable sources of power. If these actions are unable to satisfy the increasing energy and capacity needs, the plan supports clean and efficient fossil-fired generation.

California Building Energy Code: Title 24, Part 6, Energy-Efficiency Standards

Energy conservation standards for new residential and nonresidential buildings were adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the CEC) in June 1977 and most recently revised in 2024 (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 24, Part 6). Title 24 Part 6 requires the design of building shells and building components to conserve energy. The standards are updated periodically to allow for consideration and possible incorporation of new energy-efficiency technologies and methods.

In 2024, the CEC adopted the 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which were subsequently approved by the California Building Standards Commission. The 2025 standards become effective and replace the existing 2022 standards on January 1, 2026. The 2025 standards would require mixed-fuel single-family homes to be electric-ready to accommodate replacement of gas appliances with electric appliances. In addition, the new standards also include prescriptive photovoltaic system and battery requirements for high-rise, multifamily buildings (i.e., more than three stories) and noncommercial buildings such as hotels, offices, medical offices, restaurants, retail stores, schools, warehouses, theaters, and convention centers. The California Building Standards Code (CBSC) and the California Green Building

Standards Code (24 CCR, Part 11, known as CALGreen) undergo a triennial update with a goal to achieve zero net energy for new buildings by 2030.

California Building Code: Title 24, Part 11, Green Building Standards

On July 17, 2008, the California Building Standards Commission adopted CALGreen, the nation's first green building standards. It includes mandatory requirements for new residential and nonresidential buildings throughout California. CALGreen is intended to (1) reduce GHG emissions from buildings; (2) promote environmentally responsible, cost-effective, healthier places to live and work; (3) reduce energy and water consumption; and (4) respond to the directives by the Governor. The mandatory provisions of CALGreen became effective January 1, 2011, and were most recently updated in 2024 (2025 CALGreen update). The 2025 CALGreen update becomes effective on January 1, 2026, and provides updates to the residential and nonresidential voluntary measures.

Overall, the code is established to reduce construction waste, make buildings more efficient in the use of materials and energy, and reduce environmental impact during and after construction. CALGreen contains requirements for construction site selection, stormwater control during construction, construction waste reduction, indoor water use reduction, material selection, natural resource conservation, site irrigation conservation, and more. The code provides for design options allowing the designer to determine how best to achieve compliance for a given site or building condition. The code also requires building commissioning, which is a process for verifying that all building systems (e.g., heating and cooling equipment and lighting systems) are functioning at their maximum efficiency.

2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations

The 2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations (20 CCR Sections 1601 through 1608) were adopted by the CEC on October 11, 2006, and approved by the California Office of Administrative Law on December 14, 2006. The regulations include standards for both federally regulated appliances and non–federally regulated appliances. They contain energy performance, energy design, water performance, and water design standards for appliances (including refrigerators, ice makers, vending machines, freezers, water heaters, fans, boilers, washing machines, dryers, air conditioners, pool equipment, and plumbing fittings) that are sold or offered for sale in California. These standards are updated regularly to allow consideration of new energy-efficiency technologies and methods.

Off-Road Equipment and Transportation-Related Regulations

Assembly Bill 1493

California vehicle GHG emission standards were enacted under AB 1493 (Pavley I). Pavley I is a clean-car standard that reduces GHG emissions from new passenger vehicles (light-duty auto to medium-duty vehicles) from 2009 through 2016. California implements the Pavley I standards through a waiver granted to California by the USEPA. In 2012, the USEPA issued a Final Rulemaking that sets even more stringent fuel economy and GHG emissions standards for model year 2017 through 2025 light-duty vehicles (see also the discussion on the update to the CAFE standards under the heading *Federal*, above). In January 2012, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved the Pavley Advanced Clean Cars program (formerly known as Pavley II) for model years 2017 through 2025. The program combines the control of smog, soot, and global warming gases and requirements for greater numbers of zero-emission vehicles into a single package of standards. Under California's Advanced Clean Car program, by 2025, new automobiles will emit 34 percent fewer global warming gases and 75 percent fewer smog-forming emissions (CARB 2017).

Title 13, Chapter 9, Article 4.8, Section 2449

CCR Section 2449, Title 13, Chapter 9, Article 4.8 was adopted on May 2, 2008, and limits non-essential idling of fleets to no more than five consecutive minutes at any location. This idling restriction applies to all vehicles in California with a diesel-fueled or alternative diesel-fueled off-road engine, unless a waiver provides sufficient justification that such idling is necessary.

Senate Bill 375

In 2008, SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, was adopted to connect the GHG emissions reductions targets established in the 2008 Scoping Plan for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles (excludes emissions associated with goods movement) by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations to local land use planning to reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle trips. Specifically, SB 375 required CARB to establish GHG emissions reduction targets for each of the 18 metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the MPO for the six-county Sacramento Metropolitan Planning Area, which includes Yuba County. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, CARB adopted per-capita reduction targets for each of the MPOs rather than a total magnitude reduction target.

AB 1007 State Alternative Fuels Plans

AB 1007 (Chapter 371, Statutes 2005) required the CEC to prepare a State plan to increase the use of alternative fuels in California. The CEC prepared the State Alternative Fuels Plan (SAF Plan) in partnership with CARB and in consultation with other State, federal, and local agencies. The SAF Plan presents strategies and actions California must take to increase the use of alternative, nonpetroleum fuels in a manner that minimizes costs to California and maximizes the economic benefits of in-State production. The SAF Plan assessed various alternative fuels and developed fuel portfolios to meet California's goals to reduce petroleum consumption, increase alternative fuel use, reduce GHG emissions, and increase in-state production of biofuels without causing a significant degradation of public health and environmental quality.

Executive Order N-79-20

On September 23, 2020, EO N-79-20 was issued, which sets a time frame for the transition to zero-emissions (ZE) passenger vehicles and trucks in addition to off-road equipment. It directs CARB to develop and propose the following:

- Passenger vehicle and truck regulations requiring increasing volumes of new zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) sold in California toward the target of 100 percent of in-state sales by 2035.
- Medium- and heavy-duty vehicle regulations requiring increasing volumes of new ZE trucks and buses sold and operated in California toward the target of 100 percent of the fleet transitioning to ZEVs by 2045 everywhere feasible, and for all drayage trucks to be ZE by 2035.
- Strategies to achieve 100 percent zero emissions from all off-road vehicles and equipment operations in California by 2035, in cooperation with other State agencies, the USEPA, and local air districts.

On August 25, 2022, CARB adopted the Advanced Clean Cars II (ACC II) regulations that codifies the EO goal of 100 percent of in-state sales of new passenger vehicles and trucks be ZE by 2035. Starting in year 2026, ACC II requires that 35 percent of new vehicles sold be ZE or plug-in hybrids (CARB 2022).

Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation

In April 2023, CARB released the Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulation to accelerate the transition to zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (CARB 2025). In conjunction with the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) regulation, the ACF regulations helps to ensure that medium- and heavy-duty ZEVs are brought to the market, by requiring certain fleets to purchase ZEVs. The ACF ZEV phase-in approach, which provides initial focus where the best fleet electrification opportunities exist, sets clear targets for regulated fleets to make a full conversion to ZEVs, and creates a catalyst to accelerate development of a heavy-duty public infrastructure network.

The ACF regulations cover four main elements:

- Manufacturer sales mandate. Manufacturers may sell only zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles starting in 2036.
- Drayage fleets. Beginning January 1, 2024, trucks must be registered in the CARB Online System to conduct drayage activities in California. Non-zero-emission "legacy" drayage trucks may register in the CARB Online System through December 31, 2023. Legacy drayage trucks can continue to operate through their minimum useful life. Beginning January 1, 2024, only zero-emission drayage trucks may register in the CARB Online System. All drayage trucks entering seaports and intermodal railyards would be required to be zero-emission by 2035.
- High-priority and federal fleets. High-priority and federal fleets must comply with the Model Year Schedule or may elect to use the optional ZEVMilestones Option to phase in ZEVs into their fleets:
  - Model Year Schedule: Fleets must purchase only ZEVs beginning 2024 and, starting January 1, 2025, must remove internal combustion engine vehicles at the end of their useful life as specified in the regulation.
  - ZEVMilestones Option (Optional): Instead of the Model Year Schedule, fleets may elect to meet ZEV targets as a percentage of the total fleet starting with vehicle types that are most suitable for electrification.
- State and local agencies. State and local government fleets, including city, county, special district, and State agency fleets, would be required to ensure 50 percent of vehicle purchases are zero-emission beginning in 2024 and 100 percent of vehicle purchases are zero-emission by 2027. Small government fleets (those with 10 or fewer vehicles) and those in designated counties would start their ZEV purchases beginning in 2027. Alternately, State and local government fleet owners may elect to meet ZEV targets using the ZEV Milestones Option. State and local government fleets may purchase either ZEVs or near-ZEVs, or a combination of ZEVs and near-ZEVs, until 2035. Starting in 2035, only ZEVs will meet the requirements.

The ACF regulations would also establish requirements that transform the medium- and heavy-duty vehicle sector and demonstrate independent utility through achievement of the following objectives:

- Achieve criteria and GHG emissions reductions consistent with the goals identified in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) Strategy and Scoping Plan.
- Provide emissions reductions in disadvantaged communities (DAC), thereby supporting the implementation of Assembly Bill (AB) 617 (Garcia, C., Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017).

- Support the goals of EO N-79-20, which calls for accelerated ZEV deployment with these targets:
  - 100 percent ZE drayage by 2035
  - 100 percent ZE trucks and buses where feasible by 2045
- Ensure requirements, such as ZEV deployment schedules and related infrastructure build-out, are technologically feasible, cost-effective, and support market conditions.
- Lead the transition away from petroleum fuels and towards electric drivetrains.
- Contribute towards achieving carbon neutrality in California pursuant to SB 100, and in accordance with EO B-55-18.
- Mindfully set requirements to allow time for public ZE infrastructure buildout for smaller fleets or for regional haul applications who would be reliant on a regional network of public chargers.
- Ensure manufacturers and fleets work together to place ZEVs in service suitably and successfully as market expands.
- Establish a fair and level playing field among fleet owners.
- Craft the proposed project in a way that ensures institutional capacity for CARB to manage, implement, and enforce requirements.

Energy Storage

California has set ambitious long-term goals for energy storage beyond 2026 to support its clean energy and climate goals. The State aims to reach 100-percent carbon-free electricity by 2045, which will require significant investment in renewable energy sources like wind and solar, as well as energy storage technologies to balance the variability of these sources.

CAISO has a total energy storage capacity of more than 3,160 megawatts (MW) as of June 2022 (CAISO 2022). This includes both large-scale and distributed energy storage systems, such as batteries, pumped hydroelectric storage, and thermal storage. CAISO is responsible for managing the electricity grid for much of California, and it has set a target of adding 3,300 MW of additional energy storage capacity by 2024 to support the integration of more renewable energy sources like wind and solar. As part of SB 100, load-serving entities (LSE) were required to procure no less than 1.3 gigawatts (GW) of energy storage capacity by 2020, and 3 GW by 2030. Additionally, the CPUC has established a target of 15 GW of energy storage capacity by 2030 (CPUC 2022).

The Integrated Resource Plan

CAISO develops a coordinated grid management plan to integrate the generation and storage capacities of LSEs, called the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). The IRP is a comprehensive planning document that outlines CAISO's forecasts for electricity demand, supply, and transmission needs over a 20-year planning horizon, as well as its strategies for integrating

renewable energy resources and other grid services to meet those needs. The plan is developed in collaboration with LSEs, regulators, and other stakeholders, and is updated periodically to reflect changes in the energy landscape and evolving policy goals. Overall, the IRP plays a critical role in ensuring the reliability and resilience of California's electricity grid as the state continues to transition to a cleaner and more sustainable energy system.

When an individual battery energy storage (BES) facility or generation infrastructure (i.e., solar panels) comes online in California, it is typically included in the IRP through a process known as the Interconnection Queue. The Interconnection Queue is managed by the CAISO, which oversees the operation of the State's electricity grid.

The Interconnection Queue

The Interconnection Queue is an application process that functions as a waiting list of proposed electricity generation and storage projects that are seeking to connect to the grid. When a new BES facility or generation infrastructure is proposed, the developer applies to CAISO to request an interconnection to the grid. CAISO evaluates the application to ensure that the facility meets technical and operational requirements, such as voltage regulation and frequency response, and that it can be integrated effectively into the grid.

Once the BES facility or generation infrastructure is approved by CAISO, it is assigned a point of interconnection on the grid, and its output is added to the IRP as a resource that can provide electricity and other grid services, such as frequency regulation or ramping support. The facility is then dispatched by CAISO based on its bids into the day-ahead and real-time electricity markets, and its output is used to help balance supply and demand on the grid in real-time.

Overall, the Interconnection Queue is an important mechanism for integrating new BES facilities and other electricity resources into the California grid, and for ensuring that the grid remains reliable and resilient as the state continues to transition to a cleaner and more sustainable energy system.

REGIONAL

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) is a 20-year plan for transportation investment and land use strategy to support the Sacramento region. Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is designated by the federal government as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Sacramento region, which requires SACOG to update and maintain the MTP/SCS every four years in coordination with each local government.

Under SB 375, SACOG is responsible for conducting land use and transportation planning in a way that reduces GHG emissions from cars and light-duty trucks to meet CARB's regional transportation-related GHG reduction goals. CARB assigned SACOG a target of 19 percent per-capita GHG reduction target. Supporting policies to reduce GHG emissions include focusing communities where services and transportation already exist; transit-oriented development; investing in transit and active transportation; and prioritizing transportation infrastructure that benefit environmental justice communities and reduce VMT (SACOG 2019).

Yuba County 2030 General Plan

The Yuba County 2030 General Plan includes goals and policies aimed to increase energy efficiency and conservation from planned development projects within the county. These goals and policies specific to energy are mainly in Chapter 7, *Natural Resources Element* (YCCDSA 2011).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code includes various directives pertaining to energy. The code is organized by title, chapter, and section. Most provisions related to energy impacts are included in Title X, *Building and Construction.*

- Chapter 9.90, *Trip Reduction Ordinance*, establishes a trip reduction program to increase the average vehicle ridership from home-to-work commuting and help improve the region's air quality by reducing single-occupant motor vehicle trips.
- Chapter 10.05, *Building Standards Construction Code*, adopts the current triennial version of the CCR, Title 24, published by the California Building Standards Commission.
- Chapter 10.10, *Expedited and Streamlined Permitting for Small Residential Rooftop Solar Energy Systems*, adopts an expedited, streamlined solar permitting process that complies with the Solar Rights Act and AB 2188 (Chapter 521, Statutes 2014; Amending Civil Code Section 714; and Government Code Section 65850.5) to achieve timely and cost-effective installations of small residential rooftop solar energy systems. The ordinance encourages the use of solar systems by removing unreasonable barriers, minimizing costs to property owners and the County, and expanding the ability of property owners to install solar energy systems.
- Chapter 11.32, *Standards for Specific Uses*, Section 11.32.260, *Alternative energy systems*, encourages the use of renewable energy sources that are compatible with surrounding uses. Solar energy systems, including personal solar energy systems and solar power generation facilities. Section 11.32.270, *Wind energy systems*, encourages the use of personal wind energy systems and wind power generation facilities that are compatible with surrounding uses.
- Chapter 11.44, *Subdivision Design*, Section 11.44.050, *Energy conservation and solar access*, promotes future passive or natural heating or cooling opportunities in the subdivision.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan was prepared by Yuba County and includes various policies, land use classifications, and development standards tailored to the plan area. Many of these policies are derived from general policies of the Yuba County General Plan. These policies specific to energy are mainly under Urban Design and Development, Circulation, and Conservation and Environmental Policies (YCPC 1993).

3.6.2 Existing Conditions

ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS

Electricity is quantified using kilowatt (kW) and kilowatt-hours (kWh), and natural gas is measured in British thermal units (BTU). The volumetric billing unit used for natural gas delivered to customers is typically expressed in hundreds of cubic feet (Ccf), which is equal to approximately 103,800 BTU (EIA 2024). A kW is a measure of 1,000 watts of electrical power and a kWh is a measure of electrical energy equivalent to a power consumption of 1,000 watts for one hour. The kWh is commonly used as a billing unit for energy delivered to consumers by electric utilities.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Electricity and natural gas in Plumas Lake is provided through the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E).

Electricity

PG&E is a publicly traded utility company that generates, purchases, and transmits energy and natural gas under contract with CPUC. PG&E's service territory is 70,000 square miles, roughly extending north to Eureka, south to Bakersfield, west to the Pacific Ocean, and east to the Sierra Nevada range. PG&E's electricity distribution system consists of 106,681 circuit-miles of electric distribution lines and 18,466 circuit-miles of interconnected transmission lines (PG&E 2025a). PG&E owns and maintains aboveground networks of electric transmission and distribution facilities throughout the city.

PG&E electricity is generated by a combination of sources such as coal-fired power plants, nuclear power plants, and hydroelectric dams, as well as newer sources of energy, such as wind turbines and photovoltaic plants, also known as solar farms. The bulk electric grid (collectively referred to as "the grid") is a network of high-voltage transmission lines linked to power plants within the PG&E system. The distribution system, consisting of lower-voltage secondary lines, is at the street and neighborhood level, and consists of overhead or underground distribution lines, transformers, and individual service "drops" that connect to the individual customer.

In 2022, approximately 38 percent of PG&E's energy generated came from renewable resources including biopower, geothermal, small hydroelectric, solar, and wind power. PG&E's portfolio consisted of 49 percent nuclear generation, 8 percent large hydroelectric facilities, and 5 percent natural gas (PG&E 2025b).

As shown in Table 3.6-1, *Yuba County 2022 Electricity Consumption*, total electricity consumption in Yuba County was approximately 560,720,000 kWh in 2022 (CEC 2025a). Therefore, Yuba County experienced a per-capita electricity consumption rate of 6,698 kWh per person per year. It should be noted that county energy consumption rates were retrieved to characterize existing energy consumption because that is the smallest scale at which energy consumption estimates are publicly available.

Table 3.6-1 Yuba County 2022 Electricity Consumption

Parameter	Quantity
Residential Electricity Consumption (kWh per year)	245,310,00
Nonresidential Electricity Consumption (kWh per year)	315,410,000
Total Electricity Consumption (kWh per year)	**560,720,000**
2022 Yuba County Population	83,721
Per-Capita Electricity Consumption (kWh per year)	**6,698**

Sources: CEC 2025a; DOF 2024.

Natural Gas

PG&E gas transmission pipeline systems serve approximately 4.5 million gas customers in northern and central California (PG&E 2025a). The system is operated under an inspection and monitoring program. The system operates in real time on a 24-hour basis, and includes leak inspections, surveys, and patrols of the pipelines. PG&E also adopted the Pipeline 2020 program, which aims to modernize critical pipeline infrastructure, expand the use of automatic or remotely operated shut-off valves, catalyze development of next-generation inspection technologies, develop industry-leading best practices, and enhance public safety partnerships with local communities, public officials, and first responders. Total natural gas consumption in PG&E's service area was 1,215,290,400,000 kilo-BTU (kBTU) for 2022 (CEC 2025b).

As shown in Table 3.6-2, *Yuba County 2022 Natural Gas Consumption*, natural gas consumption in Yuba County was approximately 1,164,517,400 kBTU and per-capita consumption rate of 13,906 kBTU per person in year 2022 (CEC 2025b). It should be noted that county energy consumption rates were retrieved to characterize existing energy consumption because that is the smallest scale at which energy consumption estimates are publicly available.

Table 3.6-2 Yuba County 2022 Natural Gas Consumption

Parameter	Quantity
Residential Natural Gas Consumption (kBtu per year)	778,381,400
Nonresidential Natural Gas Consumption (kBtu per year)	386,136,000
Total Natural Gas Consumption (kBtu per year)	**1,164,517,400**
2022 Yuba County Population	83,721
Per-Capita Natural Gas Consumption (kBtu per year)	**13,906**

Sources: CEC 2025b; DOF 2024.

Note: Utilizes a conversion rate of 103,800 Btu per Therm. kBtu = 1,000 Btu.

Fuel Consumption

The CEC produces a California Annual Retail Fuel Outlet Report every year, which is a compilation of gasoline and diesel fuel sales across the state, available at the county level. According to the CEC, Yuba County fuel sales totaled an estimated 36 million gallons of gasoline and 5 million gallons of diesel fuel in 2022 (CEC 2024).

As shown in Table 3.6-3, *Yuba County 2022 Transportation Fuel Consumption*, the county experienced a consumption rate of 525 gallons of fuel per person per year in 2022. It should be noted that county energy consumption rates were retrieved to characterize existing energy consumption because that is the smallest scale at which energy consumption estimates are publicly available.

Table 3.6-3 Yuba County 2022 Transportation Fuel Consumption

Parameter	Quantity
Gasoline Fuel Consumption (gallons per year)	36,000,000
Diesel Fuel Consumption (gallons per year)	7,950,000
Total Transportation Fuel Consumption (gallons per year)	43,950,000
2022 Yuba County Population	83,721
Per-Capita Transportation Fuel Consumption (gallons per year)	**525**

Sources: CEC 2024; DOF 2024.

Note: Diesel fuel estimates account for non-retail sales of fuel within the county. Estimates represent rounded results.

3.6.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to energy if it would:

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

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

To determine whether the proposed project would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, this analysis uses the guidance provided in Appendix F, *Energy Conservation*, of the CEQA Guidelines, as well as the analytical precedent set by *League to Save Lake Tahoe Mountain etc. v. County of Placer* (2022) (75 Cal.App.5th 63, 164-168).

According to Appendix F, *Energy Conservation*, of the CEQA Guidelines, CEQA analyses should consider energy conservation goals, including decreasing overall per-capita energy consumption; decreasing reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and oil; and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources. In *League to Save Lake Tahoe Mountain etc. v. County of Placer* (2022) (75 Cal.App.5th 63, 164-168), the Appellate Court ruled that the analysis of wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary energy consumption was inadequate because it did not consider whether additional renewable energy features could be added to the project.

The proposed project would be considered to result in a potentially significant impact if it would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Considering the guidance provided by Appendix F, *Energy Conservation*, of the CEQA Guidelines and the Appellate Court decision in *League to Save Lake Tahoe Mountain etc. v. County of Placer* (2022) (75 Cal.App.5th 63, 164-168), the following energy conservation goals are considered in determining whether the proposed project could result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources:

- Decrease overall per-capita energy consumption
- Decrease reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and oil
- Increase reliance on renewable energy sources

It is important to note that these energy conservation goals are not utilized herein as bright-line significance thresholds and are instead used as an informative guide in assessing whether the proposed project could result in a potentially significant energy impact. In other words, even though a project may result in an increase in per-capita energy consumption, that does not necessarily mean that the consumption of that energy would be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary, because the consumption of energy alone does not constitute the wasteful,

inefficient, or unnecessary use of energy resources. Because different land use types consume different types of energy resources at different rates depending on that occupancy's operational objectives and energy needs, comparing the per-capita energy consumption of the proposed project against the aggregated residential and nonresidential energy consumption data for the county is informative but not determinative of whether that energy consumption would be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary. Therefore, this analysis focuses on whether the use of that energy resource is carried out in a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary manner in the context of the Appendix F energy conservation goals and explores whether mitigation may be warranted to ensure that the use of energy resources is not considered wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary.

METHODOLOGY

The provided energy and fuel usage information for the proposed project is based on the following.

- **Building Energy**. Building energy consumption estimates use the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod version 2022.1) default energy (i.e., electricity and natural gas) rates. The increase in electricity consumption for the all-electric building design was calculated using a conversion factor of 3,412 BTU per kWh.
- **On-Road Vehicle Fuel Usage.** Fuel usage associated with operation-related vehicle trips and construction-related vehicle trips (i.e., worker and vendor trips) is based on fuel usage data obtained from EMFAC2025, version 2.0.0, and on vehicle trip generation data provided in the traffic impact analysis (see Appendix L, *Transportation Impact Assessment*, of this Draft EIR).
- **Off-Road Equipment Fuel Usage.** Fuel usage for construction-related off-road equipment is based on fuel usage data obtained from Off-Road Web Query, version 1.1.2, and on the construction equipment mix anticipated for the proposed project.

3.6.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?

Short-Term Construction Impacts

Construction of the proposed project would create temporary increased demands for electricity and vehicle fuels compared to existing conditions and would result in short-term transportation-related energy use.

Electrical Energy

Construction of the proposed project would not require electricity to power most construction equipment. Electricity use during construction would vary during different phases of construction. The majority of construction equipment during demolition and grading would be gas or diesel powered, and the later construction phases would require electricity-powered equipment for interior construction and architectural coatings. Overall, the use of electricity would be temporary and would fluctuate according to the phase of construction. Additionally, it is anticipated that the majority of electric-powered construction equipment would be hand tools (e.g., power drills, table saws, compressors) and lighting, which would result in minimal electricity usage during construction activities. Therefore, project-related construction activities would not result in wasteful or unnecessary electricity demands, and impacts would be less than significant.

Natural Gas Energy

It is not anticipated that construction equipment used for the proposed project would be powered by natural gas, and no natural gas demand is anticipated during construction. Therefore, the project would have no impact with respect to natural gas usage.

Transportation Energy

Transportation energy use depends on the type and number of trips, VMT, fuel efficiency of vehicles, and travel mode. Transportation energy use during construction would come from the transport and use of construction equipment, delivery vehicles and haul trucks, and construction employee vehicles that would use diesel fuel and/or gasoline. The use of energy resources by these vehicles would fluctuate according to the phase of construction. It is anticipated that the majority of off-road construction equipment, such as those used during demolition and grading, would be gas or diesel powered. To limit wasteful and unnecessary energy consumption, the construction contractors are anticipated to minimize nonessential idling of construction equipment during construction, in accordance with Section 2449 of the CCR, Title 13, Article 4.8, Chapter 9. Thus, impacts related to transportation energy use during construction would not require expanded energy supplies or the construction of new infrastructure. In addition, use of all construction equipment would cease upon completion of project construction.

Energy consumption during construction (2026 through 2030) was calculated using the CalEEMod computer model, version 2022.1, and data from the EMFAC2021 and Off-Road Web Query databases. The results are shown in Table 3.6-4, *Construction-Related Fuel Usage*.

Table 3.6-4 Construction-Related Fuel Usage

Source	Gas (gallons)	Diesel (gallons)	Electricity (kWh)
Construction Worker Commute	6,073	7	5,287
Construction Vendor Trips	890	7,372	0
Construction Truck Haul Trips	0	35,291	0
Construction Off-Road Equipment	6,274	129,706	0
Total	**13,238**	**172,376**	**5,287**

Sources: CalEEMod Version 2022.1; EMFAC2022 Version 2.0.0; Off-Road Web Query Version 2.0.0; Appendix B.
Note: VMT = vehicle-miles traveled; kWh = kilowatt-hour.

Construction trips would not result in unnecessary use of energy since the project area is centrally located and is served by numerous regional freeway systems (e.g., State Route 70) that provide the most direct routes from various areas of the region. Electrical energy would be available for use during construction from existing power lines and connections, precluding the use of less-efficient generators. Thus, energy use during construction of the proposed project would not be considered inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary, and impacts would be less than significant.

Long-term Impacts During Operation

Operation of the proposed project would create additional demands for building energy compared to existing conditions and would result in increased transportation energy use. Operational use of building energy would include heating, cooling, and ventilation of buildings; water heating; operation of electrical systems; use of on-site equipment and appliances; and indoor, outdoor, and perimeter lighting. Additionally, the proposed project would be designed all-electric, and therefore operation of the project would increase electricity demand for building energy use.

As discussed under Section 3.6.3, *Standards for Analysis*, the following energy conservation goals drawn from CEQA Guidelines Appendix F are considered herein to assist in analyzing whether the proposed project's energy consumption could be considered not wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary:

- Decrease overall per-capita energy consumption.
- Decrease reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and oil.
- Increase reliance on renewable energy sources.

Electricity Consumption

Electrical service to the project site would be provided by PG&E through connections to existing off-site/on-site electrical lines and new on-site infrastructure. As shown in Table 3.6-5, *Operational Electricity Consumption*, the total annual electricity consumption is estimated to be 889,382 kWh, accounting for the combined demand from the buildings, parking lot, and electric vehicles. The proposed project would consume electricity at a per-capita rate that is lower than the county average. Therefore, consistent with the Appendix F goal of reducing per-capita energy consumption, the proposed project's electricity consumption would result in a reduction in per-capita consumption rates when compared with the county average.

Table 3.6-5 Operational Electricity Consumption

Parameter	Electricity (kWh/Year)
Land Use	
Buildings	325,695
Parking Lot	20,604
Subtotal	346,298
Passenger Vehicle Electricity	
Passenger Vehicles	543,084
Subtotal	543,084
Land Use and Transportation Total	**889,382**
Per-Capita Electricity Consumption	
Proposed Project[1]	741
County Average[2]	6,698

Sources: CalEEMod Version 2022.1; EMFAC2025 Version 2.0.0; Off-Road Web Query Version 2.0.0; Appendix B.

Note: kWh = kilowatt-hour.

1. The electricity consumption per capita is based on a total maximum student enrollment of 1,200 students for the proposed project.

2. County average per-capita consumption is drawn from Table 3.6-1.

Moreover, the proposed project would be required to comply with the latest CBSC and CALGreen requirements, which would decrease building energy consumption. For example, compliance with these regulations would require the proposed project to incorporate passive energy-efficiency designs to reduce potential wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of electricity. Moreover, the CBSC would require the proposed project to either include a rooftop solar system or design the project to achieve improved energy-efficiency performance commensurate with what the rooftop system would produce. Rooftop solar systems would reduce the amount of electricity that has to be transported through the state's electricity grid and thereby reduce the amount of electricity lost in transmission. Additional design features to help reduce building energy consumption and improve energy efficiency include the use of

energy-efficient Lighting Emitting Diode (LED) lighting and an all-electric building design. LED fixtures are highly efficient and long-lasting, while all-electric systems eliminate on-site fossil fuel use and allow the buildings to operate using increasingly clean electricity from the grid.

Additionally, all utilities serving the region would be required to comply with the State's RPS program under SB 100, which mandates utilities to procure a certain proportion of electricity from eligible renewable and carbon-free sources and increasing the proportion through the coming years with an ultimate procurement requirement of 100 percent by 2045. The RPS requirements would support use of electricity by the proposed project that is generated from renewable or carbon-free sources. Overall, the proposed project would generally be consistent with the goals outlined in Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines regarding increasing energy efficiency, decreasing reliance on fossil fuels, and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources for electricity generation. Because the proposed project would comply with CBSC, CALGreen, and utility compliance with SB 100, the proposed project would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary electricity demands. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Natural Gas Energy

Implementation of the proposed project would not generate an increase in natural gas since the campus would encompass only all-electric buildings on-site. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would result in no impact with respect to natural gas usage.

Transportation Energy

The proposed project would consume transportation energy during operations from the use of motor vehicles. The efficiency of motor vehicles in use, such as the average miles per gallon for motor vehicles that will be used by students and staff of the proposed project, are unknown. However, this analysis quantifies transportation energy use using overall VMT for the proposed project, average countywide fuel efficiencies, and average countywide fleet mix as provided in Table 3.6-6, *Annual Operation-Related Fuel Usage.* As shown in Table 3.6-6, the annual VMT for the proposed project is estimated to be 10.4 million miles based on CalEEMod defaults for VMT generation and the proposed project's new trips shown in the traffic impact analysis (see Appendix L, *Transportation Impact Assessment*).

Table 3.6-6 Annual Operation-Related Fuel Usage

Source	Gas		Diesel		CNG		Electricity	
	Annual VMT	Annual Gallons	Annual VMT	Annual Gallons	Annual VMT	Annual Gallons	Annual VMT	Annual Gallons
Vehicles	8,304,477	347,514	595,695	48,897	685	142	1,464,569	543,084
Total VMT[1]	10,365,426 miles per year							
Total Fuel Consumption	396,553 gallons per year							
Per-Capita Fuel Consumption								
Proposed Project[2]	330							
County Average[3]	525							

Sources: CalEEMod Version 2022.1; EMFAC2025 Version 2.0.0; Off-Road Web Query Version 2.0.0; Appendix B.

Note: VMT = vehicle-miles traveled; kWh = kilowatt-hour.

1. Total VMT was calculated using the trip generation estimates from the Kittelson Traffic Impact Analysis (Appendix L) and CalEEMod default trip distances for the project site, which provides a conservative assessment of potential transportation fuel consumption for the proposed project.
2. The fuel consumption per capita is based on a total maximum student enrollment of 1,200 students.
3. County average per-capita consumption is drawn from Table 3.6-3.

Based on the total maximum student enrollment of 1,200 students, the proposed project's per-capita fuel consumption would be 330 gallons per student and result in a lower consumption rate compared to the county average of 525 gallons per person (see Table 3.6-3). Several factors would reduce the fuel consumption of the proposed project from what was modeled in this analysis. For example, the Plumas Lake Traffic Impact Analysis (EIR Appendix L) indicates that this neighborhood-serving development would primarily accommodate local residents who are already traveling nearby, rather than generating a substantial number of new regional trips. Without the capacity to serve middle school–aged students within the community, families would be required to travel longer distances to access schools. As such, the proposed project is expected to reduce trip lengths and result in a less-than-significant VMT impact, leading to a likely reduction in transportation fuel consumption due to improved proximity to educational services. Furthermore, the inclusion of EV charging infrastructure would support the use of electric vehicles by staff and visitors, reducing reliance on gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles. This would help lower overall fuel consumption and support California's clean transportation goals.

Additionally, because of State and federal vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, the average fuel efficiency for vehicles used by students and staff of the proposed project is anticipated to improve with each year as older and less fuel-efficient vehicles are retired and replaced with newer, more fuel-efficient vehicles or vehicles powered by alternative fuel sources (e.g., electricity, hydrogen). Therefore, the proposed project is anticipated to result in lower per-

capita transportation fuel consumption. Moreover, incremental vehicle fleet turnover in future years would decrease reliance on fossil fuels and slowly shift a greater proportion of transportation energy needs to electricity, which would incrementally increase the proposed project's reliance on renewable energy sources through electricity utility compliance with SB 100. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

This impact analysis evaluates consistency of the proposed project with California's Energy Action Plan and Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan.

Energy Action Plan

The Energy Action Plan was last updated in 2008 and was developed by the CPUC, CEC, and California Power Authority to create a unified State energy policy framework. It serves as one of the State's strategies for planning for reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy procurement and supply. The Energy Action Plan further establishes a "loading order" in identifying priorities for statewide energy planning efforts, which translates into first prioritizing meeting existing demand with cost-effective energy efficiency and demand response efforts, then using renewable energy resources and distributed generation, and finally meeting the remaining energy demand with renewable or otherwise "clean" fossil-fuel power generation resources (e.g., renewable natural gas). Other priorities identified in the Energy Action Plan but not directly related to local agencies, include modernizing transmission and distribution infrastructure, enhancing reliability in electricity and natural gas markets, and ensuring affordable access to all Californians. Therefore, a project can be assessed for consistency with the Energy Action Plan by examining how the proposed development generally supports or conflicts with the strategies of the plan, such as promoting energy resource deployment consistent with the plan's loading order.

The proposed new middle school campus, featuring EV infrastructure, energy-efficient LED lighting, and an all-electric building design, directly supports the goals of the Energy Action Plan by promoting clean energy use and improving energy efficiency. By eliminating the need for on-site fossil fuel combustion, the all-electric design aligns with strategies to transition to renewable electricity sources and decarbonize building operations. The integration of LED lighting further enhances energy efficiency by significantly reducing electricity demand for lighting compared to traditional systems (i.e., incandescent bulbs and fluorescent tubes). Additionally, the inclusion of EV infrastructure encourages the adoption of EVs among staff and visitors, further reducing transportation-related emissions. Together, these features would help further CARB's goals for renewable energy production and the state's goal of transitioning to

100 percent carbon-free electricity. Therefore, the proposed project would be considered consistent with the Energy Action Plan strategies and impacts would be less than significant.

Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan

The Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan was last updated in 2011 and serves as the State's long-term roadmap to make energy efficiency a top priority in supporting California's grid harmonization and renewable energy integration efforts. The Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan serves as a living strategic document for State and local agencies and emphasizes the integration of energy-efficiency policies and measures into planning efforts as a critical component to advancing the objectives of the plan. Therefore, a project can be assessed for consistency with the Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan by examining how its proposed development generally supports or conflicts with the strategies of the plan, such as green building standards and zero net energy readiness.

The proposed project incorporates a range of design features, including energy-efficient LED lighting, EV infrastructure, and an all-electric building system, that align with and advance the goals of the state's long-term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan. By replacing traditional systems such as gas-powered heating and outdated lighting with modern, all-electric Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems and LED lighting, the proposed project would reduce overall energy consumption and operational emissions. Additionally, EV charging infrastructure encourages the adoption of low-emission transportation options among staff and visitors, further contributing to long-term reductions in transportation-related emissions. Therefore, the proposed project would be considered consistent with the Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan strategies and impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.6.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to energy?

The cumulative energy impacts are considered in the context of the growth from the proposed project combined with the estimated growth in PG&E service areas. The proposed project's energy requirement and energy use efficiencies would not substantially affect energy resources, supplies, and capacity, nor would they affect peak and base period demand of energy, including energy in the forms of electricity and transportation fuel use. A discussion of the proposed project's energy demand and impact on energy supplies is included in Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service Systems*.

The proposed project would comply with applicable energy standards, including the CBSC and CALGreen requirements, to reduce energy consumption and promote renewable energy sources that align with the State's goals for carbon neutrality. As described previously, the proposed project would not result in a significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary energy consumption, and it would comply with applicable State, regional, or local plans for renewable energy (i.e., California's Energy Action Plan and Long-Term Efficiency Strategic Plan).

Cumulative development projects would similarly be required to comply with applicable State requirements that promote energy efficiency and prevent the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary use of energy. When considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, the proposed project would not conflict with the goals or policies of California's Energy Action Plan or the Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan. Furthermore, future development in PG&E service areas would also comply with the applicable energy-efficiency standards. Accordingly, the proposed project would not be cumulatively considerable, and cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

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3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

This chapter outlines the regulatory framework, existing geological and soil conditions at the project site, and the potential impacts of the Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) on these resources.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical report(s):

- *Geotechnical and Geologic Hazards Investigation Prepared for Plumas Lake Elementary School District New Middle School Campus* ("Geotechnical Report"), GEOCON Consultants, Inc., August 2024
- *Paleontological Assessment Letter Report for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District Project*, ECORP Consulting Inc., August 2025.
- *Proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Geological and Environmental Hazards Assessment Report* (GEHA), PlaceWorks, November 2023.

Complete copies of these technical reports are provided in Appendices F, G, and H of this DEIR, respectively.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to geology and soil were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.7.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act

The Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-124) established the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, which is coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. This program was substantially amended in November 1990 by the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Act (NEHRPA), which refined the description of agency responsibilities, program goals, and objectives.

NEHRPA's mission includes improved understanding, characterization, and prediction of hazards and vulnerabilities; improved building codes and land use practices; risk reduction through post-earthquake investigations and education; development and improvement of design and construction techniques; improved mitigation capacity; and accelerated application of research results. The NEHRPA designates Federal Emergency Management Agency as the program's lead agency and assigns several planning, coordinating, and reporting responsibilities. Other NEHRPA agencies include the National Institute of Standards and Technology, National Science Foundation, and USGS.

Paleontological Resources Preservation, Omnibus Public Lands Act

This legislation directs the Secretaries of the US Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to manage and protect paleontological resources on federal land using "scientific principles and expertise." To formulate a consistent paleontological resources management framework, the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA), Public Law 111-011, Title VI, Subtitle D, incorporates most of the recommendations from the report of the Secretary of the Interior titled "Assessment of Fossil Management on Federal and Indian Lands." In passing the PRPA, Congress officially recognized the scientific importance of paleontological resources on some federal lands by declaring that fossils from these lands are federal property that must be preserved and protected. The PRPA codifies existing policies of the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, and provides the following:

- Uniform criminal and civil penalties for illegal sale and transport, and theft and vandalism of fossils from federal lands.
- Uniform minimum requirements for paleontological resource-use permit issuance (terms, conditions, and qualifications of applicants).
- Uniform definitions for "paleontological resources" and "casual collecting."
- Uniform requirements for curation of federal fossils in approved repositories.

Antiquities Act of 1906

The Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 US Code secs. 431–433) was the first US law to provide general legal protection of cultural and natural resources of historic or scientific interest on federal lands, including paleontological resources (NPS 2025a). The Antiquities Act was used to proclaim several national monuments based upon significant paleontological resources (NPS 2025b). It states, in part:

> ...that any person who shall appropriate, excavate, injure or destroy any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity, situated on lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States, without the permission of the Secretary of the Department of the Government having jurisdiction over the lands on which said antiquities are situated, shall upon conviction, be fined in a sum of not more than five hundred dollars or be imprisoned for a period of not more than ninety days, or

shall suffer both fine and imprisonment, in the discretion of the court. (54 United States Code Section 320302)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration Regulations

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Excavation and Trenching standard, Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 1926, Subpart P, contains requirements for excavation and trenching operations. The standards apply to all open excavations in the Earth's surface. Following the standards will prevent or greatly reduce the risk of cave-ins and other excavation-related incidents (OSHA 2015).

Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act

This act gives the US Department of Agriculture assessment and planning authority to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance soil, water, and related natural resources. Protection and restoration activities include prevention of harmful soil changes, rehabilitation of contaminated soil and water, and precautions against negative soil impacts. Disruptions of natural soil functions, including its function as an archive of natural and cultural history, should be avoided as far as practicable. In addition, the federal Water Pollution Control Act (also referred to as the Clean Water Act) requirements, through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permitting process, provide guidance for protection of geological and soil resources.

STATE

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (California Public Resources Code (PRC) secs. 2621–2624) was passed in 1972 to mitigate the hazard of surface faulting to structures intended for human occupancy. The Alquist-Priolo Act's main purpose is to prohibit sitting buildings used for human occupancy across traces of active faults that constitute a potential hazard to structures from surface faulting or fault creep. The Alquist-Priolo Act requires the State Geologist to establish regulatory zones, known as "Earthquake Fault Zones," delineating appropriately wide earthquake fault zones to encompass potentially active and recently active traces of faults. Local agencies must regulate most development projects within these zones. Before a project can be permitted, cities and counties must require a geologic investigation to demonstrate that proposed human occupancy structures would not be constructed across active faults. A licensed geologist must prepare an evaluation and written report of a specific site. If an active fault is found, a structure for human occupancy cannot be placed over the trace of the fault and must be set back, typically at least 50 feet from the fault.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act of 1990 (PRC secs. 2690–2699.6) directs the California Geological Survey (CGS) to identify and map areas prone to liquefaction, earthquake-induced landslides, and amplified ground shaking. The purpose is to minimize loss of life and property through the identification, evaluation, and mitigation of seismic hazards.

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act provides a statewide seismic hazard mapping and technical advisory program to assist cities, counties, and state agencies, which are directed to use the seismic hazard zone maps in their land use planning and permitting processes. This act requires site-specific hazards investigations to be conducted by licensed professionals within “zones of required investigation” to identify and evaluate seismic hazards and formulate mitigation measures prior to permitting most developments designed for human occupancy. Evaluation and mitigation of seismic hazards are to be conducted under guidelines established by the California State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) (CGS 2008).

Seismic Hazards and Zones of Required Investigation

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act and the Seismic Hazards Mapping Act direct the State Geologist to delineate regulatory "zones of required investigation" to reduce the threat to public health and safety and to minimize the loss of life and property posed by earthquake-related ground failures and other hazards. Cities and counties affected by these zones are required to regulate development within them. The two acts also require sellers of real property (and their agents) within a mapped hazard zone to disclose that fact at the time of sale.

The zones of required investigation—listed below for potential earthquake faulting, liquefaction, landslides, and tsunamis—are delineated and distributed to cities, counties, and state construction agencies to help identify where higher building standards may be necessary for safe development. Statutes require that cities and counties use all four of these zones as part of their construction permitting process (CGS 2025).

- **Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones:** These zones are intended to prevent buildings for human occupancy from being constructed upon active faults.
- **Liquefaction Zones:** These zones identify where the stability of foundation soils must be investigated and countermeasures undertaken in the design and construction of buildings for human occupancy.
- **Earthquake-Induced Landslide Zones:** These zones identify where the stability of hillslopes must be evaluated and countermeasures undertaken in the design and construction of buildings for human occupancy.
- **Tsunami Regulatory Zones:** These zones identify where impacts from tsunami inundation and related hazards must be evaluated and countermeasures (e.g., evacuation and engineering design) developed to protect the human occupants.

California Seismic Hazards Program

The Seismic Hazards Program delineates areas prone to ground failure and other earthquake-related hazards including surface fault rupture, liquefaction, earthquake-induced landslides, and tsunami inundation. Cities and counties are required to use these maps in their land use planning and building permit processes to identify and mitigate these hazards for development projects prior to the next major earthquake.

California Building Standards Code

California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 24, also known as the California Building Standards Code, regulates how buildings are designed and constructed, and is intended to ensure the maximum structural integrity and safety of private and public buildings. Title 24 is composed of 12 "parts." Parts 2, 10, and 12 of Title 24 are relevant to geology, soils, and mineral resources, as described below.

Title 24 Part 2, California Building Code. The California Building Code (CBC) contains general building design and construction requirements relating to fire and life safety, structural safety, and access compliance. The CBC provides minimum standards to safeguard life and limb, health, property, and public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, construction, quality of materials, use and occupancy, and location and maintenance of all buildings and structures and certain equipment. The CBC is based on the International Building Code, with necessary California amendments. The CBC is updated every three years. The current CBC was published on July 1, 2022, and became effective on January 1, 2023. The CBC outlines seismic safety standards and design and construction requirements. Development projects must show compliance with the CBC through the development review process prior to obtaining building permits. The CBC includes estimates for maximum earthquake magnitudes and peak ground acceleration, soil classifications and expansion potential, seismic design categories and lateral pressure, and grading and surface drainage.

Title 24 Part 10, California Existing Building Code. The California Building Standards Commission adopted certain provisions of the International Existing Building Code, Appendix Chapter A1, Seismic Strengthening Provisions for Unreinforced Masonry Bearing Wall Buildings.

Title 24 Part 12, California Reference Standard Code. The California Referenced Standards Code compiles minimum test and reference standards required by the Building Standards Commission.

The California Geological Survey Special Publication 42

The CGS Special Publication 42, “Earthquake Fault Zones” is “a guide for government agencies, property owners / developers, and geoscience practitioners for assessing fault rupture hazards in California (CGS 2018). The purpose of these guidelines under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act is to regulate development near active faults so as to mitigate the hazard of surface fault rupture.

California Public Resources Code

The PRC protects paleontological resources in specific contexts. PRC Section 5097.5 prohibits knowing and willful excavation, removal, destruction, injury, and defacement of any vertebrate paleontological feature on public lands without express authorization from the agency with jurisdiction. Violation of this prohibition is a misdemeanor and is subject to fine or imprisonment (PRC sec. 5097.5(c)), and people convicted of such a violation may also be required to provide restitution (PRC sec. 5097.5(d)(1)). Additionally, PRC Section 30244 requires "reasonable mitigation measures" to address impacts on paleontological resources identified by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Regulations for School Facilities Construction

The State of California establishes standards for school site selection and construction to ensure safety, accessibility, and long-term suitability of school facilities. These standards and applicable regulations are in the California Education Code, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, and the California Department of Education's *School Site Selection and Approval Guide*. They are designed to guide the site selection process for new schools and address considerations related to geology, soil, and environmental safety.

- **Education Code Section 17212:** Before acquiring property for a new school site, a comprehensive geological assessment is mandated. This ensures that the proposed location is not on an active earthquake fault line and is not subject to other significant geological hazards.
- **Education Code Section 17212.5:** Geological and soil engineering studies are required for the construction, major alteration, or reconstruction of school buildings within special studies zones, or when the cost exceeds $25,000 and structural elements are affected. The Department of General Services may also require such studies outside special studies zones. Studies are not required if adequate prior investigations exist. School buildings cannot be built or relocated directly on active fault traces with a risk of surface rupture.
- **CCR Title 5 Section 14010(f):** Pursuant to Education Code Sections 17212 and 17212.5, the site shall not contain an active earthquake fault or fault trace.
- **CCR Title 5 Section 14010(i):** The site is not subject to moderate to high liquefaction or landslides.
- ***School Site Selection and Approval Guide*, Appendix H:** Appendix H details the factors to be included in a Geological and Environmental Hazards Report, including site description, geological seismic and fault hazards, subsurface conditions, liquefaction subsidence, mitigation factors, environmental health hazards, and proximity to high-pressure pipelines and electric transmission lines. It also discusses potential flood inundation, slope stability, and mitigations for student safety and staff use. (CDE 2000

These standards collectively ensure that all newly developed, state-funded school sites in California adhere to rigorous health, safety, environmental, and land-use planning requirements. By mandating detailed assessments and minimum standards, the regulations help protect students, staff, and the broader community.

REGIONAL

Yuba County 2021 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2021 Yuba County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) Update was developed by Yuba County, its two incorporated communities, and nine special districts as an update to the 2015 LHMP approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Its primary purpose is to guide efforts to reduce the risks and impacts of hazard events, protect people and property, and strengthen community resilience. The plan outlines the hazard mitigation planning process, identifies local hazards and vulnerabilities, and establishes goals and strategies to reduce risk. It also ensures continued eligibility for federal disaster assistance programs (Yuba 2021a).

The Yuba County LHMP determined that earthquakes are a priority hazard in Yuba County, but the County has limited capability to mitigate this hazard, so it was dropped to low priority for mitigation planning purposes (Yuba 2021b).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Chapter 10.05, Building Standards Construction Code: The County's building regulations are found in this chapter. The County adopted the CBC. State law permits jurisdictions to amend state building codes to address local geographic, topographic, or climatic conditions.

Chapter 11.23, Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control: This chapter aims to regulate grading, drainage, and earthwork activities in unincorporated areas of Yuba County to protect public welfare, life, health, and property. It ensures that graded sites are used in accordance with the Yuba County General Plan, stormwater management plan, public works standard specifications, California fire safe standards, stormwater regulations, and local ordinances. It requires the implementation of erosion and sedimentation control measures to protect water quality and reduce pollutant discharge into stormwater drainage systems. The chapter establishes authority for grading permits, plans approval, inspection, and enforcement of these provisions.

Section 11.23.060, Geotechnical Investigation and Inspections: This section requires a geotechnical investigation for grading projects that involve cuts or fills exceeding 10 feet in depth, except for vehicular ways, unless the proposed grading exceeds 10 feet in depth on natural ground with a slope greater than 30 percent. Investigations are also required when expansive soils are present or when the site is in an area with known or suspected geologic hazards (landslide and ground failure stemming from seismically induced ground shaking).

These investigations must be conducted by licensed geotechnical professionals and include site testing, soil classification, and evaluation of geologic risks. The resulting reports must be reviewed and approved by the Community Development and Services Agency and integrated into the final project plans. If site conditions differ from those initially reported, updated documentation must be submitted for approval. Both engineers and permit holders are responsible for submitting periodic progress reports, and any deviations from approved plans must be reported and corrected immediately.

Yuba County General Plan

Public Health and Safety Element

- **Policy HS8.1:** Development projects shall implement applicable state and local building code requirements, including structural and seismic safety measures, in order to reduce risks associated with seismic events and unstable or expansive soils.
- **Policy HS8.2:** New developments that could be adversely affected by geological and/or soil conditions shall include project features that minimize these risks.
- **Policy HS8.3:** A grading permit from the County is required for movement of dirt, soil, rock, debris or other material on over one acre of land and construction of retaining walls, bridges, and fill operations exceeding four feet, unless the activity is listed in the County Code as exempt from grading requirements.
- **Policy HS8.4:** Grading permits generally require submittal of grading plans and drainage study for review and approval by the Community Development and Services Agency, and where requested, a revegetation and winterization plan, and geotechnical investigation report.
- **Policy HS8.5**: An erosion and sediment control plan meeting County standards for preventing increased discharge of sediment is required for:
  - Projects that propose to grade more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet of area having a slope greater than ten (10) percent;
  - Clearing and grubbing areas of one acre or more regardless of slope;
  - Projects where more than two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet will be inadequately protected from erosion during any portion of the rainy season;
  - Projects that involve grading will occur within fifty (50) feet of any watercourse; or
  - Where the County determines that the grading will or may pose a significant erosion, or sediment discharge hazard for any reason.

Natural Resources Element

- **Policy NR6.2:** If potential paleontological or prehistoric resources are detected during construction, work shall stop and consultation is required to avoid further impacts.

3.7.2 Existing Conditions

REGIONAL FAULTING, SEISMICITY, AND EARTHQUAKES

The numerous faults in Northern California include active, potentially active, and inactive faults. The criteria for these major groups were developed by the CGS for the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone Program. By definition, an active fault is one that has had surface displacement within Holocene time (the last 11,000 years). A potentially active fault has demonstrated surface displacement during Quaternary time (11,000 to 1.6 million years ago) but has had no known Holocene movement. Faults that have not moved in the last 1.6 million years are considered inactive.

Regional faults in proximity to the project site are depicted on Figure 3.7-1, *Regional Fault Map*. The project site is not within a currently established Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. No active or potentially active faults with the potential for surface fault rupture are known to pass directly beneath the project site. Therefore, the potential for surface rupture due to faulting occurring beneath the site during the design life of the proposed development is considered low. The Plumas Lake area is generally characterized by low seismic activity (GEOCON 2024).

Table 3.7-1, *Regional Fault Summary*, presents approximate distances to active faults in the project site vicinity based on mapping by the CGS. The fault distances and magnitudes are only a general characterization of the seismic context of the project site. The faults in Table 3.7-1 are sources of potential ground motion. However, earthquakes that might occur on other faults in the region are also potential generators of significant ground motion and could subject the project site to ground shaking.

Table 3.7-1 Regional Fault Summary

Fault Name	Approximate Distance to Project Site (miles)	Maximum Earthquake Magnitude
Unnamed traces at Sutter Buttes	16¼	unpublished
Swain Ravine	18¼	unpublished
Paynes Peak	26	6.5
Maidu East	27	unpublished
Unnamed trace near Dunningan Hills Fault	27¼	unpublished
Cleveland Hills	30	6.7

Source: GEOCON 2024 (DEIR Appendix H).

Figure 3.7-2, *Regional Seismicity Map*, shows the epicenters of recorded earthquakes with magnitudes of 4.0 or greater within a 60-mile radius of the project site. According to reports published by the CGS and the USGS, the project site has not experienced significant ground failure from these events (GEOCON 2024).

SECONDARY SEISMIC HAZARDS

Groundwater

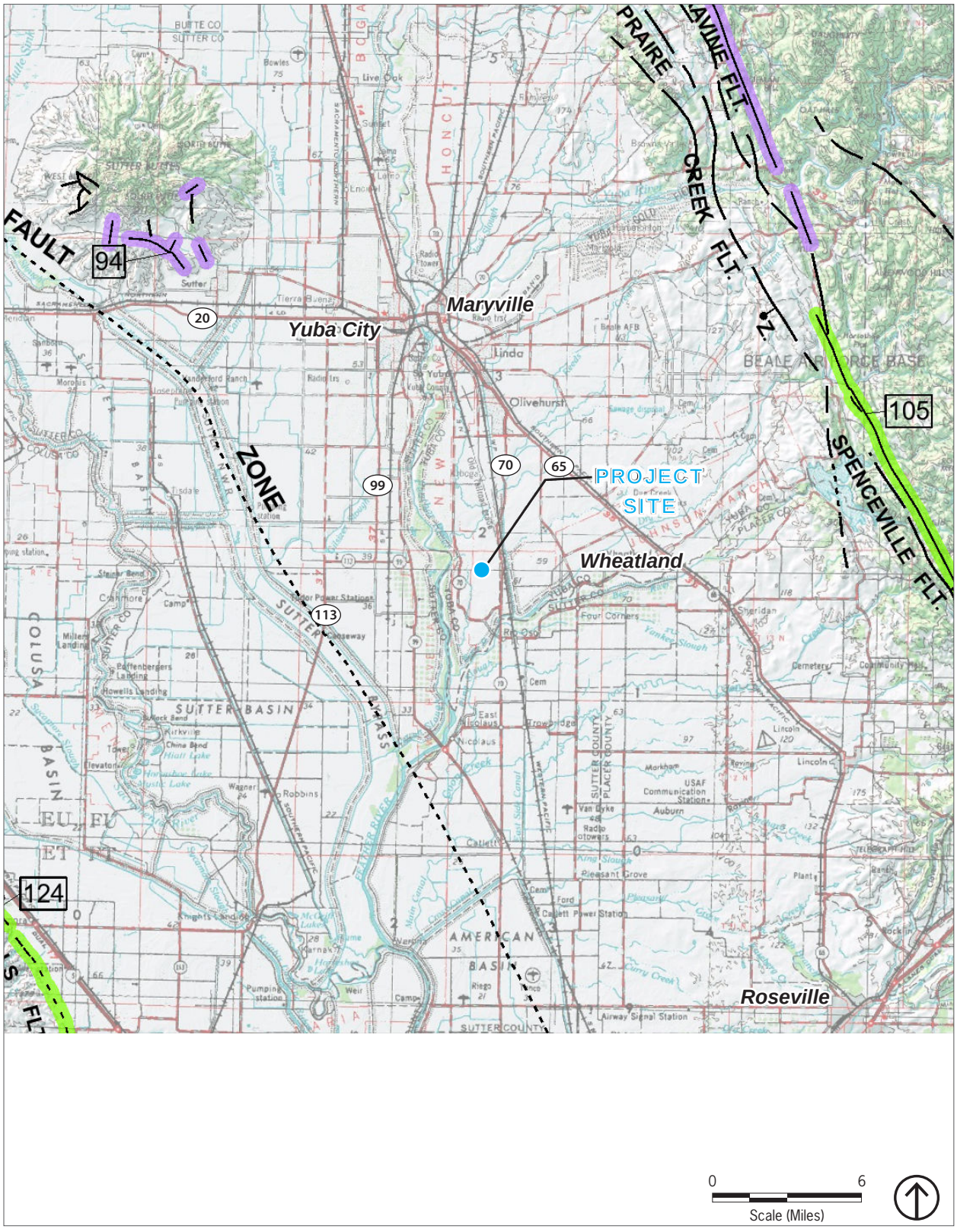
Shallow borings—maximum depth of 5 feet—at the project site did not encounter groundwater, but each of the deeper borings and all six Cone Penetrometer Tests[1] (CPT) encountered groundwater between approximately 6 feet and 21 feet below existing grade. Therefore, measured depth to groundwater may not represent stabilized groundwater levels. Fluctuations of groundwater levels can result from variations in precipitation, temperature, and other factors. Depth to groundwater can also vary significantly due to localized pumping, irrigation practices, and seasonal fluctuations. Therefore, it is possible that groundwater may be higher or lower than the levels observed during field investigation. Groundwater elevation data from a well approximately ¾ mile southeast of the project site indicates a high groundwater level of about 3.5 feet below grade (GECON 2024).

Liquefaction

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which saturated, cohesionless soils are subject to a temporary loss of shear strength during intense earthquakes. Primary factors that trigger liquefaction are moderate to strong ground shaking (seismic source), relatively clean, loose granular soils (primarily poorly graded sands and silty sands), and saturated soil conditions (shallow groundwater). Due to the increasing overburden pressure with depth, liquefaction of granular soils is generally limited to the upper 50 feet of a soil profile. Consequences of liquefaction can include ground surface settlement, ground loss (sand boils), and lateral slope displacements (lateral spreading). For liquefaction to induce sand boils or fissures, pore water pressure in liquified strata must exert enough force to break through overlying, nonliquefiable layers (GEOCON 2024).

Liquefaction potential at the project site was evaluated based on the Liquefaction Potential Index (LPI). The LPI is a measure of liquefaction potential based on an analysis of the entire vertical soil profile, not just discrete layers. Factors considered for the LPI calculations include thickness of the liquefied layer, proximity of the liquefied layer to the surface, and safety. The LPI ranges from 0 to 100, with value zero representing no liquefaction potential. Surface manifestations of liquefaction can occur at values at 5 or above. At the project site, all LPI values were below 5, meaning the risk of surface damage from liquefaction during a design-level earthquake is low (GEOCON 2024).

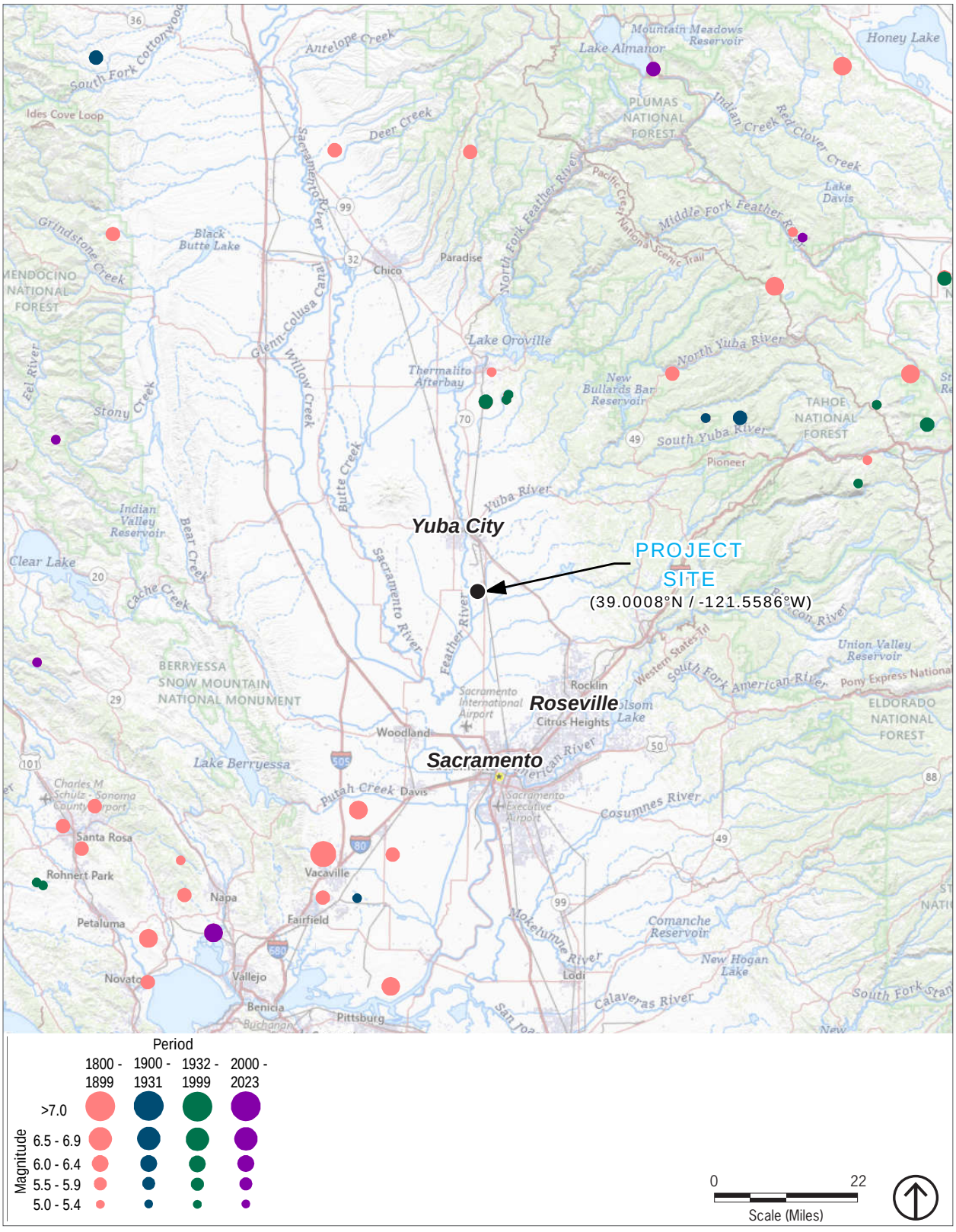
[1] CPT is used to identify subsurface conditions in the upper 100 feet of the subsurface. This test is a factor in assessing the ability to determine what areas are more prone to experiencing effects such as liquefaction and landslides when there is shaking from an earthquake (USGS 2025).



Source: Geocon 2024.

Figure 3.7-1
Regional Fault Map

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Source: Geocon 2024.

Figure 3.7-2
Regional Sensitivity Map

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Based on the low LPI and on the presence of the non-liquefiable layer that mantles the project site as well as the depth to significant liquefiable layers and the thickness and discontinuous nature of the liquefiable layers, the potential for ground loss due to sand boils or fissures in a seismic event is also considered low (GEOCON 2024).

Settlement

Consequences of liquefaction at the project site can include ground surface settlement. Total ground surface settlements of about one inch may result from liquefaction after a design level seismic event (GECON 2024).

Lateral Spreading

There is a drainage swale to the west of the project site, and the northwestern part of the project site is about 525 feet from the nearest free face of the drainage swale. Research indicates a correlation between LPI and the effects of lateral spreading, wherein surface manifestations of lateral spread are unlikely where the LPI is less than 12. As mentioned, LPI values at the project site are all under 5 and less than 2 near the drainage swale by the planned structures. Therefore, the risk of lateral spreading causing surface damage at the project site is low (GEOCON 2024).

Landslide and Slope Instability

The project site is essentially flat and level, and the slope descending toward the drainage swale just west of the project site has inclinations of approximately 4:1 or flatter. No slopes susceptible to landslides or slope failures were observed in areas that could affect the proposed structures (GEOCON 2024).

Subsidence

There is no known evidence of regional subsidence in the project area related to groundwater pumping or other causes. (GEOCON 2024).

REGIONAL AND LOCAL GEOLOGIC SETTING

Soils

Plumas Lake is situated in California's Central Valley, a broad lowland between the Sierra Nevada to the east and Coast Ranges to the west. The Central Valley has been filled by a sequence of deep alluvial deposits derived from weathering processes in the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges. The weathering and subsequent deposition within the valley has resulted in alluvium that can be thousands of feet in thickness. As shown in Figure 3.7-3, *Geologic Map*, the project site lies at the intersection of two USGS quadrangles (Sacramento and Chico), which show slightly different geologic units. However, based on available mapping and subsurface soil investigations, the area is primarily underlain by Holocene- to Pleistocene-age alluvial deposits, including basin, fan, and Riverbank Formation materials. Since the soil layers are often

discontinuous and similar in nature, they have been collectively classified as Quaternary alluvium (GEOCON 2024).

Soil borings at the project site indicate that alluvial deposits extend from the ground surface to a depth of approximately 51.5 feet below the existing grade. The soil appears to be primarily fine grained, consisting of silts and clays with discontinuous interbeds of silty sand. The alluvium generally comprises medium stiff to hard, lean to fat clays with variable amounts of sand and silt, stiff to hard silts with variable amounts of sand, clay, and gravel, very stiff to hard clayey silts to silty clays, and medium dense to very dense sands with variable amounts of silt (GEOCON 2024).

Hydrocollapsible Soil

Based on the consistent character and relative density of the alluvial soils observed in the borings on the project site and the lack of porous soils, the potential for hydrocollapse beneath the project site is low. (GECON 2024).

Expansive Soils

Laboratory test results from samples of the near-surface clays at the project site indicate high expansion potential, and the soils are classified “expansive” per the 2022 CBC. Expansive soils may undergo significant volume changes with changes in moisture content. They shrink and harden when dried and expand and soften when wet (GEOCON 2024).

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Plumas Lake is in the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province, on the western edge of the Sierra Nevada foothills and the Sacramento Valley. The geology of the Plumas Lake area consists primarily of Mesozoic granitic rocks overlain by Cenozoic volcanic and sedimentary deposits. The area has experienced uplift, erosion, and localized volcanism, which resulted in deep valleys and granitic outcrops. Pleistocene glaciation has contributed to the formation of sedimentary deposits, including glacial outwash and lakebed sediments (ECORP 2025).

The underlying geology of the project site consists of:

- Basin Deposits (Qb), which consists of fine-grained deposits of silt and clay in flood basins between modern water courses deposited during the Holocene (12 thousand years ago to present).
- Riverbank Formation (Qr), which consists of weathered silt and gravel deposited during the middle Pleistocene (130 to 450 thousand years ago).

Modesto-Riverbank Formation, Undifferentiated (Qmr), which consists of weathered and slightly weathered gravel, sand, silt, and clay deposited during the Pleistocene (130 to 450 thousand years ago).



Source: Geocon 2024.

Figure 3.7-3
Geologic Map

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These Holocene and Pleistocene deposits are collectively referred to as Quaternary (Q) in age (ECORP 2025).

A paleontological record search through the Sierra College Natural History Museum in Rocklin, California, was conducted for the project site and offsite improvement area. No paleontological resources were found within the project site or a 1-mile radius. A search of the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP) database was also prepared. The database search produced three fossils from Yuba County, specifically, at the Yuba River. The fossils included the pelvis, sacrum, and a single postsacral vertebra from a mammoth; a radius-ulna from a horse; and an associated postcrania from a bison. A literature search further yielded no fossil findings (ECORP 2025).

3.7.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to geology if it would:

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.)

    ii) Strong seismic ground shaking.

    iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.

    iv) Landslides.

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

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.

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

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.

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

METHODOLOGY

Geology and Soils

The scope of the geotechnical investigation included field exploration, laboratory testing, and engineering analysis. The field exploration was performed between May 28 and May 31, 2024, and included 6 CPT soundings to maximum depths of approximately 51 feet, drilling 22 exploratory borings to depths of approximately 51.5 feet or less below existing grade, and performing borehole percolation testing in 2 additional shallow borings. Laboratory tests were performed on selected soil samples obtained during the investigation to evaluate pertinent geotechnical parameters. Lab results, seismic response spectra, and liquefaction analyses are detailed in Appendix F.

Paleontological

The paleontological investigation included a paleontological record search through the Sierra College Natural History Museum in Rocklin, California and, UCMP in Berkeley, California. A literature review of the geology and paleontology of the project site and offsite improvement area was also prepared.

3.7.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project subject occupants to potential seismic-related hazards, 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.)

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.

iv) Landslides.

Fault Rupture Hazard

As shown in Figure 3.7-1, the project site is not within an established Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zone. Therefore, the potential for surface rupture due to faulting beneath the project site during the design life of the proposed development is considered low. The Geological and

Environmental Hazard Assessment Report (GEHA) prepared for the project site also determined that the project site is not on a known fault, within an earthquake fault zone, or within an area designated as geologically hazardous. The project site is not immediately adjacent (i.e., within a few hundred feet) of a fault zone (PlaceWorks 2023). The nearest potentially active fault is the Foothills Fault System approximately 16 miles northeast of the project site. The project site is not on a pressure ridge, and there are no known active faults on or immediately adjacent to the project site. Therefore, the potential for tectonic fault rupture at the project site is considered negligible (PlaceWorks 2023), and impacts are determined to be less than significant.

Strong Seismic Ground Shaking

Ground shaking throughout California is a typical phenomenon in the state. The project site has not experienced significant ground failure from historic earthquakes or regional faults; however, the project site could be subjected to strong ground shaking in the event of an earthquake. The potential for strong seismic ground shaking would be minimized through compliance with the established regulatory framework. The proposed project would be constructed in accordance with the CBC (24 CCR Part 2), which provides minimum standards to protect property and public welfare by regulating design and construction to mitigate the effects of seismic shaking and adverse soil conditions. In addition, the proposed project would also be required to adhere to the structural recommendation outlined in the geotechnical report prepared for the proposed project. The proposed project would be required to be reviewed and approved by the Division of State Architect (DSA), which approves the design, including the structural integrity. Review and approval by DSA would ensure compliance with the CBC and geotechnical report. Compliance with the standards of the CBC and applicable requirements from the Yuba County Ordinance Code—for example, Section 10.05.450, geotechnical report requirements and Section 10.50.130, seismic-force design standards—together with implementation of the geotechnical report would ensure that impacts from seismic ground shaking would be less than significant.

Liquefaction

The liquefaction risk at the project site is considered low due to the presence of a dense surface layer, low LPI values, and the depth and discontinuity of potentially liquefiable soils (GEOCON 2024).

However, the likely consequence of potential liquefaction at the project site is settlement. The total ground surface settlements of about one inch may result from liquefaction after a design level seismic event. The geotechnical report recommends that the foundations and project improvements be designed to accommodate approximately one inch of total liquefaction-induced settlement and approximately ¾ inch of differential settlement across a horizontal distance of 50 feet.

The proposed project would be required to comply with the CBC and the geological recommendations in the geotechnical report prepared for the proposed project. Because the project site is a proposed school, the DSA review would ensure that the buildings and structures onsite are sufficiently evaluated and constructed to withstand liquefaction and settlement potential. Further, offsite improvements and the extension of Kensington and Blackbird Way would further be reviewed and approved by the County. The project would be required to comply with applicable requirements of the Yuba County Ordinance Code. Therefore, impacts from liquefaction and settlement from the proposed project would be less than significant.

Landslide

The project site is flat with gentle slopes, and no landslide or slope failure risks were identified that could impact the proposed structures (GEOCON 2024; PlaceWorks 2023). The proposed project would comply with the CBC, and recommendations from the Geotechnical Evaluation Report. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than Significant.

b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Erosion is a normal and inevitable geologic process whereby earthen materials are loosened, worn away, decomposed, or dissolved and removed from one place and transported to another. The project site contains relatively flat terrain, which decreases the proposed project's potential to accelerate erosion. Implementation of the proposed project would require earthwork which includes grading for proper base and slope, and utility trenching.

The proposed project encompasses an area greater than one acre and is therefore subject to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General permit requirements. As part of compliance, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be prepared, outlining minimum and advanced construction best management practices (BMP) for erosion control, along with their implementation during construction.

For offsite improvements and the extension of Kensington Drive and Blackbird Way, the proposed project would be required to comply with applicable provisions of the Yuba County General Plan and the Yuba County Ordinance Code. The Yuba County General Plan includes policies aimed at minimizing soil erosion under the Public Health and Safety Element. Policy HS8.3 requires a grading permit for the movement of dirt, soil, rock, debris, or other material on sites larger than one acre. Policy HS8.5 requires the preparation of an erosion and sediment control plan that meets County standards for any project disturbing one acre or more, regardless of slope, including clearing and grubbing activities, which this project entails. The Yuba County Ordinance Code Chapter 11.23, Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control, also requires a grading permit for any activity involving ground disturbance of more than one acre or for projects disturbing less than one acre if they are part of a larger development exceeding one acre.

Compliance with these existing regulatory frameworks, along with adherence to recommendations from the proposed project's geotechnical report, would minimize the potential for soil erosion and topsoil loss (GEOCON 2024). As a result, the proposed project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil, and impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

c) Would the project 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?

Lateral Spreading

The potential for lateral spreading at the project site is low due to minimal risk of shallow liquefaction and low LPI value below 5 across the project site. Therefore, the likelihood of surface damage from lateral spreading is considered low, resulting in less than significant impacts.

Subsidence

According to the geotechnical report, there is no known evidence of regional subsidence in the project area related to groundwater pumping or other causes. The proposed project would result in neither an overdraft of groundwater aquifers nor overpumping of petroleum reserves. Impacts from subsidence would be less than significant.

Liquefaction and Landslide

As discussed in Impact (a) above, liquefaction and landslide impacts are considered less than significant.

Collapse

Based on the consistency and relative density of the alluvial deposits and the absence of porous soils at the project site, the potential for hydrocollapse in the soils that underlie the project site is low (GEOCON 2024), and impacts would be less than significant.

Additionally, compliance with the CBC, geotechnical recommendations from the geotechnical report, and review by DSA and County would ensure that impacts related to soil collapse would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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

Expansive soils swell when they become wet and shrink when they dry out, resulting in the potential for cracked building foundations and in some cases, structural distress of the buildings themselves. In each case, minor to severe damage to overlying structures is possible (PlaceWorks 2023).

The project would be required to comply with the latest edition of the California Building Code (CBC), which contains specific provisions for structural design and foundation engineering to protect structures from hazards related to expansive soils. Laboratory testing at the project site indicates the presence of highly expansive soils, which could result in potentially significant impacts if not properly addressed. In accordance with the Geotechnical Evaluation Report, the proposed project would need to implement site-specific recommendations such as proper moisture conditioning, soil compaction, and surface drainage. In addition, a layer of low-expansive fill will be required beneath all interior and exterior slabs-on-grade. Any imported or low-expansive fill used on the project site should have an Expansion Index below 50 and a Plasticity Index below 15 and must be free of organic material, construction debris, and rocks larger than three inches. However, native soil excavated from the project site is not expected to meet these criteria.

Furthermore, project plans and geotechnical design measures would be reviewed and approved by the DSA and the County prior to issuance of building permits to ensure consistency with applicable structural safety standards and geotechnical recommendations. Compliance with these regulatory requirements and design measures will ensure that potential risks to life or property associated with expansive soils are avoided. Therefore, impacts related to expansive soils are less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

e) Would the project 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?

The proposed project would not require the installation or use of a septic tank or alternative wastewater disposal system. The proposed project is in a developed area within Plumas Lake and would utilize the local sewer system. Therefore, no impact would result from soil conditions in relation to septic tanks or other on-site water disposal systems.

Significance without Mitigation: No Impact.

f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

The surface geology within the project site consists of younger Quaternary (Holocene-age) deposits, which are known to have a low potential of or sensitivity to the presence of paleontological resources due to its more recent age. However, older Quaternary (Pleistocene-age) deposits may be present at depth and are considered to have a high paleontological sensitivity due to their potential to contain scientifically significant fossils (ECORP 2025). Ground-disturbing activities as part of the proposed project would cause potentially significant impacts to paleontological resources.

A unique geological feature is a naturally occurring landform, rock formation, or soil structure that can have scientific, educational, aesthetic, or cultural value. Examples include volcanic cones, fossil beds, mineral formations, among other unique geological features. The project site contains fallow agricultural land. The project site is flat and does not contain any landforms, rock formations, or unique soil structures. Therefore, no impacts on unique geological structures would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant.

Impact GEO-3: The proposed project could result in a potentially significant impact due to the presence of paleontological resources.

> **Mitigation Measure GEO-1: Unanticipated Discovery of Paleontological Resource.** Prior to any ground-disturbing activities during construction, a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program shall be developed by a qualified paleontologist and provided to project construction personnel involved in earthwork activities in case any unanticipated paleontological resources are discovered during excavation activities.
>
> A qualified paleontologist shall be retained on an on-call basis for the duration of ground-disturbing activities. No full-time monitoring shall be required unless a paleontological resource is discovered. If a paleontological resource is discovered, the contractor shall notify the District and cease excavation within 50 feet of the find until the on-call qualified paleontologist can provide an evaluation of the find.
>
> The qualified paleontologist shall evaluate the significance of the find and recommend appropriate measures for the disposition of the project site (e.g., fossil recovery, curation, data recovery, and/or monitoring). Construction activities may continue in other parts of the construction site while evaluation and treatment of the paleontological resource take place.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. Mitigation Measure GEO-1 requires an on-call paleontologist and awareness training for construction personnel involved with earthwork during construction. No full-time monitoring will be required unless a paleontological resource is found, in which case MM GEO-1 describes the process for evaluation, etc. With implementation of MM GEO-1, impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant.

3.7.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for geologic resources includes the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, which is subject to similar regional geologic conditions. Though the project site may be exposed to geologic hazards such as strong ground shaking, settlement, and soil collapse, these risks are not unique to the site and are common throughout the region. However, mandatory compliance with applicable state and local regulations, including the California Building Code and Yuba County Ordinance Code, would reduce potential site-specific impacts to less than significant levels.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to geological resources?

Geological and soil-related impacts are typically site specific and do not generally contribute to broader, cumulative regional impacts. The proposed project would not result in substantial on-site or off-site geologic disturbances. Regulatory compliance and implementation of Geotechnical Evaluation Report's recommendations, would ensure that risks related to expansive soils, settlement, and seismic hazards are addressed appropriately in the design and construction of the proposed project. Other development projects in the region would also be required to prepare a geotechnical report, comply with applicable regulatory requirements (such as the Yuba County Ordinance Code), and, if necessary, implement mitigation measures. As such, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulative impact.

Similarly, impacts to paleontological resources are also considered localized, as they are typically associated with specific geologic formations exposed during ground-disturbing activities. While older Quaternary (Pleistocene-age) deposits may be present at depth and have high paleontological sensitivity, the proposed project includes Mitigation Measure GEO-1. Similar to the proposed project, each development project would be expected to review its potential to impact paleontological resources and incorporate applicable mitigation measures. With project-specific review and incorporation of applicable mitigation measures, cumulative impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant. Further, the proposed project's impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

As stated above, the project site does not contain any unique geological structures. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a cumulative impact on unique geological structures.

Because the proposed project's impacts are limited to the project footprint and would be mitigated to less than significant levels, the project would not contribute to cumulative geologic or paleontological resource impacts in the Plumas Lake area. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to geology and soils would be less than significant.

3.7.6 References

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3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential impacts related to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are associated with the proposed project. This section describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions, identifies criteria used to determine impact significance, provides an analysis of the potential GHG emission impacts, and identifies feasible mitigation measures that could mitigate any potentially significant impacts. Transportation sector emissions are based on trip generation provided by Kittelson (see Appendix L, *Transportation Impact Assessment*, of this Draft EIR). GHG emissions modeling is included in Appendix B, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Modeling*, of this Draft EIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (School District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to GHG emissions were raised during the NOP comment period.

Terminology

The following are definitions for terms used throughout this section.

- **Greenhouse gases (GHG).** Gases in the atmosphere that absorb infrared light, thereby retaining heat in the atmosphere and contributing to a greenhouse effect.
- **Global warming potential (GWP).** Metric used to describe how much heat a molecule of a GHG absorbs relative to a molecule of carbon dioxide (CO_2) over a given period of time (20, 100, and 500 years). CO_2 has a GWP of 1.
- **Carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO_2e)**. The standard unit to measure the amount of GHGs in terms of the amount of CO_2 that would cause the same amount of warming. CO_2e is based on the GWP ratios between the various GHGs relative to CO_2.
- **$MTCO_2e$.** Metric ton of CO_2e.
- **$MMTCO_2e$.** Million metric tons of CO_2e.

3.8.1 Environmental Setting

GREENHOUSE GASES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Human activities contribute to global climate change by adding large amounts of heat-trapping gases, known as GHG, to the atmosphere. The primary source of GHGs is fossil fuel use. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified four major GHGs—water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and ozone (O_3)—that may cause an increase in global average temperatures observed in the 20th and 21st centuries. Other GHGs identified by the IPCC that contribute to global warming to a lesser extent include nitrous oxide (N_2O), sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6), hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and chlorofluorocarbons (IPCC 2001).[1,2]

The major GHGs are briefly described as follows:

- **Carbon dioxide (CO_2)** enters the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), solid waste, trees and wood products, and respiration, and as a result of other chemical reactions (e.g., manufacture of cement). Carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere (sequestered) when it is absorbed by plants as part of the biological carbon cycle.
- **Methane (CH_4)** is emitted during the production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil. Methane emissions also result from livestock and other agricultural practices and from the decay of organic waste in municipal landfills and water treatment facilities.
- **Nitrous oxide (N_2O)** is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities as well as during combustion of fossil fuels and solid waste.

GHGs are dependent on the lifetime, or persistence, of the gas molecule in the atmosphere. Some GHGs have a stronger greenhouse effect than others. These are referred to as high global warming potential (GWP) gases. The GWP of applicable GHG emissions are shown in Table 3.8-1, *GHG Emissions and Their Relative Global Warming Potential Compared to CO_2*. The GWP is used to convert GHGs to CO_2-equivalence (CO_2e) to show the relative potential that different

[1] Water vapor (H_2O) is the strongest GHG and the most variable in its phases (vapor, cloud droplets, ice crystals). However, water vapor is not considered a pollutant because it is considered part of the feedback loop of changing radiative forcing rather than a primary cause of change.

[2] Black carbon contributes to climate change both directly, by absorbing sunlight, and indirectly, by depositing on snow (making it melt faster) and by interacting with clouds and affecting cloud formation. Black carbon is the most strongly light-absorbing component of particulate matter (PM) emitted from burning fuels such as coal, diesel, and biomass. Reducing black carbon emissions globally can have immediate economic, climate, and public health benefits. California has been an international leader in reducing emissions of black carbon, with close to 95 percent control expected by 2020 due to existing programs that target reducing PM from diesel engines and burning activities (CARB 2017). However, State and national GHG inventories do not include black carbon due to ongoing work resolving the precise global warming potential of black carbon. Guidance for CEQA documents does not yet include black carbon.

GHGs have to contribute to the greenhouse effect. For example, under IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) GWP values for methane (CH_4), a project that generates 10 metric tons (MT) of CH_4 would be equivalent to 250 MT of CO_2.[3]

Table 3.8-1 GHG Emissions and Their Relative Global Warming Potential Compared to CO_2

GHGs	Fourth Assessment Report Global Warming Potential Relative to CO_2 [1]	Fifth Assessment Report Global Warming Potential Relative to CO_2 [1]	Sixth Assessment Report Global Warming Potential Relative to CO_2 [1]
Carbon Dioxide (CO_2)	1	1	1
Methane (CH_4)[2]	25	28	30
Nitrous Oxide (N_2O)	298	265	273

Sources: IPCC 2007, 2014, 2023.

Note: The IPCC published updated GWP values in its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) that reflect new information on atmospheric lifetimes of GHGs and an improved calculation of the radiative forcing of CO_2. However, GWP values identified in AR4 are used by CalEEMod for emissions calculations. Therefore, this analysis utilizes AR4 GWP values consistent with the latest version of CalEEMod.

1. Based on 100-year horizon of the GWP of the air pollutant compared to CO_2.
2. The methane GWP includes direct effects and indirect effects due to the production of tropospheric ozone and stratospheric water vapor. The indirect effect due to the production of CO_2 is not included.

Human Influence on Climate Change

For approximately 1,000 years before the Industrial Revolution, the number of GHGs in the atmosphere remained fairly constant. However, during the twentieth century, scientists observed a rapid change in the climate and the quantity of climate change pollutants in the Earth's atmosphere that is attributable to human activities.

The recent IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) summarizes the latest scientific consensus on climate change. It finds that atmospheric concentrations of CO_2 have increased by 50 percent since the Industrial Revolution and continue to increase at a rate of two parts per million each year. By the 2030s, and no later than 2040, the world will exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius (°C) warming (CARB 2022). These recent changes in the quantity and concentration of climate change pollutants far exceed the extremes of the ice ages, and the global mean temperature is warming at a rate that cannot be explained by natural causes alone. Human activities are directly altering the chemical composition of the atmosphere through the buildup of climate change pollutants (CAT 2006). In the past, gradual changes in the Earth's temperature changed the distribution of species, availability of water, and other conditions. Human activities are

[3] CO_2-equivalence is used to show the relative potential that different GHGs have to retain infrared radiation in the atmosphere and contribute to the greenhouse effect. The global warming potential of a GHG is also dependent on the lifetime, or persistence, of the gas molecule in the atmosphere.

accelerating this process so that environmental impacts associated with climate change no longer occur in a geologic time frame but within a human lifetime (IPCC 2001).

Like the variability in the projections of the expected increase in global surface temperatures, the environmental consequences of gradual changes in the Earth's temperature are hard to predict. Projections of climate change depend heavily on future human activity. Therefore, climate models are based on different emission scenarios that account for historical trends in emissions and on observations of the climate record that assess the human influence of the trend and projections for extreme weather events. Climate-change scenarios are affected by varying degrees of uncertainty. For example, there are varying degrees of certainty on the magnitude of the trends for:

- Warmer and fewer cold days and nights over most land areas.
- Warmer and more frequent hot days and nights over most land areas.
- An increase in frequency of warm spells/heat waves over most land areas.
- An increase in frequency of heavy precipitation events (or proportion of total rainfall from heavy rainfalls) over most areas.
- Larger areas affected by drought.
- Intense tropical cyclone activity increases.
- Increased incidence of extreme high sea levels (excluding tsunamis).

Potential Climate Change Impacts for California

There is at least a greater than 50 percent likelihood that global warming will reach or exceed 1.5°C in the near-term, even for the very low GHG emissions scenario (IPCC 2023). Climate change is already impacting California and will continue to affect it for the foreseeable future. For example, the average temperature in most areas of California is already 1 degree Fahrenheit (°F) higher than historical levels, and some areas have seen average increases in excess of 2°F (Cal OES 2020). The California Fourth Climate Change Assessment identifies the following climate change impacts under a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario, in which no new actions are taken to curb GHG emissions:

- Annual average daily high temperatures in California are expected to rise by 2.7°F by 2040, 5.8°F by 2070, and 8.8°F by 2100 compared to observed and modeled historical conditions. These changes are statewide averages. Heat waves are projected to become longer, more intense, and more frequent.
- Warming temperatures are expected to increase soil moisture loss and lead to drier seasonal conditions. Summer dryness may become prolonged, with soil drying beginning earlier in the spring and lasting longer into the fall and winter rainy season.
- High heat increases the risk of death from cardiovascular, respiratory, cerebrovascular, and other diseases.

- Droughts are likely to become more frequent and persistent through 2100.[4]
- Climate change is projected to increase the strength of the most intense precipitation and storm events affecting California.
- Mountain ranges in California are already seeing a reduction in the percentage of precipitation falling as snow. Snowpack levels are projected to decline significantly by 2100 due to reduced snowfall and faster snowmelt. California's water storage system is designed with the expectation that snow will stay frozen for many months, and that as it melts, it will be stored in a series of reservoirs and dams, many of which are used to generate electricity. Changing waterfall patterns therefore impact both water supply and electricity supply.
- Marine layer clouds are projected to decrease, though more research is needed to better understand their sensitivity to climate change.
- Extreme wildfires (i.e., fires larger than 10,000 hectares or 24,710 acres) are expected to occur 50 percent more frequently. The maximum area burned statewide may increase 178 percent by the end of the century. Drought and reduced water supplies can increase wildfire risk.
- Exposure to wildfire smoke is linked to increased incidence of respiratory illness.
- Sea-level rise is expected to continue to increase erosion of beaches, cliffs, and bluffs (Cal OES 2020).

Global climate change risks to California are shown in Table 3.8-2, *Summary of GHG Emissions Risks to California*, and include impacts to public health, water resources, agriculture, coastal sea level, forest and biological resources, and energy.

[4] Overall, California has become drier over time, with five of the eight years of severe to extreme drought occurring between 2007 and 2016, and with unprecedented dry years in 2014 and 2015. Statewide precipitation has become increasingly variable from year to year, with the driest consecutive four years occurring from 2012 to 2015.

Table 3.8-2 Summary of GHG Emissions Risks to California

Impact Category	Potential Risk
Public Health Impacts	Heat waves will be more frequent, hotter, and longer Fewer extremely cold nights Poor air quality made worse Higher temperatures increase ground-level ozone levels Deaths due to extreme heat
Water Resources Impacts	Decreasing Sierra Nevada snowpack Challenges in securing adequate water supply Potential reduction in hydropower Loss of winter recreation
Agricultural Impacts	Increasing temperature Increasing threats from pests and pathogens Expanded ranges of agricultural weeds Declining productivity Irregular blooms and harvests
Coastal Sea Level Impacts	Accelerated sea-level rise Increasing coastal floods Shrinking beaches Worsened impacts on infrastructure
Forest and Biological Resource Impacts	Increased risk and severity of wildfires Lengthening of the wildfire season Movement of forest areas Conversion of forest to grassland Declining forest productivity Increasing threats from pests and pathogens Shifting vegetation and species distribution Altered timing of migration and mating habits Loss of sensitive or slow-moving species
Energy Demand Impacts	Potential reduction in hydropower Increased energy demand

Sources: CEC 2006, 2009; CCC 2018; CNRA 2014; Cal OES 2020.

3.8.2 Regulatory Framework

This section summarizes key federal, State, and regional regulations and programs related to GHG emissions resulting from the proposed project.

FEDERAL

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) announced on December 7, 2009, that GHG emissions threaten the public health and welfare of the American people and that GHG emissions from on-road vehicles contribute to that threat. The USEPA's final findings respond to the 2007 United States Supreme Court decision in *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency* (2007) 127 S. Ct. 1438 that GHG emissions fit within the Clean Air Act (CAA) definition of air pollutants (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] Section 7401 et seq.). The findings allowed the USEPA to finalize the GHG standards proposed in 2009 for new light-duty vehicles as part of the joint rulemaking with the Department of Transportation (USEPA 2009a).

To regulate GHGs from passenger vehicles, the USEPA was required to issue an endangerment finding (USEPA 2009b). On December 15, 2009, USEPA issued an Endangerment Finding and Cause or Contribute Finding under Section 202(a) of the CAA. The finding identifies emissions of six key GHGs—CO_2, CH_4, N_2O, HCFCs, PFCs, and SF_6—as threatening the public health and welfare of current and future generations, in their current and projected concentrations in the atmosphere. The first three are applicable to the proposed project's GHG emissions inventory because they constitute the majority of GHG emissions and are the GHG emissions that should be evaluated as part of a project's GHG emissions inventory.

On January 20, 2025, the President of the United States signed an executive order, *Unleashing American Energy*, which directed the USEPA to eliminate the social cost of carbon calculation from any federal permitting or regulatory decision and submit recommendations on the legality and continued applicability of the 2009 endangerment finding, among other directives (White House 2025). On July 29, 2025, the USEPA released its proposal to rescind the 2009 endangerment finding and repeal all GHG emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines pursuant to CAA Section 202(a) (USEPA 2025). The proposed rule would remove GHG-related provisions from 40 CFR Part 600 without affecting provisions related to Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards and fuel economy labeling (Vol. 90 Federal Register, No. 146, 36288.).

California currently regulates GHG emissions under the regulatory framework of the CAA. USEPA has historically granted California waivers to the CAA to establish its own regulations due to its population size and pollution levels. In May 2025, the U.S. Senate approved several bills under the Congressional Review Act that purported to rescind California's CAA waiver (H.J.Res. 87, H.J.Res. 88, H.J.Res. 89.). However, the U.S. Senate Parliamentarian and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded that the bills were illegal (GAO 2025). Consequently, California filed a lawsuit challenging the revocations. (See *State of California et al v. U.S.A. et al.* (2025) N.D. Cal Case No. 25-CV-04966 challenging disapproval of California's CAA waivers which allowed California to set its own vehicular fuel economy standards).

United States Mandatory Report Rule for Greenhouse Gases (2009).

In response to the endangerment finding, the USEPA issued the Mandatory Reporting of GHG Rule that requires substantial emitters of GHG emissions (e.g., large stationary sources) to report GHG emissions data. Facilities that emit 25,000 $MTCO_2e$ per year are required to submit an annual report.

Update to Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards (2017 to 2026).

The federal government issued new Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards in 2012 for model years 2017 to 2025, which required a fleet average of 54.5 miles per gallon (MPG) in 2025. On March 30, 2020, the USEPA finalized an updated CAFE and GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks and established new standards covering model years 2021 through 2026, known as the Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Final Rule for Model Years 2021 to 2026. Overall, SAFE requires a fleet average of 40.4 MPG for model year 2026 vehicles (85 Federal Register 24174 (April 30, 2020)).

On June 7, 2024, NHTSA announced final CAFE standards for passenger cars and light trucks built in model years 2027 to 2031 and final fuel-efficiency standards for heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans built in model years 2030 to 2035. The final rules require an industry fleetwide average of approximately 50.4 MPG for passenger cars and light trucks in model year 2031, by increasing fuel economy by 2 percent year over year for passenger cars (model years 2027–2031) and for light trucks (model years 2029–2031). For heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans, the final rule would increase fuel efficiency at a rate of 10 percent per year (model years 2030–2032) and 8 percent per year (model years 2033–2035) (NHTSA 2024).

On June 11, 2025, the NHTSA published the final rule, “Resetting the Corporate Average Fuel Economy Program.” This interpretive rule issued by the NHTSA does not immediately change or reverse current fuel economy standards; however, the rule clarifies the NHTSA’s interpretation of its obligations for CAFE standards stemming from the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. The rule asserts that some regulations, such as those established under previous presidential administrations, improperly considered electric vehicles (EVs) when identifying the “maximum feasibility” average fuel economy level upon which CAFE standards are developed, thereby establishing a legal foundation for future rollbacks of CAFE standards (NHTSA 2025).

Individual cities and counties lack the ability to regulate fuel economy standards. Title 42 of the U.S.C. Section 7543(a) states: “No state or any political subdivision therefore shall adopt or attempt to enforce any standard relating to the control of emissions from new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle engines subject to this part.”

STATE

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in GHG emissions are generally embodied in Executive Order (EO) S-03-05, Assembly Bill (AB) 32, AB 1279, Senate Bill (SB) 32, EO B-30-15, and SB 375.

Executive Order S-03-05

EO S-03-05, signed June 1, 2005, set the following GHG reduction targets for the state: 2000 levels by 2010, 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Assembly Bill 32, Global Warming Solutions Act (2006)

Commonly known as its legislative bill number (AB 32), this act was signed August 31, 2006, to reduce California's contribution of GHG emissions. AB 32 follows the 2020 tier of emissions-reduction targets established in EO S-03-05. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) prepared the 2008 Scoping Plan to outline a plan to achieve the GHG emissions reduction targets of AB 32.

Executive Order B-30-15

EO B-30-15, signed April 29, 2015, set a goal of reducing GHG emissions in the state to 40 percent of 1990 levels by 2030. EO B-30-15 also directed CARB to update the Scoping Plan to quantify the 2030 GHG reduction goal for the state and requires State agencies to implement measures to meet the interim 2030 goal as well as the long-term goal for 2050 in EO S-03-05. It also requires the Natural Resources Agency to conduct triennial updates of the California adaptation strategy, Safeguarding California, to ensure climate change is accounted for in State planning and investment decisions.

Senate Bill 32 and Assembly Bill 197

In September 2016, SB 32 and AB 197 were signed, making the EO goal for year 2030 into a statewide mandated legislative target. AB 197 established a joint legislative committee on climate change policies and requires CARB to prioritize direct emissions reductions rather than the market-based cap-and-trade program for large stationary, mobile, and other sources.

Executive Order B-55-18

EO B-55-18, signed September 10, 2018, sets a goal "to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and no later than 2045, and achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter." EO B-55-18 directs CARB to work with relevant State agencies to ensure future Scoping Plans identify and recommend measures to achieve the carbon neutrality goal. The goal of carbon neutrality by 2045 is in addition to other statewide goals, meaning not only should emissions be

reduced to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, but that, by no later than 2045, the remaining emissions should be offset by equivalent net removals of CO_2e from the atmosphere, including through sequestration in forests, soils, and other natural landscapes.

Assembly Bill 1279

AB 1279, signed by Governor Newsom in September 2022, codifies the carbon neutrality targets of EO B-55-18 for year 2045 and sets a new legislative target for year 2045 of 85 percent below 1990 levels for anthropogenic GHG emissions. CARB was required to update the Scoping Plan to identify and recommend measures to achieve the net-zero and GHG emissions-reduction goals.

2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update

CARB adopted the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality (Scoping Plan) on December 15, 2022, which lays out a path to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 or earlier and to reduce the state's anthropogenic (human-caused) GHG emissions (CARB 2022). The Scoping Plan was updated to address the carbon neutrality goals of EO B-55-18 and the ambitious GHG reduction target as directed by AB 1279. Previous Scoping Plans focused on specific GHG reduction targets for our industrial, energy, and transportation sectors—to meet 1990 levels by 2020, and then the more aggressive 40 percent below that for the 2030 target. This Scoping Plan expands on earlier Scoping Plans with a target of reducing anthropogenic emissions to 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. Carbon neutrality takes it one step further by expanding actions to capture and store carbon, including through natural and working lands and mechanical technologies, while drastically reducing anthropogenic sources of carbon pollution at the same time.

The path forward was informed by the recent Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC and the measures would achieve 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045 in accordance with AB 1279. CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan identifies strategies, as shown in Table 3.8-3, *Priority Strategies for Local Government Climate Action Plans*, that would be most impactful at the local level for ensuring substantial progress toward the State's carbon neutrality goals.

Table 3.8-3 Priority Strategies for Local Government Climate Action Plans

Priority Area	Priority Strategies
Transportation Electrification	Convert local government fleets to zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) and provide electric vehicle (EV) charging at public sites.
	Create a jurisdiction-specific ZEV ecosystem to support deployment of ZEVs statewide (such as building standards that exceed State building codes, permit streamlining, infrastructure siting, consumer education, preferential parking policies, and ZEV readiness plans).
Vehicle-Miles Traveled (VMT) Reduction	Reduce or eliminate minimum parking standards.
	Implement complete streets policies and investments, consistent with general plan circulation element requirements.
	Increase access to public transit by increasing density of development near transit, improving transit service by increasing service frequency, creating bus priority lanes, reducing or eliminating fares, microtransit, and other approaches.
	Increase public access to clean mobility options by planning for and investing in electric shuttles, bike share, car share, and walking.
	Implement parking pricing or transportation demand management pricing strategies.
	Amend zoning or development codes to enable mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented, and compact infill development (such as increasing allowable density of the neighborhood).
	Preserve natural and working lands by implementing land use policies that guide development toward infill areas and do not convert “greenfield” land to urban uses (e.g., green belts, strategic conservation easements).
Building Decarbonization	Adopt all-electric new construction reach codes for residential and commercial uses.
	Adopt policies and incentive programs to implement energy efficiency retrofits for existing buildings, such as weatherization, lighting upgrades, and replacing energy-intensive appliances and equipment with more efficient systems (such as Energy Star-rated equipment and equipment controllers).
	Adopt policies and incentive programs to electrify all appliances and equipment in existing buildings such as appliance rebates, existing building reach codes, or time of sale electrification ordinances.
	Facilitate deployment of renewable energy production and distribution and energy storage on privately owned land uses (e.g., permit streamlining, information sharing).
	Deploy renewable energy production and energy storage directly in new public projects and on existing public facilities (e.g., solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops of municipal buildings and on canopies in public parking lots, battery storage systems in municipal buildings).

Source: CARB 2022.

For residential and mixed-use development projects, CARB recommends this first approach to demonstrate that these land use development projects are aligned with State climate goals based on the attributes of land use development that reduce operational GHG emissions while simultaneously advancing fair housing.

Key residential and mixed-use project attributes that reduce GHGs include the following:

- **Transportation Electrification.** Provide EV charging infrastructure that, at a minimum, meets the most ambitious voluntary standards in the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) at the time of project approval.
- **Vehicle-Miles Traveled Reduction**
  - Is located on infill sites that are surrounded by existing urban uses and reuses or redevelops previously undeveloped or underutilized land that is presently served by existing utilities and essential public services (e.g., transit, streets, water, sewer).
  - Does not result in the loss or conversion of the State's natural and working lands.
  - Consists of transit-supportive densities (minimum of 20 residential dwelling units/acre) or is in proximity to existing transit stops (within a half mile) or satisfies more detailed and stringent criteria specified in the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).
  - Reduces parking requirements by:
    - Eliminating parking requirements or including maximum allowable parking ratios (i.e., the ratio of parking spaces to residential units or square feet);
    - Providing residential parking supply at a ratio of <1 parking space per dwelling unit; or
    - For multifamily residential development, require parking costs to be unbundled from costs to rent or own a residential unit.
  - At least 20 percent of the units are affordable to lower-income residents.
  - Result in no net loss of existing affordable units.
- **Building Decarbonization.** Use all-electric appliances without any natural gas connections and does not use propane or other fossil fuels for space heating, water heating, or indoor cooking.

The second approach to project-level alignment with State climate goals is net-zero GHG emissions. The third approach to demonstrating project-level alignment with State climate goals is to align with GHG thresholds of significance, which many local air quality management and air pollution control districts have developed or adopted (CARB 2022).

Senate Bill 375

SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, was adopted in 2008 to connect the GHG emissions reduction targets established in the 2008 Scoping Plan for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles (i.e., excluding emissions associated with goods movement) by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations to local land use planning to reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle trips. Specifically, SB 375 required CARB to establish GHG emissions reduction targets for each of the 18 metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the MPO for the Sacramento region, which includes Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter and Yuba Counties.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, CARB adopted per-capita reduction targets for each of the MPOs rather than a total magnitude reduction target. CARB is required to update the targets for the MPOs every eight years. In June 2017, CARB released updated targets and technical methodology, and then released another update in February 2018, which became effective in October 2018. CARB staff began the target update process in 2024 with a public workshop and plans to conclude it in 2026 with Board approval of the new targets (CARB 2025).

The updated targets consider the need to further reduce VMT, as identified in the 2017 Scoping Plan Update, while balancing the need for additional and more flexible revenue sources to incentivize positive planning and action toward sustainable communities. The updated SB 375 targets are in units of percent per-capita reduction in GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks compared to 2005. This excludes reductions anticipated from implementation of State technology and fuels strategies and any potential future State strategies such as statewide road user pricing. The updated targets call for greater per-capita GHG emission reductions from SB 375 than were currently in place, which for 2035 translates into updated targets that either match or exceed the emission reduction levels in the MPOs' currently adopted SCSs. CARB's updated targets result in an additional reduction of over 8 $MMTCO_2e$ in 2035 compared to the prior targets (CARB 2018).

Transportation Sector Specific Regulations

Advanced Clean Fleets and Advanced Clean Trucks

CARB adopted the Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulation in 2023 to accelerate the transition to zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. In conjunction with the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) regulation, the ACF regulations help to ensure that medium- and heavy-duty ZEVs are brought to the market, by requiring certain fleets to purchase ZEVs. The ACF ZEV phase-in approach provides initial focus where the best fleet electrification opportunities exist, sets clear

targets for regulated fleets to make a full conversion to ZEVs, and creates a catalyst to accelerate development of a heavy-duty public charging infrastructure network.

Assembly Bill 1493

California vehicle GHG emission standards were enacted under AB 1493 (Pavley I). Pavley I is a clean-car standard that reduces GHG emissions from new passenger vehicles (light-duty auto to medium-duty vehicles) from 2009 through 2016 and was anticipated to reduce GHG emissions from new passenger vehicles by 30 percent in 2016. California implements the Pavley I standards through a waiver granted to California by the USEPA. In 2012, the USEPA issued a Final Rulemaking that set even more stringent fuel economy and GHG emissions standards for model years 2017 through 2025 light-duty vehicles. (See also the discussion in federal regulations under "*Update to Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards [2017 to 2026]*.")

In January 2012, CARB approved the Advanced Clean Cars program (formerly known as Pavley II) for model years 2017 through 2025. The program combines the control of smog, soot, and GHGs with requirements for greater numbers of ZEVs into a single package of standards. California's Advanced Clean Car II regulations will rapidly scale down light-duty passenger car, pickup truck, and SUV emissions starting with 2026 model year through 2035 (CARB 2023).

Executive Order S-01-07

On January 18, 2007, the State set a new low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) for transportation fuels sold in the state. EO S-01-07 set a declining standard for GHG emissions measured in CO_2e gram per unit of fuel energy sold in California. The LCFS required a reduction of 2.5 percent in the carbon intensity of California's transportation fuels by 2015 and a reduction of at least 10 percent by 2020. The standard applied to refiners, blenders, producers, and importers of transportation fuels, and used market-based mechanisms to allow these providers to choose the most economically feasible methods for reducing emissions during the "fuel cycle."

Executive Order B-16-2012

On March 23, 2012, the State directed CARB, the California Energy Commission (CEC), the Public Utilities Commission, and other relevant agencies to work with the Plug-in Electric Vehicle Collaborative and the California Fuel Cell Partnership to establish benchmarks to accommodate ZEVs in major metropolitan areas, including infrastructure to support them (e.g., EV charging stations). EO B-16-2012 also directed the number of ZEVs in California's State vehicle fleet to increase through the normal course of fleet replacement so that at least 10 percent of fleet purchases of light-duty vehicles are ZE by 2015 and at least 25 percent by 2020. The EO also established a target for the transportation sector of reducing GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

Executive Order N-79-20

On September 23, 2020, Governor Newsom signed EO N-79-20, establishing a goal that 100 percent of in-state sales of new passenger cars and trucks will be ZE by 2035. Additionally, the fleet goals for trucks are that 100 percent of drayage trucks are ZE by 2035, and 100 percent of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in the state are ZE by 2045, where feasible. The EO's goal for the State is to transition to 100 percent ZE off-road vehicles and equipment by 2035, where feasible.

Renewables Portfolio: Carbon Neutrality Regulations

Senate Bills 1078, 107, and X1-2 and Executive Order S-14-08

A major component of California's Renewable Energy Program is the renewables portfolio standard established under SB 1078 (Sher) and SB 107 (Simitian). Under the RPS, certain retail sellers of electricity were required to increase the amount of renewable energy each year by at least 1 percent to reach at least 20 percent by December 30, 2010. EO S-14-08, signed in November 2008, expanded the State's renewable energy standard to 33 percent renewable power by 2020. This standard was adopted by the legislature in 2011 (SB X1-2). Eligible renewable sources of electricity include wind, small hydropower, solar, geothermal, biomass, and biogas. The increase in renewable sources for electricity production decreases indirect GHG emissions from development projects because electricity production from renewable sources is generally considered carbon neutral.

Senate Bill 350

SB 350 (de Leon) was signed into law in September 2015 and establishes tiered increases to the RPS—40 percent by 2024, 45 percent by 2027, and 50 percent by 2030. SB 350 also set a new goal to double the energy-efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas through energy efficiency and conservation measures.

Senate Bill 100

On September 10, 2018, Governor Brown signed SB 100. Under SB 100, the RPS for public-owned facilities and retail sellers consists of 44 percent renewable energy by 2024, 52 percent by 2027, and 60 percent by 2030. SB 100 also established a new RPS requirement of 50 percent by 2026. Furthermore, the bill establishes an overall State policy that eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources supply 100 percent of all retail sales of electricity to California end-use customers and 100 percent of electricity procured to serve all State agencies by December 31, 2045. Under the bill, the State cannot increase carbon emissions elsewhere in the western grid or allow resource shuffling to achieve the 100 percent carbon-free electricity target.

Senate Bill 1020

SB 1020 was signed into law on September 16, 2022. SB 1020 provides interim RPS targets (90 percent renewable energy by 2035 and 95 percent renewable energy by 2040) and requires renewable energy and zero-carbon resources to reach 100 percent clean electricity by 2045.

Energy-Efficiency Regulations

California Building Energy Code: Title 24, Part 6, Energy-Efficiency Standards

Energy conservation standards for new residential and nonresidential buildings were adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the CEC) in June 1977 (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations [CCR]). Title 24 requires the design of building shells and building components to conserve energy. The standards are updated periodically to allow for the consideration and possible incorporation of new energy efficiency technologies and methods.

In 2024, the CEC adopted the 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which were subsequently approved by the California Building Standards Commission. The 2025 standards become effective and replace the existing 2022 standards on January 1, 2026. The 2025 standards would include prescriptive photovoltaic system and battery requirements for high-rise, multifamily buildings (i.e., more than three stories) and nonresidential buildings such as hotels, offices, medical offices, restaurants, retail stores, schools, warehouses, theaters, and convention centers. The CBSC and CALGreen undergo a triennial update with a goal to achieve zero net energy for new nonresidential buildings by 2030.

California Building Code: Title 24, Part 11, Green Building Standards

On July 17, 2008, the California Building Standards Commission adopted the nation's first green building standards. The California Green Building Standards Code (24 CCR, Part 11, known as CALGreen) was adopted as part of the California Building Standards Code. CALGreen established planning and design standards for sustainable site development, energy efficiency (in excess of the California Energy Code requirements), water conservation, material conservation, and internal air contaminants.[5] The mandatory provisions of CALGreen became effective January 1, 2011, and were most recently updated in 2024 (2025 CALGreen update). The 2025 CALGreen update becomes effective on January 1, 2026, and provides updates to the residential and nonresidential voluntary measures.

[5] The green building standards became mandatory in the 2010 edition of the Code.

2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations

The 2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations (20 CCR Sections 1601–1608) were adopted by the CEC on October 11, 2006, and approved by the California Office of Administrative Law on December 14, 2006. The regulations include standards for both federally regulated appliances and non–federally regulated appliances. Though these regulations are now often viewed as "business as usual," they exceed the standards imposed by all other states, and they reduce GHG emissions by reducing energy demand.

Solid Waste Diversion Regulations

Assembly Bill 939: Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989

California's Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939, Public Resources Code Section 40050 et seq.) set a requirement for cities and counties throughout the state to divert 50 percent of all solid waste from landfills by January 1, 2000, through source reduction, recycling, and composting. In 2008, the requirements were modified to reflect a per capita requirement rather than tonnage. To help achieve this, the Act requires that each city and county prepare and submit a source reduction and recycling element. AB 939 also established the goal for all California counties to provide at least 15 years of ongoing landfill capacity.

Assembly Bill 341

AB 341 (Chapter 476, Statutes of 2011) increased the statewide goal for waste diversion to 75 percent by 2020 and requires recycling of waste from commercial and multi-family residential land uses. Section 5.408 of CALGreen also requires that at least 65 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operations be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse.

Assembly Bill 1327

The California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act (AB 1327, Public Resources Code Section 42900 et seq.) requires areas to be set aside for collecting and loading recyclable materials in development projects. The Act required the California Integrated Waste Management Board to develop a model ordinance for adoption by any local agency requiring adequate areas for collection and loading of recyclable materials as part of development projects. Local agencies are required to adopt the model or an ordinance of their own.

Assembly Bill 1826

In October 2014, Governor Brown signed AB 1826, requiring businesses to recycle their organic waste on and after April 1, 2016, depending on the amount of waste they generate per week. This law also requires that on and after January 1, 2016, local jurisdictions across the state

implement an organic waste recycling program to divert organic waste generated by businesses and multifamily residential dwellings with five or more units. Organic waste means food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, nonhazardous wood waste, and food-soiled paper waste that is mixed with food waste.

Water-Efficiency Regulations

Senate Bill X7-7

The 20x2020 Water Conservation Plan was issued by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in 2010 pursuant to SB 7, which was adopted during the 7th Extraordinary Session of 2009–2010 and therefore dubbed "SBX7-7." SBX7-7 mandated urban water conservation and authorized DWR to prepare a plan implementing urban water conservation requirements, which DWR did through the 20x2020 Water Conservation Plan. In addition, it required agricultural water providers to prepare agricultural water management plans, measure water deliveries to customers, and implement other efficiency measures. SBX7-7 required urban water providers to adopt a water conservation target of a 20 percent reduction in urban per-capita water use by 2020 compared to 2005 baseline use.

Assembly Bill 1881: Water Conservation in Landscaping Act

The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (AB 1881) requires local agencies to adopt the updated DWR model ordinance or an equivalent. AB 1881 also requires CEC to consult with DWR to adopt, by regulation, performance standards and labeling requirements for landscape irrigation equipment, including irrigation controllers, moisture sensors, emission devices, and valves, to reduce the wasteful, uneconomic, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy or water.

Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy

On September 19, 2016, the Governor signed SB 1383 to supplement the GHG reduction strategies in the Scoping Plan to consider short-lived climate pollutants, including black carbon and methane. Black carbon is the light-absorbing component of fine particulate matter produced during the incomplete combustion of fuels. SB 1383 required CARB, no later than January 1, 2018, to approve and begin implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants to achieve a reduction in methane by 40 percent, hydrofluorocarbon gases by 40 percent, and anthropogenic black carbon by 50 percent below 2013 levels by 2030. The bill also established targets for reducing organic waste in landfills. On March 14, 2017, CARB adopted the Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy, which identifies the State's approach to reducing anthropogenic and biogenic sources of short-lived climate pollutants. Anthropogenic sources of black carbon include on- and off-road transportation, residential wood burning, fuel combustion (charbroiling), and industrial processes. According to CARB, ambient levels of black carbon in California are 90 percent lower

than in the early 1960s, despite the tripling of diesel fuel use (CARB 2017). In-use on-road rules were expected to reduce black carbon emissions from on-road sources by 80 percent between 2000 and 2020.

REGIONAL

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) is a 20-year plan for transportation investment and land use strategy to support the Sacramento region. SACOG is designated by the federal government as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Sacramento region, which requires SACOG to update and maintain the MTP/SCS every four years in coordination with each local government.

Under SB 375, SACOG is responsible for conducting land use and transportation planning in a way that reduces GHG emissions from cars and light duty trucks to meet CARB's regional transportation-related GHG reduction goals. CARB assigned SACOG a target of 19 percent per-capita GHG reduction target. Supporting policies to reduce GHG emissions include focusing communities where services and transportation already exist; transit-oriented development; investing in transit and active transportation; and prioritizing transportation infrastructure that benefit environmental justice communities and reduce VMT (SACOG 2019).

Yuba County 2030 General Plan

The Yuba County 2030 General Plan includes goals and policies aimed at reducing GHG emissions from planned development projects within the county. These goals and policies specific to GHG impacts are mainly in Chapter 6, *Public Health & Safety Element* (YCCDSA 2011).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code includes various directives pertaining to energy. The code is organized by title, chapter, and section. Most provisions related to GHG impacts are included in Title X, *Building and Construction.*

- Chapter 9.90, *Trip Reduction Ordinance*, establishes a trip reduction program to increase the average vehicle ridership from home-to-work commuting and help improve the region's air quality by reducing single occupant motor vehicle trips.
- Chapter 10.05, *Building Standards Construction Code*, adopts the current triennial version of the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, published by the California Building Standards Commission.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan was prepared by Yuba County and includes various policies, land use classifications, and development standards tailored to the Plan area. Many of these policies are derived from general policies of the Yuba County General Plan. These policies specific to GHG emissions are mainly under Urban Design and Development, Circulation, and Conservation and Environmental Policies (YCPC 1993).

3.8.3 Existing Conditions

CALIFORNIA'S GHG SOURCES AND RELATIVE CONTRIBUTION

In 2024, the statewide GHG emissions inventory was updated for 2000 to 2022 emissions using the GWPs in IPCC's AR4 and reported that California produced 371.1 $MMTCO_2e$ GHG emissions in 2022 (2.4 percent lower than 2021 levels). The 2022 emissions data shows that California is continuing its established long-term trend of GHG emissions declines, despite the anomalous emissions trends from 2019 through 2021, due in large part to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2014, statewide GHG emissions dropped below the 2020 GHG Limit (AB 32 target for year 2020) and have remained below the limit since that time. Additionally, the carbon intensity of California's economy (the amount of carbon pollution per million dollars of gross state product [GSP]) is declining (CARB 2024).

California's transportation sector was the single-largest generator of GHG emissions, producing 37.7 percent of the state's total emissions. Industrial sector emissions made up 19.6 percent, and electric power generation made up 16.1 percent of the state's emissions inventory. Other major sectors of GHG emissions include residential and commercial (10.6 percent), agriculture and forestry (8.0 percent), high GWP (5.7 percent), and recycling and waste (2.2 percent).

Emissions from the transportation sector decreased compared to 2021, primarily due to a greater share of fuels used for on-road transportation being produced from non-fossil resources. Industrial sector decreases from 2021 to 2022, most notably in the oil and gas production sector. Electricity emissions also decreased compared to 2021 from the continued growth of in-state solar generation and increases to in-state hydropower and imported wind power. High-GWP gases continue to replace ozone-depleting substances (ODS) being phased out under the 1987 Montreal Protocol and emissions from this sector have been stable from 2020 to 2022 (CARB 2024).

PROJECT SITE

The project site consists of approximately 25 acres of fallow agricultural land and does not generate GHG emissions.

3.8.4 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to GHG emissions if it would:

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

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

THRESHOLD GUIDANCE

FRAQMD Indirect Source Review Guidelines

Currently, the FRAQMD has not adopted a numerical threshold of significance for GHG emissions in their *Indirect Source Review Guidelines* (Guidelines) (FRAQMD 2010). Where guidance is not provided by FRAQMD, guidance from the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro AQMD) will be used for the following analysis.

Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

Sac Metro AQMD adopted the *Guide to Air Quality Assessment in Sacramento County* (CEQA Guide), which provides methods for the analysis and review of air quality and GHG impacts from land use development projects (Sac Metro AQMD 2025). For purposes of this analysis, the latest Sac Metro AQMD's GHG project-level significance thresholds were used to evaluate the proposed project's potential impacts related to GHG emissions.

Construction

The Sac Metro AQMD has adopted a construction GHG significance threshold of 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year (Sac Metro AQMD 2021). Should a land use development project exceed this amount of GHG emissions in a given year, it would present a potentially significant construction impact warranting mitigation.

Operation

The Sac Metro AQMD has created a tiered approach in evaluating operation-related GHG emissions impacts (Sac Metro AQMD 2021). The Sac Metro AQMD has adopted a GHG significance threshold for GHG emissions from operation of a project, which is 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year after implementation of Tier 1 best management practices (BMPs) for GHG emissions. To assess a project's potential to exceed the 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year significance threshold, the

Sac Metro AQMD has adopted operational screening criteria to qualitatively assess a project's potential GHG emissions impacts (Sac Metro AQMD 2018).

As the proposed project involves construction of a middle school, the appropriate Sac Metro AQMD screening criteria would be the Educational, Elementary School land use criteria, listed below:

- GHG Screening Level: 57,000 square feet, or 676 students.

In addition to the above significance threshold, the Sac Metro AQMD has the following Tier 1 BMPs that must be included in the project for impacts to be determined less than significant:

- No natural gas: projects shall be designed and constructed without natural gas infrastructure; and
- Electric vehicle (EV) ready: projects shall meet the current California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) Tier 2 nonresidential measures, except all EV capable spaces shall be instead EV ready.

If a project exceeds 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year with the Tier 1 BMPs, it would be required to incorporate the Tier 2 BMP, which mirrors the SB 743 VMT reduction targets, to be determined less than significant:

- Residential and/or office projects must achieve 15 percent reduction in VMT per capita compared to the existing average VMT per capita in the county.
- Retail projects must achieve no net increase in total VMT.

If a project does not exceed 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year with the Tier 1 BMPs, or if a project exceeds 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year with the Tier 1 BMPs but results in a less-than-significant VMT impact with respect to meeting SB 743 VMT reduction targets, there would be a less-than-significant impact related to GHG emissions. The Sac Metro AQMD has developed this threshold to ensure that new GHG emissions would be reviewed and assessed for mitigation, thereby contributing to GHG emissions reduction goals of AB 32, SB 32, the Scoping Plan, and Executive Order B-30-15 (Sac Metro AQMD 2021).

Mass Emissions and Health Effects

On December 24, 2018, in the case *Sierra Club et al. v. County of Fresno et al.* (Friant Ranch), the California Supreme Court affirmed the holding of the Court of Appeal that EIRs for projects must not only identify impacts to human health, but also provide an "analysis of the correlation between the project's emissions and human health impacts" related to each criteria air pollutant that exceeds the regional significance thresholds or explain why it could not make such a connection. In general, the ruling focuses on the correlation of emissions of toxic air contaminants and criteria air pollutants and their impact to human health. While the case

focused on toxic air contaminants and criteria air pollutants, the principles also apply to evaluating a project's GHG emissions and their significance in the context of climate change.

In 2009, the USEPA issued an endangerment finding for six GHGs (CO_2, CH_4, N_2O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF_6) to regulate GHG emissions from passenger vehicles. The endangerment finding is based on evidence that shows an increase in mortality and morbidity associated with increases in average temperatures, which increase the likelihood of heat waves and ozone levels. While these identified effects, such as sea level rise and increase in extreme weather, can indirectly impact human health, neither the USEPA nor CARB has established ambient air quality standards for GHG emissions. The State's GHG reduction strategy outlines a path to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change. Yet the State's GHG reduction goals and strategies are based on the State's path toward reducing statewide cumulative GHGs, as outlined in AB 32, SB 32, AB 1279, and EO B-55-18.

As described, the significance thresholds that Sac Metro AQMD recommends for use in analyzing GHG impacts are based on achieving the statewide GHG reduction goals (impact discussion [a]) and relying on consistency with policies or plans adopted to reduce GHG emissions (impact discussion [b]). Further, because no single project is large enough to result in a measurable increase in global concentration of GHG emissions, climate change impacts of a project are considered on a cumulative basis. Without federal ambient air quality standards for GHG emissions and given the cumulative nature of GHG emissions and Sac Metro AQMD's significance thresholds that are tied to reducing the state's cumulative GHG emissions, it is not feasible at this time to connect the project's specific GHG emissions to the potential health impacts of climate change.

METHODOLOGY

This GHG emissions evaluation was prepared in accordance with the requirements of CEQA to determine if significant GHG impacts are likely to occur as a result of the proposed project. GHG emissions modeling is included in Appendix B, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Modeling*, of this Draft EIR.

The proposed project GHG emissions inventory was modeled using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2022.1 and includes the following sectors:

- **On-Road Transportation.** Transportation emissions are based on the trip generation for the proposed project provided by Kittelson (see Appendix L, Traffic Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR). The default fleet mix in CalEEMod was modified to reflect a higher proportion of passenger vehicles than the regional VMT. Assumes a mix of approximately 97 percent passenger vehicles, 2 percent medium duty trucks, and 1 percent heavy-duty trucks and buses.

- **Area Sources.** Area sources generated from use of consumer products, cleaning supplies, and landscaping equipment are based on CalEEMod default emission rates and on the assumed building square footage.
- **Energy.** The CalEEMod default energy rates (i.e., electricity and natural gas) were used. Default natural gas use generated in CalEEMod was converted to electricity use and added to the total electricity use for the proposed project to account for all-electric building design.
- **Construction.** The project-related construction emissions are based on information provided by the School District and CalEEMod defaults. Construction is modeled across four phases over an approximately 54-month duration: Phase 1 (Spring 2026 to Fall 2027), Phase 2 (Fall 2027 to Fall 2028), Phase 3 (Fall 2028 to Fall 2029), and Phase 4 (Fall 2029 to Fall 2030). Construction activities are assumed to occur five days per week. The construction equipment mix and worker/vendor trips were based on CalEEMod default assumptions. Hauling trips were calculated based on the estimated volume of soil import and export, as provided by the School District.

Life-cycle emissions are not included in this analysis because not enough information is available for the proposed project. Therefore, lifecycle GHG emissions would be speculative (LCI 2008).[6] Additionally, black carbon emissions are not included in the GHG analysis because CARB does not include this short-lived climate pollutant in the State's AB 32/SB 32 inventory but treats it separately (CARB 2017).

3.8.5 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Global climate change is not confined to a particular project area and is generally accepted as the consequence of global industrialization over the last 200 years. A project does not generate enough GHG emissions on its own to influence global climate change; therefore, this section measures the proposed project's contribution to the cumulative environmental impact associated with GHG emissions. As described in Section 3.8.4, *Standards for Analysis*, since

[6] Life-cycle emissions include indirect emissions associated with materials manufacture. However, these indirect emissions involve numerous parties, each of which is responsible for GHG emissions of their particular activity. The California Resources Agency, in adopting the CEQA Guidelines Amendments on GHG emissions found that lifecycle analyses were not warranted for project-specific CEQA analysis in most situations, for a variety of reasons, including lack of control over some sources, and the possibility of double-counting emissions (CNRA 2009). Because the amount of materials consumed during the operation or construction phases of individual development projects is not known, the origin of the raw materials purchased is not known, and manufacturing information for those raw materials are also not known, calculation of life cycle emissions would be speculative. A life-cycle analysis is not warranted.

FRAQMD does not have an adopted GHG significance threshold, the Sac Metro AQMD thresholds and guidance were used to evaluate GHG emissions.

Construction

Development of the proposed project would contribute to climate change through direct and indirect emissions of GHG from the construction activities needed to implement the proposed project, which would generate a short-term increase in GHG emissions. As shown in Table 3.8-4, *Construction-Related GHG Emissions*, construction of the proposed project would not generate annual GHG emissions that would exceed the Sac Metro AQMD threshold of 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year.

Table 3.8-4 Construction-Related GHG Emissions

Construction Year	GHG Emissions $MTCO_2e$/Year
Year 2026	928
Year 2027	275
Year 2028	278
Year 2029	316
Year 2030	182
Annual Maximum	928
Sac Metro AQMD GHG Construction Threshold	1,100
Exceeds Threshold?	No

Source: CalEEMod, Version 2022.1., Sac Metro AQMD 2020, 2021, Appendix B.

Note: MTons = metric tons; $MTCO_2e$ = metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent

Operation

The proposed project would also generate a long-term increase in GHG emissions from on-road mobile sources, energy use (i.e., electricity), area sources (e.g., consumer cleaning products), water use/wastewater generation, and solid waste disposal.

The proposed project would involve construction of a new middle school with approximately 70,867 square feet of new building area. Student enrollment is expected to increase gradually over the four construction phases, aligning with the phased delivery of new classroom facilities. At full buildout, the proposed project would have an available enrollment capacity of 1,200 students and is anticipated to have an actual enrollment of approximately 972 students. Both the proposed building area (70,867 square feet) and the projected student enrollment (1,200 students) would exceed the Sac Metro AQMD's operational screening criteria for elementary schools, which are 57,000 square feet or 676 students. As a result, the proposed project was

evaluated against Sac Metro AQMD's operational GHG emission threshold of 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year with implementation of Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 1 BMPs.

As shown in Table 3.8-5, *Operation-Related GHG Emissions*, operation of the proposed project would generate annual GHG emissions that would exceed the Sac Metro AQMD threshold of 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year.

Table 3.8-5 Operation-Related GHG Emissions

Source	GHG Emissions $MTCO_2e$/Year	Percentage
Mobile	2,839	98%
Area	1	0%
Energy	32	1%
Water	2	0%
Solid Waste	29	1%
Refrigerants	0	0%
Annual Emissions	**2,904**	100%
Sac Metro AQMD GHG Operation Threshold	1,100	NA
Exceeds Threshold?	**Yes**	NA

Source: CalEEMod, Version 2022.1., Sac Metro AQMD 2020, 2021, Appendix B.

Note: MTons = metric tons; $MTCO_2e$ = metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent

In addition to the above significance threshold, the Sac Metro AQMD has Tier 1 BMPs that must be included in the project for impacts to be determined less than significant:

- No natural gas: Projects shall be designed and constructed without natural gas infrastructure.
- Electric vehicle (EV) ready: Projects shall meet the current California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) Tier 2 nonresidential measures, except all EV capable spaces shall be instead EV ready.

As described previously under *Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District*, if a project exceeds 1,100 $MTCO_2e$ per year with the Tier 1 BMPs, it would be required to incorporate the Tier 2 BMPs, which mirrors the SB 743 VMT reduction targets. According to the traffic impact analysis, the proposed project would primarily serve the local residents already traveling within the district, rather than generate substantial new regional trips (Appendix L). Currently, without a local middle school, students must travel longer distances to attend school. By providing a new middle school campus in a central location, the proposed project is expected to reduce overall trip lengths. As a result, the proposed project qualifies for screening from further detailed VMT analysis and would result in a less-than-significant impact related to VMT,

consistent with the intent of SB 743. Furthermore, the proposed project land use does not fall under the land use categories included in the Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 2 BMP screening criteria (i.e., residential, office, or retail projects).

However, without inclusion of Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 1 BMPs, the proposed project would have the potential to have significant impacts on the environment. The proposed project, by design, would satisfy the first BMP of an all-electric building design. However, the proposed project is not designed to implement the second required BMP, which requires specific EV charging infrastructure consistent with the current CALGreen Tier 2 nonresidential measures. Therefore, operational GHG emissions associated with the proposed project may result in cumulative contribution to GHG emissions. Impacts would be potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant.

Impact GHG-1: The proposed project does not currently implement the second required Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 1 BMP of including EV charging infrastructure consistent with the current CALGreen Tier 2 nonresidential measures. As a result, operational GHG emissions may result in cumulative GHG impact.

> **Mitigation Measure GHG-1:** The proposed project shall comply with the applicable 2022 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) Tier 2 standards, which are a requirement under the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro AQMD) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Best Management Practices (BMPs). Plans shall identify the number of electric vehicle (EV) parking spaces with chargers that meet the 2022 CALGreen Tier 2 standards, except all EV capable spaces shall be instead EV ready.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure GHG-1, the proposed project would be required to install the applicable number of EV parking spaces per CALGreen Tier 2 requirements for projects subject to Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 1 BMPs. Therefore, the proposed project would implement both required BMPs identified in the Sac Metro AQMD CEQA Guide, by design and through the incorporation of Mitigation Measure GHG-1, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Applicable plans adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions include CARB's Scoping Plan and SACOG's 2020 MTP/SCS. A consistency analysis with these plans is presented below.

California Air Resources Board Scoping Plan

CARB's Scoping Plan is California's GHG reduction strategy to achieve the state's GHG emissions reduction target established by SB 32, which is to reduce GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 emission levels by 2030. CARB recently adopted the 2022 Scoping Plan to achieve the state's carbon neutrality goals under EO B-55-18. The CARB Scoping Plan is applicable to State agencies and is not directly applicable to cities/counties or individual projects (i.e., the Scoping Plan does not require the school district to adopt policies, programs, or regulations to reduce GHG emissions). However, new regulations adopted by the State agencies outlined in the Scoping Plan result in GHG emissions reductions at the local level. As a result, local agencies benefit from reductions in transportation emissions rates, increases in water efficiency in the building and landscape codes, and other statewide actions that affect a local agency's emissions inventory from the top down. Statewide strategies to reduce GHG emissions include the LCFS and changes in the corporate average fuel economy standards (e.g., Pavley I and Pavley California Advanced Clean Cars program).

Construction of the proposed project would adhere to the programs and regulations identified by the Scoping Plan and implemented by state, regional, and local agencies to achieve the statewide GHG reduction goals of AB 32, SB 32, and AB 1279. In addition, the required Sac Metro AQMD Tier 1 BMPs, which the proposed project would either include by design or is required to incorporate by Mitigation Measure GHG-1, go beyond the requirements of the current CALGreen and Building Energy Efficiency Standards in effect at the time when applying for building permits. Furthermore, the proposed project would primarily serve existing local residents within the School District and reduce trip lengths by providing a middle school in a central location. As such, it qualifies for VMT screening and would not generate substantial new regional VMT, resulting in a less-than-significant VMT impact (Appendix L).

Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with State efforts to reduce motor vehicle emissions and generate GHG emissions consistent with the reduction goals of AB 32, SB 32, and AB 1279. The proposed project would not obstruct implementation of the CARB Scoping Plan, and a less-than-significant impact would occur.

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS)

SACOG adopted the 2020 MTP/SCS in November 2019, which lays out the transportation investment and land use strategy to support an economically prosperous region (SACOG 2019). The 2020 MTP/SCS provides a general idea of future land use patterns to meet the housing needs of the region and outlines transportation planning that reduces GHG emissions from vehicles consistent with state climate goals. The overarching strategy in the 2020 MTP/SCS is to foster a balance of new housing and job growth near job centers with mobility options to reduce the growth rate of VMT. Additionally, this plan emphasizes more frequent transit services and to build an efficient multimodal system (including bike or car share, ride-hailing

options, bus, and light rail) to provide more travel choices to residents throughout the region. The projected regional development, when integrated with the proposed regional transportation network in the 2020 MTP/SCS, would reduce per-capita GHG emissions related to vehicular travel and achieve the 19 percent GHG reduction per-capita target for the SACOG region.

The 2020 MTP/SCS does not require that local general plans, specific plans, or zoning be consistent with the SCS, but does provide incentives for consistency to governments and developers. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the new middle school would accommodate anticipated student enrollment associated with the buildout of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and within the county. While the proposed project would increase student capacity, it is consistent with planned development and is intended to serve existing and future residents. Therefore, the proposed project would not interfere with SACOG's ability to implement the regional strategies in the 2020 MTP/SCS, and a less-than-significant impact would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.8.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to greenhouse gas emissions?

Project-related GHG emissions are not confined to a particular air basin but are dispersed worldwide. Therefore, impacts under impact discussions (a) and (b) are not project-specific impacts to global warming, but the proposed project's contribution to this cumulative impact.

While the proposed project would contribute to short-term and long-term increases in GHG emissions, it would implement the Sac Metro AQMD Tier 1 BMPs (with implementation of Mitigation Measure GHG-1) established for the purpose of achieving the State's climate goals. Compliance with these BMPs would reduce GHG impacts to a less-than-significant level for the proposed project. The proposed project is also consistent with other applicable state and local plans, including the CARB 2022 Scoping Plan and the 2020 MTP/SCS as discussed in impact discussion (b). Cumulative development projects would similarly be required to comply with applicable State requirements and policies that promote reduction in GHG emissions. Therefore, cumulative GHG impacts of the proposed project would be less than significant.

3.8.7 References

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3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The purpose of this section is to disclose and analyze the potential impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials related to the project site and general vicinity, and to analyze the potential for exposure of people to hazards and hazardous materials as the proposed project is built and operated in the future. This section is based in part on the following:

- Proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Geological and Environmental Hazards Assessment Report (GEHA), PlaceWorks, November 2022
- Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA), Padre Associates, August 2025 and No Further Action Letter, Department of Toxic Substances Control, September 9, 2025

Complete copies of these technical reports are provided in Appendices H and I of this DEIR, respectively.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025. A scoping meeting was held on July 10, 2025, to solicit agency and public input on the scope and content of the EIR. No members from the public attended the scoping meeting, and no written or oral comments were received during the scoping meeting. Written comments received during the NOP review period were considered in the preparation of this EIR.

Relevant comments regarding hazards and hazardous materials were received during the NOP public review period. The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) provided comments in a letter dated July 10, 2025, requesting that the EIR evaluate the potential presence of oil, gas, or geothermal wells within or near the project site and address applicable safety requirements. Full comment letters are included in Appendix A. These concerns related to hazardous materials have been addressed in this section of the EIR.

3.9.1 Regulatory Framework

FEDERAL

The primary federal agencies that are responsible for overseeing regulations and policies regarding hazardous materials are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Department of Transportation (DOT). Several laws governing the transport, storage, and use of hazardous

materials are governed by these agencies as well as oversight for contaminated sites cleanup. Federal laws and regulations that are applicable to hazards and hazardous materials are presented below.

Hazardous Materials Transportation Act

The Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, as amended, is the basic statute regulating hazardous materials transportation in the United States. The purpose of the law is to provide adequate protection against the risks to life and property inherent in transporting hazardous materials in interstate commerce. This law gives the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and other agencies the authority to issue and enforce rules and regulations governing the safe transportation of hazardous materials.

Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act

The Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act authorizes the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Pipeline Safety to regulate pipeline transportation of natural (flammable, toxic, or corrosive) gas and other gases as well as the transportation and storage of liquefied natural gas. The Office of Pipeline Safety regulates the design, construction, inspection, testing, operation, and maintenance of pipeline facilities. While the federal government is primarily responsible for developing, issuing, and enforcing pipeline safety regulations, the pipeline safety statutes provide for State assumption of the intrastate regulatory, inspection, and enforcement responsibilities under an annual certification.

To qualify for certification, a state must adopt the minimum federal regulations and may adopt additional or more stringent regulations as long as they are not incompatible.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

The 1976 Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the 1984 RCRA Amendments regulate the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous wastes. The legislation mandated that hazardous wastes be tracked from the point of generation to their ultimate fate in the environment. This includes detailed tracking of hazardous materials during transport and permitting of hazardous material handling facilities.

The 1984 RCRA amendments provided the framework for a regulatory program designed to prevent releases from USTs. The program established tank and leak detection standards, including spill and overflow protection devices for new tanks. The tanks must also meet performance standards to ensure that the stored material will not corrode the tanks. The RCRA was further amended in 1988 to set additional standards for USTs.

In July 2015, the EPA revised the federal UST regulation, which strengthened the 1988 federal UST regulations by increasing emphasis on properly operating and maintain UST equipment. The revision added new operation and maintenance requirements and addressed UST systems

deferred in the 1988 UST regulation. The purpose of the revision was to help prevent and detect UST releases, which are a leading source of groundwater contamination. To ensure compliance performance measures reflect the 2015 UST regulation, the EPA and the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials coordinated to update existing compliance performance measures and add new measures. The measures required states to switch from tracking compliance against significant operational compliance measures to the more stringent technical compliance rate measures. As of March 2025, only 61 percent of USTs were in compliance with all technical compliance rate categories (EPA 2025a).

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

CERCLA introduced active federal involvement to emergency response, site remediation, and spill prevention, most notably the Superfund program. CERCLA was intended to be comprehensive in encompassing both the prevention of, and response to, uncontrolled hazardous substances releases. CERCLA deals with environmental response, providing mechanisms for reacting to emergencies and to chronic hazardous material releases. In addition to establishing procedures to prevent and remedy problems, it establishes a system for compensating appropriate individuals and assigning appropriate liability. It is designed to plan for and respond to failure in other regulatory programs and to remedy problems resulting from action taken before the era of comprehensive regulatory protection.

STATE

The primary state agencies that are responsible for overseeing regulations and policies regarding hazardous materials are the California Office of Emergency Services (OES), California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA), State Water Quality Control Board, and the California Air Resources Board. Several laws governing the generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials are administered by these agencies. State laws and regulations that are applicable to hazards and hazardous materials are presented below.

California Health and Safety Code

CalEPA has established rules governing the use of hazardous materials and the management of hazardous wastes. Many of these regulations are embodied in the California Health and Safety Code. The code includes regulations that govern safe drinking water, substances control, land reuse and revitalization, remediation, restoration, and methamphetamine contaminated cleanups.

California Code of Regulations Title 22 and Title 26

The California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 22 provides state regulations for hazardous materials, and CCR Title 26 provides regulation of hazardous materials management. In 1996, CalEPA established the "Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program" (Unified Program) which consolidated the six administrative components of hazardous waste and materials into one program.

Uniform Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program

The Unified Program administered by the State of California consolidates, coordinates, and makes consistent the administrative requirements, permits, inspections, and enforcement activities for environmental and emergency management programs, which include: Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventories (business plans), the California Accidental Release Prevention (CalARP) Program, and the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program. The Unified Program is implemented at the local government level by Certified Unified Program Agencies (CUPA).

The CUPA for Yuba County is the Yuba County Environmental Health Department; it is responsible for regulating hazardous materials business plans and chemical inventory, hazardous waste and tiered permitting, USTs, aboveground storage tanks, and risk management plans.

Hazardous Materials Release Notification

Many State statutes require emergency notification of a hazardous chemical release:

- Health and Safety Code, Sections 25270.8 and 25507
- Vehicle Code, Section 23112.5
- Public Utilities Code, Section 7673 (PUC General Orders #22-B, 161)
- Government Code, Sections 51018, 8670.25.5(a)
- Water Code, Sections 13271, 13272
- Labor Code, Section 6409.1 (b)10

Requirements for immediate notification of all significant spills or threatened releases cover owners, operators, persons in charge, and employers. Notification is required regarding significant releases from facilities, vehicles, vessels, pipelines, and railroads. In addition, all releases that result in injuries or harmful exposure to workers must be immediately reported to the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) pursuant to the California Labor Code Section 6409.1(b).

California Accidental Release Prevention Program

CalARP became effective on January 1, 1997, in response to Senate Bill 1889 (Chapter 715, Statutes of 1996). CalARP aims to be proactive and therefore requires businesses to prepare risk management plans, that is, detailed engineering analyses of the potential accident factors at a business and mitigation measures to reduce this accident potential. Th requirement for a risk management plan is coupled with the requirement for a hazardous materials business plan under the Unified Program, implemented by the CUPA.

California Health and Safety Code 25250.26

California Health and Safety Code 25250.256 requires that every generator of used oil, other than the owner or operator of a used oil collection center, as defined in Section 48622 of the Public Resources Code (PRC), or a household hazardous waste collection facility, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 25218.1, that transfers used oil to a recycling facility, shall submit a certification to the transporter that the used oil transferred meets the definition of used oil pursuant to Section 25250.1(a) of the Health and Safety Code. The certification shall specifically state that the used oil does not contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at a concentration of 5 parts per million (ppm), or greater, in accordance Health and Safety Code Section 25250.1(iv)(B)(1)(a).

State of California Emergency Plan

California has developed an emergency response plan to coordinate emergency services provided by federal, State, and local governments and private agencies. Response to hazardous material incidents is one part of this plan. The plan is managed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, which coordinates the responses of other agencies, including CalEPA, the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the RWQCBs.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC) incorporates, by adoption, the International Fire Code of the International Code Council, with California amendments. This is the official fire code for the State and all political subdivisions. It is found in CCR Title 24, Part 9, and is revised and published every three years by the California Building Standards Commission. The CFC is effective statewide, but a local jurisdiction may adopt more restrictive standards based on local conditions. The Linda Fire Protection District, the City's fire service provider, regularly adopts each new CFC update under the *Linda Fire Protection District Fire Code*. Chapter 50 of the CFC contains general requirements for hazardous materials that are intended to be paired with specific requirements for a given hazardous material in Chapter 51 through Chapter 67. These chapters contain more restrictive regulations beyond what is listed in the California Health and Safety Code concerning hazardous materials.

REGIONAL

County of Yuba Office of Emergency Services

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) in Yuba County is dedicated to coordinating disaster planning and response efforts before, during, and after emergencies. Its mission is to protect public safety and property by working with stakeholders and first responders. OES also provides preparedness and educational resources to help residents make informed decisions during emergencies (Yuba 2023).

Certified Unified Program Agency

The California Environmental Protection Agency designates specific local agencies as CUPA, typically at the county level. The Yuba County Environmental Health Department is the CUPA designated for Yuba County. The Yuba County Environmental Health Department is responsible for the implementation of statewide programs within its jurisdiction, including: underground storage of hazardous substances (USTs), Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) requirements, the California Accidental Release Prevention (Cal-ARP) program, and other hazardous materials management programs. The HMBP Program requires businesses that handle or store hazardous materials above specified thresholds to prepare and maintain a business plan that identifies the types, quantities, and storage locations of hazardous materials onsite and outlines emergency response procedures, employee training, and spill prevention measures. Implementation of these programs involves permitting, inspections, public education and guidance, investigations, and enforcement.

Yuba County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Yuba County maintains the Yuba County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (Yuba County LHMP), most recently updated in 2021, to identify and reduce risks from natural and human-caused hazards. The Yuba County LHMP is developed in accordance with the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and is required for eligibility for certain FEMA disaster relief and mitigation funding (Yuba 2021). The plan includes a countywide hazard assessment and outlines mitigation strategies for wildfire, flood, earthquake, and hazardous materials incidents, among others. The Plumas Lake area is identified in the plan's hazard mapping and vulnerability assessments.

The Yuba County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is responsible for coordinating emergency planning and response across jurisdictions. In addition to the Yuba County LHMP, the County maintains an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that establishes protocols for incident command, interagency coordination, evacuation, sheltering, and public communication during emergencies. The EOP and Yuba County LHMP function together to guide pre-disaster planning and post-disaster response and recovery throughout the county, including in the Plumas Lake area (Yuba 2015).

Local first response agencies, including the Linda Fire Protection District and Yuba County Sheriff's Department, support implementation of these plans in collaboration with OES and state and federal emergency response partners.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

County Code § 11.26.130 — "Hazardous and extremely hazardous materials"

This section states that the use, handling, storage and transportation of hazardous and extremely hazardous materials shall comply with the provisions of the California Hazardous Materials Regulations and the California Fire and Building Code, as well as the laws and regulations of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the County Environmental Health Agency. Activities, processes and uses shall not generate or emit any fissionable or radioactive materials into the atmosphere, a sewage system or onto the ground.

Additionally, the County's local CUPA webpages elaborate that under the authority of the County CUPA (certified by the California Environmental Protection Agency), programs for HMBP, hazardous waste generator status, underground/above-ground storage tanks, and emergency response are administered (though not all are codified as distinct ordinance sections).

Yuba County General Plan

Goal HS7. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Protect the community from the harmful effects of hazards and hazardous materials

- **Policy HS7.1**: The County will assess risks associated with public investments and other County-initiated actions, and new private developments shall assess and mitigate hazardous materials risks and ensure safe handling, storage, and movement in compliance with local, state, and federal safety standards.
- **Policy HS7.5**: The County will support compliance with state law regarding the location of school sites and sources of hazardous air emissions to ensure against endangerment of public health.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan (PLSP) incorporates hazards and safety considerations through its reliance on the Yuba County General Plan Safety and Seismic Safety Elements and through plan-specific development standards addressing flood hazards, emergency access, and land use compatibility. The PLSP area lies entirely within Reclamation District No. 784 and is subject to regional flood protection and drainage regulations, including levees, drainage canals, detention facilities, and pumping infrastructure designed to manage the 100-year flood event. Portions of the Specific Plan area are mapped within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Hazard Zones A and B, and the PLSP requires new development to comply with applicable

floodplain management standards, including minimum finished-floor elevations above the 100-year flood level or certification of equivalent flood protection (Yuba 1993).

3.9.2 Existing Conditions

PHYSICAL SETTING

Geology

The Project Site is in the northern portion of the Great Valley Geomorphic Province, a north-south trending valley, approximately 400 miles long by 50 miles wide, the northern portion of which is known as the Sacramento Valley. Within the Sacramento Valley, the project site is situated in the east-central portion just west of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The surface of the Sacramento Valley is composed primarily of unconsolidated Pleistocene (1.6 million to 11,000 years ago) and Recent (11,000 years ago to the present) alluvial sediments. These lie unconformably on Mio-Pliocene, marine sediments, which extend to a crystalline basement at a depth of approximately 20,000 feet. The Sutter Buttes located approximately 16 miles northwest of the project site, are a prominent monolithic cluster of steepsided pinnacle-like hills covering about 25 km2 that break the topographic monotony of the Sacramento Valley. Rising over 600 meters from the valley floor, this pile of volcanic rocks is the only major igneous outcrop anywhere in the Great Valley.

Stratigraphically, the subsurface of the Great Valley is complex, and is comprised of tens of thousands of feet of marine and non-marine sediments ranging in age from Jurassic to Recent. The sediments are important sources of groundwater and petroleum hydrocarbons (gas and oil).

According to the Department of Conservation California Geologic Survey Geologic Map of the Chico Quadrangle, California, 1:250,000 (1992), the project site is underlain by Pleistocene Riverbank Formation. The Riverbank Formation deposited between 130,000 to 450,000 years ago) consists of poorly-to-highly permeable pebble and small cobble gravels interlensed with reddish clay sands and silt. The formation ranges from less than one foot to over 200 feet thick depending on location.

Soils

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Yuba County, California (1998), surficial soils at the project site are comprised of Hollenbeck silty clay loam and to a lesser extent Kilaga clay loam.

Hollenbeck silty clay loam (0 to 1 % slopes) consists of a well-drained soil located in basins that formed in fine textured alluvium from mixed sources. Typically, the surface layer is brown silty clay loam about 8 inches thick. The upper 8 inches of the subsoil is grayish brown silty clay. The

next 27 inches is yellowish brown and brown clay. The lower 4 inches is reddish yellow clay loam. An indurated hardpan is at a depth of 47 inches. Permeability is slow and the available water capacity is 5.5 to 6.0 inches. The shrink-swell potential is high, runoff is very slow and the hazard of water erosion is slight.

Kilaga clay loam, hardpan substratum (0 to 1 % slopes) consists of a well-drained soil on stream terraces. Typically, the surface layer is brown clay loam about 9 inches thick. The upper 12 inches of the subsoil is yellowish brown clay loam. The lower 34 inches is yellowish brown silty clay loam and silty clay. The next layer is a hardpan about 5 inches thick. Siltstone is at a depth of 60 inches. Permeability is slow and the available water capacity is 8.0 to 9.5 inches. The shrink-swell potential is high, runoff is very slow and the hazard of water erosion is slight.

Groundwater

The project site is located in the Sacramento Valley groundwater basin, South Yuba subbasin. Tule subbasin. The South Yuba subbasin lies in the southern portion of the Sacramento Basin Hydrologic Study Area. It is bounded on the north by the Yuba River, on the west by the Feather River, on the south by the Bear River, and on the east by the Sierra Nevada and encompasses nearly 107,000 acres. During April 2004 a geotechnical study was conducted by Wallace Kuhl & Associates at a property located approximately 0.25 miles east of the project site. Groundwater was encountered in five of the drill holes at approximate depth of 10 to 20 feet below grade surface.

Groundwater is inferred to flow westerly towards an unnamed drainage slough located adjacent to the project site.

PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING USES

The project site is located within the PLSP area in southern Yuba County. The site is bounded by River Oaks Boulevard to the south, Kensington Drive to the west, and open agricultural lands to the north and east. The project site is currently undeveloped and consists of an agricultural field.[1] Surrounding land uses include residential neighborhoods to the west and south, and vacant or agricultural parcels to the north and east. Cobblestone Elementary School is located approximately 0.2 mile east of the project site, and Riverside Meadows Intermediate School is located approximately 0.68 mile southeast.

The project site is located near the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive in Plumas Lake, unincorporated Yuba County. The project site is surrounded by vacant land and agricultural land to the north, south, and west, and single-family homes to the east, across River Oaks Boulevard. Direct vehicular access to the project site is available from River Oaks

[1] At the time the PEA site reconnaissance was conducted in August 2024, the project site was in active agricultural production. The agricultural lease was terminated at the end of the season, prior to the start of this DEIR.

Boulevard, a primary east–west arterial that connects to State Route 70 (SR-70), and from Kensington Drive, a local north–south roadway providing access to surrounding residential neighborhoods. These roadways also function as the primary emergency response and evacuation routes serving the project site.

SITE HISTORY AND AGRICULTURAL USE

The project site has been in continuous agricultural use since at least the late 1930s, as documented in historic aerial photographs reviewed in the PEA (Padre Associates 2025). See Appendix I. Throughout this period, the project site was cultivated with row and field crops, most recently planted with butternut squash at the time of the August 2024 site reconnaissance. The project site contains unpaved farm roads along the northern and western boundaries and an irrigation ditch running north–south along the western property line. Irrigation water was drawn from a nearby drainage slough west of the project site and conveyed via a mobile pump and temporary piping system to the on-site ditch for flood irrigation.

According to the Yuba County Agricultural Commissioner's records, pesticide-use permits were issued to Danna Farms, Inc. for crops including cantaloupes, squash, sunflowers, and tomatoes between 2018 and 2024. Registered pesticide applications during this period included herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides such as 2,4-D Amine, Bifenthrin (Bifen 2 AG Gold), Agri-Mek SC, Clethodim 2E, Paraquat Concentrate, Intrepid 2F, and Sevin Brand XLR Plus. While many of these chemicals have relatively short half-lives (10–90 days), several, including Intrepid 2F (240–430 days) and Paraquat Concentrate (~1,000 days), can persist longer in soils.

No evidence of past industrial, commercial, or structural development were identified on the property, and no recognized environmental conditions (RECs), environmental liens, or land use restrictions were noted in the Environmental Data Resources (EDR) Radius Map Report, the DTSC EnviroStor, or the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker databases. Overall, the PEA concluded that the project site's historic agricultural activities did not result in hazardous substance releases and recommended a "No Further Action" determination from DTSC. DTSC issued a No Further Action Letter on September 9, 2025, which marks the close of the PEA process.

SOIL SAMPLING AND ANALYTICAL RESULTS

As part of the PEA, a soil investigation was conducted to evaluate potential residual contamination associated with historic agricultural activities on the project site. A total of 12 shallow soil samples were collected from the upper 0–6 inches below ground surface (bgs) across representative portions of the 25-acre site, including the former crop areas, irrigation ditch, and unpaved access roads. Samples were analyzed for chemicals of potential concern commonly associated with long-term agricultural operations, including organochlorine

pesticides (OCPs), arsenic, and lead. Laboratory analysis was performed by a California-certified analytical laboratory in accordance with U.S. EPA SW-846 methods.

Analytical results indicated that all detected concentrations were well below applicable human health screening levels and DTSC significance thresholds. Specifically:

- OCPs: Low levels of legacy pesticides such as DDT, DDE, DDD, and toxaphene were detected sporadically across the site. However, all concentrations were an order of magnitude or more below the DTSC Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) screening levels for residential and school land use.
- Arsenic: Detected arsenic concentrations ranged from 3.1 to 6.5 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg), which is within the regional background range for Yuba County soils (approximately 2–11 mg/kg). These values do not indicate an anthropogenic source or site-specific release.
- Lead: Total lead concentrations ranged from 7.4 to 18 mg/kg, which is below the DTSC residential/school screening level of 80 mg/kg and consistent with background concentrations observed in agricultural soils throughout the Sacramento Valley.

Risk evaluation determined that the calculated noncancer hazard index for all detected analytes was 0.02, far below the DTSC significance threshold of 1.0, and the cumulative excess lifetime cancer risk from OCPs was calculated at 1.6×10^{-7}, which is well below DTSC's acceptable risk level of 1×10^{-6}.

Based on these results, the PEA concluded that no hazardous substances are present at concentrations that would pose a risk to human health or the environment, and no further action was recommended by DTSC. DTSC issued a No Further Action Letter on September 9, 2025, which marks the close of the PEA process.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND SITES

California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires that the following types of hazardous materials sites be compiled into a list: hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Quality Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

The GEHA confirmed that based on a review of the EnviroStor and GeoTracker databases, the project site does not contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site, and no hazardous substance release sites were identified within the project site. Searches of databases by EDR (2022) identified no listings for the project site in federal, State, or local hazardous materials databases reviewed as part of the database search. According to the PEA (Padre Associates 2025), the project site was not identified on any federal, state, or local hazardous materials databases, and no RECs were identified. The PEA also confirmed that

no adjacent or nearby properties within a one-quarter-mile radius are listed on the EnviroStor or GeoTracker databases, and the few records identified in the broader search area are associated with closed leaking underground storage tank (LUST) cases and permitted facilities with no known off-site impacts.

Separately, a review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the "Cortese List"), including DTSC and SWRCB source lists, confirms that the project site is not included on the Cortese List (DTSC 2026).

Therefore, based on review of multiple databases and field reconnaissance, no hazardous materials sites or sources of concern were identified on or near the project site (Padre Associates 2025; DTSC 2025; SWRCB 2025).

PIPELINES, STORAGE TANKS, AND UTILITIES

According to the GEHA, there are no petroleum or chemical pipelines on the project site based on a review of the National Pipeline Mapping System. Pacific Gas & Electric confirmed that no high-pressure natural gas pipelines are located within 1,500 feet of the project site, and no aboveground fuel storage tanks were identified within a 1,500-foot radius

POWER LINES

The GEHA notes that according to Pacific Gas & Electric, there are no PG&E facilities of 50kV or higher within 350 feet of the project site (PlaceWorks 2025).

OIL, GAS AND GEOTHERMAL WELLS

The GEHA identifies that the project site is not within 300 feet of an active oil or natural gas well. The closest well is approximately 890 feet southwest of the project site and is identified as a dry hole drilled by D.D. Feldman Oil & Gas (PlaceWorks 2025). Based on California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM)'s Well Finder database, the project site does not contain any active plugged, or idle oil, gas, or geothermal wells (Cal GEM 2025).

3.9.3 Standards for Analysis

METHODOLOGY

The analysis in this section is based on the findings of the PEA prepared by Padre Associates, Inc. in 2025 and the GEHA prepared by PlaceWorks in 2022. The PEA included a detailed review of historical land use records, aerial imagery, topographic maps, and agricultural permit data to evaluate potential contamination associated with past on-site activities. Fieldwork included a site reconnaissance and the collection of shallow soil samples from 12 locations across the

property, which were analyzed for OCPs, arsenic, and lead—chemicals of potential concern commonly associated with historical agricultural operations. Laboratory analyses were performed by a California-certified laboratory in accordance with U.S. EPA SW-846 methods. Analytical results were compared to applicable screening criteria established by the California DTSC for school sites and residential land uses. The evaluation also included a review of federal, state, and local hazardous materials databases (e.g., EnviroStor, GeoTracker, EDR Radius Map Report) to identify listed hazardous sites on or near the property. Findings from the PEA and GEHA were used to assess existing conditions and to determine whether the proposed project could result in significant hazards or hazardous materials impacts under CEQA.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to hazards and hazardous materials if it would:

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.

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

d) Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.

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, if the project would 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.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

3.9.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Construction

The proposed project would include grading, construction of new buildings, and minimal soil excavation. Potentially hazardous materials used during construction include paints, sealants, solvents, adhesives, cleaners, gasoline, and diesel fuel. However, the potentially hazardous materials are typical materials used during construction and would not be used or stored in quantities that pose a significant safety hazard. Further, the potentially hazardous materials would be stored, handled, and transported in accordance with manufacturers' specifications. The handling, use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials during the construction phase of the proposed project would comply with existing regulations of several agencies—the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Yuba County, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, and the United States Department of Transportation. In the event that a spill occurs, supplies are maintained on-site for containing and cleaning small spills of hazardous materials. Project construction workers are trained on the proper use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials. Construction activities associated with the proposed project would be short term or one time in nature, which further limits the use of these materials onsite.

Construction activities would also be conducted in accordance with the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) as part of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The primary objective of the SWPPP is to identify, construct, implement, and maintain best management practices (BMP) to reduce or eliminate pollutants in stormwater discharges and authorized non-storm water discharges from the construction site. BMPs for hazardous materials may include, but are not limited to, off-site refueling, placement of generators on impervious surfaces, establishing cleanout areas for cement, etc. Adherence to existing regulations would ensure compliance with safety standards related to the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and with the safety procedures mandated by applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

As documented in the PEA, shallow soil sampling across the project site confirmed that all detected concentrations of OCPs, arsenic, and lead were below applicable DTSC screening thresholds for school or residential land uses (Padre Associates 2025). Therefore, no soil remediation or management is required prior to grading.

However, because grading and earthwork would disturb near-surface soils that historically supported agricultural operations, there is potential for incidental worker exposure to residual agricultural chemicals or naturally occurring metals during soil handling, dust generation, or excavation. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs), including dust suppression, equipment washing, and adherence to Cal/OSHA worker safety regulations, would ensure such exposure remains well below hazardous levels. The handling, use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials would comply with existing regulations of several agencies such as the EPA, Cal/OSHA, US OSHA, and USDOT. In addition, the GEHA confirmed that the project site is not located near petroleum pipelines, chemical pipelines, or aboveground storage tanks, further reducing the potential for cumulative hazard risks during construction transport or use of materials.

There is nothing unique about the construction of the proposed project or the project site that could create significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials would ensure that all potentially hazardous materials are used and handled in an appropriate manner and would minimize the potential for safety impacts to occur. Therefore, the proposed project construction would not create substantial hazards to the public or the environment. Impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

Operation of the proposed project would involve limited quantities of routine hazardous materials typical of school uses, such as cleaning and maintenance supplies (cleaners, gasoline, paint, and pesticides) and chemicals used for educational purposes (such those in science labs). The proposed project is a school development and would use cleaners and other chemicals in relatively small quantities, which are not considered hazardous in quantities that would result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Because the PEA confirmed that no residual contamination or regulated hazardous materials remain in on-site soils above regulatory thresholds, operational activities would not result in exposure or disturbance of hazardous substances.

All on-site activities during construction and operation would be required to adhere to federal and state regulations for the handling, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. The District would also be required to maintain a Hazard Communication Program consistent with Cal/OSHA standards, including employee training, labeling, and safety data sheet maintenance for all materials stored or used on project site. With implementation of these regulatory requirements and standard construction BMPs, potential hazards associated with construction-related soil disturbance or material handling would be less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project 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?

The project site is currently an active agricultural field and is proposed for development as the Plumas Lake Middle School campus. The project site is surrounded by residential uses, agricultural uses, and vacant land.

As documented in the PEA the project site was evaluated for residual OCPs, arsenic, and lead which are typically chemicals of potential concern associated with historical agricultural use. Twelve shallow soil samples were collected from the upper 0–6 inches below ground surface and analyzed by a California-certified laboratory. The PEA concluded that all analyte concentrations were below applicable California DTSC HHRA screening thresholds for school and residential land uses, and therefore, would not pose a significant risk to human health or the environment.

Specifically, detected concentrations of OCPs such as DDT, DDE, and DDD ranged from non-detect to 0.0028 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg), compared to the DTSC residential/school screening level of 0.19 mg/kg. The corresponding cancer risk from detected OCPs was calculated at 1.6×10^{-7}, which is well below DTSC's acceptable threshold of 1×10^{-6}, and the noncancer health hazard index for all analytes was calculated at 0.02—far below the significance threshold of 1.0. Arsenic concentrations ranged from 3.1 to 6.5 mg/kg, which falls within the regional background range of 2 to 11 mg/kg for Yuba County soils confirming that arsenic at the site reflects naturally occurring conditions rather than anthropogenic contamination. Lead concentrations ranged from 7.4 to 18 mg/kg, substantially below DTSC's school site screening level of 80 mg/kg. Collectively, these results confirm that potential exposure through soil disturbance would not result in a significant cancer or noncancer health risk. Based on these findings, the PEA recommended a "No Further Action" determination from the DTSC. DTSC issued a No Further Action letter on September 9, 2025, which marks the close of the PEA process.

In addition, the GEHA further corroborated these findings by confirming that the project site and surrounding area do not contain or lie near petroleum or chemical pipelines, aboveground storage tanks, or high-voltage transmission lines that could present safety hazards. A review of federal and state environmental databases, including the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases, and the EDR Radius Map Report, verified that the project site is not listed as a hazardous materials site (Padre Associates 2025). Separately, a review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 confirms that the project site is not included on the Cortese List (DTSC 2026). The nearest oil well, located approximately 890 feet southwest of the project site, is a dry and inactive well historically

advanced by D.D. Feldman Oil & Gas, as confirmed by the California Geologic Energy Management Division (PlaceWorks 2022). No other active or abandoned wells, pipelines, or hazardous materials facilities occur within a one-quarter-mile radius.

Therefore, the proposed project would not 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. This impact is less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substance, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

As a result of the proposed project being a new school site, Public Resources Code (PRC) 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186, *School Facilities*, apply. An evaluation of the proposed project in light of PRC 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186, is shown in Table 3.9-1, *Public Resources Code 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186 Analysis.*

Table 3.9-1 Public Resources Code 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186 Analysis

Code	Consistency Analysis
Public Resources Code 21151.8.(a)(1): The environmental impact report or negative declaration includes information that is needed to determine if the property proposed to be purchased, or to be constructed upon, is any of the following:	
21151.8.(a)(1)(A): The site of a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site and, if so, whether the wastes have been removed.	Based on a database review summarized in the GEHA and PEA (see Appendix H and I), and the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the Cortese List), the project site does not contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site.
21151.8.(a)(1)(B): A hazardous substance release site identified by the Department of Toxic Substances Control in a current list adopted pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 78760) of Chapter 4 of Part 2 of Division 45 of the Health and Safety Code for removal or remedial action pursuant to Part 2 (commencing with Section 78000) of Division 45 of the Health and Safety Code.	Based on a database review summarized in the GEHA and PEA (see Appendix H and I), and a review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the Cortese List), no hazardous substance release sites were identified within the project site.

Table 3.9-1 Public Resources Code 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186 Analysis

Code	Consistency Analysis
21151.8.(a)(1)(C): A site that contains one or more pipelines, situated underground or aboveground, that carries hazardous substances, extremely hazardous substances, or hazardous wastes, unless the pipeline is a natural gas line that is used only to supply natural gas to that school or neighborhood, or other nearby schools.	There are no petroleum or chemical pipelines on the project site based on a review of the National Pipeline Mapping System online mapping database. According to the response from Pacific Gas & Electric, no high-pressure natural gas pipelines are located within 1,500 feet of the project site. OPUD services the Plumas Lake area area including the project site. OPUD confirmed that they will provide sewer to the project site.
21151.8.(a)(1)(D): A site that is within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor.	Public Resources Code Section 21151.8(b)(9) and Education Code Section 17213(d)(9) define a "freeway or other busy traffic corridors" as roadways that on an average day have traffic in excess of 50,000 vehicles in a rural area or 100,000 vehicles in an urban area or 100,000 average daily trips (ADT). Residential and rural uses surround the project site. River Oaks Boulevard is designated as an urban arterial street. No freeways or busy traffic corridors are located within 500 feet of the project site.
CEQA Guidelines Section 15186(c): When the project involves the purchase of a school site or the construction of a secondary or elementary school by a school district, the negative declaration or EIR prepared for the project shall not be adopted or certified unless: **CEQA Guidelines Section 15186(c)(1):** The negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or EIR contains sufficient information to determine whether the property is:	
15186(c)(1)(A): The site of a current or former hazardous waste or solid waste disposal facility and, if so, whether wastes have been removed.	Based on a database review summarized in the GEHA and PEA (see Appendix H and I), and a review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the Cortese List), the project site does not contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site.
15186(c)(1)(B): A hazardous substance release site identified by the Department of Toxic Substances Control in a current list adopted pursuant to Section 25356 of the Health and Safety Code for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 (commencing with	Based on a database review summarized in the GEHA and PEA (see Appendix H and I), and a review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the Cortese List), no hazardous substance release sites were identified within the project site.

Table 3.9-1 Public Resources Code 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186 Analysis

Code	Consistency Analysis
Section 25300) of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code.	
15186(c)(1)(C): The site of one or more buried or above ground pipelines which carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes, as defined in Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code. This does not include a natural gas pipeline used only to supply the school or neighborhood.	No aboveground fuel storage tanks were identified within a 1,500-foot radius, based on a review of Google Earth Pro and the GeoTracker website. There are no petroleum or chemical pipelines within a 1,500-foot radius, according to the National Pipeline Mapping System (online mapping database. According to the response from Pacific Gas & Electric, no high-pressure natural gas pipelines are located within 1,500 feet of the site.
15186(c)(1)(D): Within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor.	No freeways or busy traffic corridors are located within 500 feet of the project site. See PRC 21151.8.(a)(1)(D) above.

Source: PlaceWorks 2022

As substantiated in Tables 5.9-1, the proposed project would be consistent with PRC 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines 15186. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Construction and Operation

The proposed project includes the construction and operation of a new middle school campus on a former agricultural site within the PLSP area. The project site is currently undeveloped and has been historically used for agricultural purposes. The project site is approximately 0.2 miles west of Cobblestone Elementary School (located at 1718 Churchill Way) and approximately 0.68 miles northwest of Riverside Meadows Intermediate School (located at 1751 Cimarron Drive).

As discussed under Threshold 3.9(a), construction and operation of the proposed project would involve the use of small amounts of hazardous materials typical of construction (e.g., fuel, lubricants, solvents) and school operation (e.g., cleaning products, maintenance supplies). These materials would be used, transported, and stored in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations that ensure proper handling and prevent accidental release.

As discussed under Threshold 3.9(b), the GEHA confirmed that no aboveground fuel storage tanks or petroleum, high-pressure natural gas, or chemical pipelines are present within 1,500 feet of the project site. Additionally, the PEA documented that soil sampling results for OCPs, arsenic, and lead were all below regulatory screening thresholds and no evidence of release or threatened release was identified. Based on these findings, DTSC issued a “No Further Action” determination, confirming that no significant hazard from hazardous materials is expected at

the project site. Therefore, no significant hazard from hazardous materials is expected at the project site. Impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the State to compile lists of the following types of hazardous materials sites: hazardous waste facilities; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Resources Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

The project site does not contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site, and no hazardous substance release sites were identified. Reviews of the DTSC EnviroStor and SRWCB GeoTracker databases did not identify the project site as a listed hazardous materials site (PlaceWorks 2025). Separately, based on review of the hazardous materials site categories identified in Government Code Section 65962.5 (the Cortese List), the project site is not included on the Cortese List (DTSC 2026). This conclusion is consistent with the findings of the PEA, which identified no evidence of hazardous materials release or threatened release on or adjacent to the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not create a hazard to the public or the environment because of a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

e) For a project 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?

The nearest public airports to the project site are the Yuba County Airport, located approximately 6 miles north, and the Sacramento International Airport, located approximately 20 miles south of the project site. The project site is not located within an airport land use plan area for either airport and is not within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. Therefore, no impact would occur and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: No Impact.

f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The project site is located in unincorporated Yuba County within the PLSP area. Yuba County has adopted a comprehensive EOP that provides coordinated guidance for emergency response to natural and human-caused disasters within the County. The EOP facilitates multi-jurisdictional coordination among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency situations.

The project does not include any modifications to regional circulation patterns and would not obstruct designated emergency access routes. As discussed in Section 3.17, *Transportation*, the project site would be designed in accordance with applicable California Department of Education (CDE) and Yuba County emergency access standards, including provisions for fire and emergency vehicle circulation. However, focused off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard including a dedicated left-turn lane, curb enhancements, and a striped pedestrian crosswalk at Kensington Drive could result in temporary lane closures during construction. Because River Oaks Boulevard provides the primary connection to SR-70, the main evacuation route for the Plumas Lake area, even short-term closures could interfere with emergency response times and evacuation access if not properly managed. Therefore, this impact could be potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant.

Impact HAZ-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary link to SR-70, temporary off-site construction activities along River Oaks Boulevard could impair emergency response or evacuation access.

The proposed project would implement Mitigation Measure WIL-1.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure WIL-1, which requires a Traffic Control Plan with detour routing and coordination with emergency service providers to maintain continuous emergency access. Construction activities would be temporary in nature and would be subject to standard traffic control measures to ensure roadway access is maintained.

Therefore, the proposed project would not impair or physically interfere with implementation of an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan, and impacts would be less than significant.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

As discussed in Section 3.19, *Wildfire*, the project site and surrounding area are not located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, as mapped by CAL FIRE (2025). The project site is in a developed area of the PLSP and is surrounded by agricultural and residential uses, with no nearby wildland areas posing elevated fire risk. The closest area designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone is located in the Town of Smartsville, approximately 19 miles northeast (CAL FIRE 2025). Development of the proposed project would comply with all applicable local and state building and fire safety codes.

Wildfire risks affecting the project site are also addressed at the countywide level through implementation of the Yuba County LHMP, which identifies wildfire hazards and establishes mitigation and emergency preparedness strategies applicable throughout the County, including the Plumas Lake area. Consistency with the Yuba County LHMP further reduces the potential for exposure to wildfire-related risks.

In addition, as a school project, the proposed project would be required to comply with the Comprehensive School Safety Plan requirements pursuant to California Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan would establish procedures for emergency preparedness and response, including evacuation, communication, and coordination protocols for a range of natural and human-caused hazards, including fire-related events. Preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan would further reduce potential risks to students, staff, and visitors in the event of a wildfire or other emergency.

Therefore, the proposed project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildfires. No impact would occur and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.9.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for hazards and hazardous materials considers the proposed project together with other existing, approved, and reasonably foreseeable development within the PLSP area and adjacent portions of southern Yuba County. This setting encompasses buildout of residential neighborhoods, schools, commercial uses, and supporting infrastructure consistent with the Specific Plan.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to hazards and hazardous materials?

As described in Section 3.9.4, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; upset or accident conditions; proximity to hazardous-materials sites; or wildland-fire risk. No contamination has been identified on-site, and operational hazardous-materials use would be minimal and fully regulated. Future development would likewise be required to review the potential for hazardous materials to occur onsite and, if needed, develop a plan to handle potential hazardous materials onsite and upset conditions. Future development would be required to comply with applicable federal, State, and local regulations governing hazardous-materials management, worker safety, and emergency access, including oversight by the U.S. EPA, DTSC, SWRCB, Cal/OSHA, and the Yuba County Environmental Health Department. Further each future development would also evaluate its impact to emergency response and evacuation planning and wildfire exposure and implement appropriate mitigation as needed.

With respect to evacuation, cumulative development within the PLSP area would be required to comply with Yuba County emergency access and circulation standards and would be evaluated individually for consistency with the County EOP. As described above, while temporary construction-related lane closures along River Oaks Boulevard could affect evacuation access if not properly managed, such impacts would be addressed through project-specific traffic control planning, coordination with emergency service providers, and implementation of mitigation measures to maintain continuous access to SR-70, the primary evacuation route for the area. Future projects would be subject to similar requirements, and no cumulative degradation of evacuation capacity or emergency response access would occur.

Because hazardous-materials impacts are site-specific and individually regulated under these uniform programs, and evacuation-related impacts would be temporary, localized, and mitigated on a project-by-project basis, cumulative development in the area would not result in combined off-site contamination, exposure, reduced evacuation capacity, or interference with emergency response. Therefore, the proposed project would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative hazards or hazardous-materials impacts.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.9.6 References

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3.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

This section of the Draft EIR describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions on the project site related to hydrology and water quality, and the potential impacts of the project on hydrology and water quality.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical reports:

- *Biological Resources Assessment for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project*, ECORP Consulting Inc., July 2025.
- *Geotechnical and Geologic Hazards Investigation Prepared for Plumas Lake Elementary School District New Middle School Campus*, GEOCON Consultants, Inc., August 2024.
- *Proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Geological and Environmental Hazards Assessment Report*, PlaceWorks, November 2022.

Complete copies of these technical reports are provided in Appendices D, F, and H of this Draft EIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) made the following comments, dated July 17, 2025:

- Construction over one acre requires coverage under the Construction General Permit (2009-0009-DWQ) and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
- Discharges to U.S. waters/wetlands may need a Section 404 permit and a Section 401 Water Quality Certification.
- Impacts to non-jurisdictional state waters may require a Waste Discharge Requirement with small projects eligible for streamlined approval (Order 2004-0004-DWQ).
- Groundwater or surface water discharges require National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit coverage, often via a Limited Threat General Order; submission of a Notice of Intent is needed.

The relevant issues raised in these comment letters are addressed throughout this section. Refer to Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary,* in Chapter 3, Environmental

Analysis, for a full summary of all comments received and Appendix A for the contents of the NOP comment letters.

3.10.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal, state and regional laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (CWA) (Title 33 United States Code [USC] Sections 1251 to 1376) of 1972 is the primary federal law that governs and authorizes water quality control activities by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), as well as the states.

Under federal law, USEPA has published water quality regulations under Volume 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Section 303 of the CWA requires states to adopt water quality standards for all surface waters of the United States. As defined by the CWA, water quality standards consist of two elements: (1) designated beneficial uses of the water body in question and (2) criteria that protect the designated uses. Section 304(a) requires the USEPA to publish advisory water quality criteria that accurately reflect the latest scientific knowledge on the kind and extent of all effects on health and welfare that may be expected from the presence of pollutants in water. Where multiple uses exist, water quality standards must protect the most sensitive use. In California, the USEPA has delegated authority to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and its nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) to identify beneficial uses and adopt applicable water quality objectives.

When water quality does not meet CWA standards and compromises designated beneficial uses of a receiving water body, Section 303(d) of the CWA requires that water body be identified and listed as “impaired.” Once a water body has been designated as impaired, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) must be developed for the impairing pollutant(s). A TMDL is an estimate of the total load of pollutants from point, nonpoint, and natural sources that a water body may receive without exceeding applicable water quality standards, with a factor of safety included. Once established, the TMDL allocates the loads among current and future pollutant sources to the water body.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program was established by the CWA to regulate municipal and industrial discharges to surface waters of the United States, including discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4). Federal NPDES permit regulations have been established for broad categories of discharges, including

point-source municipal waste discharges and nonpoint-source stormwater runoff. NPDES permits generally identify effluent and receiving water limits on allowable concentrations and/or mass emissions of pollutants in the discharge; prohibitions on discharges not specifically allowed under the permit; and provisions that describe required actions by the discharger, including industrial pretreatment, pollution prevention, self-monitoring, and other activities.

Under the NPDES program, all facilities that discharge pollutants into waters of the United States are required to obtain a NPDES permit. Requirements for stormwater discharges are also regulated under this program. In California, the NPDES permit program is administered by the SWRCB through the nine RWQCBs.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the National Flood Insurance Program to provide subsidized flood insurance to communities that comply with FEMA regulations limiting development in floodplains. FEMA also issues Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that identify which land areas are subject to flooding. These maps provide flood information and identify flood hazard zones in the community. The design standard for flood protection is established by FEMA. FEMA's minimum level of flood protection for new development is the 100-year flood event, also described as a flood that has a 1-in-100 chance of occurring in any given year.

STATE

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Water Code Sections 13000 et seq.) is the basic water quality control law for California. This act established the SWRCB and divided the state into nine regional basins, each under the jurisdiction of an RWQCB. The SWRCB is the primary State agency responsible for the protection of California's water quality and groundwater supplies. The RWQCBs carry out regulations, protection, and administration of water quality in each region. Each regional board is required to adopt a water quality control plan or basin plan that recognizes and reflects the regional differences in existing water quality, the beneficial uses of the region's ground and surface water, and local water quality conditions and problems.

The Porter-Cologne Act also authorizes the SWRCB and RWQCBs to issue and enforce waste discharge requirements, NPDES permits, and other approvals. Other State agencies with jurisdiction over water quality regulation in California include the California Department of Health Services for drinking water regulations, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment.

State Water Resources Control Board

In California, the SWRCB has broad authority over water quality control issues for the State. The SWRCB is responsible for developing statewide water quality policy and exercises the powers delegated to the State by the federal government under the CWA. It also regulates public drinking water systems, NPDES wastewater discharges, water quality monitoring, water recycling programs, landfill disposal, water rights, and implements drought restrictions.

Construction General Permit

Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land that could impact hydrologic resources must comply with the requirements of the SWRCB Construction General Permit (CGP) Order No. WQ 2022-0057-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002. Under the terms of the permit, applicants must file Permit Registration Documents (PRDs) with the SWRCB before the start of construction. The PRDs include a Notice of Intent, risk assessment, site map, Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), annual fee, and a signed certification statement. The PRDs are submitted electronically to the SWRCB via the Stormwater Multiple Application and Report Tracking System (SMARTS) website.

Applicants must also demonstrate conformance with applicable best management practices (BMPs) and prepare a SWPPP containing a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed buildings, lots, roadways, collection and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the project site. The SWPPP must list BMPs that would be implemented to prevent soil erosion and discharge of other construction-related pollutants that could contaminate nearby water resources. Additionally, the SWPPP must contain a visual monitoring program, a sampling program to ensure compliance with water quality standards, and on-site collection of samples and inspection of BMPs during a qualifying precipitation event.

Trash Amendments

On April 7, 2015, the SWRCB adopted an amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California to control trash and Part 1, Trash Provisions, of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California (SWRCB 2025). They are collectively referred to as “the Trash Amendments.” The Trash Amendments apply to all surface waters of California and include a land use-based compliance approach to focus trash controls on areas with high trash-generation rates. Areas such as high-density residential, industrial, commercial, mixed urban, and public transportation stations are considered priority land uses. There are two compliance tracks for Phase I and Phase II MS4 permittees:

- **Track 1:** Permittees must install, operate, and maintain a network of certified full-capture systems in storm drains that capture runoff from priority land uses.

- **Track 2:** Permittees must implement a plan with a combination of full capture systems, multi-benefit projects, institutional controls, and/or other treatment methods that have the same effectiveness as Track 1 methods.

The Trash Amendments provide a framework for permittees to implement their provisions. Full compliance must occur within 10 years of the permit, and permittees must also meet interim milestones such as average load reductions of 10 percent per year.

Phase II Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit

The California SWRCB's Phase II Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit is a general permit regulating stormwater discharges from smaller MS4s within urbanized areas to protect water quality. This permit requires small MS4 operators to implement a Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) with six or more minimum control measures, such as public education, illicit discharge detection, construction site controls, and pollution prevention. The SWRCB adopted the Phase II Small MS4 General Permit Water Quality Order (WQO) 2013-0001-DWQ on February 5, 2013. Since then, six amendments have been adopted.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The historic passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014 set forth a statewide framework to help protect groundwater resources over the long term. SGMA consists of a three-bill legislative package, including Assembly Bill (AB) 1739, Senate Bill (SB) 1168, and SB 1319, and subsequent statewide regulations. The Governor's signing message states that "groundwater management in California is best accomplished locally." Under SGMA, in groundwater basins that are designated as medium and high priority, local public agencies and groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) must assess conditions in their local groundwater basins and then prepare groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) or alternatives to GSPs to avoid undesirable results and mitigate overdraft within 20 years. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) serves two roles to support local SGMA implementation (1) regulatory oversight through the evaluation and assessment of GSPs and (2) providing ongoing assistance to locals through the development of best management practices (BMPs) and guidance, planning assistance, technical assistance, and financial assistance.

REGIONAL

Central Valley Basin Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan)

The project site is within the Central Valley RWQCB (Region 5). The Central Valley RWQCB is responsible for developing and implementing Water Quality Control Plans, also known as Basin Plans, for the Central Valley region of California. Basin Plans identify beneficial uses of surface and ground waters, water quality objectives to protect those uses, implementation actions to achieve objectives and a monitoring and surveillance program to ensure implementation

actions are effective. There are two Basin Plans for the Central Valley Region, one for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins, and one for the Tulare Lake Basin (CVRWQCB 2025).

Yuba Groundwater Sustainability Plan

DWR, which oversees SGMA, formally approved the GSP for the North and South Yuba groundwater subbasins in Yuba County in 2021. The plan was developed by three GSAs, including Yuba Water, Cordua Irrigation District, and the City of Marysville. SGMA regulations require GSAs to perform a written assessment of implementation of an approved GSP at a minimum every five years following initial plan adoption (known as a Periodic Evaluation). GSAs can revise a previously adopted GSP to reflect the most current groundwater management approaches, which must be accompanied by a periodic evaluation. The Yuba Water Agency Board of Directors approved the Final Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plan on January 7, 2025 (YWA 2025).

The GSP's plan area is a combination of the North Yuba Subbasin and South Yuba Subbasin – the project site is within the South Yuba Subbasin. The purpose of this GSP is to verify and maintain sustainable groundwater management in the Yuba Subbasins by meeting the regulatory requirements set forth under SGMA. Under SGMA, high- and medium-priority basins not identified as critically overdrafted were required to be managed by a GSP by January 31, 2022. DWR has identified the South Yuba Subbasin as a high-priority subbasin (YWA 2024).

Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

The Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning effort is a collaborative process that supports water management in the Yuba County area. The plan was developed by various organizations and adopted by 12 agencies in 2008. The 2018 Plan Update focuses on new requirements in the 2016 IRWM Program Guidelines, ensuring compliance with the guidelines and qualifying projects for state funding. The plan addresses significant challenges and opportunities for improvement, including working with DWR. It considers the complexities of managing water supply and quality, uncertainty, and the needs of disadvantaged communities, under-represented communities, and tribal organizations, focusing on identifying resources for a sustainable future (YCRWMG 2018).

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD12.3:** The County will implement stormwater master plans designed to provide collection, detention, and conveyance consistent with local standards for developed areas within the Valley Growth Boundary. In general, new developments will be required to demonstrate no net increase in stormwater runoff prior to approval.

- **Policy CD15.6:** New developments (public and private) should use Low Impact Development, Natural Drainage Systems, and other best management practices that reduce the rate of runoff, filter out pollutants, and facilitate groundwater infiltration.

Public Health and Safety Element

- **Policy HS1.2:** For areas under the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, the County will not approve new developments within a flood hazard area or an area of moderate flood hazard without demonstrating adequate flood protection according to Government Code Sections 65865.5, 65962, and 66474.5.
- **Policy HS1.3:** The County may allow nonresidential improvements within the 100-year floodplain so long as the proposed improvements do not:
  - Increase flood heights or velocities;
  - Inhibit emergency access;
  - Create excessive costs in providing governmental services during or after flooding;
  - Interfere with the existing waterflow capacity of the floodway;
  - Substantially increase erosion and/or sedimentation; or
  - Contribute to the deterioration of any water course or the quality of water in any body of water.
- **Policy HS1.4:** Public buildings are discouraged in the 100-year flood zone, but if they are constructed, they should be flood-proofed to a point at or above the base flood level elevation.
- **Policy HS1.9:** New developments shall evaluate potential flood hazards and demonstrate compliance with state and federal flood standards prior to approval.
- **Policy HS1.10:** New developments shall provide drainage improvements according to County standards.
- **Policy HS3.4:** New developments shall be designed to control surface runoff discharges, in compliance with the permit requirements and the receiving water limitations administered by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- **Policy HS3.16:** New developments are encouraged to incorporate open, vegetated swales to filter, slow down, and convey stormwater and encourage groundwater infiltration.
- **Policy HS8.3:** A grading permit from the County is required for movement of dirt, soil, rock, debris or other material on over one acre of land and construction of retaining walls, bridges, and fill operations exceeding four feet, unless the activity is listed in the County Code as exempt from grading requirements.
- **Policy HS8.4:** Grading permits generally require submittal of grading plans and drainage study for review and approval by the Community Development and Services Agency, and where requested, a revegetation and winterization plan, and geotechnical investigation report.

- **Policy HS8.5**: An erosion and sediment control plan meeting County standards for preventing to increased discharge of sediment is required for:
  - Projects that propose to grade more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet of area having a slope greater than ten (10) percent;
  - Clearing and grubbing areas of one acre or more regardless of slope;
  - Projects where more than two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet will be inadequately protected from erosion during any portion of the rainy season;
  - Projects that involve grading will occur within fifty (50) feet of any watercourse; or
  - Where the County determines that the grading will or may pose a significant erosion, or sediment discharge hazard for any reason.

Natural Resource Element

- **Policy NR12.3:** New developments are strongly discouraged in areas with high groundwater infiltration rates and the County's development standards will restrict the amount of impervious surface that can be added in these areas in the context of new developments.

Yuba County Stormwater Management Plan

The Yuba County Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) has been implemented by Yuba County and the City of Marysville to meet the NPDES Phase II requirements for Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (small MS4s). The SWMP outlines BMPs, measurable goals, and timetables for the implementation of the Six Minimum Control Measures required by the USEPA and the SWRCB under NPDES General Permit No. The six measures include public education, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, construction site stormwater runoff control, post-construction stormwater management, and pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations (Yuba 2004).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

- **Chapter 7.50, Stormwater Quality.** This chapter aims to ensure compliance with State and federal laws in Yuba County, focusing on protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, enhancing the quality of waters, and promoting BMPs. It aims to protect water quality in watercourses, bodies, and wetlands in accordance with the CWA and SWRCB Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ. This chapter also aims to prohibit illicit discharges to the storm drain system, establish authority for stormwater management, and establish authority for development projects to reduce pollution and erosion. It also aims to implement and enforce any stormwater management plan adopted by the county.
- **Chapter 10.30, Floodplain Management.** This chapter establishes floodplain regulations in Yuba County to protect public health, safety, and property by minimizing the impacts of flooding, erosion, and mudslides. It mandates consistent, legally enforceable rules for all land—public and private—within flood-prone areas. The methods used include restricting

hazardous development, requiring flood-resistant construction, preserving natural floodplains, and regulating activities that increase flood risks, like filling or building flood barriers. The chapter also includes general provisions that clarify that the chapter applies to FEMA-identified flood zones, and compliance is mandatory for any construction or development. It ensures the most restrictive standard applies when laws overlap, and limits county liability for flood damage.

- **Chapter 11.23 – Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control:** This chapter aims to regulate grading, drainage, and earthwork activities in unincorporated areas of Yuba County to protect public welfare, life, health, and property. It ensures that graded sites are used in accordance with the Yuba County General Plan, stormwater management plan, public works standard specifications, California fire safe standards, stormwater regulations, and local ordinances. It requires the implementation of erosion and sedimentation control measures to protect water quality and reduce pollutants discharge into stormwater drainage systems. The chapter establishes authority for grading permits, plans approval, inspection, and enforcement of these provisions.

3.10.2 Existing Conditions

Regional and Local Hydrology

The project site is within the Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) region, which is situated within California's north Central Valley. The region extends from about the 4,850-foot elevation in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the Sacramento Valley floor, where the Yuba River flows into the Feather River near Marysville. The valley floor is bisected by the Yuba River, and the surrounding terrain is primarily flat, with rural farmlands and urbanization, both subject to flooding during storm events. The valley area incorporates the entire lower section of the Yuba River watershed and small portions of the Feather and Bear River watersheds. As is typical of the Sacramento and Central Valleys, developed areas in the valley floor are highly dependent on levees for flood protection, and they can experience difficulties with drainage and wastewater discharge. The rural sections of the valley area are also challenged by agricultural water supply reliability and the conversion of agricultural lands to residential areas (YCRWMG 2018).

The Yuba River watershed comprises five primary reaches: the North Fork, Middle Fork, South Fork, Main Stem, and Lower. The project site is within the lower Feather River watershed. The Feather River Watershed consists of 134,431 acres and comprises approximately 33 percent of the Yuba region (YCRWMG 2018).

Site Hydrology

The project site is generally flat, with ground elevations ranging from approximately 40 to 45 feet above mean sea level (amsl). To the west of the site lies a drainage swale with a low point around 30 feet amsl, and its banks have gentle slopes, roughly a 4:1 ratio (horizontal to vertical), or flatter in the area near the project site (GEOCON 2024). Given this topography, surface runoff from the project site naturally flows westward into the drainage swale, which serves as the local low point and is expected to collect and convey stormwater away from the project site.

The project site is located within Reclamation District No. 784 (RD 784), which was established in May 1908 and operates under the authority of the California Department of Water Resources and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board. RD 784 encompasses approximately 40,676 acres and maintains a comprehensive flood protection and drainage system that includes approximately 33.6 miles of levees, more than 60 miles of internal drainage canals, and ten pumping stations. The Reclamation District is bounded by the Yuba River to the north, the Bear River to the south, the Feather River to the west, and the Western Pacific Interceptor Canal to the east, and it serves more than 11,000 structures within its jurisdiction (RD 784 2025).

Existing Reclamation District storm drainage infrastructure in the vicinity of the project site includes Linear 16, culvert that runs along the western boundary of the project site and Lateral 16 which is adjacent to the northern boundary (Yuba 2019). There are also irrigation channels along the western edge of the project site that are owned by the Reclamation District and serve as overflow structures.

Figure 3.4-2, *California Aquatic Resources Inventory*, in Section 3.4, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR, shows the California Aquatic Resources Inventory (CARI) of the project site. The CARI indicates a single feature within the project site with the designation “WRU,” which represents a seasonally flooded wetland. CARI is a statewide geographic information system (GIS)-based dataset that compiles surface water and riparian area information from multiple sources and standardizes it to a common classification system. It is intended to provide landscape-scale information useful for local land use planning, but it is not a substitute for on-the-ground verification. Because of this, mapped features may not always be present, or their boundaries may differ from what is observed in the field (ECORP 2025).

During a site visit conducted by ECORP, a preliminary assessment of aquatic resources within the project site was performed. No evidence of the CARI-mapped feature was observed, and no other aquatic resources were identified within the project site (ECORP 2025). This indicates that, while the CARI dataset suggested a potential wetland, the field investigation did not confirm its presence.

Surface Water Quality

Section 303(d) of the 1972 CWA requires states to identify water bodies that do not meet water quality objectives and do not support their beneficial uses. Every two years, each state must submit to the USEPA an updated list, called the Section 303(d) list. In addition to identifying the water bodies that are not supporting beneficial uses, the list identifies the pollutant or stressor causing impairment and establishes a priority for developing a control plan to address the impairment. The list identifies water bodies where (1) a TMDL has been approved by the USEPA and implementation is available, but water quality standards are not yet met, and (2) water bodies where the water quality problem is being addressed by an action other than a TMDL and water quality standards are not yet met.

Table 3.10-1, *CWA Section 303(d) List of Water Quality-Limited Segments*, lists the Section 303(d)-listed water bodies in the Lower Feather River Watershed classified as impaired because they are unable to support certain designated beneficial ecosystem functions.

Table 3.10-1 CWA Section 303(d) List of Water Quality-Limited Segments

Water Body	Pollutant/Stressor	Potential Source	Estimated Size Affected	Expected TMDL Completion Date
Feather River, Lower (Lake Oroville Dam to Confluence with Sacramento River)	▪ Group A Pesticides ▪ Mercury ▪ PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) ▪ Unknown Toxicity	Source Unknown	72.18 miles	2027 2037 2027 2011
Simmerly Slough	▪ Unknown toxicity	Source Unknown	5.51 miles	2021
Honcut Creek	▪ Indicator Bacteria ▪ Oxygen, Dissolved	Source Unknown	9.65 miles	2035

Source: SWRCB 2024.

The Lower Feather River from Lake Oroville Dam to the confluence with the Sacramento River is a Section 303(d) listed water body for Group A pesticides, mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other unknown toxicity. Simmerly Slough in the Lower Feather River watershed is a listed water body for unknown toxicity, and the Honcut Creek is listed for bacteria and dissolved oxygen (SWRCB 2024).

Groundwater

The project site is in the South Yuba Subbasin of the Sacramento Valley Groundwater Basin. The South Yuba Subbasin (Basin 5-021.61) is part of the Yuba Subbasins located within the Sacramento Valley Groundwater Basin, which lies in the Sacramento River Hydrologic Region.

The South Yuba Subbasin spans about 170 square miles (108,886 acres). It is bounded on the west by the Yuba-Sutter County line, on the north by the Yuba River, on the east by the Sierra Nevada foothills, and on the south by the boundary between Yuba County and both Sutter County and Placer County, except where Dry Creek Mutual Water Company's southern boundary is located south of the Sutter-Yuba County line, in which case the southern boundary of Dry Creek Mutual Water Company is the subbasin's southern boundary. Plumas Lake is in the South Yuba Subbasin, and DWR has identified it as a high-priority subbasin (YWA 2024).

This subbasin is part of the Lower Sacramento Basin, within California's largest watershed, the 27,000-square-mile Sacramento River Basin, which drains from multiple mountain ranges including the Sierra Nevada, Mount Shasta, and the Coast Range.

Key hydrological features of the South Yuba Subbasin include the following:

- **Major rivers:** Yuba River, Feather River, and Bear River;
- **Topography:** Mostly flat with gently rolling hills toward the east;
- **Elevation:** Ranges from approximately 30 feet (southwest corner) to approximately 150 feet (northwest region); and
- **Flow direction:** Ground and surface water generally slope southwest toward the confluence of the Feather and Bear Rivers.

The depth to groundwater in the vicinity of the project site is about 19 feet below ground surface (PlaceWorks 2022.

Flood Hazards

Designated Flood Zones

FEMA identifies floodplain zones to assist cities with mitigating flooding hazards through land use planning. FEMA also outlines specific regulations for any construction within a 100-year floodplain. The 100-year floodplain is defined as an area that has a 1 percent chance of being inundated during a 12-month period. FEMA also prepares maps for 500-year floods, which means that in any given year, the risk of flooding in the designated area is 0.2 percent.

As seen on Figure 3.10-1, *FEMA Flood Zones*, the project site is within Flood Zone X. According to FEMA, Flood Zone X is an area with reduced flood risk due to existing levee protection (FEMA 2011; PlaceWorks 2022).



Source: FEMA 2011.

Figure 3.10-1
FEMA Flood Zones

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Dam Inundation

Based on maps from the Office of Emergency Services, the project site is within the inundation zone for the simultaneous failure of Rollins Dam and Camp Far West Dam. In the event of a failure of Rollins Dam alone or Camp Far West Dam alone, the project site would be outside of the dam inundation zone (DWR 2025; PlaceWorks 2022).

Seiches

A seiche is a surface wave created when an inland water body (such as a lake or retention basin) is shaken, usually by an earthquake. No surface water bodies pose a flood hazard to the project site due to a seiche.

Tsunamis

A tsunami is an ocean wave caused by a sudden displacement of the ocean floor, most often due to earthquakes. The project site is not at risk of flooding from tsunami, because it is approximately 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean (DOC 2025).

3.10.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to hydrology and water quality if it would:

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

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

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 a 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.

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows.

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

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

3.10.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Construction

Clearing, grading, excavation, and construction activities associated with implementation of the proposed project have the potential to impact water quality through soil erosion, increasing the amount of silt and debris carried in runoff. Additionally, the use of construction materials, such as fuels, solvents, and paints, may present a risk to surface water quality. Finally, the refueling and parking of construction vehicles and other equipment on-site and off-site during construction may result in oil, grease, or related pollutant leaks and spills that may discharge into the storm drain system.

To minimize these potential impacts, the proposed project would be required to comply with the NPDES's CGP Order No. WQ 2022-0057-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002. The CGP requires the preparation of a SWPPP that incorporates BMPs to control sedimentation, erosion, and hazardous materials contamination of runoff during construction. The SWRCB mandates that projects that disturb one or more acres of land must obtain coverage under the statewide CGP. The CGP also requires that prior to the start of construction activities, the project applicant (i.e. the District) must file Permit Registration Documents (PRDs) with the SWRCB, which includes a Notice of Intent, risk assessment, site map, annual fee, signed certification statement, SWPPP, and post-construction water balance calculations. The construction contractor is required to always maintain a copy of the SWPPP on-site and implement all construction BMPs identified in the SWPPP during construction activities. Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the project applicant is required to provide proof of filing of the PRDs with the SWRCB, which include preparation of a SWPPP. In accordance with Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 7.50.150, *Reduction of pollutants in stormwater; best management practices*, any person performing

construction activities within the county must prevent pollutants from entering the stormwater conveyance system and comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Categories of potential BMPs that could be implemented for the proposed project are described in Table 3.10-2, *Construction Best Management Practices to Prevent Erosion*.

Submittal of the PRDs and implementation of the SWPPP and its associated BMPs throughout the construction phase of the proposed project will address pollutants of concern due to construction activities. The proposed project would comply with all applicable water quality standards and waste discharge requirements. As a result, water quality impacts associated with construction activities would be less than significant.

Table 3.10-2 Construction Best Management Practices to Prevent Erosion

Category	Purpose	Examples
Erosion Controls and Wind Controls	▪ Use project scheduling and planning to reduce soil or vegetation disturbance (particularly during the rainy season) ▪ Prevent or reduce erosion potential by diverting or controlling drainage ▪ Prepare and stabilize disturbed soil areas	Scheduling, preservation of existing vegetation, hydraulic mulch, hydroseeding, soil binders, straw mulch, geotextile and mats, wood mulching, earth dikes and drainage swales, velocity dissipation devices, slope drains, streambank stabilization, compost blankets, soil preparation/roughening, and non-vegetative stabilization
Sediment Controls	▪ Filter out soil particles that have been detached and transported in water	Silt fence, sediment basin, sediment trap, check dam, fiber rolls, gravel bag berm, street sweeping and vacuuming, sandbag barrier, straw bale barrier, storm drain inlet protection, manufactured linear sediment controls, compost socks and berms, and biofilter bags
Wind Erosion Controls	▪ Apply water or other dust palliatives to prevent or minimize dust nuisance	Dust control soil binders, chemical dust suppressants, covering stockpiles, permanent vegetation, mulching, watering, temporary gravel construction, synthetic covers, and minimization of disturbed area
Tracking Controls	▪ Minimize the tracking of soil offsite by vehicles	Stabilized construction roadways and construction entrances/exits, and entrance/outlet tire wash
Non-Stormwater Management Controls	▪ Prohibit discharge of materials other than stormwater, such as discharges from the cleaning, maintenance, and fueling of vehicles and equipment ▪ Conduct various construction operations, including paving, grinding, and concrete curing and finishing, in ways that minimize non-stormwater discharges and contamination of any such discharges	Water conservation practices, temporary stream crossings, clear water diversions, illicit connection/discharge, potable and irrigation water management, and the proper management of the following operations: paving and grinding, dewatering, vehicle and equipment cleaning, fueling and maintenance, pile driving, concrete curing, concrete finishing, demolition adjacent to water, material over water, and temporary batch plants
Waste Management and Controls (i.e., good housekeeping practices)	▪ Manage materials and wastes to avoid contamination of stormwater	Stockpile management, spill prevention and control, solid waste management, hazardous waste management, contaminated soil management, concrete waste management, sanitary/septic waste management, liquid waste management, and management of material delivery storage and use

Source: Compiled by PlaceWorks from information provided in the California Stormwater Quality Association's Construction Best Management Practices Handbook

Operations

Once the project site has been developed, urban runoff could contain a variety of contaminants that may adversely affect water quality. Runoff from impervious surfaces, such as buildings, streets, driveways, and parking areas, can include pollutants such as oil, grease, fuel, antifreeze, and byproducts of combustion (e.g., lead, cadmium, nickel, and other heavy metals), as well as fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals. Precipitation during the early rainy season may result in a "first flush" event, in which initial stormwater runoff carries particularly high concentrations of these pollutants.

The District is not regulated under the County MS4 permit. The proposed project is required to comply with the post-construction performance standards under SWRCB's CGP. The performance standards specify runoff-reduction requirements for all sites not covered by Phase I or Phase II MS4 permits to minimize and mitigate stormwater runoff impacts. The following is a discussion of site-design, source-control, and treatment-control BMPs that would be incorporated into the proposed project. Figure 2-7, *Stormwater Control Plan*, in Section 2, *Project Description*, shows the stormwater control plan for the proposed project.

The proposed project is designed with on-site bioretention basins and an underground detention system in compliance with the CGP post-construction stormwater requirements. Bioretention basins function by capturing and filtering runoff through vegetated soil media, allowing for pollutant removal and infiltration into the ground, thereby improving water quality. The proposed stormwater design would incorporate on-site treatment and detention to ensure that runoff volumes would be treated onsite per the requirements of the CGP and that post-development peak flows do not exceed pre-development conditions.

As shown in Figure 2-7, *Stormwater Control Plan*, in Section 2, *Project Description*, the project site is divided into five Drainage Management Areas (DMAs) that convey runoff to designated BMPs for water-quality treatment and flow control.

DMA 1, with a required treatment volume of 18,846 cubic feet (cf), would discharge to Bioretention Basin 1, which provides a design capacity of 20,720 cf, exceeding the required treatment volume. Runoff from roofs, pavement, and landscaped areas would be routed through this bioretention and detention system to meet water-quality treatment requirements and attenuate peak flows before entering the storm drain network. Outflows are reduced to pre-development levels.

DMA 2 has a required treatment volume of 241 cf and would discharge to pervious concrete, which provides a treatment capacity of 4,554 cf, exceeding the required treatment volume. The porous pavement would provide on-site storage and infiltration which would reduce runoff to existing discharge rates.

Overflow from DMA 1 and DMA 2 would discharge into a new MS4 system consisting of new public storm drains and appurtenances, which would connect to the existing storm drain at River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive. From there, runoff would travel approximately 1,100 feet north before discharging into Reclamation District Lateral 16, which then conveys flows toward Linear 1B.

DMA 3 and DMA 4, requiring treatment volumes of 4,427 cf and 1,029 cf respectively, would drain to Bioretention Basin 2 and an underground detention system, which together provide 6,119 cf of treatment and storage capacity. Overflow would discharge into the Reclamation District's storm drain (Linear 1B) through a new storm drain line, bypassing River Oaks Boulevard and the existing MS4 system.

DMA 5 captures runoff from the new access roadway and adjacent improvements. Flows would be treated through planter box or biopod facilities. Overflow would combine with the runoff from DMA 1 and DMA 2 discharging into the new MS4 storm drain system.

With the implementation of the BMP features described, as well as compliance with local regulations and code requirements, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact on surface or groundwater quality during the operational phase.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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

The project site is over the South Yuba Subbasin. The water agency that provides water to the project site is the Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD). Groundwater is currently the only source of potable water supply for OPUD. Groundwater is pumped from the South Yuba Groundwater Subbasin from six active wells in the Olivehurst system and three active wells in the Plumas Lake system (OPUD 2022).

The proposed project would connect to the existing OPUD water infrastructure and would not involve the construction of new wells or the direct extraction of groundwater. Although the proposed project would incrementally increase water demand, it is within the planned growth projections for the area and the available capacity of OPUD's groundwater supply system (OPUD 2022, pg. 3-7). OPUD manages its groundwater use in coordination with the South Yuba GSP, which establishes sustainable yield thresholds and monitoring protocols in compliance with the SGMA.

In addition, the proposed project would include low-impact development (LID) features, such as bioretention basins and detention areas, which promote infiltration and help maintain existing groundwater recharge conditions. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the proposed project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin, and this impact is therefore less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

c) Would the project 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 that would:

i) Result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

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

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

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Erosion or Siltation

The proposed project would increase impervious surfaces, which in turn would increase stormwater runoff and peak discharges with the potential to cause erosion and siltation. The proposed project would not involve the alteration of any natural drainage channels or any watercourse. The project drainage would include bioretention basins that would reduce erosion. Most of the potential erosion and siltation impacts would occur during the construction phase (e.g., grading, clearing, excavating, and cut-and-fill activities) of the proposed project. During construction, the project site would be cleared of vegetation in preparation for grading, which would expose loose soil to potential wind and water erosion. If not controlled, the transport of these materials to local waterways would temporarily increase suspended sediment concentrations and release pollutants attached to sediment particles into local waterways. As previously stated, the proposed project would be required to submit PRDs and a SWPPP to the SWRCB for approval prior to the commencement of construction activities. The SWPPP would describe the BMPs to be implemented during the proposed project's construction activities. The operational phase of the project would contain features to reduce the impact of erosion and siltation (see Figure 2-7). Implementation of the project's proposed

construction phase and operational phase BMPs would therefore ensure that erosion and siltation impacts would be less than significant.

Increase Rate or Amount of Runoff that could Cause Flooding

The proposed project would increase impervious surfaces, which in turn could increase stormwater runoff and result in higher peak discharges. However, the proposed project includes a comprehensive stormwater management system designed to ensure that post-development peak flows do not exceed pre-development conditions. The project site is organized into five DMAs, each served by BMPs that provide on-site water-quality treatment and detention as shown in Figure 2-7.

The project site's five DMAs would be managed with on-site BMPs to control runoff and meet water-quality standards. DMA 1 would generate approximately 18,846 cubic feet of runoff and would be served by Bioretention Facility #1, which provides about 20,720 cubic feet of storage to detain runoff from rooftops, paved areas, and landscaped areas prior to discharge. DMA 2 would produce 241 cubic feet of runoff and would utilize a porous pavement drain-rock system providing approximately 4,554 cubic feet of storage and treatment volume, exceeding minimum requirements and reducing both runoff volume and peak flows. DMA 3 would generate about 4,427 cubic feet of runoff and would be treated through planter boxes or biopod facilities before entering the municipal storm drain system. DMA 4 would produce 1,029 cubic feet of runoff and would drain to a bioretention and StormTech detention facility that attenuates peak flows and provides treatment prior to discharge. DMA 5 would result in 3,953 cubic feet of runoff and would remain undeveloped, continuing to drain overland consistent with existing conditions, with no increase in runoff or peak flows.

Collectively, the proposed BMPs are sized to capture, treat, and detain stormwater runoff such that discharge rates leaving the site would be reduced to or below pre-development levels. The proposed project would not alter natural drainage patterns or watercourses. With implementation of the proposed drainage and detention facilities, the proposed project would not substantially increase runoff rates or volumes that could cause flooding. Impacts related to increased runoff and flooding would be less than significant.

Stormwater Runoff and Drainage System Capacity

Construction

To ensure that stormwater flows on and off-site during construction activities do not result in flooding or exceedance of the stormwater drainage system capacity, the proposed project would comply with the CGP and the project-specific SWPPP which would include the implementation of BMPs to control stormwater runoff. Standard BMPs implemented under the requirements of the CGP during construction activities include diversion of runoff to berms or channels temporarily constructed onsite and installation of silt fences, fiber rolls, gravel bags,

and wattles to intercept runoff. As the project site develops with more impervious surfaces throughout the course of construction activities, the construction and installation of operational BMPs under the proposed project would occur, as discussed below, to ensure that runoff on and off-site is controlled. Impacts associated with flooding and exceedance of the capacity of stormwater drainage systems during construction activities would be less than significant.

Construction of the proposed project would also temporarily introduce potential sources of pollution on-site, such as oils, paints, solvents, and gasoline, that are typical of construction activities. If not controlled, such materials could enter the local stormwater drainage system. The proposed project would be required to prepare and implement BMPs consistent with the CGP and its project-specific SWPPP. Adherence to County storm water quality regulations in Chapter 7.50, Stormwater Quality, in the Yuba County Ordinance Code would also limit the runoff of polluted stormwater from the construction site. Therefore, impacts associated with polluted runoff from construction activities would be less than significant.

Operation

During operation, the proposed project would implement BMPs that minimize the amount of stormwater runoff and associated pollutants. Although the proposed project would increase impervious surfaces on the project site, on-site bioretention, porous pavement, and detention facilities are sized to attenuate post-development peak flows to or below pre-development levels. These include approximately 20,720 cubic feet of detention storage in DMA 1 and approximately 4,554 cubic feet of treatment and storage volume in DMA 2, with additional detention provided in other drainage areas. Treated and detained runoff would discharge to the existing municipal storm drain system consistent with historic drainage patterns.

Because post-development peak flows would not exceed pre-development conditions, the project would not exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm drain facilities. Additionally, the proposed project would be required to comply with storm drain design standards enacted by Yuba County. Therefore, impacts related to stormwater runoff and drainage system capacity would be less than significant.

Impede or Redirect Flood Flows

As shown in Figure 3.10-1, the project site is located within FEMA Flood Zone X, specifically an area designated as having a reduced risk of flooding due to levee protection. This designation indicates that while the project site is in a 100-year flood zone area it is protected from flooding due to levees.

The proposed project would not place structures in a floodway or significantly alter existing drainage patterns in a manner that would redirect or impede flood flows. Therefore, there would be less than significant impact to flood flows.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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

According to FEMA, the project site is within Flood Zone X, which is an area that is protected from being within a 100-year flood zone due to levee protection.

In the event of a failure of Rollins Dam alone or Camp Far West Dam alone, the project site would be outside of the dam inundation zone. However, the project site is within the inundation zone for the simultaneous failure of Rollins Dam and Camp Far West Dam (PlaceWorks 2022). It is highly unlikely that either dam would experience catastrophic failure, even in the case of a maximum credible earthquake. Potentially hazardous materials stored and used onsite, such as cleaners, paints, pesticides, oils, and other typical maintenance and cleaning products associated with maintaining a well-kept campus, would be in small quantities and stored to manufacturers' specifications. In the very unlikely event of dam failure, the small quantities of cleaning and maintenance products stored onsite would not result in a risk of release of pollutants. In addition, the proposed project would need to comply with the Comprehensive School Safety Plan pursuant to Education Code Sections 32280-32289.5, which would establish disaster procedures in the event of various natural and man-made disasters and events. See Section 3.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Section 3.14, Public Services for more discussion on the Comprehensive School Safety Plan. A less than significant impact would occur.

A seiche is an oscillating surface wave in a restricted or enclosed body of water, generated by ground motion, usually during an earthquake. Seiches are of concern for water storage facilities, because inundation from a seiche can occur if the wave overflows a containment wall, such as the wall of a reservoir, water storage tank, dam, or other artificial body of water. The project site lies within the mapped dam-failure inundation zones for both Rollins Reservoir and Camp Far West Reservoir. The Rollins Reservoir is approximately 35 miles east and the Camp Far West Reservoir is approximately 14 miles east of the project site. Because of this distance, seiches within these reservoirs would not affect the project site. Therefore, impact from a seiche would be less than significant.

Tsunamis are a type of earthquake-induced flooding produced by large-scale sudden disturbances of the sea floor. Tsunami waves interact with the shallow sea floor when approaching a landmass, resulting in an increase in wave height and a destructive wave surge into low-lying coastal areas. The proposed project is approximately 100 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, the project site is outside the tsunami hazard zone and would not be affected by a tsunami. Based on the preceding, the proposed project would not risk release of pollutants as the result of floods, tsunami, or seiche. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

During construction, the proposed project would be subject to the SWRCB's CGP, which requires preparation and implementation of a SWPPP. The SWPPP would include BMPs to minimize erosion, control sediment, and prevent pollutants from discharging into receiving waters. These measures would ensure consistency with the Central Valley Basin Water Quality Control Plan by protecting surface water quality during construction.

Post-construction stormwater runoff would be managed using bioretention, detention, and infiltration-based BMPs tailored to the site's five drainage basins. DMA 1 would generate would be served by Bioretention Facility #1, which provides about 20,720 cubic feet of storage to detain and treat runoff from rooftops, paved areas, and landscaped areas prior to discharge. DMA 2 would utilize a porous pavement drain-rock system providing approximately 4,554 cubic feet of storage and treatment volume. DMA 3 would be treated through planter boxes or biopod facilities before entering the municipal storm drain system. DMA 4 would drain to a bioretention and StormTech detention facility that attenuates peak flows and provides treatment prior to discharge. DMA 5 would remain undeveloped, continuing to drain overland consistent with existing conditions, with no increase in runoff or peak flows. These measures would ensure consistency with the Central Valley Basin Water Quality Control Plan by protecting surface water quality during operations.

The project site is within the South Yuba Subbasin, which is classified as a high-priority basin under the SGMA by DWR. As discussed previously, the proposed project would not result in substantial groundwater extraction, nor would it significantly interfere with groundwater recharge. Water supply would be provided by OPUD, which manages groundwater in accordance with the South Yuba Subbasin GSP.

The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or a sustainable groundwater management plan. The overall site currently drains toward a Reclamation District facility, and the proposed stormwater management system is designed to maintain this historic drainage pattern while incorporating on-site treatment and detention features to ensure that post-development peak runoff rates do not exceed pre-development conditions. By preserving existing discharge locations and flow directions, the project would not alter downstream hydrology or interfere with regional drainage facilities governed under the Central Valley Basin Water Quality Control Plan. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.10.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for hydrology and water quality includes the South Yuba Subbasin watershed and surrounding development areas within Yuba County, particularly those served by OPUD and those contributing to the same stormwater drainage and groundwater basins. The cumulative scenario considers planned or reasonably foreseeable development projects in the vicinity, including residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects identified in the Yuba County General Plan and associated planning documents. These projects, in combination with the proposed project, have the potential to contribute to cumulative impacts related to stormwater runoff, surface water quality degradation, groundwater recharge, and flood hazards.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to hydrology or water quality?

HYDROLOGY

All cumulative projects in the area are required to comply with applicable federal, State, and local laws and regulations, including the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Phase II MS4 Permit (where applicable), and relevant Yuba County Ordinance Code. These regulatory requirements ensure that construction and operational activities implement BMPs to prevent erosion, control runoff, and avoid off-site transport of pollutants. Regional development is also subject to regulations addressing flood hazards, including levee protections, storm drain design standards, and hydromodification management, ensuring that cumulative impacts related to runoff, flooding, and drainage are less than significant.

The proposed project would likewise comply with these regulations and implement site-specific BMPs during construction and operation. For the proposed project this includes bioretention basins, detention facilities, porous pavement, and infiltration systems to maintain pre-development flow rates and prevent erosion or flooding. The proposed project and other foreseeable cumulative developments are required to adhere to the same regulatory framework and BMP practices, the project's incremental contribution to cumulative hydrology impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

WATER QUALITY

Cumulative projects with short-term construction and long-term operational activities have the potential to degrade surface water and groundwater quality in the region. These projects would be regulated by the State Water Board's Phase II MS4 General Permit (Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ, as amended) where applicable, Yuba County's Storm Water Management Program and Post-Construction Standards Plan (which mandate implementation of LID, hydromodification management, post-construction BMPs, site design measures, and source control), the State Construction General Permit and associated SWPPP, and local ordinances under Yuba County's stormwater quality and grading/drainage codes.

The proposed project would implement BMPs, including bioretention basins, porous pavement, and detention systems, to capture and treat stormwater, prevent erosion, and maintain groundwater recharge consistent with pre-development conditions. Other future projects similar to the proposed project would adhere to similar measures. Compliance with all applicable local, regional, State, and federal regulations, along with the implementation of identified BMPs, ensures that cumulative surface water and groundwater quality impacts would remain less than significant and that the project's contribution to these cumulative impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.10.6 References

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YWA (Yuba Water Agency). 2024. *Yuba Subbasins Water Management Plan: A Groundwater Sustainability Plan*. https://www.yubawater.org/DocumentCenter/View/7473/Yuba-Subbasins-Amended-GSP---full-document-PDF.

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3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section of the EIR describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions on the project site related to land use and planning, and the potential impacts from implementation of the proposed project.

Land use impacts can be either direct or indirect. Direct impacts are those that result in land use incompatibility, division of neighborhoods or communities, or interference with other land use plans. This section focuses on direct land use impacts. Indirect impacts are secondary effects resulting from land use policy implementation, such as an increase in demand for public utilities or services, or increased traffic on roadways. Indirect impacts are addressed in other sections of this Draft EIR. This section is based in part on the following:

- Yuba County 2030 General Plan (Yuba County General Plan) and its Public Health and Safety Element, which identifies policies and standards for hazardous materials management, emergency response, and wildfire safety (Yuba County 2011).
- Yuba County Ordinance Code, which contains regulations related to building safety, fire code compliance, and hazardous materials handling.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025. A scoping meeting was held on July 10, 2025, to solicit agency and public input on the scope and content of the EIR. No members from the public attended the scoping meeting, and no written or oral comments were received during the scoping meeting. Written comments received during the NOP review period were considered in the preparation of this EIR.

Key topics raised in scoping comments included concerns about oil, gas, and geothermal wells on the project site. One comment letter submitted by the Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) (June 23, 2025) identifies that the project site traverses through OPUD property and asks if an agreement and property transfer has occurred. Additionally, OPUD asks what would occur and who would maintain a portion of land that would be cut off by a proposed roadway. These concerns have been addressed in the appropriate sections of this EIR.

3.11.1 Regulatory Framework

State and regional laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

California Code of Regulations

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education, provides information from the California Department of Education on minimum standards for educational facilities, procedures for site acquisition for public school districts, and the standards, planning, and approval of school facilities.

REGIONAL

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the regional planning agency and council of governments for the six-county Sacramento Metropolitan Planning Area, which includes Sacramento County, Yuba County, Sutter County, Yolo County, Placer County, and El Dorado County. SACOG's 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) for the Sacramento region lays out a transportation investment and land use strategy to support the region, with access to jobs and economic opportunity, transportation options, and affordable housing that works for all residents. The 2020 MTP/SCS addresses regional challenges in the areas of the environment, economy, communities (housing and essential services), and mobility (SACOG 2019).

Yuba County 2030 Countywide General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD 2.1:** The County will encourage infill development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties within unincorporated communities.
- **Policy CD 3.5:** Prior to approval, new developments are required to demonstrate consistency with established standards for setbacks from landfills, airports, sewage treatment plants, and other similar uses, as applicable.
- **Policy CD 5.1:** Valley Neighborhoods should provide for most daily and weekly destinations, including a mix of commercial retail and services, schools, parks, and other civic uses.
- **Policy CD 11.1:** The County will encourage provision of high-quality parks and recreational areas, schools and other public service, retail, housing options, cultural attractions, walkability, and other amenities, in order to attract future employers.

- **Policy CD 12.15:** The County recognized that provision of adequate school facilities is a community priority.
- **Policy CD 14.6:** The County will coordinate its land use planning with local school districts to ensure adequate educational facilities with safe and convent pedestrian and bicycle access to and from surrounding neighborhoods.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code consists of all the regulatory and penal ordinances and certain administrative ordinances of Yuba County. Those that relate most closely to land use and planning are from Title 11, Division II.

Zoning and Overlay Districts

- Title 11, Development Code. This title is intended to guide, control, and regulate future growth and development in the county.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan refines the approach to the urban-agricultural transition by enabling expanded urban services and reducing land use conflicts through detailed regulations. This plan plays a key role in managing growth between urban uses to the north and agricultural lands to the south. The following policies include:

New Development

- **Goal:** It shall be the goal of Yuba County to ensure that new development is planned and occurs in a manner that will minimize: grading, vegetation disturbance, intrusion onto natural water courses, and encroachment onto archaeological, historical or rare and endangered species sites
- **Policy I:** Planned Unit Development shall be encouraged as a means to conserve and protect natural resources and the character of the natural environment.
- **Policy 2:** New development shall be designed and constructed in a manner which preserves the visual quality of the foothill setting by encouraging the use of curvilinear streets, vegetation reestablishment in cuts and on fills, and housing site locations which blend into the landscape rather than becoming a focal point.

Public Services

- **Policy 4:** Where urban development allowed by the Plan is adjacent to agricultural lands, it is the obligation of the urban area and developments within the Plan to provide adequate buffering to minimize potential conflicts with agricultural activities. No special obligation to modify farming practices is imposed upon agriculture by this Plan.

3.11.2 Existing Conditions

EXISTING PROJECT SITE LAND USE AND ZONING

As described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the project site consists of approximately 25 acres of fallow agricultural land and has a land use designation of Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP) (Yuba County 2011). Valley Neighborhood is a mixed-use designation that allows a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses, including schools. The project site is within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is designated Medium Density Residential (RM), allowing up to four dwelling units per acre (Yuba County 1992).

The project site does not include any buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, nor landscaping. The terrain is flat and the project site is characterized as fallow agricultural land, with the northern portion exhibiting overgrown weeds and vegetation. Remnants of previous agricultural use, such as rubber tubing from former irrigation systems, are also present.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND CONTEXT

The project site is primarily surrounded by residential and agricultural land uses. Single-family homes in various phases of construction are to the north, agricultural uses are to the west, east, and south, and single-family homes are east, across River Oaks Boulevard. Figure 2-5, *Surrounding Uses Photographs*, depicts these surrounding conditions.

The project site is primarily surrounded by land designated as Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan, except for the area west of the project site, which is designated Natural Resources (Yuba 2011). The surrounding properties are also within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, except for the land to the west, which is zoned as Exclusive Agricultural District (AE-40) (Yuba County 1992).

3.11.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to land use if it would:

a) Physically divide an established community.

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.

3.11.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project physically divide an established community?

Projects with the potential to divide an established community typically include major highways or roadways, storm channels, utility transmission lines, or the closure of bridges or roadways. The physical division of an established community would impair mobility in an existing community or between a community and outlying areas.

The project site is within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and has a Valley Neighborhood land use designation under the Yuba County General Plan (Yuba 2011). The project site consists of fallow agricultural land, and no residential or developed uses exist on site. The proposed project would construct a middle school and associated off-site improvements to connect the project site to surrounding infrastructure, including new access roadways. The proposed project would construct access roads connecting to existing roadways (i.e., River Oaks Boulevard, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way), and the surrounding residential communities. The proposed roadways and pedestrian improvements, such as the left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard and the crosswalk at Kensington Drive, would improve circulation and access between the project site and nearby homes. Residential neighborhoods are already developed or under construction to the north and east of the project site, and the Plumas Lake Specific Plan anticipated schools in proximity to these neighborhoods.

The proposed project would construct a middle school and associated off-site improvements. Off-site improvements include the extension of Kensington Drive east, through OPUD's property, to connect with the proposed school's parking lot and Blackbird Way, as well as minor curb and pedestrian safety improvements along River Oaks Boulevard. The District has an existing easement agreement with the OPUD as of October 17, 2024, to construct, use, and maintain a roadway (Blackbird Way).

The proposed project would occur within the project site boundaries and would connect to existing roadways in the surrounding community. Thus, the proposed project would not physically divide the established community. Therefore, the proposed project would not physically divide an established community, and impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project 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?

Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The SACOG 2020 MTP/SCS is a 20-year growth and transportation plan aimed at creating vibrant, healthy communities with access to affordable housing, jobs, clean air, and everyday destinations. Its success depends on forward-looking policies and strategies that guide implementation over the next one to five years and require coordinated efforts among multiple agencies and partners. The plan emphasizes key actions in four priority policy areas to support the region's long-term vision. Table 3.11-1, *Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with MTP/SCS Goals*, provides an analysis of the proposed project's consistency to the goals of the MTP/SCS.

Table 3.11-1 Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with MTP/SCS Goals

Goals	Consistency Analysis
Build vibrant places for today's and tomorrow's residents	**Consistent**. The proposed project would develop a middle school that serves the Plumas Lake Elementary School District, which includes the Plumas Lake community and nearby unincorporated areas. By providing a middle school within the District, the proposed project would meet an essential community need. The school would primarily serve students from nearby residential neighborhoods, supporting a complete and self-sustaining community with access to local educational opportunities. By enhancing access to public education close to where residents live, the project would contribute to long-term community vitality and help support a vibrant, well-served community for both current and future residents.
Foster the next generation of mobility solutions.	**Consistent**. The proposed project is a school project. The proposed project would include minor roadway improvements at the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive to ensure adequate and safe site access and circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. The proposed project would support multi-model transportation methods, including for personal vehicles, school buses, walking and bicycles by providing efficient circulation onsite, separate parent/guardian and school bus pick-up and drop-off areas, walking paths throughout the project site, and bicycle infrastructure. The proposed project would support mobility solutions and would not interfere with the implementation of regionwide mobility solutions.
Modernize the way we pay for transportation infrastructure	**Not Applicable**. The proposed project involves the development of an educational facility and does not include transportation infrastructure improvements, funding mechanisms, or changes to transportation financing. Therefore, this goal does not apply to the proposed project.

Table 3.11-1 Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with MTP/SCS Goals

Goals	Consistency Analysis
Build and maintain a safe, reliable, and multimodal transportation system	**Consistent.** Impact (c) in Section 3.16, *Transportation*, discusses how the proposed project does not propose geometric design features (e.g., sharp curves, unusual lane configurations) or land uses incompatible with surrounding development. Access would be provided via existing roadway connections that meet County design standards. Intersections and ramps within the project site are expected to continue operating safely, and no geometric deficiencies attributable to the proposed project have been identified.

Source: SACOG 2020

The primary purpose of the proposed project is to provide a middle school within the District. Although the proposed project is not a transportation project, it would be consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the SACOG 2020 MTP/SCS by supporting a complete community and reducing the need for students to travel outside the District for educational services. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

General Plan Land Use and Zoning Designations

The project site has a land use designation of Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned SP. As discussed in Section 3.11.2, *Existing Conditions*, Valley Neighborhood is a mixed-use designation that allows public uses, including schools. The project site is within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and is designated RM. The proposed project would be the construction of a middle school that would serve the District and surrounding community. The development of a middle school is consistent with the buildout of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.

The District, as the lead agency under CEQA, and the Plumas Lake Elementary School District School Board (Board) would exempt the campus from local zoning in accordance with Government Code Section 53094. Government Code Section 53094 provides that the Board may render a City or County zoning ordinance inapplicable to the District's use except where the use of the property by such districts is for non-classroom facilities. The District invoking this exemption would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation. As such, the proposed project would not conflict with the land use designation onsite nor the zoning designation onsite. A less than significant impact would occur related to General Plan and zoning designations.

General Plan Consistency

Table 3.11-2, *Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with the General Plan Policies*, provides an analysis of the proposed project's consistency to the policies in the General Plan.

Table 3.11-2 Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with the General Plan Policies

Policies	Consistency Analysis
Policy CD 2.1: The County will encourage infill development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties within unincorporated communities	**Consistent**. The project site includes fallow agriculture land and is currently underutilized. It is located near urban development with residential development to the north and east. The proposed project would provide an essential community service by locating a middle school in a central location within Plumas Lake.
Policy CD 3.5: Prior to approval, new developments are required to demonstrate consistency with established standards for setbacks from landfills, airports, sewage treatment plants, and other similar uses, as applicable.	**Consistent**. The proposed project would be services by landfill and OPUD (see Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service Systems*). The project site is not within an airport land use plan.
Policy CD 5.1: Valley Neighborhoods should provide for most daily and weekly destinations, including a mix of commercial retail and services, schools, parks, and other civic uses.	**Consistent**. The proposed project would add a new school use within Valley Neighborhood land use designation, helping meet daily and weekly needs, and would help provide adequate school facilities, which is identified as a community priority based on the Yuba County General Plan
Policy CD 11.1: The County will encourage provision of high-quality parks and recreational areas, schools and other public service, retail, housing options, cultural attractions, walkability, and other amenities, to attract future employers.	**Consistent.** The proposed project is the construction and operation of a middle school for the District. Operation of the proposed project would generate approximately 50 to 60 staff positions, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel. These positions would primarily be filled by existing residents within the Yuba–Sutter labor market.
Policy CD 12.15: The County recognized that provision of adequate school facilities is a community priority	**Consistent.** The proposed project would add a middle school use within Valley Neighborhood land use designation, helping meet daily and weekly needs, and would help provide adequate school facilities, which is identified as a community priority based on the Yuba County General Plan
Policy CD 14.6: The County will coordinate its land use planning with local school districts to ensure adequate educational facilities with safe and convent pedestrian and bicycle access to and from surrounding neighborhoods	**Consistent.** The District would coordinate with the County to ensure that access to the proposed project from surrounding residential areas is safe, convenient, and consistent with applicable local policies. The proposed project includes roadway and off-site improvements, including construction of a left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard, an approximately 11,080-square-foot drop-off area, and a 61,453-square-foot fire lane along the west side of Blackbird Way to accommodate bus pick-up and drop-off operations. Parent and guardian pick-up and drop-off would occur within a designated zone in the northern parking lot.

Table 3.11-2 Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with the General Plan Policies

Policies	Consistency Analysis
	In addition, as discussed under Impact c in Section 3.16, *Transportation*, the proposed project would utilize existing roadway connections that meet County design standards and would not introduce geometric design features or land uses incompatible with surrounding development. Project access points and adjacent intersections are expected to operate safely, and no project-related geometric deficiencies have been identified.

As shown in Table 3.11-2, the proposed project would be consistent with the Yuba County General Plan. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan provides a framework for the orderly development of approximately 5,000 acres in southern Yuba County between Olivehurst and the Bear River. The Plan area is bounded by State Highway 70, and its regional access and predominance of non-prime farmland make it suitable for accommodating a substantial portion of the County's projected growth over the next 20 years (Yuba 1992).

As stated in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, "a middle or junior high school site is also shown on the Land Use diagram in the southern portion of the Plan area in the Plumas School District. Because of the advance discussions conducted between the land owner and the school district, this site may be considered as feasible…Because of the population involved, it is likely that an additional two or three middle schools will need to be developed within the Plan area**"** (Yuba 1992, pg. 66). As such, the proposed project is consistent with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan by providing a new middle school within the District and supporting this need.

In addition, the proposed project is consistent with the following goals and policies that would be applicable to the proposed project as shown in Table 3.11-3, *Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan*.

Table 3.11-3 Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan

Goals and Policies	Consistency Analysis
Goal: It shall be the goal of Yuba County to ensure that new development is planned and occurs in a manner that will minimize: grading, vegetation disturbance, intrusion onto natural water courses, and encroachment onto archaeological, historical or rare and endangered species sites	**Consistent**. The proposed project has been designed to minimize grading and project site disturbance to the extent feasible and would avoid intrusion into natural watercourses (See Section 3.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*). Environmental constraints, including biological and cultural resources, were evaluated as part of the project planning process, and the project would comply with applicable County, state, and federal regulations intended to protect sensitive resources (See Section 3.4, *Biological Resources*, and 3.5, *Cultural Resources*).
Policy I: Planned Unit Development shall be encouraged as a means to conserve and protect natural resources and the character of the natural environment.	**Consistent**. The proposed project is planned as a cohesive and integrated development that allows site design flexibility to avoid sensitive features and efficiently utilize land. This approach supports conservation of natural resources while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses and the overall character envisioned in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.
Policy 2: New development shall be designed and constructed in a manner which preserves the visual quality of the foothill setting by encouraging the use of curvilinear streets, vegetation reestablishment in cuts and on fills, and housing site locations which blend into the landscape rather than becoming a focal point	**Consistent**. The proposed project incorporates site planning, landscaping, and architectural features that are compatible with surrounding development and designed to blend into the existing landscape (See Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*).
Policy 4: Where urban development allowed by the Plan is adjacent to agricultural lands, it is the obligation of the urban area and developments within the Plan to provide adequate buffering to minimize potential conflicts with agricultural activities. No special obligation to modify farming practices is imposed upon agriculture by this Plan.	**Consistent.** Construction and operation of the proposed project would be confined to the project site, with the exception of off-site improvements along River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive, which are located in the northern portion of the project site and away from adjacent agricultural lands. The proposed project would incorporate BMPs including bioretention and detention facilities located in the southern portion of the project site (See Figure 2-7, Stormwater Control Plan) which would help minimize potential effects on nearby agricultural uses. The proposed project would not impose any requirements on existing agricultural operations and is consistent with the buffering intent of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.11.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to land use?

A cumulative impact would be considered significant if the project, taken together with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the identified area, would conflict with applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations. The project site is within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, which anticipated residential neighborhoods, schools, and supporting infrastructure. Other development in the Specific Plan area is therefore expected to be consistent with adopted land use designations and policies. Accordingly, cumulative land use impacts would not be significant.

As discussed previously, the proposed project would occur on fallow agricultural land, separate from existing residential uses, and therefore would not physically divide an existing community. Further, the proposed project would be consistent with existing land uses and will be exempt from local zoning under Government Code Section 53094. The proposed project does not conflict with any adopted and applicable land use plan, policies, or regulations. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulative land use impact, and the impact would be less than significant.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant**.**

3.11.6 References

Yuba County. 1992. *Plumas Lake Specific Plan*. Yuba County Department of Planning and Building Services. https://cms7files.revize.com/yubaca/Yuba%20County/Community%20Development/Planning/Handouts/Complete%20PLSP%20-%20Clean%20Version.pdf.

_____. 2011, June 7. *Yuba County 2030 General Plan*. https://www.yuba.gov/departments/community_development/planning_department/general_plan.php.

SACOG (Sacramento Area Council of Governments). 2019, November 18. 2020 MTP/SCS. https://www.sacog.org/planning/blueprint/2020-mtp-scs.

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3.12 NOISE

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) to result in noise impacts on the noise environment in the local vicinity. Specifically, this section summarizes relevant State and local noise policies and standards, describes existing ambient noise conditions, and evaluates potential construction and operational noise impacts. The analysis in this section is based on the project characteristics and phasing described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of this DEIR.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical report(s):

- *Noise Assessment*, PlaceWorks, August 2025.
- *Transportation Impact Assessment*, Kittelson & Associates, November2025.

Complete copies of these technical reports are provided in Appendices J and L of this Draft EIR, respectively.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to noise and vibration were raised during the NOP comment period.

Terminology

Sound. A disturbance created by a vibrating object, which, when transmitted by pressure waves through a medium such as air, is capable of being detected by a receiving mechanism, such as the human ear or a microphone.

Noise. Sound that is loud, unpleasant, unexpected, or otherwise undesirable.

Decibel (dB). A unitless measure of sound on a logarithmic scale.

A-Weighted Decibel (dBA). An overall frequency-weighted sound level in decibels that approximates the frequency response of the human ear.

Equivalent Continuous Noise Level (Leq); also called the Energy-Equivalent Noise Level. The value of an equivalent, steady sound level that, in a stated time period (often over an hour) and at a stated location, has the same A-weighted sound energy as the time-varying sound. Thus, the L_{eq} metric is a single numerical value that represents the equivalent amount of variable sound energy received by a receptor over the specified duration.

Statistical Sound Level (L_n). The sound level that is exceeded "n" percent of time during a given sample period. For example, the L_{50} level is the statistical indicator of the time-varying noise signal that is exceeded 50 percent of the time (during each sampling period); that is, half of the sampling time, the changing noise levels are above this value and half of the time they are below it. This is called the "median sound level." The L10 level, likewise, is the value that is exceeded 10 percent of the time (i.e., near the maximum) and this is often known as the "intrusive sound level." The L_{90} is the sound level exceeded 90 percent of the time and is often considered the "effective background level" or "residual noise level."

Day-Night Sound Level (L_{dn} or DNL). The energy-average of the A-weighted sound levels occurring during a 24-hour period, with 10 dB added to the sound levels occurring during the period from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.

Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL). The energy average of the A-weighted sound levels occurring during a 24-hour period, with 5 dB added from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and 10 dB from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. For general community/environmental noise, CNEL and Ldn values rarely differ by more than 1 dB (with the CNEL being only slightly more restrictive, that is, higher than the Ldn value). As a matter of practice, L_{dn} and CNEL values are interchangeable and are treated as equivalent in this assessment.

Peak Particle Velocity (PPV). The peak signal value of an oscillating vibration velocity waveform usually expressed in inches per second (in/sec).

Sensitive Receptor. Noise- and vibration-sensitive receptors include land uses where quiet environments are necessary for enjoyment and public health and safety. Residences, schools, motels and hotels, libraries, religious institutions, hospitals, and nursing homes are examples.

Noise and Vibration Fundamentals

Noise is defined as unwanted sound and is known to have adverse effects on people, including hearing loss, speech and sleep interference, physiological responses, and annoyance. Although sound can be easily measured, the perception of noise and the physical response to sound complicate the analysis of its impact on people. People judge the relative magnitude of sound sensation in subjective terms such as "noisiness" or "loudness." Based on these known adverse effects of noise, the federal government, the State of California, and many local governments

have established criteria to protect public health and safety and to prevent disruption of certain human activities.

Sound Fundamentals

Sound is a pressure wave transmitted through the air. It is described in terms of loudness or amplitude (measured in decibels), frequency or pitch (measured in Hertz [Hz] or cycles per second), and duration (measured in seconds or minutes). The standard unit of measurement of the loudness of sound is the decibel (dB). Changes of 1 to 3 dBA are detectable under quiet, controlled conditions, and changes of less than 1 dBA are usually indiscernible. A 3 dBA change in noise level is considered the minimum change that is detectable with human hearing in outside environments. A change of 5 dBA is readily discernable to most people in an exterior environment, and a 10 dBA change is perceived as a doubling (or halving) of the sound.

The human ear is not equally sensitive to all frequencies. Sound waves below 16 Hz are not heard at all and are "felt" more as a vibration. Similarly, while people with extremely sensitive hearing can hear sounds as high as 20,000 Hz, most people cannot hear above 15,000 Hz. In all cases, hearing acuity falls off rapidly above about 10,000 Hz and below about 200 Hz. Since the human ear is not equally sensitive to sound at all frequencies, a special frequency-dependent rating scale is usually used to relate noise to human sensitivity. The A-weighted decibel scale (dBA) performs this compensation by discriminating against frequencies in a manner approximating the sensitivity of the human ear.

Noise is defined as unwanted sound and is known to have several adverse effects on people, including hearing loss, speech and sleep interference, physiological responses, and annoyance. Based on these known adverse effects of noise, the federal government, the State of California, and many local governments have established criteria to protect public health and safety and to prevent disruption of certain human activities.

Sound Measurement

Sound intensity is measured through the A-weighted scale to correct for the relative frequency response of the human ear. That is, an A-weighted noise level de-emphasizes low and very high frequencies of sound, similar to the human ear's de-emphasis of these frequencies.

Unlike linear units such as inches or pounds, decibels are measured on a logarithmic scale, representing points on a sharply rising curve. On a logarithmic scale, an increase of 10 dBA is 10 times more intense than 1 dBA, while 20 dBA is 100 times more intense, and 30 dBA is 1,000 times more intense. A sound as soft as human breathing is about 10 times greater than 0 dBA. The decibel system of measuring sound gives a rough connection between the physical intensity

of sound and its perceived loudness to the human ear. Ambient sounds generally range from 30 dBA (very quiet) to 100 dBA (very loud).

Sound levels are generated from a source and their decibel level decreases as the distance from that source increases. Sound dissipates exponentially with distance from the noise source. This phenomenon is known as "spreading loss." For a single point source, sound levels decrease by approximately 6 dBA for each doubling of distance from the source. This drop-off rate is appropriate for noise generated by on-site operations from stationary equipment or activity at a project site. If noise is produced by a line source, such as highway traffic, the sound decreases by 3 dBA for each doubling of distance in a hard site environment. Line source noise in a relatively flat environment with absorptive vegetation decreases by 4.5 dBA for each doubling of distance.

Time variation in noise exposure is typically expressed in terms of a steady-state energy level equal to the energy content of the time varying period (called L_{eq}), or alternately, as a statistical description of the sound level that is exceeded over some fraction of a given observation period. For example, the L_{50} noise level represents the noise level that is exceeded 50 percent of the time. Half the time the noise level exceeds this level and half the time the noise level is less than this level. This level is also representative of the level that is exceeded 30 minutes in an hour. Similarly, the L_2, L_8, and L_{25} values represent the noise levels that are exceeded 2, 8, and 25 percent of the time or 1, 5, and 15 minutes per hour. These "L" values are typically used to demonstrate compliance for stationary noise sources with a county's noise ordinance, as discussed below. Other values typically noted during a noise survey are the Lmin and Lmax. These values represent the minimum and maximum root-mean-square noise levels obtained over the measurement period.

Because community receptors are more sensitive to unwanted noise intrusion during the evening and at night, an artificial dB increment is added to quiet-time noise levels in a 24-hour noise descriptor called the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) or Day-Night Noise Level (L_{dn}). The CNEL descriptor requires that an artificial increment of 5 dBA be added to the actual noise level for the hours from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and 10 dBA for the hours from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The L_{dn} descriptor uses the same methodology except that there is no artificial increment added to the hours between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Both descriptors give roughly the same 24-hour level with the CNEL being only slightly more restrictive (i.e., higher).

Psychological and Physiological Effects of Noise

Physical damage to human hearing begins at prolonged exposure to noise levels higher than 85 dBA. Exposure to high noise levels affects our entire system, with prolonged noise exposure in excess of 75 dBA increasing body tensions, and thereby affecting blood pressure, functions of the heart, and the nervous system. In comparison, extended periods of noise exposure above

90 dBA could result in permanent hearing damage. When the noise level reaches 120 dBA, a tickling sensation occurs in the human ear even with short-term exposure. This level of noise is called the threshold of feeling. As the sound reaches 140 dBA, the tickling sensation is replaced by the feeling of pain in the ear. This is called the threshold of pain. A sound level of 190 dBA will rupture the eardrum and permanently damage the inner ear.

Vibration Fundamentals

Vibration is an oscillatory motion through a solid medium, such as the ground or a building. Vibration is normally associated with activities stemming from operations of railroads or vibration-intensive stationary sources but can also be associated with construction equipment such as jackhammers, pile drivers, and hydraulic hammers.

Amplitude

Vibration amplitudes are usually described in terms of either the peak particle velocity (PPV) or the root mean square (RMS) velocity. PPV is the maximum instantaneous peak of the vibration signal, and RMS is the square root of the average of the squared amplitude of the signal. PPV is more appropriate for evaluating potential building damage. The units for PPV are normally inches per second (in/sec). Typically, groundborne vibration generated by human activities attenuates rapidly with distance from the source of the vibration.

The way in which vibration is transmitted through the earth is called propagation. As vibration waves propagate from a source, the energy is spread over an ever-increasing area such that the energy level striking a given point is reduced with the distance from the energy source. This geometric spreading loss is inversely proportional to the square of the distance. The amount of attenuation provided by material damping varies with soil type and condition as well as the frequency of the wave.

Table 3.12-1, *Typical Vibration Levels Effect on Buildings*, shows the effects on buildings resulting from continuous vibration (in terms of various levels of PPV).

Table 3.12-1 Typical Vibration Levels Effect on Buildings

Vibration Level Peak Particle Velocity	Effect on Buildings
0.006–0.019 in/sec	Vibrations unlikely to cause damage of any type
0.08 in/sec	Recommended upper level of vibration to which ruins and ancient monuments should be subjected
0.10 in/sec	Virtually no risk of “architectural” (i.e., not structural) damage to normal buildings

Table 3.12-1 Typical Vibration Levels Effect on Buildings

Vibration Level Peak Particle Velocity	Effect on Buildings
0.20 in/sec	Threshold at which there is a risk to "architectural" damage to normal dwellings – houses with plastered walls and ceilings
0.4–0.6 in/sec	Vibrations at a greater level than normally expected from traffic, but would cause "architectural" damage and possibly minor structural damage

Source: Caltrans 2020.

3.12.1 Regulatory Framework

FEDERAL

Construction Noise and Vibration

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) oversees safety measures related to noise and vibration. The FTA's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment manual indicates that 80 dBA equivalent sound level (L_{eq}) is reasonable criteria for assessing construction noise levels at residential uses (FTA 2018). In the absence of local construction noise limits, the FTA recommended 80 dBA L_{eq} criteria is used to assess the significance of construction noise levels at residential receivers, as recommended by the FTA, and shown in Table 3.12-2, *FTA Detailed Analysis Construction Noise Criteria*.

Table 3.12-2 FTA Detailed Analysis Construction Noise Criteria

Building/Structural Category	Leq (8hr) dBA	
	Day	Night
Residential	80	70
Commercial	85	85
Industrial	90	90

Source: FTA 2018.

The FTA also provides criteria for acceptable levels of groundborne vibration for various types of buildings. Structures amplify groundborne vibration; wood-frame buildings, such as typical residential structures, are more affected by ground vibration than heavier buildings. The level at which groundborne vibration is strong enough to cause architectural damage has not been determined conclusively, but the standards recommended by the FTA are shown in Table 3.12-3, *FTA Construction Vibration Damage Criteria*.

Table 3.12-3 FTA Construction Vibration Damage Criteria

Building/Structural Category	Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) (in/sec)	Approximate Vibration dB
I. Reinforced-concrete, steel, or timber (no plaster)	0.5	102
II. Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3	98
III. Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2	94
IV. Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12	90

Source: FTA 2018.

in/sec = inches per second

STATE

California Code of Regulations

Title 24, Part 11. The State of California's noise insulation standards for nonresidential uses are codified in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24, Building Standards Administrative Code, Part 11, California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen). CALGreen noise standards are applied to new or renovation construction projects in California to control interior noise levels resulting from exterior noise sources. Proposed projects may use either the prescriptive method (Section 5.507.4.1) or the performance method (5.507.4.2) to show compliance. Under the prescriptive method, a project must demonstrate transmission loss ratings for the wall and roof-ceiling assemblies and exterior windows when located within a noise environment of 65 dBA CNEL or higher. Under the performance method, a project must demonstrate that interior noise levels do not exceed 50 dBA L_{eq} (1 hour).

Title 5, Section 14040(q). Under Title 5, the California Department of Education (CDE) regulations require a school district to consider noise in the site selection process. As recommended by CDE guidance, if a school district is considering a potential school site near a freeway or other source of noise, it should hire an acoustical engineer to determine the level of sound that the site is exposed to and to assist in designing the school should that site be chosen.

REGIONAL

Yuba County General Plan

Noise is addressed within the Public Health and Safety Element of the County General Plan (Yuba County 2011). Table 3.12-4, *Maximum Allowable Noise Exposure from Transportation Noise Sources at NSLU (Noise-Sensitive Land Uses),* summarizes maximum allowable noise from transportation sources at noise-sensitive land uses from the County's General Plan. Table 3.12-5, *Maximum Allowable Noise Exposure from Non-Transportation Noise Sources at NSLU,*

summarizes maximum allowable noise from non-transportation sources at noise-sensitive land uses and Table 3.12-6, *Performance Standards for Non-Transportation Noise Sources,* shows performance standards for non-transportation noise sources from the General Plan.

Table 3.12-4 Maximum Allowable Noise Exposure from Transportation Noise Sources at NSLU (Noise-Sensitive Land Uses)

Land Use	Interior Spaces		Outdoor Activity Areas (dBA Ldn)			
	DBA LDN	DBA LEQ	Normally Acceptable	Conditionally Acceptable	Normally Unacceptable	Clearly Unacceptable
Residences	45	-	< 60 DBA	60 -70	70 -75	>75
Hotels, Motels	45	-	< 65	65–70	70–75	> 75
Schools, libraries, Museums, Places of Workship, Hospitals, Nursing Homes	45	45	< 60	60–70	70–75	> 75
Theaters, Auditoriums, Concert Halls, Amphitheaters	35	-	< 60	60–70	70–75	> 75
Outdoor Spectator Sports	-	-	< 70	70–75	75–80	> 80
Playgrounds, Parks	-	-	< 65	65–70	70–75	> 75
Golf Courses Riding Stables, Water Recreation, Cemeteries	-	-	< 70	70–75	75–80	> 80
Office Buildings, Retail, and Commercial Services	45	-	< 70	70–75	75–80	> 80
Industrial, Manufacturing, Utilities, Agriculture	-	-	< 75	75–80	> 80	> 85

Source: Yuba County 2011.

Notes: dBA = A-weighted decibels; Ldn = day-night average noise level; LEQ – energy-equivalent noise level. This table does not apply to existing transportation noise sources affecting existing land use. Outdoor activity areas are the portion of a property where activities are normally expected. This would include portions of backyards, decks, balconies, pools, sports or game courts, and patios, but would not include front yards, spaces next to parking, road, driveways, or vehicular loading areas. Hospitals and nursing homes use the Ldn interior standard, whereas schools, libraries, museums, and places of worship use a LEQ interior standard. Office buildings have an interior standard, but retail and commercial service uses do not have an interior standard.

Table 3.12-5 Maximum Allowable Noise Exposure from Non-Transportation Noise Sources at NSLU

Noise Level Descriptor	Daytime (7 A.M.–10 P.M.)	Nighttime (10 P.M.–7 A.M.)
Hourly Leq	60 dBA	45 dBA
Lmax	75 dBA	65 dBA

Source: Yuba County 2011.

Notes: dBA= A-weighted decibel; LEQ= energy-equivalent noise level; Lmax= maximum noise level. Each of the noise levels specified shall be lowered by 5 dBA for simple tone noises, noises consisting primarily of speech, music, or for recurring impulsive noises. These noise-level standards do not apply to residential units established in conjunction with industrial or commercial uses (e.g., caretaker dwellings). Noise-sensitive land uses include schools, hospitals, rest homes, long-term care facilities, mental care facilities, residences, and other similar land uses.

Table 3.12-6 Performance Standards for Non-Transportation Noise Sources

Cumulative Duration of a Noise Event (Minutes)	Maximum Exterior Noise Level Standards	
	Daytime dBA LMAX	Nighttime dBA LMAX
30-60	50	45
15-30	55	50
5-15	60	55
1-5	65	60
0-1	70	65

Source: Yuba County 2011.

Notes: dBA= A-weighted decibel; LMAX = maximum noise level.

The County General Plan Public Health and Safety Element contains the following goals and policies that address noise within the county and are applicable to the proposed project.

Goal HS4: Airports. Avoid land use conflicts with and reduce exposure of people and property to risks from the County's airports.

Goal HS10: Noise and Vibration. Ensure that noise does not substantially reduce the local quality of life.

The proposed Plumas Lake Middle School constitutes a new development and is therefore subject to the policies of the Yuba County General Plan Noise Element. These policies establish standards for protecting sensitive land uses from excessive noise. The analysis in this section evaluates the project's consistency with these policies, particularly concerning the protection of the adjacent residential receptors from construction activities, increased vehicular traffic, and student activities during school operations.

- **Policy HS10.1**: New developments that generate traffic or are affected by traffic noise shall provide design and mitigation, if necessary, to ensure acceptable daytime and nighttime land use/noise environment at outdoor activity areas of affected properties, as defined in Table Public Health & Safety-1 (included as Table 3.12-4).
- **Policy HS10.2**: If existing noise levels exceed the acceptable levels listed in Table Public Health & Safety-1, new developments are required to incorporate mitigation to reduce noise exposure in outdoor activity areas to the maximum extent feasible and include mitigation designed to achieve acceptable interior noise levels, as defined in Table Public Health & Safety-1 (included as Table 3.12-4).
- **Policy HS10.3**: New developments that would generate or be affected by non-transportation noise shall be located, designed, and if necessary, mitigated below maximum levels specified in Table Public Health & Safety-2, as measured at outdoor activity areas of affected noise-sensitive land uses.
- **Policy HS10.4**: If existing noise levels exceed the maximum allowable levels listed in Table Public Health & Safety-2 (included as Table 3.12-5), projects are required to incorporate mitigation to reduce noise exposure in outdoor activity areas to the maximum extent feasible and include mitigation to achieve acceptable interior noise levels, as defined in Table Public Health & Safety-1 (included as Table 3.12-4).
- **Policy HS10.5**: The maximum noise level shall not exceed the performance standards shown in Table Public Health & Safety-3 (included as Table 3.12-6), as measured at outdoor activity areas of any affected noise-sensitive land use except:
  - If the ambient noise level exceeds the standard in Table Public Health & Safety-3, the standard becomes the ambient level plus 5 dBA.
  - Reduce the applicable standards in Table Public Health & Safety-3 by 5 decibels if they exceed the existing ambient level by 10 or more dBA.
- **Policy HS10.6**: New developments shall provide all feasible noise mitigation to reduce construction and other short-term noise and vibration impacts as a condition of approval.
- **Policy HS10.7**: New developments shall ensure that construction equipment is properly maintained and equipped with noise control components, such as mufflers, in accordance with manufacturers' specifications.
- **Policy HS10.9**: New developments shall disperse vehicular traffic onto a network of fully connected smaller roadways and minimize funneling of local traffic onto large-volume, high-speed roadways near existing or planned noise-sensitive land uses to the maximum extent feasible.
- **Policy HS10.10**: Proposed noise-generating industrial and other land uses shall be located away from noise-sensitive land uses, shall enclose noise sources, or shall use other site planning or mitigation techniques to ensure acceptable noise levels, to the greatest extent feasible.

- **Policy HS10.11**: Lands within the 65 CNEL noise contour of Beale Air Force Base, Yuba County Airport, and Brownsville Airport shall be maintained in agricultural, open space, commercial, industrial, or other uses permitted by the subject airport's adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and consistent with the recommendations of the Beale Joint Land Use Study, including noise contours associated with future hypothetical missions, as appropriate.
- **Policy HS10.14** Public events, such as school sporting events, festivals, and other similar community and temporary events are exempt from the noise standards outlined in this Element.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code, Chapter 8.20, *Noise Regulations,* contains the following ordinance sections which are applicable to the project.

Section 8.20.140. Ambient base noise level.

Where the ambient noise level is less than designated in this section, the respective maximum noise level permitted in Table 3.12-7, *Ambient Noise Base Level*, shall govern.

Table 3.12-7 Ambient Noise Base Level

Zone	Time	Ambient Level (dBA)	Maximum Noise Level Permitted (dBA)
Single-Family Residential	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	45	55
Single-Family Residential	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	50	60
Multifamily Residential	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	50	60
Multifamily Residential	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	55	65
Commercial	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	55	65
Commercial	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	60	70
General Industrial	Anytime	65	75
Extractive Industrial	Anytime	70	80

Source: Yuba County Ordinance Code, Section 8.20.140.

Section 8.20.260. Machinery, equipment, fans and air conditioning.

In accordance with the Yuba County Ordinance Code, it is unlawful for any person to operate any machinery, equipment, pump, fan, air conditioning apparatus, or similar mechanical device in any manner so as to create any noise that would cause the noise level at the property plane

(the vertical line through the property line which determines the property boundaries in space) of any property to exceed the ambient base noise level by more than 5 dB.

Section 8.20.310. Construction of buildings and projects.

It shall be unlawful for any person within a residential zone, or within a radius of 500 feet therefrom, to operate equipment or perform any outside construction or repair work on buildings, structures, or projects or to operate any pile driver, power shovel, pneumatic hammer, derrick, power hoist, or any other construction type device between the hours of 10:00 p.m. of one day and 7:00 a.m. of the following day in such a manner that a reasonable person of normal sensitiveness residing in the area is caused discomfort or annoyance unless a permit has been duly obtained beforehand from the Community Development and Services Agency's Director of the Planning Department as set forth in Section 8.20.710. No permit shall be required to perform emergency work as defined in Article 1 of the Yuba County Ordinance Code.

Section 8.20.710. Exemption permit; immediate compliance impractical or unreasonable.

Where the applicant can show that notwithstanding the application of all available noise abatement techniques, immediate compliance with the requirement of the Chapter would be impractical or unreasonable, a conditional and/or limited noise permit may be granted an applicant, exempting the particular project or activity from the provisions of this Chapter for a limited period, not to exceed six months, subject to renewal upon a further showing of good cause conditioned by a schedule for compliance and details of methods therefore in appropriate cases. Applications for such permit shall be made to the Community Development and Services Agency to process such permits upon a form provided therefore. Such application shall be processed in the following manner:

1. The Director of the Community Development and Services Agency, or his or her designee, is empowered to deny any such application.
2. In determining whether to grant or deny the application, the Director of the Community Development and Services Agency, or his or her designee, shall balance the hardship on the applicant, the community, and other persons of not granting the permit against the adverse impact on the health, safety, and welfare of persons affected, the adverse impact on property affected, and any other adverse impacts of granting the permit. Applicants for permits and persons contesting permits may be required to submit such information as the Director of the Community Development and Services Agency, or his or her designee, may reasonably require. In granting or denying an application, the Director of the Community Development and Services Agency shall keep on public file a copy of the decision and the reasons for denying or granting the permit.

3. Permits shall be granted by notice to the applicant containing all necessary conditions, including a time limit on the permitted activity. The permit shall not become effective until all conditions are agreed to by the applicant. Noncompliance with any conditions of the permit shall terminate the permit and subject the person holding it to those provisions of this Chapter for which the permit was granted.
4. Prior to issuance of the permit, a fee in the amount set forth in Title XIII shall be paid to the County of Yuba. The same fee shall be required for each renewal of the original permit.

3.12.2 Existing Conditions

NOISE SOURCES

The primary existing noise sources in the project vicinity are traffic on River Oaks Boulevard, which runs along the east of the project site and to a lesser extent, traffic on State Route 70 approximately 0.68 miles east. Additional area noise sources include ongoing agricultural operations to the west and south of the project site, and temporary construction noise from active residential development to the north and east. The existing ambient noise levels are characteristic of a rural-to-suburban transition area, as established by the community noise survey conducted for the Yuba County 2030 General Plan, which serves as the baseline for this analysis.

NOISE-SENSITIVE LAND USES

Noise-sensitive land uses (NSLUs), such as residential developments and schools where quiet is essential, are present in the vicinity of the project site. The primary off-site NSLUs are the existing single-family residential uses directly to the east, across River Oaks Boulevard, and the future residential properties currently under construction to the north of the project site. The identification of these adjacent NSLUs is a key consideration for the noise impact analysis, particularly concerning construction activities and operational noise from vehicular traffic and school events.

AMBIENT NOISE MEASUREMENTS

Three short-term (15-minute) measurement locations were conducted around the project site. All measurements were conducted Tuesday, August 26, 2025. Monitoring for the short-term measurements was performed using Larson-Davis Model LxT and 820 sound level meters, which satisfy the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard for Type I instrumentation. The meter was calibrated prior to and after the monitoring period. All measurements were at least five feet above the ground and away from reflective surfaces. Meteorological conditions during the measurement periods were favorable for outdoor sound measurements and were noted to be representative of the typical conditions for the season. All sound level meters were equipped with a windscreen during measurements.

Short-Term Noise Measurements

The short-term measurement results are detailed below and summarized in Table 3.12-8, *Ambient Short-Term Noise Measurement Summary*. The locations of the long-term measurements are shown in Figure 3.12-1, *Short-Term Noise Monitoring Locations*.

- **Short-Term Location 1 (ST-1)** monitoring was conducted at the terminus of Finsbury Way, 82 feet southwest of the residence of 1664 Finsbury Way. The 15-minute noise measurement was conducted beginning at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 26, 2025. The noise environment of this location is characterized by passing traffic on Finsbury Way, wind, and birds chirping. During the measurement period, one car, two medium-duty vehicles, and zero heavy-duty vehicles were counted. Noise levels measured 46.2 dBA L_{eq} and 61.6 dBA L_{max} during the measurement period at ST-1.
- **Short-Term Location 2 (ST-2)** monitoring was conducted 71 feet southwest of the residence on 1150 Camomile Drive and 29 feet east of the Blackbird Way centerline. The 15-minute noise measurement was conducted beginning at 11:52 a.m. on Tuesday, August 26, 2025. The noise environment of this location is characterized primarily by local traffic passing on Camomile Drive. Occasional sounds from construction, airplane flyovers, and sprinklers could be heard. During the measurement period, five cars, four medium-duty vehicles, and one heavy-duty vehicle were counted on Camomile Drive. Noise levels measured 48 dBA L_{eq} and 61.6 dBA L_{max} during the measurement period at ST-2.
- **Short-Term Location 3 (ST-3)** monitoring was approximately 123 feet northeast of the residence of 1232 Kensington Drive, and approximately 43 feet west of the River Oaks Boulevard centerline. A 15-minute noise measurement was conducted beginning at 12:18 p.m. on Tuesday, August 26, 2025. The noise environment of this location is characterized primarily by the vehicular traffic on River Oaks Boulevard. Occasional sounds from walking pedestrians and airplane flyovers could be heard. During the measurement period, 20 cars, 24 medium-duty vehicles, and 3 heavy-duty vehicles were counted on River Oaks Boulevard. Noise levels measured 60.4 dBA L_{eq} and 74.6 dBA L_{max} during the measurement period at ST-3.

Table 3.12-8 Ambient Short-Term Noise Measurement Summary

Location	Leq	Lmax	Lmin	L50	L25	L8	L2
ST-1: Center line of Finsbury Way, 82 feet southwest of 1664 Finsbury Way.	46.2	61.6	39.9	42.7	43.6	46.1	54.6
ST-2: 71 feet southwest of 1150 Camomile Drive and 29 feet east of the Blackbird Way centerline.	48.0	61.6	42.0	46.1	48.1	51.3	53.4
ST-3: Approximately 123 feet northeast of 1232 Kensington Drive and 43 feet west of the River Oaks Blvd centerline.	60.4	74.6	39.1	49.6	58.3	66.1	70.2

Source: Appendix J.



Source: Nearmap 2025.

Figure 3-12.1
Short-Term Noise Monitoring Locations

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3.12.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to noise if it would:

a) Generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.

b) Generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

c) For a project 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, if the project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

THRESHOLD GUIDANCE

Noise Compatibility

The noise standards in the Yuba County Noise Element are used to evaluate the acceptability of noise levels for land use compatibility purposes. For projects involving school uses, the exterior noise exposure from transportation sources (e.g., roadways, railways) shall be evaluated against a 24-hour cumulative noise standard. The applicable noise descriptor is the equivalent Day-Night Average Sound Level (Ldn). The normally acceptable exterior noise level for school sites is 60 dB Ldn and the conditionally acceptable exterior noise level is 70 dBA Ldn.

Stationary Source Noise

The Public Health and Safety Element of the County General Plan establishes the maximum permissible noise level that may intrude into an adjoining property or dwelling unit from non-transportation noise sources. A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would exceed the County's limits for maximum allowable noise exposure from non-transportation noise sources, summarized in Table 3.12-5. Based on the County's Noise Ordinance Section 8.20.260 for machinery, equipment, fans and air conditioning, a significant impact would occur if the proposed project would cause the noise level at any property to exceed the ambient base noise level by more than 5 dB.

Construction Noise

Yuba County's noise rules limit construction activities to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. when construction is conducted in a residential zone or within a radius of 500 feet therefrom. This analysis focuses on noise impacts for nearby residential areas. According to Federal Transit

Administration (FTA) criteria, construction noise exceeding 80 dBA at homes would be considered a significant impact.

Vibration

The FTA vibration criteria of 0.20 PPV (in/sec) for structural damage is applied to evaluate project impacts.

Transportation Noise

A project will normally have a significant effect on the environment related to noise if transportation noise would substantially increase the ambient noise levels for adjoining noise-sensitive areas. Most people can detect changes in sound levels of approximately 3 dBA under normal, quiet conditions, and changes of 1 dBA to 3 dBA are detectable under quiet, controlled conditions. Changes of less than 1 dBA are usually indiscernible. A change of 5 dBA is readily discernible to most people in an exterior environment. Based on this, the following thresholds of significance, similar to those recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), are used to assess traffic noise impacts at sensitive receptor locations. A significant impact would occur if project traffic noise increases would exceed:

- 1.5 dBA in ambient noise environments of 65 dBA CNEL and higher
- 3 dBA in ambient noise environments of 60 to 64 dBA CNEL
- 5 dBA in ambient noise environments of less than 60 dBA CNEL

A significant cumulative traffic noise impact occurs when the thresholds above are exceeded under cumulative conditions (with project) and the contribution of the project to future traffic is calculated to be greater than 1.5 dBA along River Oaks Boulevard, Plumas Lake Boulevard, and Feather River Boulevard and greater than 5 dBA CNEL along all other roadway segments, based on existing traffic noise modeling results, discussed below.

METHODOLOGY

This noise evaluation was prepared in accordance with CEQA to determine whether the proposed project would result in significant construction or operational noise impacts at nearby off-site sensitive receptors. Consistent with the California Supreme Court ruling *in California Building Industry Association v. Bay Area Air Quality Management District* (2015) 62 Cal.4th 369, CEQA does not generally require analysis of the effects of the existing environment on a project's future users. Therefore, noise compatibility for on-site sensitive receptors, such as students and staff, is not subject to CEQA significance determinations. However, the project must comply with applicable County regulations and building standards to ensure a suitable acoustic environment for educational use.

The construction noise analysis uses the Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM) based on an anticipated equipment mix for individual construction activities verified by the applicant. The simultaneous use of the three loudest pieces of equipment for each construction activity is modeled from the appropriate acoustical center of the construction site to the nearest sensitive receptor property line. Groundborne vibration and vibration noise is determined using FTA methodology and reference vibration levels for typical construction equipment (FTA 2018). Construction activities would be subject to Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 8.20.310, which limits work to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Additionally, the proposed project would comply with General Plan Policies HS10.6 and HS10.7, which require feasible mitigation and proper equipment maintenance to reduce short-term noise and vibration impacts.

Operational noise was evaluated based on the performance standards in Table 3.12-7. Further, General Plan Policies HS10.4 and HS10.5 state that mitigation must be incorporated if ambient levels exceed those thresholds. The project will also be reviewed by the Division of the State Architect (DSA) to ensure compliance with California Building Code requirements for acoustical insulation, including achieving interior noise levels of 45 dBA CNEL or less in classrooms. While CEQA does not require a significance determination for on-site noise compatibility, the project will be required to meet all applicable County and State standards to ensure both construction and long-term operations do not result in adverse noise impacts to surrounding sensitive receptors (FTA 2018).

3.12.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

CONSTRUCTION NOISE

The transport of workers and materials to and from the construction site has the potential to increase noise levels along local access roadways to the project site. Individual construction vehicle passes-by and haul trucks may create momentary and short-lived noise levels. However, daily construction trips would be minimal and temporary.

The proposed project includes the construction of a new middle school that would be constructed in four phases, commencing in Spring 2026 and achieving full operational capacity by Fall 2030. The proposed project includes the redistribution of students currently enrolled at Riverside Meadows Middle School (grades 6–8) to the new Plumas Lake Middle School. In addition, elementary students from Cobblestone Elementary and Rio Del Oro Elementary

(Grades TK–5) would be redistributed evenly across Cobblestone Elementary School, Rio Del Oro Elementary School, and Riverside Meadows Middle School. To accommodate the redistribution, the Riverside Meadows Middle School campus would be repurposed as an elementary school. The redistribution of elementary school students would occur during phases 1 through 4 (see Table 2-1, *PLESD Available Enrollment Capacity by Phase*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*). This process would not require physical improvements to any of the three existing campuses.

Noise generated during construction is based on the type of equipment used, the location of the equipment relative to sensitive receptors, and the timing and duration of the noise-generating activities. Noise levels from construction activities are dominated by the loudest piece of construction equipment. The dominant noise source is typically the engine, although work piece noise (such as dropping of materials) can also be noticeable. For the proposed project, construction noise is dominated by the loudest piece of equipment needed for construction of the proposed project. No nighttime work or the use of pile-driving equipment is proposed.

The noise produced at each construction phase is determined by combining the L_{eq} contributions from the three loudest pieces of equipment used at a given time, while accounting for the ongoing time-variations of noise emissions (commonly referred to as the usage factor). Heavy equipment, such as a dozer or a loader, can have maximum, short-duration noise levels of up to 85 dBA at 50 feet. However, overall noise emissions vary considerably, depending on what specific activity is being performed at any given moment.

Noise attenuation due to distance, the number and type of equipment, and the load and power requirements to accomplish tasks at each construction phase would result in different noise levels from construction activities at a given receptor. Since noise from construction equipment is intermittent and diminishes at a rate of at least 6 dBA per doubling of distance (conservatively disregarding other attenuation effects from air absorption, ground effects, and shielding effects provided by intervening structures or existing solid walls), the average noise levels at noise-sensitive receptors could vary considerably, because mobile construction equipment would move around the site (site of each development phase) with different equipment mixes, loads, and power requirements.

The proposed project includes the first phase of construction, comprising 16 classrooms, an administration building, a multipurpose room, and all necessary site work, with a construction schedule from Spring 2026 to Fall 2027. The expected construction equipment mix was estimated and categorized by construction activity using the Federal Highway Administration Roadway Construction Model (RCNM). Assuming the nearest off-site sensitive receptor to the closest boundary of project construction activities, construction-related noise levels would be up to 75 dBA L_{eq} at residences to the north. Construction noise levels at receptors further away

are estimated to be even less. The results are summarized in Table 3.12-9, *Project-Related Construction Noise Levels, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 1*.

Table 3.12-9 Project-Related Construction Noise Levels, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 1

Construction Activity Phase	Noise Levels in dBA Leq		
	RCNM Reference Noise Level	Residential North	Residential West
Distance (feet)	**50**	**275**	**875**
Site Preparation	81	66	56
Grading	84	69	59
Distance (feet)	**50**	**165**	**730**
Building Construction	77	66	53
Architectural Coating	74	63	50
Distance (feet)	**50**	**60**	**125**
Paving	77	75	69
Exceeds FTA 80 L_{eq} Standard?		**No**	**No**

Source: FHWA's RCNM software. Distance measurements were taken using Google Earth (2025) from the area of anticipated construction to the property line of the nearest receptors.

dBA L_{eq} = Energy Average Sound Levels

Phase 2 of the proposed project includes the construction comprising of a new gymnasium, with a construction schedule from Fall 2027 to Fall 2028. This phase will not increase student enrollment capacity. Assuming the nearest off-site sensitive receptor to the closest boundary of project construction activities, construction-related noise levels would be up to 75 dBA Leq at residences to the north. Construction noise levels at receptors further away are estimated to be even less. The results are summarized in Table 3.12-10, *Project-Related Construction Noise Level, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 2*.

Table 3.12-10 Project-Related Construction Noise Level, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 2

Construction Activity Phase	Noise Levels in dBA Leq			
	RCNM Reference Noise Level	Residential North	Residential West	On-Site Receptor
Distance (feet)	**50**	**165**	**730**	**215**
Building Construction	77	66	53	64
Architectural Coating	74	63	50	61
Distance (feet)	**50**	**60**	**125**	**200**
Paving	77	75	69	65
Exceeds FTA 80 L_{eq} Standard?		**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: FHWA's RCNM software. Distance measurements were taken using Google Earth (2025) from the area of anticipated construction to the property line of the nearest receptors.

dBA L_{eq} = Energy Average Sound Levels.

Phase 3 of the proposed project includes the construction of eight new classrooms, with a construction schedule from Fall 2028 to Fall 2029. Assuming the nearest off-site sensitive receptor to the closest boundary of project construction activities, construction-related noise levels would be up to 75 dBA Leq at residences to the north. Construction noise levels at receptors further away are estimated to be even less. The results are summarized in Table 3.12-11, *Project-Related Construction Noise Levels, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 3*.

Table 3.12-11 Project-Related Construction Noise Level, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 3

Construction Activity Phase	Noise Levels in dBA Leq			
	RCNM Reference Noise Level	Residential North	Residential West	On-Site Receptor
Distance *(feet)*	**50**	**440**	**1110**	**390**
Site Preparation	81	62	54	63
Grading	84	65	57	66
Distance *(feet)*	**50**	**165**	**730**	**50**
Building Construction	77	66	53	77
Architectural Coating	74	63	50	74
Distance *(feet)*	**50**	**60**	**125**	**50**
Paving	77	75	69	77
Exceeds FTA 80 L_{eq} Standard?		**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: FHWA's RCNM software. Distance measurements were taken using Google Earth (2025) from the area of anticipated construction to the property line of the nearest receptors.

dBA L_{eq} = Energy Average Sound Levels.

Phase 4 of the proposed project includes the construction of 20 new classrooms, sports fields, and library, with a construction schedule from Fall 2029 to Fall 2030. Assuming the nearest off-site sensitive receptor to the closest boundary of project construction activities, construction-related noise levels would be up to 75 dBA Leq at residences to the north. Construction noise levels at receptors further away are estimated to be even less. The results are summarized in Table 3.12-12, *Project-Related Construction Noise Levels, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 4*.

Table 3.12-12 Project-Related Construction Noise Level, dBA at the Nearest Receptors, Phase 4

Construction Activity Phase	Noise Levels in dBA Leq			
	RCNM Reference Noise Level	Residential North	Residential West	On-Site Receptor
Distance (feet)	**50**	**165**	**50**	**730**
Building Construction	77	66	53	77
Architectural Coating	74	63	50	74
Distance (feet)	**50**	**60**	**50**	**125**
Paving	77	75	69	77
Exceeds FTA 80 L_{eq} Standard?		**No**	**No**	**No**

Source: FHWA's RCNM software. Distance measurements were taken using Google Earth (2025) from the area of anticipated construction to the property line of the nearest receptors.

dBA L_{eq} = Energy Average Sound Levels.

Off-Site Receptors

The nearest sensitive receptor property lines to project construction activities are single-family homes to the north and east. During Phases 1, 2, 3, and 4, these residences would be exposed to periodic noise levels of up to 75 dBA Leq during paving activities, with all phases remaining below the FTA 80 dBA Leq standard. The proposed project's construction activities would occur within the permitted time frame identified in the Yuba County Ordinance Code, Section 8.20.310 (7:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.). Further, as standard best practice, the construction equipment would be used to the manufacturer's specifications, including the use of mufflers, which support the County General Plan Policy HS10.7. Because the proposed project's construction activities would not exceed the FTA noise standard (80 L_{eq}), would comply with the Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 8.20.310, and would comply with the applicable noise-related General Plan policies, the proposed project's construction-related noise impacts would be less than significant.

On-Campus Receptors

Students would occupy classrooms on site during construction phases 2, 3, and 4 during site preparation, paving, building construction, and architectural coating. Construction activities could occur within 85 feet of existing classroom buildings. As shown in Table 3.12-11, construction noise levels would range between 74 dBA and 84 dBA Leq at 50 feet per the RCNM Reference Noise Level and would propagate to 74 dBA and 77 dBA Leq at 50 feet. Typical exterior-to-interior noise attenuation with windows and doors closed is 25 dBA. This would result in interior noise levels of approximately 49 dBA to 52 dBA Leq. Speech interference is considered intolerable when background noise levels exceed 60 dBA. Therefore, average construction noise levels are not expected to exceed 60 dBA Leq within adjacent classrooms based on typical exterior-to-interior noise attenuation. Construction would occur throughout the project site and thereby would be further than 50 feet at times, which would reduce interior noise levels. In addition, to avoid classroom disruption, some work would be done during instructional breaks when students are off campus. Additionally, construction of the proposed project would occur during the limited hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. per the Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 8.20.310. Therefore, on-campus construction noise impacts would be less than significant.

OPERATIONAL NOISE

The primary on-site operational noise sources associated with the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School would include student activities during school hours, vehicular traffic from the parent/guardian pick-up/drop-off zone, school bus arrivals and departures, and occasional use of a public address (PA) system for announcements or events held in the multipurpose room (MPR).

The proposed project is not anticipated to include a permanent, exterior PA system for athletic fields, as no field lighting or PA systems are proposed for any athletic facilities. However, a PA system within the MPR may be used for school assemblies, performances, or community events. The MPR is a fully enclosed building, and any noise from interior events would be attenuated by the building. Exterior noise from these events is expected to be minimal and attenuated by the building structure.

A typical source of operational noise will be student pick-up and drop-off activity. The proposed project includes a dedicated 11,080-square-foot pick-up/drop-off zone on the south side of the northern parking lot. Vehicular circulation, idling engines, and occasional car horns during these peak periods (typically before school start and after school dismissal) will be the primary noise generators. Student pedestrian noise during class changes or lunch periods in outdoor areas will also contribute to the ambient noise environment.

School operational hours are anticipated to be standard for the District, typically from approximately 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, following the academic calendar. Occasional evening or weekend use of facilities (MPR, library, gym) for school or community events may occur consistent with the Civic Center Act but would be periodic and temporary. The District would have authority over the scheduling of such events.

The nearest noise-sensitive receptors are the single-family residences to the north of the project site, adjacent to the project site. These residential properties are currently under development and are not yet occupied. The project site is bordered by fallow agricultural land to the south and east, which currently has no sensitive receptors. The ongoing and planned residential construction to the north will establish the future sensitive receptors for operational noise impact assessment.

Traffic Noise

A project will normally have a significant effect on the environment related to traffic noise if it substantially increases the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas. Changes of less than 1 dBA are usually indiscernible. A change of 5 dBA is readily discernible to most people in an outdoor environment. Noise levels above 70 dBA CNEL are normally unacceptable at sensitive receptor locations such as residences, schools, and noise environments in these areas would be considered degraded. Based on this, a significant impact would occur if traffic noise increases of 1.5 dBA Ldn or greater along River Oaks Boulevard, Plumas Lake Boulevard, and Feather River Boulevard and greater than 5 dBA Ldn along all other roadway segments, over existing conditions.

Roadway segment average daily traffic (ADT) volumes were provided by Kittelson (see Appendix L). To determine the project-related traffic noise increase, the Existing, Opening Year 2027, and Future 2040 ADT volumes under both the With Project and No Project scenarios were compared, as shown in Table 3.12-13, *Summary of Traffic Noise Increases*. The analysis shows that the increase in vehicle trips from the proposed project would result in a negligible increase in ADT volumes on all study roadway segments. Consequently, the proposed project's contribution to traffic noise levels is minimal. As detailed in the table, the proposed project would result in a maximum noise increase of less than 1 dBA on all segments in the 2027 analysis. By 2040, the proposed project is predicted to cause no measurable increase on any segment.

These project-related increases are far below the thresholds of significance (a 1.5 dBA increase in ambient noise environments greater than 70 dBA CNEL, or a 3 dBA increase in environments less than 60 dBA CNEL). Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any significant traffic noise increases, and this impact is considered less than significant.

Table 3.12-13 Summary of Traffic Noise Increases

Roadway	Segment		Average Daily Traffic Noise Levels, dBA CNEL				Noise Increase, dBA CNEL		
	From	To	Existing	2027 No Project	2027 With Project	Project Increase (2027)	2040 No Project	2040 With Project	Project Increase (2040)
River Oaks Blvd	the North	Plumas Lake Blvd	68	69	69	<1	72	72	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Plumas Lake Blvd	Zanes Dr	65	66	66	<1	69	69	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Zanes Dr	Hidden Creek Way	65	66	66	<1	67	67	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Hidden Creek Way	Leighton Grove Dr	64	65	65	<1	66	66	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Leighton Grove Dr	Kensington Dr	66	66	66	<1	67	67	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Kensington Dr	Cimarron Dr	66	67	67	<1	68	68	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Cimarron Dr	Santa Cruz/ Lockwood	66	67	67	<1	68	68	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Santa Cruz/ Lockwood	Feather River Blvd	65	65	65	<1	67	67	<1
River Oaks Blvd	Feather River Blvd	the South	65	66	66	<1	68	68	<1
Plumas Lake Blvd	the West	River Oaks Blvd	62	63	63	<1	67	67	<1
Plumas Lake Blvd	River Oaks Blvd	the East	64	65	65	<1	69	69	<1
Zanes Drive	River Oaks Blvd	the West	56	56	56	<1	57	57	<1
Hidden Creek Way	River Oaks Blvd	the West	56	56	56	<1	58	58	<1
Leighton Grove Dr	River Oaks Blvd	the East	53	54	54	<1	55	55	<1
Kensington Dr	River Oaks Blvd	the East	56	58	58	<1	61	61	<1
Cimarron Dr	River Oaks Blvd	the East	58	59	59	<1	59	59	<1
Santa Cruz/ Lockwood	River Oaks Blvd	the West	52	52	52	<1	54	54	<1

Table 3.12-13 Summary of Traffic Noise Increases

Roadway	Segment		Average Daily Traffic Noise Levels, dBA CNEL				Noise Increase, dBA CNEL		
	From	To	Existing	2027 No Project	2027 With Project	Project Increase (2027)	2040 No Project	2040 With Project	Project Increase (2040)
Santa Cruz/ Lockwood	River Oaks Blvd	the East	51	51	51	<1	53	53	<1
Feather River Blvd	River Oaks Blvd	SR-70 Southbound Ramps	66	67	67	<1	70	70	<1
Feather River Blvd	SR-70 Southbound Ramps	SR-70 Northbound Ramps	68	68	68	<1	71	71	<1
Feather River Blvd	SR-70 Northbound Ramps	Chalice Creek Rd	65	66	66	<1	69	69	<1
Feather River Blvd	Chalice Creek Rd	the East	63	64	64	<1	65	65	<1

Source: FHWA Highway Noise Prediction Model (FHWA-RD-77-108) See Appendix J. Based on traffic volumes provided by Kittleson. (see Appendix L).

As previously discussed, the proposed project would result in an increase in students, which could result in an increase in noise traffic. However, these trips would be minimal and would not substantially increase the overall daily traffic volumes. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a substantial traffic noise increase over existing conditions. Traffic noise impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

CONSTRUCTION

Construction activities have the potential to generate varying degrees of ground vibration, depending on the construction procedures and equipment. The use of construction equipment generates vibrations that spread through the ground and diminish with distance from the source. The effect on buildings in the vicinity of the construction site varies depending on soil type, ground strata, and receptor-building construction. The effects from vibration can range from no perceptible effects at the lowest vibration levels, to low rumbling sounds and

perceptible vibrations at moderate levels, to slight structural damage at the highest levels. Vibration from construction activities rarely reaches the levels that can damage structures.

For reference, a vibration level of 0.2 in/sec PPV is used as the limit for nonengineered timber and masonry buildings, which would conservatively apply to the surrounding structures (FTA 2018). Typical construction equipment can generate vibration levels ranging from 0.21 inches per second (in/sec) peak particle velocity (PPV) at 25 feet.

Table 3.12-14, *Project-Related Construction Vibration Damage Levels*, summarizes vibration levels for typical construction equipment at a reference distance of 25 feet and the nearest sensitive receptor. The nearest off-site receptors are residences to the north approximately 30 feet from the nearest construction impact area (paving).

Table 3.12-14 Project-Related Construction Vibration Damage Levels

Equipment	Levels, PPV (in/sec)			
	FTA Reference at 25 Feet	**Residential North at 45 Feet**	**Residential West at 135 feet**	**On-site Receptor at 30 feet**
Vibratory Roller	0.21	0.087	0.017	0.160
Clam shovel	0.202	0.084	0.016	0.154
Hoe Ram	0.089	0.037	0.007	0.068
Large Bulldozer	0.089	0.037	0.007	0.068
Caisson Drilling	0.089	0.037	0.007	0.068
Loaded Trucks	0.076	0.031	0.006	0.058
Jackhammer	0.035	0.014	0.003	0.027
Small Bulldozer	0.003	0.001	0.000	0.002
Exceed 0.2 in/sec PPV Standard?		**No**	**No**	**No**

Sources: FTA 2018; see Appendix J.

As shown in Table 3.12-14, the proposed construction activities would not exceed the 0.2 in/sec PPV FTA standard. Further, the proposed project would be required to comply with the daytime construction hours limited to 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. per the Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 8.20.310, which limits construction hours. Therefore, vibration damage impacts would be less than significant.

OPERATION

The proposed project is not the type of land use that could generate significant vibration. The proposed project would operate a middle school. Proposed project operation would not include any substantial long-term vibration sources. Therefore, no significant vibration effects would occur; thus, impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than Significant.

c) For a project 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?

The nearest airport to the project site is the Yuba County Airport, approximately 6.74 miles north. Therefore, due to distance, the proposed project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels related to air travel. No impacts would occur.

Significance without Mitigation: No Impact.

3.12.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Noise and vibration are localized occurrences; they decrease rapidly in magnitude as the distance from the source to the receptor increases. Therefore, only those related projects that are in the direct vicinity of the project site would have the potential to be considered in a cumulative context with the proposed project's contribution.

No major stationary sources of noise were identified in the vicinity of the project site. Future residential construction noise and groundborne vibration sources were identified adjacent to and north of the project site.

As defined in Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines, cumulative impacts are the incremental effects of an individual project when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects within the cumulative impact area for noise. The project site is in an area that is developed with a suburban setting that includes residential and agricultural uses.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to noise?

Construction

Cumulative impacts would only occur if other projects are being constructed in the vicinity of the project site at the same time as the proposed project. The project site is adjacent to a residential development that is currently under construction. Continued construction of this residential development could overlap with early phases of the proposed project and could combine with the proposed project's phased construction activities to create cumulatively considerable construction noise impacts. As with the proposed project, this project's residential

development activities and future development in the project site area would be required to comply with applicable County's Noise Ordinance and applicable General Plan policies related to noise. Development projects that exceed the noise and vibration thresholds would be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures. The proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact to construction noise and vibration. Therefore, cumulative construction noise and vibration would be less than significant.

Operation

Operation of the proposed project would not exceed the County's noise standards. There are no other nearby sources of stationary noise in the project area that would significantly contribute to the ambient noise environment near the project site.

A significant cumulative traffic noise increase would be identified if project traffic were calculated to contribute 1.5 dBA or more under Future 2040 Cumulative Plus Project traffic conditions over existing conditions. That is, if a cumulative traffic noise increase greater than 1.5 dBA along River Oaks Boulevard, Plumas Lake Boulevard, and Feather River Boulevard and greater than 5 dBA Ldn along all other roadway segments is calculated, and the relative contribution from project traffic is calculated to contribute 1.5 dBA or more to this cumulative impact, it would be considered cumulatively considerable. As shown in Table 3.12-15, the cumulative increase would be less than the most stringent significance threshold of 1.5 dBA for ambient noise environments of 65 dBA CNEL or more. Therefore, cumulative traffic noise impacts would be less than significant.

Airport

Noise and vibration are localized occurrences; they decrease rapidly in magnitude as the distance from the source to the receptor increases. The project site is approximately 6.74 miles north of Yuba County Airport, a distance that places it well outside the airport's 65 dB CNEL contour, which is the threshold recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration, Caltrans Division of Aeronautics, and local jurisdictions for potentially incompatible noise exposure for school and other sensitive land uses. The proposed project would not include uses that would generate new or increased aircraft activity, nor would it involve alterations to existing flight paths, aviation-related land uses, or noise-sensitive facilities that would draw significant people into areas subject to high aircraft noise exposure. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact related to exposing people working or residing in the area to excessive noise levels; impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.12.6 References

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3.13 POPULATION AND HOUSING

This section of the DEIR examines the potential for socioeconomic impacts of implementation of the proposed project on Plumas Lake as well as other unincorporated areas in Yuba County, including changes in population, employment, and demand for housing.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to population, housing, or employment were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.13.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to population and housing and applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

California Housing Element Law

California planning and zoning law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan for future growth (California Government Code Section 65300). This plan must include a housing element that identifies housing needs for all economic segments and provides opportunities for housing development to meet that need. At the state level, the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) estimates the relative share of California's projected population growth in each county based on California Department of Finance population projections and historical growth trends. These figures are compiled by HCD in a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for each region of California. Where there is a regional council of governments (COG), the HCD provides the RHNA to the council, which a share of the regional housing needs to each of its cities and counties. The process of assigning shares gives cities and counties the opportunity to comment on the proposed allocations.

State law recognizes the vital role local governments play in the supply and affordability of housing. To that end, California Government Code requires that the housing element achieve legislative goals to:

- Identify adequate sites to facilitate and encourage the development, maintenance, and improvement of housing for households of all economic levels, including persons with disabilities.
- Remove, as legally feasible and appropriate, governmental constraints to the production, maintenance, and improvement of housing for persons of all incomes, including those with disabilities.
- Assist in the development of adequate housing to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households.
- Conserve and improve the condition of housing and neighborhoods, including existing affordable housing. Promote housing opportunities for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability.
- Preserve for lower income households the publicly assisted multifamily housing developments in each community.
- California housing element laws (California Government Code §§ 65580–65589) require that each city and county identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs within its jurisdiction and prepare goals, policies, and programs to further the development, improvement, and preservation of housing for all economic segments of the community commensurate with local housing needs.

Housing Accountability Act

The Housing Accountability Act (HAA) requires that cities approve applications for residential development that are consistent with a city's general plan and zoning code development standards without reducing the proposed density. Examples of objective standards are those that are measurable and have clear criteria that are determined in advance, such as numerical setback, height limit, universal design, lot coverage requirement, or parking requirement. Under the HAA, an applicant is entitled to the full density allowed by the zoning and/or general plan provided the project complies with all objective general plan, zoning, and subdivision standards and provided that the full density proposed does not result in a specific, adverse impact on public health and safety and cannot be mitigated in any other way.

Assembly Bill (AB) 648 amends the HAA by increasing the documentation and standard of proof required for a local agency to legally defend its denial of low-to-moderate-income housing development projects. If the local agency considers the housing development project to be inconsistent, not in compliance, or not in conformity, this bill requires the local agency to give the applicant, within specified time periods, written documentation identifying the provision or provisions and an explanation of the reason or reasons it considers the housing development to be inconsistent, not in compliance, or not in conformity. If the local agency fails to provide this documentation, the housing development project is deemed consistent, compliant, and in conformity with the applicable plan, program, policy, ordinance, standard, requirement, or other similar provision.

REGIONAL

Sacramento Area Council of Governments MTP/SCS

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for a six-county region, including Yuba County. SACOG develops and implements the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), which coordinates long-range transportation and land use planning. The 2020 MTP/SCS outlines a transportation investment and land use strategy for a prosperous region, focusing on job opportunities, affordable housing, air quality improvement, preservation of natural resources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help California achieve its climate change goals. Adopted in November 2019, the plan prepares for an expected 620,000 new residents by 2040 through revitalization of existing communities and investment in aging suburbs and corridors (SACOG 2019a).

REGIONAL

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD5.1:** Valley Neighborhoods should provide for most daily and weekly destinations, including a mix of commercial retail and services, schools, parks, and other civic uses.
- **Policy CD5.3:** Valley residential development in existing and planned Valley Neighborhoods should provide for the full range of housing types and densities.
- **Policy CD5.5:** The County's development standards will allow narrow lots, narrow driveways, alleyway access, zero lot line housing, and other compact housing configurations in Valley Neighborhoods.
- **Policy CD6.1:** Valley Neighborhoods shall contain one or more Neighborhood Center, where medium- and higher-density residences, neighborhood commercial, and public services are focused.
- **Policy CD6.2:** Neighborhood Center activities, retail, and services should serve roughly 3,000 to 5,000 existing or planned residents in the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Policy CD10.1:** The County will encourage development that improves the balance between local jobs and housing, including new commercial, industrial, home-based businesses, business incubators, and other development that generates net revenues for the County and produces local jobs.

2021–2029 Housing Element

- **Policy H-1.1:** Provide for a variety of housing types to meet the housing needs of special population groups.
- **Policy H-3.1:** Reduce regulatory barriers to the development of housing and promote alternative housing types.
- **Policy H-4.1:** The County will periodically survey housing conditions in the unincorporated county area to maintain a current database on housing repair needs.
- **Policy H-4.2:** The County will pursue a combination of public and private actions to rehabilitate and maintain the existing stock of housing.
- **Policy H-4.3:** The County will require the abatement or demolition of substandard housing that is not economically feasible to repair and which represents a health and safety threat and will seek to mitigate the displacement of low-income households resulting from demolition.
- **Policy H-6.1:** The County will annually meet with housing, supportive service providers, and public health representatives to identify needs.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

Commercial Development

- **Policy 1.** Commercial development shall be located within or in cl ose proximity to areas where the level of population justifies new or expanded activities.

Residential

- **Policy 1.** Residential land use categories shall be established to allow for adequate numbers of housing units of varying type, density, location, price range and rent levels.
- **Policy 2.** The location and density of residential land use categories shall be established in consideration of the following factors: a) existing land use patterns: b) type and availability of public services and facilities; c) type, design and location of public transportation facilities; d) proximity to commercial facilities and employment centers; e) quality of agricultural lands and timberlands.

3.13.2 Existing Conditions

Plumas Lake is a Census-designated place within Yuba County. The District services Plumas Lake and unincorporated communities to the northeast of Plumas Lake. As such, this section provides an overview of population, housing, and employment trends for Yuba County, as a whole, and Plumas Lake (specifically).

POPULATION

Table 3.13-1, *Historic Population Trends,* shows the population trends and percentage change in Yuba County and Plumas Lake from 2013 through 2023.

Table 3.13-1 Historic Population Trends

Year	Yuba County		Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Population	Percent Change	Population	Percent Change
2013	73,082	–	6,058	–
2014	73,527	+0.61%	6,380	+5.31%
2015	74,039	+0.70%	6,548	+2.63%
2016	74,920	+1.19%	6,434	−1.74%
2017	76,575	+2.21%	6,976	+8.42%
2018	77,418	+1.10%	7,367	+5.61%
2019	78,549	+1.46%	7,573	+2.79%
2020	81,994	+4.39%	7,687	+1.50%
2021	83,216	+1.49%	8,349	+8.61%
2022	84,310	+1.31%	8,301	−0.58%
2023	–	–	8,424	+1.48%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2025a, USAFacts 2025.

HOUSING

Table 3.13-2, *Housing Trends,* shows the housing unit trends and percentage change in Yuba County and Plumas Lake from 2013 through 2023.

Table 3.13-2 Housing Trends

Year	Yuba County		Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Housing Units	Percent Change	Housing Units	Percent Change
2013	24,367	–	2,083	–
2014	24,785	+1.71%	2,090	+0.34%
2015	25,172	+1.56%	2,034	−2.68%
2016	25,732	+2.23%	2,002	−1.57%

Table 3.13-2 Housing Trends

Year	Yuba County		Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Housing Units	Percent Change	Housing Units	Percent Change
2017	25,940	+0.81%	2,060	+2.90%
2018	26,190	+0.96%	2,126	+3.20%
2019	26,281	+0.35%	2,242	+5.46%
2020	26,435	+0.59%	2,392	+6.69%
2021	26,948	+1.94%	2,565	+7.24%
2022	27,533	+2.17%	2,731	+6.47%
2023	28,122	+2.14%	2,966	+8.60%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2025b, DataUSA 2025.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

As shown in Table 3.12-3, *Yuba County 2021–2029 RHNA*, Yuba County's RHNA allocation for the 2021–2029 planning period is 2,887 units.

Table 3.13-3 Yuba County 2021-2029 RHNA

Income Category	Number of Units	Percentage
Very Low (50% AMI or less)	621	21.52%
Low (51-80% AMI)	374	12.96%
Moderate (81%-120% AMI)	561	19.43%
Above Moderate (>120% AMI)	1,331	46.09%
Total	**2,887**	**100.00%**

Source: Yuba County 2021.

Notes: AMI= Area Median Income

EMPLOYMENT

Table 3.13-4, *Employment Trends in Plumas Lake,* shows the employment trends and percentage change in Plumas Lake from 2013 through 2023.

Table 3.13-4 Employment Trends in Plumas Lake

Year	Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Employment	Percent Change
2013	2,540	
2014	2,665	+4.92%
2015	2,708	+1.61%
2016	2,622	−3.17%
2017	3,029	+15.50%
2018	3,196	+5.52%
2019	3,277	+2.53%
2020	3,437	+4.89%
2021	3,672	+6.83%
2022	3,715	+1.17%
2023	3,761	+1.24%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2025c.

Overall, the largest employment sectors in Yuba County are Office and Administrative Support Occupations, Management Occupations, and Sales and Related Occupations, followed by notable shares in Construction, Production, and Education-related fields. Similarly, at the local level, Table 3.13-5, *Plumas Lake Employment by Industry*, shows the distribution of jobs by industry type. As shown below, educational services, health care, and social assistance (26.40 percent); public administration (15.50 percent); construction (10.37 percent) and professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (9.20 percent) make up approximately 61.47 percent of Plumas Lake's employment.

Table 3.13-5 Plumas Lake Employment by Industry

Industry	Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Educational services, health care and social assistance	993	26.40
Public administration	583	15.50
Construction	390	10.37
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	346	9.20

Table 3.13-5 Plumas Lake Employment by Industry

Industry	Plumas Lake (Census-Designated Place within County)	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Retail trade	319	8.48
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	296	7.87
Information	224	5.96
Manufacturing	164	4.36
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	142	3.78
Other services, except public administration	117	3.11
Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services	94	2.50
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	74	1.97
Wholesale trade	19	0.51
Total	**3,761**	**100**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2025c.

GROWTH PROJECTIONS

Sacramento Area Council of Governments

SACOG's 2020 RTP/SCS provides the most current projections of population, housing units, and total employment for the County and Plumas Lake. These projections are summarized in Table 3.13-6, *SACOG Growth Projections for Yuba County and Plumas Lake*.

Table 3.13-6 SACOG Growth Projections for Yuba County and Plumas Lake

	Yuba County Unincorporated		Plumas Lake	
	2016	2040	2016	2040
Population[1]	43,020	52,780	5,460	9,060
Jobs	12,850	19,330	700	2,100
Housing units	21,510	26,390	2,730	4,530
Job-housing ratio	0.6	0.73	0.25	0.46

Source: SACOG 2019b.

1. Population was calculated using housing units multiplied by the common household size of two persons per household in unincorporated Yuba County, consistent with the Housing Element (Yuba County 2021).

Yuba County General Plan

Based on the very broad parameters established in this General Plan, the County has developed estimates of average density and intensity to use in calculating 2030 General Plan buildout land use. The County has based buildout estimates on past recorded development activity, recent development plan submittals, regional and statewide population and employment growth forecasts, and other factors (Yuba 2011). Table 3.13-7, *New Development under 2030 General Plan*, shows the development such as housing population, and jobs under the 2030 Yuba County General Plan for Plumas Lake and the County.

Table 3.13-7 New Development under 2030 General Plan

	Yuba County Unincorporated	Olivehurst-Plumas Lake
Single- Family Units	25,000 - 34,000	12,720 - 17,000
Multi-Family Units	4,700 - 6,400	940 - 1,300
Population	74,000 - 100,000	36,600 - 48,000
Jobs	50,000 - 67,000	15,000 - 20,400

Source: Yuba 2011

3.13.3 Standards for Analysis

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to population and housing if it would:

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).

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

3.13.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project 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)?

According to the SQACOG 2020 MTP/SCS, population, housing, and employment in Yuba County are projected to steadily increase through 2040. Specifically, the countywide population is anticipated to grow from approximately 80,000 residents in 2016 to about 115,000 by 2040, with employment increasing from roughly 24,000 to 34,000 jobs. SACOG projects population in unincorporated Yuba County to increase from 43,020 in 2016 to 52,780 in 2040 and in Plumas Lake from 5,460 to 9,060 during the same period, with corresponding job growth from 700 to 2,100 positions. The Plumas Lake area is identified as one of the County's primary growth areas. This level of growth is consistent with regional and local land use and transportation planning assumptions. Housing growth anticipated under the County's 2021–2029 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (2,887 new units) is incorporated into these projections.

The proposed project would not directly induce population growth because it does not include residential, commercial, or industrial land uses. Rather, the proposed project would provide educational facilities to serve existing and planned residential growth anticipated under adopted local and regional plans, such as the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Operation of the proposed project would generate approximately 50 to 60 staff positions, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel. These positions would primarily be filled by existing residents within the Yuba–Sutter labor market and are consistent with SACOG's regional employment projections for public service sectors. Educational services currently and historically represents a major local employment category in Plumas Lake (approximately 26 percent of local jobs). Further, the proposed project's staff positions is within the anticipated population and employment growth projections for Yuba County. Therefore, the proposed project's staffing demand would be consistent with existing industry trends and would not represent a substantial or unplanned increase in regional employment.

The proposed project is in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, which envisioned the development of educational facilities, including middle and high schools, to serve the Plumas Lake area. The Plumas Lake Specific Plan identifies the potential need for 2 to 3 additional middle schools and 12 to 15 elementary schools to support buildout (Yuba County 1992). Therefore, development of the proposed middle school is consistent with the long-term vision for the community and represents implementation of facilities anticipated by the Specific Plan.

In addition, the Yuba County 2030 General Plan designates the project site within the "Valley Neighborhood" land use category, which supports integrated residential neighborhoods with schools, parks, and public facilities within walking distance of housing. The proposed school use is consistent with this designation and supports the County's planned pattern of growth.

Although the proposed project includes limited off-site road improvements, these offsite improvements would provide access to the proposed project and ensure adequate circulation with existing rights-of-way and emergency access. The improvements would occur along planned local streets identified in the Specific Plan (such as Kensington Drive and Blackbird Way) and within Yuba County's adopted circulation system. Further, the proposed project would connect to existing utility stubs in the public rights-of-way to obtain water and wastewater service from the OPUD and electrical power from PG&E. These connections would utilize infrastructure planned and constructed as part of the community's buildout and would not require extension of new trunk lines or regional facilities. The proposed project's off-site road improvements and utility connections do not constitute extension of roadways or other infrastructure that could result in indirect unplanned population growth.

Overall, the proposed project is consistent with SACOG's regional growth forecasts, the Yuba County 2030 General Plan, and the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. The proposed project would not generate new housing or open new areas to development, and its minor employment increase and infrastructure connections are within anticipated regional growth assumptions. The proposed project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, this impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The project site is currently on fallow agriculture land and does not contain any housing units. Therefore, the construction of the proposed project would not displace any existing people or housing units, which could necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. No impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Significance without Mitigation: No Impact.

3.13.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to population and housing?

A cumulative impact would be considered significant if the proposed project, when considered together with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, would induce substantial unplanned population growth or lead to the displacement of existing housing or residents.

As part of the proposed project, middle school students from Riverside Meadows Middle School would relocate to the new Plumas Lake Middle School, and elementary students from Cobblestone and Rio Del Oro Elementary Schools would be redistributed among the three existing elementary campuses. Riverside Meadows would be repurposed as an elementary school during Phase 1 (Spring 2026 – Fall 2027). This redistribution would not require any physical improvements to existing campuses.

As discussed above in Impact 3.13-1, the proposed project would not generate substantial direct or indirect population growth. The proposed project would serve students residing within the Plumas Lake Elementary School District boundaries, which encompasses the unincorporated community of Plumas Lake and adjacent rural residential areas extending northeast toward Arboga Road and River Oaks Boulevard. The District does not include any incorporated cities.

The project site is surrounded by existing and planned residential neighborhoods within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area, including single-family subdivisions along Kensington Drive, River Oaks Boulevard, and Feather River Boulevard. Ongoing residential construction is occurring north of the project site, representing continued buildout of the Specific Plan area. These communities were established as part of the County's long-range growth framework, which anticipated development of local schools to serve the resident population. The proposed project would provide educational capacity consistent with that planned growth rather than induce new residential development.

Cumulatively, population and housing growth in Yuba County and the Plumas Lake area is governed by the Yuba County 2030 General Plan, the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, and the SACOG 2020 MTP/SCS regional growth projections. These plans already account for anticipated housing construction, school expansion, and supporting infrastructure in southern Yuba County.

Because the proposed project would accommodate students from existing and planned housing within the District and would not generate new residential development or extend urban infrastructure into previously undeveloped areas, it would not contribute to cumulative population or housing impacts. When considered together with other regional development, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact on population growth or housing displacement.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.13.6 References

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3.14 PUBLIC SERVICES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) addresses impacts of implementation of the proposed project to public services providing fire protection and emergency services, police protection, school services, and library services. Public and private utilities and service systems, including water, wastewater, and solid waste services and systems, are addressed in Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service System*.

Questionnaire responses from public service providers, including fire and police departments. See Appendix K, *Public Service Letters and Questionnaires*, for complete details.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to public services were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.14.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, and guidelines related to fire protection, police protection, schools, park services, and libraries apply to the proposed project and are summarized herein.

STATE

California Building Code

The California Building Code (CBC), in Part 2 of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), establishes the minimum state building standards. The CBC is currently updated every three years. The most recent update is the 2022 CBC, effective January 1, 2023. It is based on the 2021 International Building Code but amended to account for California conditions. The CBC is generally adopted on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis, subject to further modification based on local needs. Commercial and residential buildings are plan-checked by City building officials for compliance with the CBC. Typical fire safety requirements of the CBC include installing sprinklers in all high-rise buildings; establishing fire resistance standards for fire doors, building materials, and particular types of construction; and clearing debris and vegetation within a prescribed distance from occupied structures in wildfire hazard areas.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC; CCR, Title 24, Part 9) regulates emergency access and egress, building design and materials, fire safety features such as sprinklers, and the storage and handling of hazardous materials. The CFC is updated on a three-year cycle, with the 2022 edition effective January 1, 2023. Yuba County has adopted the CFC by reference in the Yuba County Code of Ordinances, ensuring that all new development, including the proposed project, complies with current state fire safety standards.

California Government Code

The Government Code (Sections 65560–65568) requires a general plan to include an open space element to address: the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, support of military installations, and protection of places of cultural or historical interest. Building permits, subdivision approvals, and zoning approvals must be consistent with the open space plan. Public Resources Code Section 5076 also requires general plans to consider demands for trail-oriented recreational use, demands in developing open-space programs, and the feasibility of integrating its trail routes with appropriate segments of the state system. Local jurisdictions may also create a separate parks and recreation element as part of or in addition to an open space and conservation element.

California Health and Safety Code

California Health and Safety Code Sections 13000 et seq. includes fire regulations for building standards (also in the CBC), fire protection and notification systems, fire protection devices such as extinguishers and smoke alarms, standards for high-rise buildings and childcare facilities, and fire suppression training.

California Occupational Safety and Health Administration

In accordance with the CCR, Title 8, Sections 1270, *Fire Prevention*, and 6773, *Fire Protection and Fire Fighting Equipment*, the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration has established minimum standards for fire suppression and emergency medical services. The standards include, but are not limited to, guidelines on the handling of highly combustible materials, firehouse sizing requirements; restrictions on the use of compressed air; access roads; and the testing, maintenance, and use of all firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

California Public Park Preservation Act

The primary instrument for protecting and preserving parkland is California's Public Park Preservation Act of 1971. Under the Public Resources Code, cities and counties may not acquire any real property that is in use as a public park for any nonpark use unless compensation, land,

or both are provided to replace the parkland acquired. This provides no net loss of parkland and facilities.

Civic Center Act

The Civic Center Act authorizes, and in some instances requires, the governing board of a school district to allow the use of school facilities or grounds as a civic center, for specified purposes. The act authorizes or requires, as applicable, the governing board of a school district to charge a fee, not to exceed the school district's direct costs, as defined, for use of its school facilities or grounds. Existing law, for these purposes, defines direct costs to mean the costs of supplies, utilities, janitorial services, services of school district employees, and salaries paid to school district employees directly associated with the administration of this section necessitated by the entity's use of the school facilities or grounds. Existing law, until January 1, 2025, expanded the definition of direct costs to include a specified share of the operating and maintenance costs proportional to the entity's use of the school facilities or grounds and a share of the costs for maintenance, repair, restoration, and refurbishment of the school facilities or grounds proportional to that entity's use of the school facilities or grounds, as specified.

Quimby Act

The Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) authorizes cities and counties to require developers to dedicate land as parkland, pay in-lieu fees, or both as a condition of approval for a tentative or final tract map or parcel map for a residential subdivision. Revenue generated through the Quimby Act cannot be used for the operation or maintenance of existing park facilities. The Quimby Act also sets a statewide standard of three acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents unless the existing neighborhood and community park area exceeds that limit, in which case the city or county may establish a higher standard.

Mitigation Fee Act

The California Mitigation Fee Act (Government Code Sections 66000 et seq.) allows a local agency to impose fees on development projects to mitigate a project's impact on a local agency's ability to provide specified public facilities. To comply with the Mitigation Fee Act, a local agency must follow four primary requirements: (1) Make certain determinations regarding the purpose and use of a fee and establish a nexus or connection between a development project or class of project and the public improvement being financed with the fee; (2) segregate fee revenue from the general fund to avoid commingling capital facilities fees and general funds; (3) make findings each fiscal year describing the continuing need for fees that have been in the possession of the local agency for five years or more and that have not been spent or committed to a project; and (4) refund any fees with interest for developer deposits for which the findings noted above cannot be made.

REGIONAL

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD12.5:** New developments shall demonstrate the availability of adequate fire-flow pressure, storage, system gridding, hydrant spacing, and sprinkler systems prior to approval.
- **Policy CD12.6:** The County will condition new developments and collaborate with local fire districts to locate stations so that first fire response can be provided within 6 minutes in 95% or more of cases within the Valley Growth Boundary.
- **Policy CD12.7:** The County's target for fire protection is an ISO (Insurance Service Organization) rating of no greater than 5 within the Valley Growth Boundary and no greater than 8 or Rural Communities.
- **Policy CD12.8:** New developments shall contribute fees, construct and dedicate facilities, and/or use other mechanisms acceptable to local service providers to provide for law enforcement and fire protection facilities and services needed to serve new growth.
- **Policy CD12.9:** The County's target for law enforcement is to provide one officer per 1,000 persons within the unincorporated area and to provide an average response time of 5 minutes or less for Priority 1 emergency calls within the Valley Growth Boundary.
- **Policy CD12.10:** New developments shall provide impact fees, land dedication, school construction, or other measures acceptable to local school districts to ensure adequate educational facilities and site new school sites that are free from toxic contaminant issues and are otherwise consistent with school district siting criteria.
- **Policy CD12.11:** The County will seek funding to improve and extend hours at the existing library in Marysville, while expanding library services to other urban and rural areas in the unincorporated County and Wheatland.
- **Policy CD12.12:** The County will support library service enhancements through online services, electronic media, tying into computer labs, virtual branches, library service in existing community buildings, and other decentralized approaches, as well as traditional libraries.
- **Policy CD12.13:** The County will take advantage of opportunities to develop, enhance, and maintain library services in coordination with local school districts, Yuba College, and other interested agencies.
- **Policy CD12.14:** Solid waste service, including recycling, is required for urban land uses developed within the Valley Growth Boundary.
- **Policy CD12.15:** The County recognizes that provision of adequate school facilities is a community priority.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Chapter 8.76: Parks and Recreation Areas

This chapter establishes regulations for parks and recreational spaces under the jurisdiction of Yuba County and Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD), aiming to protect property, public health, and welfare. It defines the scope to include both indoor and outdoor parklike areas, excluding Hammon Grove Park and Sycamore Ranch Park. Authority for rule making rests with the County Board of Supervisors for County-owned parks and with the OPUD Board of Directors for OPUD parks. Fees for reserved daytime use, overnight camping, or organized events are set by resolution and must be prepaid by agreement. The chapter also outlines parking operating hours, prohibited activities (such as littering, unauthorized vending, excessive noise), vehicle regulations, boat launch rules, and animal control provisions (including leash and cleanup requirements), with specified penalties and enforcement measures for violations.

Section 11.45.060: Parkland

Residential subdivisions must dedicate land, pay fees, or both to support parks and recreation. The requirement stems from State law and county authority and applies to new residential subdivisions, with some small-scale and nonresidential exceptions. The basic standard is 0.005 acres of parkland per person (roughly five acres per 1,000 residents), calculated by dwelling counts and census-based occupancy rates.

Chapter 10.05: Building Standards Construction Code

This chapter sets minimum regulations to protect public health and safety, with a specific focus on fire hazards, for all building construction, alteration, and maintenance in unincorporated Yuba County. It enforces the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), including the CFC (Title 24, Part 9), making state fire safety rules legally binding locally. The chapter requires the strictest applicable fire safety provisions to be followed when conflicts arise and allows existing buildings to continue operation unless the building official mandates upgrades for safety. Overall, it integrates the CFC into local law to reduce wildfire risks and enhance community resilience.

Chapter 11.22: Fire-Safe Regulations

These establish minimum wildfire protection standards under California's Public Resources Code Section 4290. Covering new buildings and subdivisions in state responsibility areas (SRAs), the regulations mandate defensible space, emergency access routes, water supply for firefighting, and ongoing maintenance of fuel reduction zones. For example, driveways must be at least 12 feet wide with 15 feet of vertical and horizontal clearance; longer driveways require turnouts and turnarounds for fire apparatus. Structures must have visible addresses posted at driveway entrances, and all new buildings in SRAs must provide a minimum 3,000-gallon emergency water supply (pond, tank, or pool) approved by local fire authorities.

3.14.2 Existing Conditions

FIRE PROTECTION

The project site is served by the Linda Fire Protection District, which provides fire suppression, emergency medical, and disaster response services. The Department's mission is to protect lives, property, and the environment through preparedness, prevention, public education, and rapid emergency response (LFPD 2025a).

The Linda Fire Protection District responds to more than 5,000 emergency calls annually and is staffed by three full-time personnel, supplemented by a dedicated team of paid-call firefighters. Its 52-square-mile service area includes the communities of Linda, Plumas Lake, Arboga, and portions of Olivehurst. The Linda Fire Protection District also participates in the California Mutual Aid System to support regional emergency needs (LFPD 2025b). The Linda Fire Protection District does not participate in any service agreements with local or regional fire agencies (Heggstrom 2025). The primary sources of funding for Linda Fire Protection District operation and improvements are from property taxes and community service area fees (Heggstrom 2025).

Response times for fire protection are addressed in the Yuba County General Plan. The proposed project lies within the Valley Growth Boundary, where the Yuba County General Plan requires fire response within six minutes for 95 percent of incidents (Policy CD12.6) and targets an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 5 or better (Policy CD12.7). The Linda Fire Protection District reports that their response times average 5 minutes (Heggstrom 202 5).

The closest fire station to the project site would be Fire Station 3, which is 0.17 miles north of the project site. Table 3.14-1, *Fire Station Servicing the Project Site*, shows the fire station that would service the project site as well as the equipment and daily staffing.

Table 3.14-1 Fire Station Servicing the Project Site

Fire Station	Equipment	Full-Time Staffing
Fire Station 3 1765 River Oaks Blvd Plumas Lake, CA 95961	▪ Engine 261 - 2002 International 4900 4x4 / West-Mark Type 3 wildland (500/500/18A) ▪ Engine 264 - 2006 International 7400 4x4 / West-Mark Type 3 wildland (500/500/18A) (SN#60579) ▪ Engine 273 - 2008 Spartan Gladiator / Hi-Tech (1500/750/20A) ▪ Engine 283 - 2021 Ford F-550 4x4 / Cascade Fire Type 6 wildland (180/400/10A)	3

Sources: FW 2025; LFPD 2025b; Heggstrom 2025.

POLICE PROTECTION

Established in 1850, the Yuba County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services across a diverse area, from the Sierra Foothills to the valley. The Patrol Unit is headquartered at 915 8thth Street in Marysville, with resident deputies serving the foothill communities. Substations are in Brownsville, District 10, Linda, Olivehurst, and Plumas Lake. The project site in Plumas Lake is served by the Sheriff's Department, which provides law enforcement throughout the unincorporated areas of Yuba County. Patrol personnel are the first to respond to emergencies and other calls for service. They are responsible for enforcing state and local laws within the unincorporated areas and provide 24-hour service to more than 55,000 residents (Yuba County 2025a).

The Yuba County Sheriff's Office (YCSO) Communications Center provides 24-hour emergency and non-emergency dispatch services for law enforcement, fire, and medical responders throughout the county, serving as the primary access point for the 911 system. The Communications Unit includes 11 dispatchers, a Communications Records Supervisor, and 2 records clerks, supported by senior volunteers.

Dispatchers use Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and multi-capable radios to coordinate responses with YCSO deputies, local law enforcement, fire agencies (including Wheatland, Olivehurst, and Linda Fire Departments), ambulance services, and state agencies such as CAL FIRE. Deputies in the field use Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) with Global Positioning System (GPS), database access (NCIC, NLETS, CLETS), and messaging capabilities to support real-time reporting and communication.

The Communications Center is connected to state and local systems, including CLETS and local government radio channels, and serves as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all of Yuba County except Marysville and Beale Air Force Base. In emergencies, the center can notify residents via telephone, in-person contact, helicopter, or loudspeaker (Yuba County 2025b).

The Office Emergency Services (OES) in Yuba County is dedicated to coordinating disaster planning and response efforts before, during, and after emergencies. The Sheriff is the second alternative charged with emergency management in the event of a natural, technological, or natural security disaster. In addition, the Yuba County Sheriff can activate the CODE RED emergency notification system at the YCSO to the entire county or individuals in a specified area (Yuba County 2015, 2025b). All operations comply with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations (Yuba County 2025b).

Response times and law enforcement standards are addressed in the Yuba County General Plan. Policy CD12.9 establishes a target staffing level of one officer per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area and an average response time of five minutes or less for Priority 1 emergency calls within the Valley Growth Boundary.

SCHOOLS

The proposed project includes a new middle school within the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District). Table 3.14-2, *District Schools*, shows the other schools within the district.

Table 3.14-2 District Schools

Schools	Location	Actual Enrollment
Cobblestone Elementary School	1718 Churchill Way, Plumas Lake, CA 95961	590
Rio Del Oro Elementary School	1220 Zanes Drive, Plumas Lake, CA 95961	564
Riverside Meadows Intermediate	1751 Cimarron Drive, Plumas Lake, CA 95961	528

Source: CDE 2025.

PARK SERVICES

Yuba County operates its own parks and recreation system at the county level; however, it does not manage or provide parks in Plumas Lake. The parks in Plumas Lake are provided and maintained by Olivehurst Public Utility District, which operates and manages approximately 37.5 acres of parks in Plumas Lake that offer amenities such as ball fields, play structures, picnic areas, and spray parks. OPUD does not receive property tax from Plumas Lake but manages the parks using these designated fees and development fees linked to Plumas Lake planning documents (OPUD 2025). OPUD also operates and maintains more than 50 acres of family-oriented park land in the Olivehurst area. See Section 3.15, *Recreation*, for additional information on parks.

No recreational uses are currently on-site. The closest park to the project site is Veterans Park approximately 0.25 miles east of the project site.

LIBRARY SERVICES

The Yuba County Library provides library services to the county and the main site at 303 2nd Street in Marysville (Yuba County 2025c).

The library offers Inter-Library Loan (ILL) services, allowing patrons to request materials from libraries across the U.S. when not available locally. Restrictions apply, as libraries generally do not lend recently published books (within one year) or reference materials. Only one request may be made at a time, with a $2.00 postage and handling fee per item. Staff also provide reference and readers' advisory services in person and by phone, assisting with locating information and materials, including online searches. If local resources are insufficient, ILL requests may be made. The Local History Archives Room is available for those interested in local history and genealogy, offering books, newspapers, photographs, pamphlets, and unpublished documents. Patrons may check out up to 25 items per library card, with a limit of 4 items per subject and 2 titles per series. All items may be renewed once, provided no requests are

pending. Circulation periods vary by material: books circulate for 28 days, new books and graphic novels for 14 days, audiobooks for 14 days, and DVDs for 7 days. Item limits include 6 manga or graphic novels, 6 audiobooks, 6 DVDs, and 10 new items (Yuba County 2025c).

3.14.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to public services if it would:

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:

- Fire protection
- Police protection
- Schools
- Parks
- Other public facilities

METHODOLOGY

The analyses in this section incorporate information from publicly available sources. In addition, service provider questionnaires (see Appendix K) were prepared and distributed to the Linda Fire Protection District and Yuba County Sheriff's Department to identify potential impacts related to public services associated with the proposed project. Each questionnaire included project buildout information and a site description to assist the agencies in evaluating whether new or expanded facilities may be required because of the project. The questionnaires and supporting materials were sent on October 13, 2025. Responses from the Linda Fire Protection District were received October 15, 2025, and can be viewed in Appendix K. No response was received from the Yuba County Sheriff's Department.

3.14.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives?

A significant environmental impact could result if the implementation of the proposed project increased demand for fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and library services to the extent that the construction of new or physically altered governmental facility would be needed and could cause physical impacts.

Fire Protection

The Linda Fire Protection District Fire Station 3, which is approximately 0.17 miles north, would provide fire protection and emergency services to the project site. Fire station 3 is staffed daily with 3 firefighter personnel. Overall, the Linda Fire Protection District consists of 27 employees, including 15 firefighters, two chief officers, two administration staff, three captains, and five engineers (LFPD 2025c).

Construction

During the construction phase of the proposed project, construction workers would be on-site temporarily. Construction of the proposed project would be required to comply with state building and fire codes to ensure on-site safety during construction. The code includes standards for building and construction and requirements for emergency access, hazardous material handling, and fire protection systems. Construction plans for the proposed project would be reviewed and inspected by the Linda Fire Protection District and Division of State Architect (DSA) to ensure all requirements are met, such as adequate emergency access to the project site during construction. Construction of the proposed project would further implement Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations to ensure the building would not interfere with access and travel of emergency vehicles. Therefore, project construction would not affect fire/emergency response protection services to the extent that new or physically altered fire facilities would be needed to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection services; construction-related impacts on fire protection would be less than significant.

Operation

At full buildout, the proposed project would accommodate an enrollment capacity of 1,200 students and is anticipated to have an actual enrollment of approximately 972 students. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would serve the

community and does not result in direct or indirect population growth. However, the proposed project would add new buildings, structures, and persons to the project site that is currently fallow agricultural land and does not have persons regularly on-site. As such, the proposed project does have the potential to increase service calls and demand for fire protection services.

The Linda Fire Protection District reports that there are no existing deficiencies in the fire protection service nor existing plans for fire service facilities or expanded capacity that would serve the project site. The Linda Fire Protection District does not anticipate that the proposed project would have an impact on its ability to provide fire protection and emergency services to the planning area because the location of the proposed project is in close proximity to Linda Fire Protection District Station 3 facilities (Heggstrom 2025). Policy CD12.7 of the Yuba County General Plan states that the County's target for fire protection is an ISO (Insurance Service Organization) rating of no greater than 5 within the Valley Growth Boundary, which the Linda Fire Protection District reports that they average 5-minute response times. Therefore, the area is currently compliant with the response time goal.

The proposed project would be required to comply with the most recent editions of the CBC and CFC (Title 24, Parts 2 and 9), as well as County Ordinance Code Section 11.22.050, which requires roads to be designed for safe access by emergency wildland fire equipment and for civilian evacuation. The proposed access and circulation features at the project site would be reviewed by the Linda Fire Protection District to ensure that the proposed project is constructed under the applicable Fire Code and Health and Safety Code and that adequate fire services and infrastructure are available. Further, DSA would review and approve project plans for fire/life safety, which would ensure adequate emergency access onto the project site. Compliance with state and local requirements and agency reviews would ensure that the proposed project does not create a substantial impact on fire protection services.

In addition, as a school project, the proposed project would be required to comply with the Comprehensive School Safety Plan requirements pursuant to California Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan would establish procedures for emergency preparedness and response, including evacuation, communication, and coordination protocols for a range of natural and human-caused hazards, including fire-related events. Preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan would help reduce impacts on fire services, preventing the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities.

As such, during construction and operation, the proposed project would not require the provision of new fire stations or altered fire protection facilities that could result in substantial adverse physical impacts, the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Police Protection

Police protection services are provided to the project site by the Yuba County Sheriff's Department. The Yuba County's Sheriff's Department operates from one Plumas Lake Field Station at 1765 River Oaks Boulevard, approximately 0.17 mile north of the project site.

Construction

During the construction phases of the proposed project, there would be a temporary increase of construction workers on-site. Construction of the proposed project would maintain emergency access and emergency egress routes during project construction. During construction, the active construction areas would be fenced, and construction site access would be limited to authorized personnel. Further, the storage and staging of construction equipment would occur on the project site, which would be fenced and hidden from view. Equipment and vehicles would be locked and only accessible by authorized personnel. These standard precautions during construction would reduce the likelihood of a crime to occur. Therefore, the temporary construction of the proposed project would not materially increase the demand for police protection services. It would not result in the need for physically altered or new police facilities, which could result in environmental impacts, and impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

At full buildout, the proposed project would accommodate an enrollment capacity of 1,200 students and is anticipated to have an actual enrollment of approximately 972 students. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would serve the community and does not result in direct or indirect population growth. However, the proposed project would add new buildings, structures, and persons to the project site that is currently fallow agricultural land and does not have persons regularly on-site. As such, the proposed project does have the potential to increase service calls and demand for police protection services.

The proposed project would include fencing and gates to control access and for safety purposes. Access to the project site would be limited to the designated point of entry on-campus and via the roadways allowing for greater control and monitoring of on-site persons. Further, the proposed project would be monitored by staff during school hours and after school during after-school activities, and other educational events on-site. During non-operational hours, the project site would be locked, and security lighting would be installed to provide an additional measure of visibility and security during evening and nighttime hours. In addition, cameras would be installed on campus at key locations to provide further security. DSA would review and approve project design plans to ensure adequate emergency access to the project site. Installation of on-site security and safety measures and compliance with state and local requirements and agency reviews would ensure that the proposed project does not create a substantial impact on police protection services.

In addition, as a school project, the proposed project would be required to comply with the Comprehensive School Safety Plan requirements pursuant to California Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan would establish procedures for emergency preparedness and response, including evacuation, communication, and coordination protocols for a range of natural and human-caused hazards. Preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan would help reduce impacts on police services, preventing the need for new or physically altered police protection facilities.

As such, during construction and operation, the proposed project would not require the provision of new police stations or altered police protection facilities that could result in substantial adverse physical impacts or the need for new or physically altered police protection facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

School Services

The proposed project would construct a new school facility to serve the Plumas Lake Elementary School District community. The potential environmental impacts of the proposed project are evaluated throughout this DEIR. The proposed project would not generate the need for other school facilities in the district that are not evaluated in this DEIR. Typically, the demand for schools is created by new housing development or activities that generate additional population. The proposed project does not include the development of new homes, which would lead to an increase in student generation and thereby the need for additional school facilities. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would not induce population growth in the area, either directly or indirectly. As such, the proposed project would not require the provision of new or altered school facilities that could result in substantial adverse physical impacts or the need for new or physically altered school facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Park Services

The need for new or the expansion of existing park facilities is typically tied to population growth. The proposed project does not include development of residential or commercial uses. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would not induce population growth in the area, either directly or indirectly. The proposed project would construct a middle school campus and would include track and field, a multisport field, tennis and pickleball courts, and basketball courts. Thus, the proposed project would not increase the demand for public facilities, such as park facilities. Further, the athletic facilities on-site would be available for public use consistent with the Civic Center Act, which would help offset the demand of existing parks in the Plumas Lake community. As such, the proposed project would not require the provision of new or altered park facilities that could result in substantial adverse

physical impacts, or the need for new or physically altered park facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Other Public Services

The need for new or the expansion of existing library services and facilities is tied to population growth. The proposed project does not include development of residential or commercial uses. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would not induce population growth in the area, either directly or indirectly. The proposed project would serve residents in District enrollment boundaries. Thus, the proposed project would not increase the demand for public facilities, such as library services or other administrative services in the Yuba County Library. Further, the proposed project would construct a 3,273-square-foot library, which would service the students and staff, and would further offset the demand on the public Yuba County Library system. As such, the proposed project would not require the provision of new or altered library facilities that could result in substantial adverse physical impacts or the need for new or physically altered library facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.14.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for public services includes the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and surrounding development in southern Yuba County. The most relevant cumulative project is a large residential development currently under construction immediately north of the proposed middle school site. As residential growth continues, demand for public services, including fire protection, police protection, schools, and libraries, will incrementally increase.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to public services?

Fire Protection

The proposed project would be served by the Linda Fire Protection District. Correspondence with the Linda Fire Protection District determined that there are no existing deficiencies in the fire protection service, and they do not anticipate that the proposed project would have an impact on its ability to provide fire protection and emergency services to the planning area (Heggstrom 2025). The proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact to fire protection services. Similar to the proposed project, other development projects would be reviewed by the Linda Fire Protection District to ensure applicable Fire Code and Health and Safety Code and that adequate fire services and infrastructure are available. In addition, development projects in the county would be required to conform with the California Health and Safety Code and Fire Code. As applicable, development projects would be required to pay

development impact fees and implement mitigation measures to mitigate impacts. Therefore, construction and operation of the proposed project, in combination with the cumulative projects, is not anticipated to result in a cumulatively considerable increase in fire protection services that would require new or expanded fire facilities. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Police Protection

Police services would be provided by the Yuba County Sheriff's Department. The proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact to police protection services. As with the proposed project, other development projects would include security measures during construction and would be expected to include design features to provide security and safety on-site. Each development project would be required to evaluate its impact on police protection services, and if necessary, implement applicable mitigation measures. Development projects would also be required to pay applicable developer fees for police protection services. Therefore, the construction and operation of the proposed project, in combination with the cumulative projects, is not anticipated to result in a cumulatively considerable increase in police protection services demand that would require new or expanded police facilities. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Park Services

The proposed project is an educational facility that would serve existing and planned residential growth within Plumas Lake, and it would not result in direct population growth. Further, the proposed project would provide athletic facilities on-site that would be accessible to the public consistent with the Civic Center Act, which would service the students and would offset the demand for OPUD park facilities. Other development projects would be reviewed for their impact on park services. If necessary, development projects would be required to implement mitigation measures to reduce their impacts on parks. Development projects would further contribute to the property tax revenues that would fund the OPUD parks services and would be required to pay impact fees to offset their fair share of the cost of providing additional park resources. The proposed project would not combine with other development projects to create a cumulative impact to park services. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

School Services

The proposed project is a school project that would serve existing and planned residential growth within the Plumas Lake plan area and district. The proposed project would not generate new students that could increase the demand for school services and contribute to a cumulative impact. Other development projects, especially residential and commercial projects, could generate new students and increase the demand for school services. Like the proposed project, each development project would be required to be reviewed for their impact on school services, implement applicable mitigation, and pay development impact fees under Senate Bill 50. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact, and cumulative impacts related to school services would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Other Public Services

Cumulative residential and commercial growth could incrementally increase demand for library and other administrative services. However, the proposed project is an educational facility that would include a 3,273-square-foot on-site library to serve students and would not increase indirect or direct population. Other development projects, if necessary, would also contribute to the property tax revenues that would fund the county library system and would be required to pay library impact fees to offset their fair share of the cost of providing additional library resources. Therefore, cumulative impacts to libraries and other public services would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.14.6 References

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3.15 RECREATION

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the Plumas Lake Middle School project (proposed project) to impact public parks and recreational facilities in Plumas Lake, since the proposed project would introduce a new school to the Plumas Lake area which could generate an increase in recreational facilities and parks in the Plumas Lake area.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to recreation were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.15.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to recreation and potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

California Government Code

The Government Code (Sections 65560–65568) requires a general plan to include an open space element to address the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, support of military installations, and protection of places of cultural or historical interest. Building permits, subdivision approvals, and zoning approvals must be consistent with the open space plan. The Public Resources Code (Section 5076) also requires general plans to consider demands for trail-oriented recreational uses and, when developing open-space programs, the feasibility of integrating their trail routes with appropriate segments of the state system. Jurisdictions may also create a separate parks and recreation element in addition to an open space and conservation element.

California Public Park Preservation Act

The primary instrument for protecting and preserving parkland is California's Public Park Preservation Act of 1971. Under the Public Resources Code, cities and counties may not acquire any real property that is in use as a public park for any nonpark use unless compensation, land,

or both are provided to replace the parkland acquired. This provides no net loss of parkland and facilities.

Quimby Act

The Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) authorizes cities and counties to require developers to dedicate land as parkland, pay in-lieu fees, or both as a condition of approval for a tentative or final tract map or parcel map for a residential subdivision. Revenue generated through the Quimby Act cannot be used for the operation or maintenance of existing park facilities. The Quimby Act also sets a statewide standard of three acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents unless the existing neighborhood and community park area exceeds that limit, in which case the city or county may establish a higher standard.

Mitigation Fee Act

The California Mitigation Fee Act (Government Code Sections 66000 et seq.) allows a local agency to impose fees on development projects to mitigate a project's impact on a local agency's ability to provide specified public facilities. To comply with the Mitigation Fee Act, a local agency must follow four primary requirements: 1) Make certain determinations regarding the purpose and use of a fee and establish a nexus or connection between a development project or class of project and the public improvement being financed with the fee; 2) Segregate fee revenue from the general fund to avoid commingling capital facilities fees and general funds; 3) Make findings each fiscal year describing the continuing need for fees that have been in the possession of the local agency for five years or more and that have not been spent or committed to a project; and 4) Refund any fees with interest for developer deposits for which the findings noted above cannot be made.

Civic Center Act

The Civic Center Act authorizes, and in some instances requires, the governing board of a school district to allow the use of school facilities or grounds as a civic center, for specified purposes. The act authorizes or requires, as applicable, the governing board of a school district to charge a fee, not to exceed the school district's direct costs, as defined, for use of its school facilities or grounds. Existing law, for these purposes, defines direct costs to mean the costs of supplies, utilities, janitorial services, services of school district employees, and salaries paid to school district employees directly associated with the administration of this section necessitated by the entity's use of the school facilities or grounds. Existing law, until January 1, 2025, expanded the definition of direct costs to include a specified share of the operating and maintenance costs proportional to the entity's use of the school facilities or grounds and a share of the costs for maintenance, repair, restoration, and refurbishment of the school facilities or grounds proportional to that entity's use of the school facilities or grounds, as specified.

REGIONAL

Yuba County Parks Master Plan

The Yuba County Parks Master Plan, adopted in 2008, provides a comprehensive framework for the evaluation, development, and enhancement of park and recreation resources throughout Yuba County in anticipation of significant population growth and evolving community needs through 2030. The plan aims to address both current and anticipated recreation needs resulting from population growth, which was projected to more than double, from about 70,396 in 2006 to 145,592 by 2030. The plan creates a roadmap for the development, improvement, and funding of park and recreation facilities for county residents and visitors (Yuba 2008).

Plumas Lake Specific Plan Area / North Arboga Study Area Park Master Plan

The June 2025 Plumas Lake Specific Plan Area / North Arboga Study Area Park Master Plan is the Olivehurst Public Utility District's (OPUD) updated blueprint for parks and recreation in the Plumas Lake and North Arboga regions. It unifies previous frameworks to guide park development in line with current and projected residential growth. Anchored to the national benchmark (five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents), the plan specifies parkland dedication formulas, facility types, and development standards, backed by dedicated funding via County Service Area 66. These measures ensure that as new homes are built, the community's recreational spaces, amenities, and quality of life continue to be effectively served. The plan aligns with OPUD's established role in managing over 50 acres of family-oriented parkland and leverages mechanisms like park use permits and reserved funds to sustain long-term operations (OPUD 2025a).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Chapter 8.76: Parks and Recreation Areas

This chapter establishes regulations for parks and recreational spaces under the jurisdiction of Yuba County and OPUD, aiming to protect property, public health, and welfare. It defines the scope to include both indoor and outdoor parklike areas, excluding Hammon Grove Park and Sycamore Ranch Park. Authority for rule making rests with the County Board of Supervisors for County-owned parks and with the OPUD Board of Directors for OPUD parks. Fees for reserved daytime use, overnight camping, or organized events are set by resolution and must be prepaid by agreement. The chapter also outlines parking operating hours, prohibited activities (such as littering, unauthorized vending, excessive noise), vehicle regulations, boat launch rules, and animal control provisions (including leash and cleanup requirements), with specified penalties and enforcement measures for violations.

Section 11.45.060: Parkland

Residential subdivisions must dedicate land, pay fees, or both to support parks and recreation. The requirement stems from state law and county authority and applies to new residential subdivisions, with some small-scale and non-residential exceptions. The basic standard is 0.005 acres of parkland per person (roughly five acres per 1,000 residents), calculated by dwelling counts and census-based occupancy rates.

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD5.1:** Valley Neighborhoods should provide for most daily and weekly destinations, including a mix of commercial retail and services, schools, parks, and other civic uses.
- **Policy CD8.1:** New developments should be designed to provide direct and convenient access to nearby parks, trails, commercial and public services, and transit stops.
- **Policy CD11.1:** The County will encourage provision of high quality parks and recreational areas, schools and other public services, retail, housing options, cultural attractions, walkability, and other amenities, in order to attract future employers.
- **Policy CD14.8:** The County will support and encourage joint-use parks for school and community use, joint-use parks for recreational and drainage conveyance and detention, joint-use libraries for school and community use, and other appropriate joint-use facilities. The County will encourage the use of schools as community centers to provide a range of services.
- **Policy CD15.8:** The County will encourage the joint use of parks for school and public use, as well as stormwater detention, as appropriate.

Natural Resources Element

- **Policy NR1.2:** Local parks should be developed according to local needs, including those identified in the County's Parks Master Plan and the Olivehurst Public Utilities District Park Master Plan.
- **Policy NR1.3:** New developments shall contribute in lieu fees and/or set aside land and dedicate improved, publicly accessible parkland and trails in locations and amounts dictated by applicable park standards, the County's Parks Master Plan, and the County Code.
- **Policy NR1.7:** Valley Neighborhoods should provide a diversity of park types at a ratio of at least 5 acres for every 1,000 residents.
- **Policy NR1.9:** The County will encourage collaboration among recreation providers and local school districts on planning, financing, and development of joint-use park space and recreational facilities.

3.15.2 Existing Conditions

The parks in Plumas Lake are provided and maintained by OPUD, which operates and manages approximately 37.5 acres of parks in Plumas Lake that offer amenities such as ball fields, play structures, picnic areas, and spray parks. These parks are funded through a dedicated maintenance mechanism in the Plumas Lake area called county service area (CSA) 66, which is separate from property tax revenues and ensures stable funding, specifically for maintenance and development for Plumas Lakes parks. OPUD does not receive property tax from Plumas Lake but manages the parks using these designated fees and development fees linked to Plumas Lake planning documents (OPUD 2025b). OPUD also includes parks and recreational facilities in the Olivehurst area. OPUD operates and maintains more than 50 acres of family-oriented park land. Table 3.15-1, *OPUD Parks and Recreation*, lists parks and recreational facilities in Plumas Lake and Olivehurst.

Table 3.15-1 OPUD Parks and Recreation

OPUD Parks	Street Address	Park Acreage[1]	Facilities
Plumas Lake			
Bear River Park,	1043 Monterey Way, Olivehurst	4.5	play structure, basketball court, benches, a drinking fountain
Bill Pinkerton Memorial Park, Hidden Creek Way	1865 Knights Ferry Dr, Plumas Lake	2.6	play structures, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Richard Doug Donahue Park, Wheeler Ranch Drive	Wheeler Ranch Drive, Olivehurst	5	ball field, half basketball court, play structure, shade structure, reservations, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, and a drinking fountain
Deputy B. Meilbeck Memorial Park	878 Chalice Creek Rd, Plumas Lake,	1	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountain
Donald Brown Memorial Park, Zanes Drive & Darkhorse Way	1101 Zanes Dr, Plumas Lake	2.4	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Dry Creek Park Devon Court & Minories Drive	1842 Devon Ct, Plumas Lake, CA 95961	1.3	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Eufay Wood Sr. Memorial Park River Oaks Blvd	River Oaks Blvd, Plumas Lake	10	ball fields, spray park, play structures, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, restrooms, drinking fountain.
Feather River East Park Sugarstick Dr & Abbylane Way	1037 Sugarstick Dr, Plumas Lake	5.4	ball fields, play structures, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Joanne Aiello Memorial Park	Olivehurst	2	play structures, a shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, a drinking fountain
Kule Loklo Park	851 Atherton Way, Olivehurst,	2	play structures, benches, drinking fountain
Liela Smith Memorial Park Wheeler Ranch Drive	1203 Plumas Links Street, Olivehurst	2.7	play structures, a shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, a drinking fountain
Orchard Glen Park Bridgeport Way	1846 Bridgeport Way, Olivehurst,		play structures, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Prairie Trails Park 2165 Feather Ridge Drive	2125 Feather Ridge Dr, Plumas Lake	0.6	shade structure, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountain, half basketball court, area to play corn hole
River Glen Park Kartikeya Drive	Olivehurst	1.3	Play structure, benches, drinking fountain

Table 3.15-1 OPUD Parks and Recreation

OPUD Parks	Street Address	Park Acreage[1]	Facilities
River Park Missouri Bar	2366 Canyon Creek Trail, Plumas Lake, CA 95961	1	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Riverside Meadows Park Cimarron Drive	1701 Cimarron Plumas Lake Drive, Plumas Lake	4.7	play structures, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Rolling Hills Park Wilcox Ranch	2201 Soldiers Ranch Way, Plumas Lake	2.5	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Veteran's Park Churchill Way	Kensington Dr, Olivehurst, CA 95961	6	play structure, shade structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, benches, drinking fountain
Wheeler Ranch Park	Weheeler Ranch Drive, Olivehurst	1.6	Walking trail, benches
Olivehurst			
Olivehurst Community Park, Powerline Road	Olivehurst Community Park, Olivehurst, CA 95961	9.0	Ballfields for casual or organized games, large open green spaces for recreation and play, handball wall, two basketball hoops, play structures, tennis/pickleball court, spray park, swimming pool, picnic tables and benches, drinking fountain, mature trees providing ample shade, soccer fields used for Yuba Elite FC practices and league game.
Johnson Park, Evelyn Drive	Johnson Park, Evelyn Dr, Olivehurst, CA 95961	0.8	Play structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills, and a drinking fountain.
Lindhurst Memorial Park, Mcgowan Parkway	Lindhurst Memorial Park, 1676 McGowan Pkwy, Olivehurst, CA 95961	2.6	Play structure, shade structure, basketball court, spray park, picnic tables, reservations, benches, BBQ grills, drinking fountain.
Tahiti Village Park, Biglow Drive	Tahiti Village Park, 3875 Biglow Dr, Arboga, CA 95961	2.4	Play structure, picnic tables, BBQ grills.

Source: OPUD 2025c

Notes:

1. Park acreage was estimated based on measurements obtained through the Google Earth area tool

Yuba County operates its own parks and recreation system at the county level; however, it does not manage or provide the parks in Plumas Lake. Plumas Lake's local parks services are under OPUD jurisdiction, with their own funding, planning, and maintenance separate from Yuba County parks operations. Table 3.15-2, *Yuba County Parks and Recreation*, lists the parks and recreational activities in Yuba County.

Table 3.15-2 Yuba County Parks and Recreation

Park/Recreational Facilities	Street Address	Park Acreage	Amenities
Dry Gulch Trail Park	Dry Gulch Trail Dr Plumas Lake, CA	N/A	Tables, grass area
Fernwood Park	5871 Grove Avenue Marysville, CA	7.7	Playground, basketball courts, large grass area
Friendship Park	5660 Alicia Avenue Marysville, CA	22.2	Playground, basketball courts, large grass area, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, skate park, and BBQ area
Hammon Grove Park	5560 Highway 20 Browns Valley CA	43.6	One-mile scenic trail, benches and picnic tables along the trail, 18-hole disc golf course, Historic mining features and interpretive landscape remnants
Humanity Park	6265 Wallen Dr Marysville, CA	0.8[1]	Playground, large grass area, and gazebo
Ponderosa Park	17103 Ponderosa Way Brownsville, CA 95919	37.6	Playground, picnic area, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, barbeques, paved fitness trail, amphitheater/stage area, Ponderosa Community Center
POW / MIA Park	1790 Edgewater Circle Marysville, CA 95901	7.8	Playground, picnic area, baseball diamonds, basketball courts, spray park (seasonal)
Purple Heart Park	5690 Rupert Avenue Marysville, CA	6.8	Paved walking trail
Shad Pad Park	981 Shad Rd Marysville, CA 95901	16	River access, open space
Star Bend	5034 Feather River Blvd 0.2 miles north of Algodon Rd Plumas Lake, CA	9.2	River access, boat launch, day use area

Table 3.15-2 Yuba County Parks and Recreation

Park/Recreational Facilities	Street Address	Park Acreage	Amenities
Sycamore Ranch	5390 Highway 20 Browns Valley, CA	90	Campground facilities (open seasonally, April–December; advance reservations required), two day-use pavilions (available for reservation; limited power; capacity up to 199 people), picnic areas and open spaces for gatherings or events, access to the Yuba River and Dry Creek, scenic natural setting with 90 acres of parkland adjacent to Hammon Grove Park, restrooms and parking areas (typical for day-use and campground operations), event accommodations for larger gatherings with special permits

Source: Yuba 2008; 2025a,b.

Notes:

1. Park acreage was estimated based on measurements obtained through the Google Earth area tool

The project site is owned by the District and consists of approximately 25 acres made up of one full parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 016-350-021) and part of an adjacent parcel owned by OPUD (APN 016-350-022). The project site is currently developed with fallow agricultural land with no existing buildings, paved surfaces, or formal recreational facilities. The terrain is flat, and portions of the project site contain overgrown vegetation and remnants of prior agricultural use. No recreational uses are currently on-site.

3.15.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to recreation if it would:

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.

b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

3.15.4 Project Impact Analysis

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?

The proposed project does not include a residential component that could permanently increase Plumas Lake's residential population. As discussed in Section 3.13, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would not result in substantial direct or indirect population growth that could generate an increase in use of parks and recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. While the proposed project would increase the number of students and staff at the project site who may use nearby recreational facilities before and after school, it is expected that the majority of staff and students attending the school would already reside in the County and/or Plumas Lake and would not substantially increase the use of nearby recreation facilities.

Further, consistent with the Civic Center Act, the proposed project would be made available for public use outside of school hours, including evenings, weekends, and school breaks. Under the Civic Center Act, school districts may open school facilities for community use, provided that use does not interfere with school activities and the district assumes responsibility for maintenance and supervision. By providing additional space for recreational and community activities, the proposed project would supplement existing recreational opportunities in the area and help offset physical deterioration of other recreational facilities by providing alternative locations for public use.

As such, the proposed project would not 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. Therefore, impacts related to recreation facilities would be less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less Than Significant.

b) Would the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The proposed project is an educational improvement project that would be on an existing fallow agricultural field. The proposed project does not involve or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Consistent with the Civic Center Act (California Government Code Sections 56700–56701), school facilities may be made available for public use outside of school hours, including evenings, weekends, and school breaks, without necessitating additional

construction. The proposed project would provide recreational opportunities for both the school and the community within the proposed project, thereby supplementing local recreational resources. The proposed project is evaluated in this EIR. As such, the proposed project would not result in the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that could cause significant environmental impacts. A less than significant impact would occur, and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

3.15.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for recreational resources includes existing and planned parks, open space, and recreational facilities in OPUD's recreational service areas, including Plumas Lake and Olivehurst, as well as the unincorporated areas of Yuba County. This setting accounts for ongoing and foreseeable residential and infrastructure development in the region, including the abutting residential development north of the project site, which may contribute incrementally to the demand for recreational facilities.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to recreation?

A cumulative impact would be considered significant if the proposed project, together with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, would induce substantial unplanned population growth or result in increased use of recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration would occur. Population growth in Plumas Lake would increase demand for parks and recreational facilities. Existing parks in the Plumas Lake area are funded and maintained through County Service Area (CSA) 66, a dedicated funding mechanism separate from general property tax revenues. CSA 66 provides stable funding specifically for the maintenance and development of parks in Plumas Lake. While OPUD does not receive property tax revenues from Plumas Lake, it manages the parks using CSA 66-designated fees and development fees linked to Plumas Lake planning documents.

The proposed project would not increase the residential population, nor would it require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. The project would provide recreational opportunities consistent with the Civic Center Act (California Government Code Sections 56700–56701) within the existing project footprint. In addition, the proposed project would provide recreational facilities that would be available to abutting residential development north of the project site, supplementing local recreational resources and helping offset potential deterioration of other nearby facilities.

Because the proposed project would not substantially increase the use of neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities, nor require recreational construction, its contribution to cumulative impacts would not be considerable. Cumulative impacts on recreational resources would be less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less Than Significant.

3.15.6 References

Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD). 2025a. Parks FAQs. Olivehurst Public Utility District. https://www.opud.org/parks-faqs.

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3.16 TRANSPORTATION

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project (proposed project) to impact transportation.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical reports:

- Plumas Lake School Transportation Impact Assessment, Kittelson and Associates., November 2025.

A complete copy of this study is included in Appendix L to this DEIR.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION PUBLIC COMMENTS

In accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to transportation were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.16.1 Regulatory Framework

State and regional laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are related to transportation and applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

STATE

Senate Bill 743

On September 27, 2013, Senate Bill (SB) 743 was signed into law. The legislature found that with the adoption of SB 375, the State had signaled its commitment to encourage land use and transportation planning decisions and investments that reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and thereby contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as required by Assembly Bill (AB) 32. Additionally, AB 1358, described subsequently, requires local governments to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users.

SB 743 started a process that fundamentally changes transportation impact analysis as part of CEQA compliance. These changes include the elimination of auto delay, level of service (LOS), and similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the basis for determining

significant impacts in many parts of California (if not statewide). As part of the new CEQA Guidelines, the new criteria "shall promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses" (California Public Resources Code Section 21099[b][1]). On January 20, 2016, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), formerly the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, released proposed revisions to its CEQA Guidelines for the implementation of SB 743. LCI developed alternative metrics and thresholds based on VMT. The guidelines were certified by the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency in December 2018, and automobile delay, as described solely by LOS or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion, shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment. As of July 1, 2020, lead agencies are required to consider VMT as the metric for determining transportation impacts under CEQA. The guidance provided relative to VMT significance criteria is focused primarily on land use projects, such as residential, office, and retail uses. However, as noted in the updated CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, agencies are directed to choose metrics that are appropriate for their jurisdiction to evaluate the potential impacts of a project in terms of VMT.

Comprehensive School Safety Plans

Comprehensive School Safety Plans (CSSPs) are required for all California public K–12 schools under Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5 to ensure a safe and orderly learning environment and effective emergency preparedness. Each school must annually develop, review, and adopt a CSSP in consultation with school staff, parents, and local first responders, with approval by the governing board or county office of education. The plan must address campus crime assessment, emergency and disaster response procedures, fire and earthquake preparedness, safe ingress and egress, and coordination with public safety agencies, while also ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities. CSSPs must be available for public inspection, except for sensitive tactical response information, and districts are responsible for monitoring compliance and reporting noncompliant schools to the California Department of Education (CDE 2026).

REGIONAL

Sacramento Area Council of Governments MTP/SCS

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for a six-county region, including Yuba County. SACOG develops and implements the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), which coordinates long-range transportation and land use planning. The 2020 MTP/SCS outlines a transportation investment and land use strategy for a prosperous region, focusing on job opportunities, affordable housing, air quality improvement, preservation of natural resources, and reducing GHG emissions to help California achieve its climate change goals. Adopted in November 2019, the plan prepares for an expected 620,000 new residents by

2040 through revitalization of existing communities and investment in aging suburbs and corridors (SACOG 2019).

Yuba-Sutter NextGen Transit Plan Master Document

Adopted in May 2023, the NextGen Transit Plan identifies new innovative solutions to improve the travel needs and connections in our community. Expected to shape the Yuba-Sutter Transit system for the next four years through pandemic recovery, the plan includes the following innovations (YSTA 2023a):

- Construction of a new transit operating, maintenance, and administration facility
- Transition to the large-scale operation of zero-emission buses
- Modifications to existing routes, new service areas, and alternative service models

Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan

The Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation (Cal. Code Regs. Title 13, Section 2023.1(d)) requires each transit agency to submit a complete Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan (Rollout Plan), approved by its governing body, showing how it plans to achieve a full transition to zero-emission buses (ZEBs). To comply with the regulation, Yuba-Sutter Transit Board approved the Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan on June 15, 2023. The plan reports that 15 small battery-electric buses (BEBs) combined with existing and planned Dial-A-Ride fleet would be adequate to serve the four zones to be implemented in Yuba City, Marysville, Linda, and Olivehurst. A fifth zone for Plumas Lake is proposed for a future phase as that area further develops (YSTA 2023b)

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development Element

- **Policy CD16.10:** The County will not use traffic level of service policies to analyze and mitigate CEQA impacts of new developments, but instead will use its level of service policies to assess fair-share funding of transportation facilities necessary to serve new projects.
- **Policy CD16.11:** The County will analyze and mitigate transportation impacts in CEQA documents according to their relative increase in vehicular travel demand.
- **Policy CD17.2:** New developments shall be designed to facilitate safe and convenient travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers.
- **Policy CD17.6:** New developments and specific plans shall analyze and mitigate impacts related to increased travel demand, as feasible and consistent with County General Plan policy.
- **Policy CD20.1:** New developments shall be designed to discourage concentration of traffic at a few intersections. Multiple points of access shall be provided, wherever feasible.

- **Policy CD20.2:** New developments in the Valley Growth Boundary shall arrange roads in an interconnected block pattern, so that local pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic do not have to use Arterials to circulate within the neighborhood. The maximum average block length in new subdivisions approved in the Valley Growth Boundary should be approximately 450 feet. Smaller block sizes should be used around Neighborhood Centers, Community Centers, and Employment Centers.
- **Policy CD20.3:** New developments shall connect with adjacent roadways and stubbed roads and shall provide frequent stubbed roadways in coordination with future planned development areas. Plans and projects shall connect to adjacent planned development areas and adjacent roadways at a minimum of 600-foot intervals. This minimum interval does not apply to development areas that are adjacent to existing or planned future limited-access highways, freeways, or expressways, or other areas where physical constraints would make this level of connectivity infeasible.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Section 11.22.050: Emergency Access

Section 11.22.050 requires that all roads and private driveways, unless exempt, be constructed to allow safe access for both emergency wildland fire equipment and civilian evacuation. New roads, driveways, and buildings must have clearly visible and legible address signs installed before final approvals. Roads must meet specific construction standards, including load-bearing capacity and vertical clearance. Driveways must be at least 12 feet wide with 15 feet of clearance from combustible vegetation, include turnouts and turnarounds as needed based on length, and adhere to slope limits unless approved by the fire district. All new roadway structures must meet load, clearance, and signage standards. When proposing a gate on a private road to restrict access, the gate must be at least 14 feet wide and 2 feet wider than the traffic lane. It should be positioned at least 30 feet from the roadway to prevent traffic obstruction while opening. Additionally, a key box is required for areas that have secured openings like locked gates.

Yuba County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan

The County of Yuba has prepared the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan (Mobility Plan) to be a comprehensive planning document for bicycle and pedestrian improvements within the unincorporated county area, including Plumas Lake. The Mobility Plan provides long-term identification of improvements for active transportation systems within Yuba County. The Mobility Plan is aligned with similar goals and objectives of SACOG and California Streets and Highways Code Section 891.2, which aims to provide an accessible, safe, convenient, and connected active transportation system (Yuba County 2024).

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan outlines a circulation strategy for the plan area. Private parcels will be accessed from a network of public roads. In general, no access will be permitted directly from major arterial roads except for limited situations where entrances to commercial centers, schools, and parks can be accomplished safely and without creating an intrusion of nonresidential traffic into neighborhoods. Lots that otherwise abut arterials shall be restricted from obtaining individual access along those roadways.

3.16.2 Existing Conditions

The roadway network in the vicinity of the project site (which includes sidewalks and on-street parking areas), an inventory of the types of traffic control devices and crosswalk locations, the nearby transit routes, and the existing traffic volumes are described below.

EXISTING ROADWAY NETWORK

State Routes

State Route 70 (SR-70) provides critical regional access to Plumas Lake, connecting the community to Yuba City, Marysville, and Sacramento. SR-70 has four lanes and interchanges at Plumas Lake Boulevard and Feather River Boulevard support access to and from the community.

Local Streets

- **River Oaks Boulevard** serves as the primary north–south arterial through Plumas Lake, functioning as the community's main spine. It connects residential neighborhoods with the Plumas Lake Boulevard and Feather River Boulevard interchanges at SR-70 and consists of four travel lanes along most of its alignment within the community.
- **Plumas Lake Boulevard** functions as the primary east–west arterial through the community, providing a direct connection between River Oaks Boulevard and SR-70. It serves as one of two interchanges linking Plumas Lake to the regional highway system, accommodating both commuter and local traffic. Within the community, Plumas Lake Boulevard is generally a four-lane facility with a landscaped median and includes some segments with bicycle lanes.
- **Feather River Boulevard** is a major north–south roadway that runs along the eastern edge of Plumas Lake, parallel to SR-70. It connects to the community via the Feather River Boulevard interchange with SR-70 and provides access to residential areas, River Oaks Boulevard, and surrounding rural lands. The roadway generally operates as a two-lane facility within the project site and serves as an important secondary access route to and from the community.

- **Other local streets.** Several local streets intersect with River Oaks Boulevard and Feather River Boulevard within the project site, providing access between residential neighborhoods and the community's primary roadways. These include Zanes Drive, Hidden Creek Way, Leighton Grove Drive, Kensington Drive, Cimarron Drive, Santa Cruz Drive, and Lockwood Boulevard, as well as Chalice Creek Road, which intersects Feather River Boulevard. In addition, Blackbird Way and Kensington Drive provide project site driveway access. These facilities are generally two-lane local streets serving residential traffic and school circulation.

Truck Facilities

The Yuba County 2030 General Plan identifies a system of designated truck routes that includes the Plumas Lake area, reflecting the role of local arterials in goods movement and connectivity to regional corridors, such as River Oaks Boulevard, Plumas Lake Boulevard, and Feather River Boulevard, which facilitate connections between the community and SR-70, an important regional corridor for goods movement.

Public Transit

Public transit service in Plumas Lake is provided by Yuba–Sutter Transit. The community is served by the Plumas Lake Park & Ride lot, located off SR-70 at Feather River Boulevard. This facility is a stop for Yuba–Sutter Transit's Sacramento Commuter Express and Midday Express routes, which provide direct service to downtown Sacramento on weekdays. The commuter routes operate primarily during peak periods in the morning and afternoon, while the midday service offers additional trips between peak hours. Local fixed-route bus service does not currently operate within Plumas Lake, but residents can connect to the regional system via the Park & Ride lot.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The existing bicycle network in Plumas Lake is along River Oaks Boulevard, which has continuous Class II bike lanes from Algodon Road in the north to Feather River Boulevard in the south, providing north–south connectivity through the community. Additional bike lane segments are present along Plumas Lake Boulevard.

Recent and planned improvements include the Plumas Lake Bike Path III project, a 0.43-mile Class I multiuse path under construction along Feather River Boulevard near River Oaks Boulevard, and a western trail segment being built by a developer. Together, these projects form part of a long-term vision for a 7.3-mile looped trail system intended to expand safe pedestrian and bicycle access across the community.

Future facilities identified in the Yuba County Bicycle Master Plan include:

- Class II bike lanes on Plumas Lake Boulevard (continuing and expanding the current facilities).
- A Class III bike route on Feather River Boulevard, which will close the planned community loop.
- A Class I multiuse path adjacent to SR-70, creating a separated facility along the highway corridor.

3.16.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to transportation if it would:

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

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b).

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

d) Result in inadequate emergency access.

METHODOLOGY

As part of the proposed project, an analysis was conducted to evaluate the transportation impacts of the proposed project; see the Transportation Impact Assessment (Appendix L). The analysis was completed in coordination with the Yuba County Public Works Department and evaluates both CEQA transportation impacts and local transportation operations. The existing and projected traffic conditions on the roadways that provide access to the project site were documented.

On September 27, 2013, SB 743 was signed into law, starting a process that fundamentally changed transportation impact analyses as part of CEQA compliance. SB 743 eliminated auto delay, LOS, and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the sole basis for determining significant impacts under CEQA. As part of the current CEQA Guidelines, the criteria “shall promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses” (Public Resources Code Section 21099(b)(1)). Pursuant to SB 743, the California Natural Resources Agency adopted revisions to the CEQA Guidelines on December 28, 2018, to implement SB 743. CEQA Guidelines

Section 15064.3 describes how transportation impacts are to be analyzed after SB 743. Under the CEQA Guidelines, metrics related to VMT were required beginning July 1, 2020, to evaluate the significance of transportation impacts under CEQA for development projects, land use plans, and transportation infrastructure projects. State courts ruled that under the Public Resources Code Section 21099(b)(2), "automobile delay, as described solely by level of service or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment" under CEQA, except for roadway capacity projects.

This DEIR incorporates the CEQA analysis for the proposed project. The proposed project's traffic forecasts (i.e., LOS analysis) is provided in Appendix L for informational purposes.

Project Trip Generation

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual is the most commonly used source to obtain trip generation rates. Trip generation rates for middle schools are available from the ITE Trip Generation Manual. For the proposed project, the applicable trip generation rates are from Land Use Code 522 (Middle School/Junior High School), shown in Table 3.16-1, *ITE Vehicle Trip Generation Rates*.

Table 3.16-1 ITE Vehicle Trip Generation Rates

ITE Land Use Code	Unit	Daily Rate	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
			In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Middle School – 522	Students	2.10	54%	46%	0.67	48%	52%	0.15

Source: Kittelson and Associates 2025 (included as EIR Appendix L).

For the Opening Year (2027 – Phase 1), the proposed project would generate 945 daily trips with 302 AM (163 inbound and 139 outbound) peak-hour trips and 68 PM (32 inbound and 35 outbound) peak-hour trips. At full buildout (Phase 4), the proposed project would generate 2,520 daily trips with 804 AM (434 inbound and 370 outbound) peak-hour trips and 180 PM (86 inbound and 94 outbound) peak-hour trips. The trip generation for Phase 1 and full buildout conditions are summarized in Table 3.16-2, *Proposed Project Trip Generation*.

Table 3.16-2 Proposed Project Trip Generation

Phase	Students	Weekday Daily Trips	Weekday AM Peak Hour			Weekday PM Peak Hour		
			In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Phase 1 (2027)	450	945	163	169	302	32	35	68
Phase 4 (2040)	1,200	2,520	434	370	804	86	94	180

Source: Kittelson and Associates 2025 (included as EIR Appendix L).

3.16.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?

Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The SACOG 2020 MTP/SCS is a 20-year plan focused on fostering vibrant communities with accessible housing, jobs, and clean air. The MTP/SCS aims for success through policies and collaboration among agencies over the next one to five years. The MTP/SCS outlines essential actions in four priority policy areas to achieve its long-term vision. Table 3.11-1, *Proposed Project Consistency Analysis with MTP/SCS Goals*, in Section 3.11, *Land Use and Planning*, provides an analysis of proposed project consistency with the MTP/SCS goals.

Yuba-Sutter NextGen Transit Plan Master Document

The Yuba-Sutter NextGen Transit Plan Master Document (Transit Plan) is designed to enhance the Yuba-Sutter Transit system over the next 5 to 10 years, focusing on pandemic recovery, the establishment of a new transit facility, and the implementation of zero-emission buses. The Transit Plan includes a comprehensive review of all services, leading to recommendations for route modifications, new service areas, alternative models, and the adoption of innovative technology. The goal is to improve customer travel experiences by reducing travel times and enhancing service frequency and connections, while introducing new transit options (YSTA 2023a).

The Transit Plan notes that, “There are growing areas in southern Yuba County, namely Plumas Lake, where major housing developments are being constructed. Yuba-Sutter Transit already serves a park and rise in close proximity to these developments.” (YSTA 2023a, pg. 60). Although there is interest in the Plumas Lake area, the plan does not specify specific transit projects in the area nor in the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not interfere with or conflict with the Transit Plan. This impact is less than significant.

Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan

The Zero-Emissions Bus Rollout Plan outlines a transition to zero-emission buses (ZEBs) using 15 small battery-electric buses (BEBs) alongside existing Dial-A-Ride services to cover four zones: Yuba City, Marysville, Linda, and Olivehurst, with plans for a fifth zone in Plumas Lake as development continues. As there are no concrete plans for ZEBs for Plumas Lake, the proposed project would not interfere with or conflict with this plan.

Yuba County General Plan

Section 3.16.1, *Regulatory Framework*, lists the Yuba County General Plan policies related to transportation, including those addressing pedestrian and bicycle access, parking, LOS, public transit, and VMT as they pertain to the proposed project.

Policy CD16.10 states that the County will not use traffic LOS policies to analyze and mitigate CEQA impacts of new development. Policy CD16.11 specifies that transportation impacts shall instead be analyzed and mitigated based on the relative increase in vehicular travel demand. Similarly, Policy CD17.6 requires that new development and specific plans analyze and mitigate impacts associated with increased travel demand, as feasible and consistent with the County General Plan. As further discussed in Impact (b), the transportation analysis evaluates VMT rather than LOS to assess project impacts. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with these policies regarding the analysis of travel demand.

Policy CD17.2 states that new developments shall be designed to facilitate safe and convenient travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers. Consistent with Policy CD17.2, the proposed project would transform a currently inaccessible agricultural parcel by constructing approximately 78,756 square feet (1.81 acres) of roadway improvements, including an 11,080-square-foot drop-off area, a 61,453-square-foot fire lane, and a 312-foot extension of Blackbird Way, along with new sidewalks, a dedicated left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard, and pedestrian safety enhancements to provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers. In addition, as mentioned previously, future facilities identified in the Yuba County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan include a Class III bike route on Feather River Boulevard and a Class I multiuse path adjacent to SR-70, the proposed project would not interfere with the implementation of these projects. Public transit in Plumas Lake is provided by Yuba Sutter Transit through the Plumas Lake Park & Ride lot at SR-70 and Feather River Boulevard, which is 1.7 miles southeast of the project site. The proposed project would not interfere with this bus stop.

Policy CD20.1 states that new developments shall be designed to discourage concentration of traffic at a few intersections. Multiple points of access shall be provided, wherever feasible. In the near term, the proposed project's operations would be adequately accommodated by the proposed roadway and intersection improvements. In the long term, regional growth and continued build out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan may result in operational deficiencies to intersections. These deficiencies are driven by regional growth rather than the proposed project. Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way would provide access to the project site. However, access to the project site from both Blackbird Way and Finsbury Way will be gated and restricted to authorized personnel only. These access points will not be available for parents or student traffic to promote controlled circulation and safety.

Policy CD20.2 requires that new developments within the Valley Growth Boundary provide an interconnected local street network that allows pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle circulation without relying on arterial roads. Policy CD20.3 requires that new developments connect with adjacent roadways and stubbed roads and provide frequent stubbed roadways in coordination with future planned development areas. The proposed project is consistent with these policies because it would extend Kensington Drive east through the project site to connect with the proposed parking lot and Blackbird Way to existing River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive, thereby improving internal circulation and local access. In addition, the proposed project would construct approximately 312 linear feet of Blackbird Way along the east side of the campus and gated access points with Blackbird Way and Finsbury Way, establishing connections to existing and planned local roads and supporting a continuous, well-connected street network that facilitates safe and efficient neighborhood circulation.

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Section 11.22.050 of the Yuba County Ordinance Code requires that public roads and private driveways be designed and constructed to provide safe access for emergency wildland fire equipment and civilian evacuation. The ordinance also requires new roads, driveways, and buildings to include clearly visible and legible address signage prior to final approval, and to meet established standards for load-bearing capacity, vertical clearance, and roadway signage. When proposing a gate on a private road to restrict access, the gate must be at least 14 feet wide and 2 feet wider than the traffic lane. It should be positioned at least 30 feet from the roadway to prevent traffic obstruction while opening. Additionally, a key box is required for areas that have secured openings like locked gates.

The proposed project includes approximately 78,756 square feet of new roadway improvements (see Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*). Improvements include construction of an approximately 11,080-square-foot pick-up/drop-off area, a roundabout on the west side of the site connecting to Finsbury Way, and an access road extending Kensington Drive westward to the school parking lot and Blackbird Way. The proposed project also includes the installation of gates on Blackbird Way and Finsbury Way that would be limited to authorized personnel. The proposed project would also construct approximately 312 linear feet of Blackbird Way and incorporate traffic facility enhancements, including a designated drop-off area and a 61,453-square-foot fire lane to accommodate bus circulation and emergency vehicle access.

The roadway extension and associated intersection improvements at River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive would be designed in accordance with Yuba County standards and coordinated with the County Department of Public Works. The proposed project would provide adequate emergency access and evacuation routes and would comply with Section 11.22.050 of the Yuba County Ordinance Code. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the Yuba County Ordinance Code. Impacts would be less than significant.

Yuba County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan

The Mobility Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for enhancements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the unincorporated areas, including Plumas Lake. The Mobility Plan aims to identify long-term improvements for active transportation within Yuba County to create a safe, accessible, and connected active transportation system. According to the Plumas Lake – Recommended Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (With Existing) Figure in the Mobility Plan, there are no bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure projects within the project site (Yuba County 2024, pg. 36). The proposed roadways and off-site improvements of the proposed project would not conflict with the Mobility Plan. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan outlines a circulation strategy for the plan area. The proposed project would extend Kensington Drive and Blackbird Way and provide connections to a network of public roadways, including River Oaks Boulevard, Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way. Primary access to the project site would be provided at Kensington Drive extension that would connect to River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive. While River Oaks Boulevard is identified as an arterial by the General Plan, the proposed project includes intersection improvements at River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive to ensure safe and adequate access to the project site and circulation along rights-of-way. Further, the connection to the existing street network and improvements along public rights-of-way would comply with County requirements and would be reviewed and approved by the County Department of Public Works. Therefore, the proposed project would support the Plumas Lake Specific Plan circulation, and a less-than-significant impact would occur.

Conclusion

The proposed project would not conflict with any adopted circulation system plan, ordinance, or policy related to pedestrian, bicycle infrastructure, or transit service. The proposed project would not preclude the County from implementing transportation infrastructure features and would not interfere with the operation of transit service. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)?

SB 743 eliminates the need for some projects to be analyzed for CEQA purposes, and these projects can be screened from requiring a VMT analysis. “Screened” is defined as projects that do not need to be analyzed for CEQA purposes.

The County of Yuba has not adopted its own VMT thresholds or guidelines. Therefore, screening criteria contained in LCI's *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* are applied. According to LCI's guidance, local-serving retail and community-serving uses in predominantly residential areas tend to shorten trip lengths and reduce VMT and may therefore be presumed to result in less-than-significant impacts (see Appendix L).

The proposed project consists of a middle school that would serve the entire Plumas Lake Elementary School District. The District encompasses the Plumas Lake community as well as unincorporated areas to the northeast of Plumas Lake. Riverside Meadows currently operates as the District's middle school at an existing location, and students are already attending middle school within the District's boundaries. The proposed project would continue to serve the same student population and District service area. The proposed project would not introduce a new use or expand the District's service area, nor would it attract students from outside the community. Instead, it would maintain an existing local-serving educational use near the majority of students residing in the Plumas Lake community and surrounding residential areas, including areas planned for future residential development (see Appendix L). Consistent with the proposed project's objectives, the proposed project would provide sufficient capacity to accommodate current and projected enrollment growth within the Plumas Lake community and minimize student travel distances by siting educational facilities near existing and planned residential development.

The proposed project qualifies as local-serving and can be presumed to result in less-than-significant VMT impacts. The proposed project is therefore screened out of further detailed VMT analysis. Accordingly, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant transportation impact with respect to VMT.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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

Geometric Design

The proposed project includes the construction of an access road to serve the proposed middle school. The proposed project would be accessed via River Oaks Boulevard at Kensington Drive. Kensington Drive would be extended east, through the project site, to connect with the project's proposed parking lot and Blackbird Way. The proposed project also includes the construction of approximately 312 linear feet of Blackbird Way, along the east side of the proposed project, providing a connection to the segment of Blackbird Way located on the adjacent property to the north of the project site. A drop-off area and a fire lane (including portions of concrete and roadway) would be installed on the west side of Blackbird Way and

would accommodate bus pick-ups/drop-offs. Parent/guardian pickup/drop-offs would occur along the pick-up/drop-off zone in the northern parking lot.

Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way would provide access to the project site. Access to the project site from both Blackbird Way and Finsbury Way will be gated and restricted to authorized personnel only. These access points will not be available for parent or student traffic, which would promote controlled circulation and safety. Sidewalks are proposed along Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and the intersection of Kensington Drive and River Oaks Boulevard. At the intersection of Kensington Drive and River Oaks Boulevard, the eastbound approach will be configured with a left-turn lane and a shared through/right-turn lane. As a project design feature, a dedicated left-turn lane will be added to the northbound approach on River Oaks Boulevard to facilitate vehicular access to the project site.

As part of the proposed project, Kensington Drive would be extended eastward from River Oaks Boulevard through the project site to provide the main access to the middle school campus. This new roadway extension and associated intersection improvements at River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive are designed to meet Yuba County design standards and are being developed in coordination with the County Department of Public Works. The intersection improvements include the addition of a dedicated left-turn lane on the northbound approach of River Oaks Boulevard and configuration of the eastbound Kensington Drive approach with a dedicated left-turn lane and shared through/right-turn lane. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in hazardous conditions, and no geometric deficiencies attributable to the project have been identified.

Queuing

The proposed project includes a 109-space parking lot on the north side of the project site. The south side of the parking lot would also include a pick-up/drop-off zone with a length of approximately 700 feet. The west side of the parking lot would end in a roundabout with a roadway connecting to Finsbury Way, north of the project site. The distance measured from River Oaks looping through the roundabout and back to the beginning of the drop-off zone provides approximately 2,500 feet in length, which can contain approximately 100 vehicles in queue. Given the capacity to queue up vehicles, the length of the drop-off area and the school student capacity, the internal circulation would accommodate school traffic on-site without spilling to River Oaks Boulevard. Therefore, vehicles associated with the proposed project would not substantially interfere with vehicle circulation along the existing River Oaks Boulevard.

Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility

As part of the proposed project, a series of roadway and off-site improvements would be constructed to support safe and efficient access to the proposed middle school campus. The proposed project would include the construction of a dedicated left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard to facilitate vehicular access to the project site. Other off-site improvements would

include curb enhancements along River Oaks Boulevard, as well as the installation of a striped pedestrian sidewalk at the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard and Kensington Drive to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. The roadway improvements are designed to meet Yuba County design standards and are being developed in coordination with the County Department of Public Works.

The District is working with the County to design and review the proposed project circulation and off-site improvements. Considering the pedestrian and cyclists' safety and left-turning conflicts at this intersection, the Transportation Impact Assessment recommends having an all-way stop at the intersection of Kensington Drive and River Oaks Boulevard in the opening year conditions to enhance crosswalk safety and reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. This will be confirmed in consultation with the County as this intersection is under the County's jurisdiction. Should the County determine that an all-way stop is warranted at this intersection, the installation of stop signs on River Oaks Boulevard would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature. For the intersection of Kensington Drive at River Oaks Boulevard, since it is the main school access driveway, the future year traffic analysis suggests that a traffic signal would be warranted and should be installed by year 2040. As discussed previously and in the Transportation Impact Assessment (Appendix L), future regional growth and continued build out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan may result in operational deficiencies to intersections. In the long term, deficiencies are driven by regional growth rather than the proposed project itself. Should the need for a traffic signal be warranted in the future, it will be evaluated and determined by the County at that time. A CEQA evaluation would be prepared as part of that effort.

Incompatible Uses

The proposed project includes the construction and operation of a middle school. The proposed project would serve the local community. It is consistent with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, which contemplated the construction of various schools across the specific plan area. As such, the proposed project does not include incompatible uses.

Conclusion

The proposed project does not propose geometric design features (e.g., sharp curves, unusual lane configurations) or land uses incompatible with surrounding development. Access would be provided via existing roadway connections that meet County design standards. Intersections and ramps within the project site are expected to continue operating safely, and no geometric deficiencies attributable to the proposed project have been identified. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

Operation

As a school project, the proposed project would be required to comply with the CSSP requirements pursuant to California Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan would establish procedures for emergency preparedness and response, including evacuation, communication, and coordination protocols for a range of natural and human-caused hazards. Education Code Section 32282(a) states that the CSSP must include procedures for safe ingress and egress of students, parents/guardians, and school employees to and from school site. Preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan would reduce potential risks to students, staff, and visitors in the event of an emergency. This impact is less than significant.

Construction

River Oaks Boulevard, a primary access route to SR-70, serves as an emergency evacuation route in Yuba County. Temporary closures on this roadway due to the project's off-site improvements could interfere with emergency response and evacuations during construction. Although Yuba County Municipal Code Section 11.22.050 establishes standards for emergency access, including roadway width, signage, clearance, and structural integrity—compliance alone does not eliminate the potential risk. While adherence to these standards and project design review would reduce risks during operation, construction impacts could be significant unless carefully coordinated with emergency services to maintain continuous access. Therefore, this impact is determined to be potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact T-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary route to State Route 70, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could result in inadequate emergency access.

The proposed project would implement Mitigation Measure WIL-1 (see Section 3.19, *Wildfire*).

Implementation of Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would ensure that emergency access and evacuation routes remain functional throughout the construction period. By requiring the identification and maintenance of alternate routes, and coordination with emergency services, the mitigation measure would prevent unanticipated delays or access barriers. As such, the potential for the construction of the proposed project to result in inadequate emergency access would be adequately addressed, and the impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than Significant.

3.16.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative study area for transportation impacts includes the Plumas Lake community and the local roadway network providing access to the project site, including River Oaks Boulevard, Plumas Lake Boulevard, Feather River Boulevard, Kensington Drive, Blackbird Way, and Finsbury Way. Cumulative projects consist of planned residential, commercial, and community developments in Plumas Lake and surrounding areas, as identified in the Yuba County General Plan, local development approvals, and the Yuba County Travel Demand Model. Cumulative traffic forecasts for the year 2040 incorporate growth from these planned projects and regional land use assumptions.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to transportation?

The proposed project would not conflict with plans listed in impact discission (a), which address the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure. Transportation improvements in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area are implemented through a coordinated planning and development process whereby individual projects are required to construct or fund improvements necessary to maintain safe and efficient circulation as growth occurs. Consistent with this framework, the proposed project would include both on-site and off-site roadway improvements that enhance connectivity and provide safe and efficient access to the proposed middle school. Specifically, the proposed project would improve multimodal connectivity between the project site and surrounding neighborhoods through the extension and curb improvements along Kensington Drive, installation of a crosswalk, and construction of a dedicated left-turn lane on River Oaks Boulevard. These improvements would enhance vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle safety and would integrate the project site into the existing and planned circulation network. By improving local access and circulation, the proposed project would support planned transportation improvements in the area and would not create conditions that would contribute to a significant cumulative impact.

The proposed project would not conflict with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b), as it is screened from detailed VMT analysis. The proposed project involves establishing a middle school to serve the Plumas Lake Elementary School District, which includes the Plumas Lake community and adjacent unincorporated areas. It aims to continue serving the existing student population without expanding the District's service area or attracting students from outside the community. The project will support current and projected enrollment growth while minimizing travel distances for students by being located near existing and planned residential developments. The proposed project is expected to generate approximately 2.10 daily trips per student, or about 2,520 daily trips at full buildout. Because most trips would originate within the local community, VMT impacts would be considered less than significant. Initial enrollment is anticipated to be approximately 432 students in fall 2027, gradually increasing to a full capacity of 1,200 students. Trip generation would increase proportionally as the campus is

expanded in phases, consistent with local roadway capacity and planned improvements. Because most trips would originate within the local community, the proposed project would result in less-than-significant VMT impacts on both a project-level and cumulative basis.

The proposed project includes off-site improvements to River Oaks Boulevard, constructed in accordance with County design standards, ensuring no increase in hazards due to geometric design features. Because River Oaks Boulevard also serves as a primary access route to SR-70 and functions as an emergency evacuation corridor, temporary construction activities could potentially interfere with emergency response or evacuation operations. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure WIL-01, which requires the maintenance of emergency access, coordination with emergency services, and identification of alternate routes, would ensure continued emergency functionality during construction. Construction activities would be temporary in nature and would be required to comply with approved construction management practices and County requirements applicable to all development in the area. Similar mitigation measures and design requirements would apply to other planned and future projects, including the nearby residential development, ensuring that cumulative construction activities do not compromise emergency response or evacuation functionality. With implementation of mitigation and adherence to County standards, adequate internal circulation, emergency access, and regional connectivity would be maintained during both construction and long-term operation. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in or contribute to significant cumulative impacts.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant. The proposed project and other foreseeable cumulative developments would implement similar circulation, transportation, and safety improvements, preventing any substantial adverse cumulative impacts.

3.16.6 References

California Department of Education (CDE). 2026. Comprehensive School Safety Plans. https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/vp/cssp.asp.

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3.17 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates the potential for the proposed project to result in impacts to tribal cultural resources (TCRs) under the CEQA. TCRs include prehistoric and historic sites, structures, districts, places, and landscapes, or any other physical evidence associated with human activity that a California Native American tribe considers important for scientific, traditional, religious, or other cultural reasons (Public Resources Code [PRC] §21074). Other potential impacts to cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric, historic, paleontological, and disturbance of human remains) are evaluated in Section 3.5, *Cultural Resources*.

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical report:

- Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project, ECORP Consulting, Inc. July 2025.

A complete copy of this report is included as Appendix E in this DEIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of CEQA Guidelines, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

One comment letter from the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), dated June 20, 2025, was received related to tribal cultural resources. The relevant issues raised in the comment letter are addressed throughout this section. Refer to Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summar*y, in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, for a full summary of all comments received and Appendix A for the contents of the NOP comment letters.

3.17.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to tribal cultural resources that are applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The NHPA establishes the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and coordinates public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect significant historic and archaeological resources.

Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of undertakings on historic properties, including properties of significance to federally recognized tribes, and to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (United States Code, Title 16, Sections 470aa–mm) became law on October 31, 1979, and has been amended four times. It regulates the protection of archaeological resources and sites that are on federal and Indian lands.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Title 25, United States Code (1990), defines "cultural items," "sacred objects," and "objects of cultural patrimony"; establishes an ownership hierarchy; provides for review; allows excavation of human remains; stipulates return of the remains according to ownership; sets penalties for violations; calls for inventories; and provides for return of specified cultural items.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act recognizes that Native American religious practices, sacred sites, and sacred objects have not been properly protected under other statutes. It establishes as national policy that traditional practices and beliefs, sites (including right of access), and the use of sacred objects shall be protected and preserved. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is a federal law passed in 1990 that mandates museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items—such as human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony—to lineal descendants or culturally affiliated Indian tribes.

STATE

California Public Resources Code

Archaeological resources are protected pursuant to a wide variety of State policies and regulations enumerated under the California Public Resources Code. Cultural resources are recognized as a nonrenewable resource and therefore receive protection under the California Public Resources Code (PRC) and CEQA.

- **PRC Sections 5097.9 to 5097.991** provide protection to Native American historical and cultural resources and sacred sites and identify the powers and duties of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). They also require notification to descendants of discoveries of Native American human remains and provide for treatment and disposition of human remains and associated grave goods.

- **PRC Section 5097.9** states that no public agency or private party on public property shall "interfere with the free expression or exercise of Native American Religion." The code further states that:
  - No such agency or party [shall] cause severe or irreparable damage to any Native American sanctified cemetery, place of worship, religious or ceremonial site, or sacred shrine… except on a clear and convincing showing that the public interest and necessity so require. County and city lands are exempt from this provision, except for parklands larger than 100 acres.

California Health and Safety Code

The discovery of human remains is regulated by California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which states that:

In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation…until the coroner…has determined…that the remains are not subject to…provisions of law concerning investigation of the circumstances, manner and cause of any death, and the recommendations concerning the treatment and disposition of the human remains have been made to the person responsible…. The coroner shall make his or her determination within two working days from the time the person responsible for the excavation, or his or her authorized representative, notifies the coroner of the discovery or recognition of the human remains. If the coroner determines that the remains are not subject to his or her authority and…has reason to believe that they are those of a Native American, he or she shall contact, by telephone within 24 hours, the Native American Heritage Commission.

Assembly Bill 52

Assembly Bill (AB) 52, the Native American Historic Resource Protection Act, sets forth a proactive approach intended to reduce the potential for delay and conflicts between Native American and development interests. Projects subject to AB 52 are those that file a notice of preparation for an EIR or notice of intent to adopt a negative or mitigated negative declaration on or after July 1, 2016. AB 52 adds tribal cultural resources to the specific cultural resources protected under CEQA. Under AB 52, a tribal cultural resource is defined as a site, feature, place, cultural landscape (must be geographically defined in terms of size and scope), sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that is either included or eligible for inclusion in the California Register or included in a local register of historical resources. A Native American Tribe or the lead agency, supported by substantial evidence, may choose at its discretion to treat a resource as a tribal cultural resource. AB 52 also mandates lead agencies to consult with tribes, if requested by the tribe, and sets the principles for conducting and concluding consultation.

Government Code Section 65092

When there is a public hearing, a notice will be sent 10 days in advance to any Native American tribes who are on the contact list and filed a written request for notice. The contact list is maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission.

REGIONAL

Yuba County 2030 General Plan

The Yuba County 2030 General Plan includes the following action from the Natural Resources Element (Yuba 2011).

- **Action NR6.1 Environmental Review and Mitigation**. Building on the analysis in the General Plan Program EIR, new development projects that could have significant adverse impacts to prehistoric or historic resources will be required to assess impacts and provide mitigation. The following steps, or those deemed equally effective by the County, will be followed:
  - Request information from the Native American Heritage Commission regarding Native American groups that may have important sites in areas that could be affected by project development
  - Involve the local Native American community in determining the appropriate mitigation of impacts to significant prehistoric sites.
  - Consult the County's historic and cultural resources database and updated information from the North Central Information Center regarding cultural resource sites, structures, or landscapes that could be affected by project activities.
  - Based upon the sensitivity of the subject proposed project area (see Exhibit NR-6), additional technical work may be required. Where a cultural resources survey has not been performed:
    - A pedestrian survey may be required in areas of low sensitivity;
    - A pedestrian survey will be required in areas of moderate and high sensitivity; and
    - Based on findings of the pedestrian survey, additional technical studies may be required, such as geoarchaeological sensitivity analysis, Native American consultation, ethnographic studies, or other analysis scaled according to the nature of the individual project.
  - For new developments that would alter historic structures (structures 50 years old or older), a qualified architectural historian shall conduct a record search and assess the potential for the project to result in significant impacts to historical resources that occur as part of the existing built environment.
  - Determination of impacts, significance, and mitigation (i.e., site monitors, avoidance, and/or other measures) shall be made by a qualified professional archaeologist or architectural historian, as appropriate.

- If impacts cannot be avoided through project design, appropriate and feasible treatment measures are required. Such measures may consist of, but are not limited to, actions such as data recovery excavations, photographic documentation, or preparation of design drawings documenting the resource subject to significant impacts.
- Provide the North Central Information Center with appropriate California Department of Parks and Recreation site record forms and cultural resources reports documenting resources that may be identified through technical work performed to review projects accommodated under the 2030 General Plan.
- If human remains are discovered during construction of projects occurring under General Plan buildout, the project proponent and landowner shall comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and California Public Resources Code Section 7050.5.

3.17.2 Existing Conditions

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRE-CONTACT HISTORY (INCLUDING ETHNOHISTORY)

Ethnographically, the project site and the offsite improvement area are in the territory occupied by the Penutian-speaking Nisenan. Nisenan were observed by early ethnographers to inhabit the drainages of the Yuba, Bear, and American rivers, and also the lower reaches of the Feather River, extending from the east banks of the Sacramento River on the west to the mid to high elevations of the western flank of the Sierra Nevada to the east. The territory extended from the area surrounding the current city of Oroville on the north to a few miles south of the American River in the south. The Sacramento River bounded the territory on the west, and in the east, it extended to a general area located within a few miles of Lake Tahoe. The descendants of traditional Nisenan, including the United Auburn Indian Community, continue to reside in the region. As a language group, Nisenan (meaning “from among us” or “of our side”) are members of the Maiduan Family of the Penutian stock and are generally divided into three groups based on dialect differences: the Northern Hill (mountain) Nisenan in the Yuba River drainage; the Valley Nisenan along the Sacramento River; and the Southern Hill (foothills) Nisenan along the American River. Descendants of the pre-contact Nisenan exist today (ECORP 2025).

Refer to Section 3.5, *Cultural Resources,* for a discussion of regional and local pre-contact history of the regional and local area, including a discussion of the Nisenan groups and ethnohistory of the region and local area.

3.17.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist," of the CEQA Guidelines states that the project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

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).

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.

METHODOLOGY

AB 52 Consultation

Pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 52 (Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1), the District initiated formal tribal consultation for the proposed Plumas Lake Middle School Project. On October 3, 2025, the District mailed consultation letters to all California Native American tribes identified by the NAHC in its correspondence for the project area. The NAHC Sacred Lands File search returned negative results; however, the Commission recommended contacting tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Yuba County region to identify any potential TCRs.

AB 52 notification letters were sent to the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, Tsi-Akim Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria, and Wilton Rancheria. Each letter included a project description, regional and site maps, and an invitation to engage in consultation regarding potential TCRs.

Sacred Lands File

As part of the Archaeological Resources Inventory Report (see Appendix E), a Sacred Lands File (SLF) for the project site and offsite improvement area was requested from NAHC. This search determines whether the California Native American tribes within the project site have recorded Sacred Lands in the SLF, which is populated by members of the Native American community with knowledge about the locations of TCRs. In requesting a search of the SLF, information from the Native American community regarding TCRs was also solicited.

3.17.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource 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)?

The results of the SLF Search were negative, which indicates that no sacred lands are known to exist within the project site or within a 0.5-mile radius of the project site (see Appendix B to the Archaeological Resources Inventory Report, which is included as Appendix E to this DEIR). Additionally, further evaluation in threshold (b) below and in Section 3.5, *Cultural Resources*, of this DEIR, do not identify archaeological nor tribal cultural resources on the project site. Therefore, no known tribal cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k) are within the project site or within the offsite improvement area. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur.

Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of 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.

AB 52 Consultation

Conducting consultation early in the CEQA process allows tribal governments, public lead agencies, and project proponents to discuss the level of environmental review, identify and address potential adverse impacts to TCRs, and reduce the potential for delay and conflict in the environmental review process. The intent of the consultations is to provide an opportunity for interested Native American contacts to work together with the lead agency (in this case, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District) during the project planning process to identify and protect TCRs.

The provisions of CEQA, Public Resources Code Sections 21080.3.1 et seq. (also known as AB 52), requires meaningful consultation with California Native American Tribes on potential impacts to TCRs, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074. As part of the AB 52

process, Native American tribes must submit a written request to the relevant lead agency if it wishes to be notified of projects that require CEQA public noticing and are within its traditionally and culturally affiliated geographical area. The lead agency must provide written, formal notification to the tribes that have requested it within 14 days of determining that a project application is complete or deciding to undertake a project. The tribe must respond to the lead agency within 30 days of receipt of the notification if it wishes to engage in consultation on the project, and the lead agency must begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving the request for consultation. Consultation concludes when either 1): the parties agree to mitigation measures to avoid a significant effect, if one exists, on a tribal cultural resource, or 2) a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. AB 52 also addresses confidentiality during tribal consultation per Public Resources Code Section 21082.3(c).

In accordance with the provisions of AB 52, the District sent letters on October 3, 2025, to the following tribes: Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, Tsi-Akim Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria, and Wilton Rancheria.

The District did not receive any responses from tribes in accordance with the provisions of AB 52.

The proposed project would include earthwork activities, such as site preparation, grading, trenching, and excavation, during construction. While there are no known tribal cultural resources on the project site or offsite improvement area, the potential remains that unknown tribal cultural resources may be encountered during construction. Impacts are potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially Significant.

Impact TCR-1: The proposed project has a potential to discover unknown tribal cultural resources during construction.

Mitigation Measure TCR-1: If tribal cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during ground disturbing activities for this project, the following procedures will be carried out for treatment and disposition of the discoveries:

- Upon discovery of any tribal cultural resources, construction activities shall cease in the immediate vicinity of the find (not less than the surrounding 50 feet) until the find can be assessed.
- All tribal cultural resources unearthed by project activities shall be evaluated by the qualified professional archaeologist. If the resources are Native American in origin, the proper Tribe(s) will retain it/them in the form and/or manner the Tribe(s) deems appropriate, for educational, cultural and/or historic purposes. Work may continue on other parts of the project site while

evaluation and, if necessary, mitigation takes place (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[f]).

- If human remains and/or grave goods are discovered or recognized during construction activities, all ground disturbance shall immediately cease, and procedures outlined in Mitigation Measure CUL-2 shall be implemented.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant. While there are no known tribal cultural resources on the project site or offsite improvement area, the potential still exists that such resources may be encountered. Mitigation Measure TCR-1 provides procedures in the event that tribal cultural resources are encountered. With this mitigation measure, potential impacts to archaeological resources would be less than significant.

3.17.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for tribal cultural resources includes the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and adjacent portions of southern Yuba County where construction or ground-disturbing activities could affect known or undiscovered tribal cultural resources. This encompasses the project site, surrounding undeveloped parcels, and other planned development areas identified in the Yuba County General Plan.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to tribal cultural resources?

Although much of Plumas Lake has been previously disturbed by agriculture and prior development, unrecorded tribal cultural resources may remain. Each project involving earthwork therefore contributes to a cumulative regional risk of damaging or destroying such resources.

Cumulative impacts to tribal cultural resources would occur when the impacts of the proposed project, in conjunction with other development projects in the region, result in multiple and/or cumulative impacts to tribal cultural resources in the area. The presence of tribal cultural resources is site specific. The proposed project incorporates Mitigation Measure TCR -1, which would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that other development projects would consult with NAHC and conduct tribal consultation pursuant to AB 52 and SB 18, as required. Each development project would consult with Native American tribes that request consultation and develop appropriate mitigation measures. With compliance with federal and state regulations for the treatment of Native American and archaeological resources, and appropriate mitigation measures, the proposed project in conjunction with other development projects would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to tribal cultural resources. A less than significant impact would occur.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.17.6 References

Yuba, County of. 2011. Yuba County 2030 General Plan. https://cms7files.revize.com/yubaca/Yuba%20County/Community%20Development/Planning/General%20Plan/2030%20General%20Plan%20Final%20-%20Complete.pdf.

ECORP Consulting, Inc (ECORP). 2025. Archaeological Resources Inventory Report for the Plumas Lake Middle School Project. (Appendix E).

3.18 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

This chapter of the Draft EIR evaluates the potential utilities and service systems impacts associated with the proposed project. This chapter describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions, identifies criteria used to determine impact significance, provides an analysis of the potential utilities and service systems impacts, and identifies feasible mitigation measures, if required, that could mitigate any potentially significant impacts.

This includes impacts on utilities and service systems, including water supply and demand, wastewater (sewage) conveyance and treatment, solid waste collection and disposal systems, storm drainage systems, and other utilities.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

The Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) provided comments on June 23, 2025, which states that water and sewer can be discussed once that phase of the project is ready.

The relevant issues raised in these comment letters are addressed throughout this section. Refer to Table 3-1, *NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments Summary*, in Chapter 3, Environmental Analysis, for a full summary of all comments received and Appendix A for the contents of the NOP comment letters.

3.18.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to wastewater treatment and collection that are applicable to the proposed project are summarized below. The regulatory framework for energy is described in detail in Chapter 3.6, Energy.

FEDERAL

Safe Drinking Water Act

The Safe Drinking Water Act, the principal federal law intended to ensure safe drinking water to the public, was enacted in 1974 and has been amended several times. The Safe Drinking Water Act authorizes the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set national standards for drinking water, called the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations, to protect

against both naturally occurring and human-made contaminants. These standards set enforceable maximum contaminant levels in drinking water and require all water providers in the United States to treat water to remove contaminants, except for private wells serving fewer than 25 people. In California, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Division of Drinking Water regulates public drinking water systems. If a water system does not meet standards, it is the water supplier's responsibility to notify its customers.

America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018

America's Water Infrastructure Act was signed into law on October 23, 2018, and authorizes federal funding for water infrastructure projects; expands water storage capabilities; assists local communities in complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act (CWA); reduces flooding risks for rural, western, and coastal communities; and addresses significant water infrastructure needs in tribal communities (EPA 2025). Additionally, the act requires that drinking water systems that serve more than 3,300 people develop or update risk assessments and emergency response plans. Risk assessments and emergency response plans must be certified by the EPA within the deadline specified by the act.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act regulates the discharge of pollutants into watersheds throughout the nation. Under the CWA, the EPA implements pollution control programs, sets wastewater standards, and makes it unlawful to discharge pollutants from a point source into any navigable waters without obtaining a permit. Point sources include any conveyances, such as pipes and man-made drainage channels, from which pollutants may be discharged.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program was established in the CWA to regulate municipal and industrial discharges to surface waters of the United States. Federal NPDES permit regulations have been established for broad categories of discharges, including point-source municipal waste discharges and nonpoint-source stormwater runoff. Wastewater discharge is regulated under the NPDES permit program for direct discharges into receiving waters and by the National Pretreatment Program for indirect discharges to a sewage treatment plant.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations), Part 258, contains regulations for municipal solid waste landfills and requires states to implement their own permitting programs incorporating the federal landfill criteria. The federal regulations address the location, operation, design, groundwater monitoring, and closure of landfills.

STATE

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act (Water Code Sections 13000 et seq.) was passed in 1969 and amended in 2013. It is the basic water quality control law for California. Under this act, the SWRCB has authority over State water rights and water quality policy. The act divided the state into nine regional basins, each under the jurisdiction of a Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), to oversee water quality on a day-to-day basis at the local and regional levels. RWQCBs engage in various water quality functions in their respective regions and regulate all pollutant or nuisance discharges that may affect either surface water or groundwater.

Urban Water Management Planning Act

The California Urban Water Management Planning Act and Section 10620 of the Water Code require that all urban water suppliers in California that provide water to more than 3,000 customers or supply more than 3,000 acre-feet per year (AFY)[1] to prepare and adopt an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) and update it every five years. The act is intended to support efficient use of urban water supplies. It requires the UWMP to compare water supply and demand over the next 20 years for normal years, single dry years, and multiple dry years and to determine current and potential recycled water uses. The 2025 UWMPs are due July 1, 2026. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is currently developing guidance for this cycle of UWMPs (DWR 2025).

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014

On September 16, 2014, a three-bill legislative package was signed into law collectively known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The Governor's signing message states "a central feature of these bills is the recognition that groundwater management in California is best accomplished locally." Under the roadmap laid out by the legislation, local and regional authorities in medium and high priority groundwater basins must form groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA) that oversee the preparation and implementation of groundwater sustainability plans (GSP).

Water Conservation Act of 2009 (Senate Bill X7 7)

Requirements for increasing water use efficiency, per State law (Senate Bill [SB] X7 7), mandate the reduction of per capita water use and agricultural water use throughout the State by 20 percent by 2020. Effective in 2016, urban retail water suppliers who do not meet the water conservation requirements established by this bill are not eligible for State water grants or loans. SB X7-7 requires that urban water retail suppliers determine baseline water use and set

[1] One acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre of ground (43,560 square feet) to a depth of one foot.

reduction targets according to specified standards. Demonstration of compliance with this regulation is a required component of each water provider's 2020 UWMP. The 2025 UWMPs will likely be prepared and approved in 2026.

2018 Water Conservation Legislation

In 2018, the California Legislature enacted two policy bills (SB 606 and Assembly Bill [AB] 1668) to establish long-term improvements in water conservation and drought planning to adapt to climate change and longer and more intense droughts in California (SWRCB 2025a). The DWR and the SWRCB will develop new standards for:

- Indoor residential water use
- Outdoor residential water use
- Commercial, industrial, and institutional water use for landscape irrigation with dedicated meters
- Water loss

Urban water suppliers are required to stay within annual water budgets based on their standards for their service areas, and to calculate and report their urban water use objectives in an annual water use report. Based on recent legislation (SB 1157), the California Water Code defines a 55-gallon-per-person daily standard for indoor residential use until 2025, at which time it decreases to 47 gallons, and further decreases to 42 gallons by 2030.

The legislation also includes changes to UWMP preparation requirements. These changes include additional requirements for Water Shortage Contingency Plans (WSCPs), expansion of dry year supply reliability assessments to a five-year drought period, and establishment of annual drought risk assessment procedures and reporting.

Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006

The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act (AB 1881) requires cities and counties to adopt the State of California's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) or a comparable landscape water conservation ordinance that is at least as effective as the State's MWELO in conserving water.

The MWELO was revised in July 2015 via Executive Order B-29-15 to address the ongoing drought and to build resiliency for future droughts. The 2015 revisions to the MWELO increased water efficiency standards for new and retrofitted landscapes through more efficient irrigation systems, greywater usage, and on-site stormwater capture and by limiting the portion of landscapes that can be covered in turf. Each city and county is required to submit annual reports to DWR that document how the agency is achieving compliance with the State MWELO and how many projects were subject to the ordinance during the annual reporting period. MWELO went through a round of revisions in 2024 to reduce ambiguity and improve clarity of the

requirements as well as reorganize the content to better adhere to the landscape design process. The 2024 revisions did not modify or add new requirements to MWELO.

California Building Code: CALGreen

The California Building Standards Commission adopted the nation's first green building standards in July 2008, the California Green Building Standards Code, also known as CALGreen. CALGreen applies to the planning, design, operation, construction, use, and occupancy of every newly constructed building or structure in California. The code establishes planning and design standards for sustainable site development, including water efficiency and water conservation measures that typically reduce water consumption by 20 percent. CALGreen is updated every three years to allow for consideration and possible incorporation of new low flow plumbing fixtures and water efficient appliances. The mandatory provisions of CALGreen became effective January 1, 2011, and the latest version, the 2022 California Green Building Standards Code, became effective on January 1, 2023 (DGS 2025). The building efficiency standards are enforced through the local building permit process

California Plumbing Code

The latest version of the California Plumbing Code (CPC) was issued in 2022 and became effective as of January 1, 2023. The CPC is updated on a three-year cycle. It specifies technical standards for the design, materials, workmanship, and maintenance of plumbing systems. One of the purposes of the plumbing code is to prevent conflicting plumbing codes within local jurisdictions. Among many topics covered in the code are water fixtures, potable and non-potable water systems, and recycled water systems.

California Water Code

The California Water Code states that the water resources of the State must be put to beneficial use and that waste or unreasonable use of water should be prevented. The code is divided into several sections that include provisions regarding water quality, formation of irrigation districts and water districts, safe drinking water, and water supply and infrastructure improvements.

Mandatory Water Conservation

Following the declaration of a state of emergency on July 15, 2014, due to drought conditions, the SWRCB adopted Resolution No. 2014-0038 for emergency regulation of Statewide water conservation efforts (SWRCB 2014). These regulations, which went into effect on August 1, 2014, were intended to reduce outdoor urban water use and persuade all California households to voluntarily reduce their water consumption by 20 percent. Urban water suppliers with 3,000 or more service connections were required to report monthly water consumption to the SWRCB.

In January of 2022, following the Governor's proclamation of a drought state of emergency for all counties, the SWRCB adopted the prohibited wasteful water uses emergency regulations. These include the prohibition of the following wasteful water use practices: 1) the application of potable water to outdoor landscapes in a manner that causes excess runoff; 2) the washing of vehicles without an automatic shut-off nozzle; 3) the application of potable water to driveways and sidewalks; 4) the use of potable water in nonrecirculating ornamental fountains; and 5) the application of potable water to outdoor landscapes during and within 48 hours after at least 0.25 inch of rainfall. In June of 2022, additional emergency water conservation regulations were enacted prohibiting the irrigation of nonfunctional turf at commercial, industrial, and institutional accounts, and the implementation of conservation actions under Level 2 of urban water suppliers' WSCPs. As of June 5, 2024, the emergency regulations expired.

In October of 2023, AB 1572 was signed into law by the Governor, prohibiting the irrigation of nonfunctional turf at commercial, industrial, and institutional sites (with exceptions for areas irrigated with recycled water or harvested rainwater). The irrigation prohibitions become effective in stages between 2027 and 2031, beginning with state and local government facilities. Under the law, urban water suppliers must adopt the same irrigation prohibitions into their local regulations.

State Water Resources Control Board General Waste Discharge Requirements

The SWRCB adopted Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements (Order No. 2006-0003) in 2006 and adopted a subsequent monitoring and reporting program (Order No. WQ-2013-0058-EXEC) for all publicly owned sanitary sewer collection systems in California with more than one mile of sewer pipes. The order provides a consistent statewide approach to reducing sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). The Waste Discharge Requirements require public agencies that own or operate sanitary sewer systems to develop and implement sewer system management plans (SSMP) and report all SSOs to the SWRCB's online reporting system. The SWRCB has delegated authority to nine RWQCBs to enforce these requirements within their regions.

The Central Valley RWQCB (Region 5) issues and enforces NPDES permits within the proposed project site. NPDES permits the RWQCB to regulate where and how waste is disposed of, including the discharge volume and effluent limits of waste and the monitoring and reporting responsibilities of the discharge. The RWQCB is also charged with conducting inspections of permitted discharges and monitoring permit compliance.

The SSMP evaluates existing sewer collection systems and provides a framework for minimizing the frequency and impact of SSOs. The SSMP includes an overflow emergency response plan; a fats, oil, and grease control program; scheduled inspections and condition assessment; design and construction standards; capacity assessment and management; and monitoring program.

Sanitary District Act of 1923

The Sanitary District Act of 1923 (California Health and Safety Code Section 6400 et seq.) authorizes the formation of sanitation districts and enables the sanitation districts to construct, operate, and maintain facilities for the collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater.

California Integrated Waste Management Act

California's Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939) required that cities and counties divert 50 percent of all solid waste from landfills as of January 1, 2000, through source reduction, recycling, and composting. This act required that each city and county prepare a Source Reduction and Recycling Element to be submitted to the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), a department within the California Natural Resources Agency. AB 939 also establishes a goal for all California counties to provide at least 15 years of ongoing landfill capacity.

In 2007, SB 1016 amended AB 939 to establish a per capita disposal measurement system. The per capita disposal measurement system is calculated as a jurisdiction's reported total disposal of solid waste divided by a jurisdiction's population. CalRecycle sets a target per capita disposal rate for each jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction must submit an annual report to CalRecycle with an update of its progress in implementing diversion programs and its current per capita disposal rate.

Mandatory Commercial Recycling Requirements

AB 341 (Chapter 476) set a statewide solid waste diversion goal of 75 percent by 2020. AB 341, which was passed in 2011 and took effect July 1, 2012, mandates recycling for businesses producing four or more cubic yards of solid waste per week or multi-family residential dwellings of five or more units.

Mandatory Organics Recycling Act

AB 1826, which was enacted in 2014, mandates organic waste recycling for all businesses and multifamily dwellings with five or more units. Starting January 1, 2020, all generators of 2 cubic yards or more of garbage, recycling, and compost combined per week must recycle organic waste. Organic waste includes food scraps, food-soiled paper waste, yard trimmings, and landscape materials. Organic waste can be recycled through composting, mulching, and anaerobic digestion which produces renewable energy and fuel. In addition to recycling food scraps, donating surplus food to local food banks can be part of the AB 1826 compliance effort.

California Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Act

SB 1383 focuses on the elimination of methane gas created by organic materials in landfills and sets targets to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the statewide disposal of organic waste by 2020 and a 75 percent reduction by 2025. Organic waste makes up half of what Californians send to landfills. SB 1383 requires all businesses and residents to divert organic materials (including food waste, yard waste, and soiled paper products) from the landfill. The regulation took effect on January 1, 2022, and requires that organics collection service be provided to all residents and businesses. The collected organic waste must be recycled into new products, such as compost, mulch, biofuel, and electricity. Each city and county have an annual procurement target based on its population. Also, an edible food recovery program must be established by 2025 with the goal of recovering 20 percent of currently disposed edible food that would otherwise be sent to landfills to feed people in need. Mandated food donors and food recovery organizations and services must keep records of the amount and dates of food donations and acceptances.

California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act of 1991

The California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act requires development projects to set aside areas for collecting and loading recyclable materials. This act required CalRecycle to develop a model ordinance for adoption by any local agency to provide adequate areas for the collection and loading of recyclable materials as part of development projects. Local agencies are required to adopt a model or an ordinance of their own that establishes standards, including space allocation, for the collection and loading of recyclable materials.

CALGreen Building Code

As previously described in Section 4.17.1.1 (Water Regulatory Setting) CALGreen establishes building standards for sustainable site development. Sections 4.408 (Residential) and 5.408 (Nonresidential): Construction Waste Reduction, Disposal and Recycling, mandate that, a minimum of 65 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition debris generated during most new construction must be recycled or salvaged. CALGreen requires developers to prepare and submit a Construction and Demolition Recycling & Waste Reduction Plan, which is submitted to the City for approval, or use a waste management company with verifiable documentation. The waste management plan must:

- Identify the materials to be diverted from disposal by recycling, reuse on the project, or salvage for future use or sale.
- Specify if materials will be sorted on-site (source-separated) or bulk mixed (single stream) .
- Identify the diversion facilities where the material will be taken.
- Identify construction methods employed to reduce the amount of waste generated.
- Specify that the amount of materials diverted be calculated by weight or volume, but not by both.

The 2025 CALGreen Code is scheduled for adoption in 2025 and will become effective January 1, 2026, as part of California's triennial building code cycle. The California Building Standards Commission adopts updates to CALGreen as part of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations.

State Water Resources Control Board Construction General Permit

Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land that could impact hydrologic resources must comply with the requirements of the SWRCB Construction General Permit (Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ), which was adopted in September 2022 and will become effective on September 1, 2023. Under the terms of the permit, applicants must file permit registration documents (PRD) with the SWRCB prior to the start of construction. The PRDs include a notice of intent, risk assessment, site map, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), annual fee, and a signed certification statement. The PRDs are submitted electronically to the SWRCB via the Stormwater Multiple Application and Report Tracking System website.

Applicants must also demonstrate conformance with applicable best management practices (BMP) and prepare a SWPPP containing a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed buildings, lots, roadways, stormwater collection, and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the project site. The SWPPP must list BMPs that would be implemented to prevent soil erosion and discharge of other construction-related pollutants that could contaminate nearby water resources. Additionally, the SWPPP must contain a weekly visual monitoring program and BMP inspections prior to, during, and after qualifying precipitation events. Water quality monitoring is also required with the schedule based on the risk level of the project site.

State Water Quality Control Board's Trash Amendment

On April 7, 2015, the SWQCB adopted an amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California to control trash. In addition, the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California added the section: Part 1, Trash Provisions. Together, they are collectively referred to as "the Trash Amendments." The purpose of the Trash Amendments is to provide statewide consistency for the RWQCBs in their regulatory approach to protect aquatic life and public health beneficial uses, reduce environmental issues associated with trash in State waters, and focus limited resources on high-trash-generating areas (SWRCB 2015).

The Trash Amendments apply to all Phase I and II permittees under the NPDES municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) permits. Compliance with the Trash Amendment requires municipalities to install certified trash treatment control systems on all catch basins no later than December 2, 2030 (SWRCB 2025b).

REGIONAL

Yuba Groundwater Sustainability Plan

DWR, which oversees SGMA, formally approved the GSP for the North and South Yuba groundwater subbasins in Yuba County in 2021. The plan was developed by three GSAs, including Yuba Water, Cordua Irrigation District, and the City of Marysville. SGMA regulations require GSAs to perform a written assessment of implementation of an approved GSP at a minimum every five years following initial plan adoption (known as a Periodic Evaluation). GSAs can revise a previously adopted GSP to reflect the most current groundwater management approaches, which must be accompanied by a periodic evaluation. The Yuba Water Agency Board of Directors approved the Final Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plan on January 7, 2025 (YWA 2025).

The GSP's plan area is a combination of the North Yuba Subbasin and South Yuba Subbasin – the project site is within the South Yuba Subbasin. The purpose of this GSP is to verify and maintain sustainable groundwater management in the Yuba Subbasins by meeting the regulatory requirements set forth under SGMA. Under SGMA, high- and medium-priority basins not identified as critically overdrafted were required to be managed by a GSP by January 31, 2022. DWR has identified the South Yuba Subbasin as a high-priority subbasin (YWA 2024).

Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

The Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning effort is a collaborative process that supports water management in the Yuba County area. The plan was developed by various organizations and adopted by 12 agencies in 2008. The 2018 Plan Update focuses on new requirements in the 2016 IRWM Program Guidelines, ensuring compliance with the guidelines and qualifying projects for state funding. The plan addresses significant challenges and opportunities for improvement, including working with DWR. It considers the complexities of managing water supply and quality, uncertainty, and the needs of Disadvantaged Communities, under-represented communities, and Tribal organizations, focusing on identifying resources for a sustainable future (YCRWMG 2018).

Yuba County Stormwater Management Plan

The Yuba County Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) has been implemented by Yuba County and the City of Marysville to meet the NPDES Phase II requirements for Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (Small MS4s). The SWMP outlines BMPs, measurable goals, and timetables for the implementation of the Six Minimum Control Measures required by the U.S EPA and the SWRCB under NPDES General Permit No. The six measures include public education, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, construction site storm water runoff control, post-construction storm water management, and pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations (Yuba 2004).

Local Enforcement Agency Solid Waste Program

The Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) is a micro agency within the Environmental Health Department and is certified by the CalRecycle as the LEA for Yuba and Sutter Counties to ensure that solid waste landfills and transfer stations are properly operated in regards to vector control, water quality protection, litter prevention, and related concerns; to provide an independent Hearing Panel to hear appeals of the decisions/orders made by the LEA; to ensure that inactive sites are properly closed and maintained following closure. The LEA enforces state laws pertaining to the storage, processing and disposal of solid waste. The LEA permits and inspects solid waste facilities to ensure compliance with state minimum standards, inspects all refuse collection vehicles operating in the two counties and responds to complaints about illegal dumping and public nuisances caused by solid waste facilities (Yuba 2025).

These Solid Waste Facilities include (Yuba 2025):

- Active and Closed Landfills
- Transfer Stations
- Composting Facilities
- Wood & Green Waste Chip & Grinding Operations
- Construction, Demolition and Inert Debris Processing Facilities

Sewer System Management Plan 2022

OPUD Board of Directors certified the District's Sewer System Management Plan (SSMP) on July 16, 2009. The State order requires an audit of the SSMP every two years at a minimum. The 2022 SSMP Update, Audit, and Audit Report has been prepared to restore the standard two-year review cycle. The report includes compliance rankings, findings, and recommendations, providing guidance for ongoing system improvements and operational oversight. The SSMP is required by the State of California to provide a standard for maintenance and repairs of sewer collections systems thereby reducing the number and severity of SSOs. The report includes level of compliance ranking, findings, and recommendations (OPUD 2023).

Urban Water Management Plan

UWMP helps water suppliers assess the availability and reliability of their water supplies and current and projected water use to help ensure reliable water service under different conditions. UWMPs evaluate conditions for the next 20 years, so these regular updates ensure continued long-term planning. In 2020, the OPUD provided water to 7,434 customer connections (including single family and multi-family residential, commercial/institutional, industrial and landscape irrigation connections) and supplied 1,382 million gallons (MG) of water (equivalent to 4,241 AF) to its customers. Based on the number of connections and volume of water served, OPUD is required to prepare a UWMP (OPUD 2022).

Water Shortage Contingency Plan

The UWMP includes a Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) as Appendix J. The WSCP describes an agency's plan for preparing and responding to water shortages. OPUD updated its WSCP to include its process for assessing potential gaps between planned water supply and demands for the current year and the next potentially dry year. It aligned its water service area's water shortage levels with the State's standard stages for consistent messaging and reporting and planned for locally appropriate water shortage responses. The WSCP may be used for foreseeable and unforeseeable events. The WSCP includes six levels to address shortage conditions ranging from up to 10 percent to greater than 50 percent and identifies a suite of shortage response actions that OPUD would need to implement at each level (OPUD 2022).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

The Yuba County Ordinance Code includes the following provisions which address utilities and service systems, including:

- **Chapter 7.07, Sewage Disposal.** This chapter aims to protect public health and the environment by establishing an administrative framework for adopting science-based minimum standards for on-site treatment, conveyance, and disposal systems. It also provides compliance and enforcement of a comprehensive regulatory program and ensures compliance with standards, laws, and guidelines adopted by the State of California, Water Resources Control Board, or Regional Water Quality Control Boards.
- **Chapter 7.50, Stormwater Quality.** This Chapter aims to ensure compliance with state and federal laws in Yuba County, focusing on protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, enhancing the quality of waters, and promoting best management practices. It aims to protect water quality in watercourses, bodies, and wetlands in accordance with the CWA and SWRCB Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ. The Chapter also aims to prohibit illicit discharges to the storm drain system, establish authority for stormwater management, and establish authority for development projects to reduce pollution and erosion. It also aims to implement and enforce any stormwater management plan adopted by the county. The Chapter also aims to meet the requirements of the SWRCB Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ and any subsequent amendments.
- **Chapter 10.05, Building Standards Construction Code**. This chapter adopts Title 24, Part 5, California Plumbing Code with appendices, adopts the latest plumbing code for new construction and Title 24, Part 11 of the CALGreen's energy and water efficiency mandatory measures.
- **Chapter 11.24, Landscape.** One of the main purposes of the landscaping regulations is to ensure consistency with the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (California Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance). Specifically, Section 11.24.070, Water efficient landscape requirements, applies to new development projects with an aggregate landscape area of 500 square feet or greater. Projects with an aggregate landscape area of 2,500

square feet or less may comply with prescriptive performance requirements. Non-artificial turf must comply with specific requirements, such as a maximum of 25 percent of required landscape areas being turf or planted with other high water use plants. Alternative compliance is required for projects with an aggregate landscape area over 2,500 square feet.

Yuba County General Plan

Community Development

- **Policy CD12.1:** New developments will be required to demonstrate the availability of adequate water supply and infrastructure, including during multiple dry years, prior to approval.
- **Policy CD12.2:** New developments will be required to construct and dedicate and/or fund on a fairshare basis wastewater collection, conveyance, and treatment facilities consistent with applicable local, State, and federal standards.
- **Policy CD12.3:** The County will implement stormwater master plans designed to provide collection, detention, and conveyance consistent with local standards for developed areas within the Valley Growth Boundary. In general, new developments will be required to demonstrate no net increase in stormwater runoff prior to approval.
- **Policy CD12.4:** The County will approve new development projects only if adequate capacity exists to accommodate solid waste demand, including processing, recycling, transportation, and disposal.

Public Health and Safety

- **Policy HS8.6:** Project applicants may be required to show evidence of coverage, or application for coverage, under an NPDES general construction permit and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) with a State issued W.D.I.D. number, [2] if applicable. Grading activities shall be located and designed to avoid contributing to the violation of provisions of any applicable NPDES stormwater discharge permit.

Plumas Lake Specific Plan

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan provides Table 4.3.1, *Water Demand Rates*, for the domestic water demand rate for schools as 5 gallons per minute per acre; this rate was converted to gallons per day per square foot for use in the project-specific water demand analysis (Yuba 1992).

[2] A Waste Discharger Identification

3.18.2 Existing Conditions

WATER

Potable Water System

OPUD provides potable water services for the communities of Olivehurst and Plumas Lake. OPUD operates two separate water pumping and distribution systems for the Olivehurst and Plumas Lake communities. OPUD's Plumas Lake system was constructed between 2003 and 2007 and operates more efficiently than the Olivehurst system. The Plumas Lake system includes three active wells, one standby well, one storage tank, two treatment plants, and Polyvinyl Chloride distribution pipelines (OPUD 2022). The project site is not in the OPUD Boundaries and would be annexed into the OPUD service area (OPUD 2022, pg. 3-2).

Groundwater and Recycled Water

Groundwater is currently the only source of potable water supply for OPUD. Groundwater is pumped from the South Yuba Groundwater Subbasin from three active wells in the Plumas Lake system (OPUD 2022). OPUD's current groundwater supply is constrained by a filter capacity of 6,600 gallons per minute (gpm) (8,725 MG/year). Table 3.18-1, *Summary of Groundwater Well Capacity in Plumas Lake*, shows the total groundwater pumping capacity for the Plumas Lake System.

Table 3.18-1 Summary of Groundwater Well Capacity in Plumas Lake

Well Number	Status	Pump Capacity (gpm)	Filter Capacity (gpm)
31	Active[1]	5,550	3,100
32	Active[1]		
33	Does not supply water	0	0
34	Active	3,500	3,500
Total[2]		**9,050**	**6,600**

Source: OPUD 2022

Note:

1. Individual capacities of Wells 31 and 32 are about 3,100 gpm each, but combined capacity is reduced to about 5,550 gpm when both are operated due to their close proximity to each other.
2. Based on data received from the District on December 21, 2021.

Regional groundwater quality in the Yuba Subbasins is considered good to excellent for municipal, domestic, and agricultural uses and does not have a significant adverse impact on the beneficial uses of groundwater in the subbasins (YWA 2024). There is naturally occurring arsenic, iron, and manganese within the Yuba Subbasin that may have concentrations that

exceed the associated drinking water thresholds, although such occurrences are limited (OPUD 2022; YWA 2024).

Recycled water is municipal wastewater that has been treated to a specified quality to enable it to be used again. Recycled water usage is based on California Code of Regulations, Title 22. Currently, there is no infrastructure in place to deliver tertiary-treated recycled water to OPUD's customers. Because land use planning and development approvals within the OPUD's service area are the responsibility of Yuba County, OPUD does not have the authority to approve the delivery of recycled water supplies to its customers. Raw water is untreated water that is used in its natural state or with minimal treatment. OPUD does not currently provide any raw water supplies to its customers (OPUD 2022).

Water Supply

The OPUD 2020 UWMP includes a water supply reliability assessment for normal, single dry years, and multiple dry years. The results are provided in Table 3.18-2, *OPUD Supply and Demand Comparison (MG)*.

OPUD's projected groundwater supply is assumed to be 6,544 million gallons (MG)/year during multiple dry years. This assumes no reduction in available supply compared to normal years. Demand reductions are not assumed during dry years. Therefore, OPUD's multiple dry year demands are assumed to be the same as normal year demands.[3]

[3] OPUD's groundwater supply projection is set at 6,544 million gallons per year during both Single Dry Years and Multiple Dry Years, operating under the assumption that there will be no reduction in available supply compared to the figures from Normal Years. During these dry periods, it is anticipated that demand reductions will not occur; thus, the demand levels for Single Dry Years and Multiple Dry Years are considered equivalent to those of Normal Years (OPUD 2022).

Table 3.18-2 OPUD Supply and Demand Comparison (MG)

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045 (Optional)
Normal Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Single Dry Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Multiple Dry Years					
First Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Second Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Third Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Fourth Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Fifth Year					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851
Sixth Year (optional)					
Supply Totals	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544	6,544
Demand Totals	1,754	2,130	2,318	2,506	2,693
Difference	4,790	4,414	4,226	4,038	3,851

Source: OPUD 2022
Notes: Volumes are in Million Gallon (MG)

To minimize OPUD's vulnerability to groundwater quality issues, OPUD would continue to coordinate with the Yuba Water Agency (YWA) and other local agencies and stakeholders to evaluate groundwater withdrawals in support of continued groundwater management efforts. In addition, OPUD has and continues to participate with YWA and other local agencies to implement water conservation measures. OPUD is responsible for water conservation marketing and outreach to OPUD's customers. OPUD does not currently foresee a need to import water from other regions (OPUD 2022).

WASTEWATER

OPUD provides wastewater services to its water service area. OPUD operates an activated sludge, tertiary wastewater treatment facility currently permitted for 3 million gallons per day (MGD) discharge.

The wastewater treatment facility has an average dry weather flow of 1.2 MGD and average wet weather flow of 1.3 MGD. The wastewater collection system consists of approximately 32 miles of gravity sewer main collection lines, 8 miles of force main sewer collection lines, and 18 lift stations. OPUD's wastewater treatment facility discharges into the Clark Lateral which flows into the Western Interceptor Drainage Canal which flows into the Bear River. OPUD's wastewater treatment plant's total remaining daily treatment capacity is 1.7 MGD.

In 2020, 588 million gallons (MG) of wastewater were generated within OPUD's service area, and 547 MG of treated wastewater were disposed of within the same area (OPUD 2022).

STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The project site lies within Reclamation District No. 784 (RD 784). RD 784 was established in May 1908 and operates under the authority of the State of California's Central Valley Flood Protection Board and the DWR. RD 784 covers approximately 40,676 acres including 33.59 miles of levees, more than 60 miles of internal drainage canals, and ten pumping stations. The district's boundaries are North - Yuba River, South - Bear River, West- Feather River, East - Western Pacific Interceptor Canal. The district encompasses over 11,000.00 structures (RD 784 2025).

Existing Reclamation District storm drainage infrastructure in the vicinity of the project site includes Linear 16, which runs along the western boundary of the project site and Lateral 16 which runs along River Oaks Boulevard adjacent to the northern boundary (Yuba 2019). There are also irrigation channels along the western edge of the project site that are owned by the Reclamation District and serve as overflow structures.

SOLID WASTE

Solid Waste Collection

Recology Yuba-Sutter (Recology) is the franchise waste hauler for Plumas Lake and provides residential and commercial solid waste collection, organics, and recycling services. Recology provides the following services to residents and businesses in the area (Recology 2025a):

- **Curbside collection:** Weekly curbside collection of waste in three containers: landfill waste in a black container, recyclables in a blue container, and organics (including yard and food waste) in a green container.
- **Bulky item pickup:** For large Items that do not fit in your cart, like old furniture, appliances, or mattresses, schedule a Bulky Item Pickup.
- **Hazardous Waste Drop-Off:** Collection facility for painting, batteries, chemicals, and sharps; residents can drop items at the Yuba-Sutter Household Hazardous Waste Facility for residents. Commercial customers must call to schedule an appointment to dispose of hazardous material.
- **Electronic & Universal Waste:** California prohibits electronic waste due to heavy metal contamination. Residential customers can schedule bulky item pickups and drop off electronic items at Yuba-Sutter Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility or at the Recology Yuba-Sutter Transfer Station.
- **Debris Boxes & Bins:** Recology Yuba-Sutter offers debris box services for medium to large projects, collecting materials like concrete, wood, bricks, metals, and plastics. They require evenly distributed materials and rental charges for longer stays.
- **Recycling Education:** Sorting guides, classroom lessons, and customer support to improve recycling and reduce contamination.
- **Specialty Service:** The Waste Zero Team provides services to businesses, including audits, consultations, and assistance in implementing recycling programs, composting, and landfill materials, assisting various business types and ensuring sustainability.

Landfills

Recology Ostrom Road Landfill, located at 5900 Ostrom Road Wheatland, California, provides solid waste disposal services to both municipal and commercial customers in the northern Sacramento Valley including Yuba. Operation began in 1995 as the first landfill facility in California to receive approval to operate under the new Subtitle D regulations requiring liner systems, leachate collection and recovery systems, water quality monitoring systems, and other environmental protection measures. The landfill covers 261 acres, 225 of which are permitted

as a Class II Landfill[4] (Recology 2025c). Table 3.18-3*, Landfill Capacity*, provides more information on the landfill capacity and closing date for the primary landfill that receives solid waste from Plumas Lake (Recology 2025c).

Table 3.18-3 Landfill Capacity

Landfill	Location	Current Remaining Capacity (cubic yards)	Maximum Permitted Throughout (tons/day)	Estimated Close Date	Disposal Rate for 2024 (tons/day) [1]	Residual Daily Disposal Capacity (tons/day) [2]
Ostrom Road Landfill	5900 Ostrom Road Wheatland, CA 95692	32,225,000	3,000	12/31/2066	919	2,081

Source: CalRecycle 2025a,b

1. The 2024 disposal rate represents the amount of waste landfilled at the Recology Ostrom Road Landfill, which was reported as 321,605 tons for the year. Dividing this annual total by 350 operating days (accounting for holidays) results in an average daily disposal rate of approximately 919 tons per day.
2. The residual daily disposal capacity is the difference between the maximum permitted daily capacity of 3,000 tons and the 2024 daily disposal rate of 919 tons, leaving an available capacity of about 2,081 tons per day.

Solid Waste Diversion and Recycling

Compliance with AB 939 is measured by comparing the CalRecycle target disposal rates for residents and employees to actual disposal rates. The CalRecycle target disposal rates for Plumas Lake was 19.8 PPD for employees. The actual disposal rate in 2024 was 19 PPD for employees (CalRecycle 2025c). Therefore, Plumas Lake meets the solid waste diversion goals for employees.

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Electricity and natural gas service in the City of Plumas Lake is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E).

[4] Class II is designated for special wastes such as contaminated soils, dredge debris, and certain commercial wastes that fall below hazardous levels. These materials can be reused or disposed of in a Class II landfill but must undergo analytical review to confirm they are non-hazardous under the state's hazardous waste criteria (Recology 2025d).

Electricity

PG&E, regulated by the CPUC, supplies and transmits electricity and natural gas across a 70,000-square-mile service area spanning from Eureka to Bakersfield and from the Pacific Coast to the Sierra Nevada. The company's electricity system includes more than 106,000 miles of distribution lines and 18,000 miles of transmission lines. PG&E's energy portfolio includes renewable resources, nuclear, hydroelectric, and natural gas generation, with 2022 sources comprising 38 percent renewables, 49 percent nuclear, 8 percent large hydroelectric, and 5 percent natural gas (PG&E 2025). As shown in Table 3.6-1, Y*uba County 2022 Electricity Consumption*, in Chapter 3.6, Energy, of this DEIR, the total electricity use in Yuba County was approximately 560.7 million kWh in 2022, equating to a per capita consumption rate of 6,698 kWh per year.

Natural Gas

PG&E provides natural gas service to approximately 4.5 million customers across northern and central California and operates its transmission system under a continuous inspection and monitoring program. The system includes 24-hour real-time operations, leak inspections, and regular patrols to ensure safety and reliability. PG&E's Pipeline 2020 Program focuses on modernizing infrastructure, expanding use of automated shut-off valves, advancing inspection technologies, and strengthening public safety partnerships. Total natural gas consumption within PG&E's service area was approximately 1.22 trillion kBTU in 2022 (CEC 2025). As shown in Table 3.6-2, *Yuba County 2022 Natural Gas Consumption*, in Chapter 3.6, *Energy*, Yuba County used about 1.16 billion kBTU in 2022, with a per capita consumption rate of 13,906 kBTU per year.

Fuel Consumption

The CEC produces a California Annual Retail Fuel Outlet Report every year, which is a compilation of gasoline and diesel fuel sales across the state, available at the county level. According to the CEC, Yuba County fuel sales totaled an estimated 36 million gallons of gasoline and 5 million gallons of diesel fuel in 2022 (CEC 2024). As shown in Table 3.6-3, *Yuba County 2022 Transportation Fuel Consumption*, the county experienced a consumption rate of 525 gallons of fuel per person per year in 2022 and equates to 525 gallons per year per capita transportation fuel consumption.

TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Telecommunications services in Plumas Lake are provided through a combination of wireless, cable, fiber, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), and fixed wireless technologies. Major mobile carriers, including AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile, provide extensive 4G LTE and 5G coverage across the community, ensuring reliable cellular service (BN 2025).

High-speed internet is available from multiple providers. Xfinity (Comcast) offers near-universal coverage with cable internet speeds up to 1,200 Mbps (ISP 2025). AT&T provides DSL service throughout the area, with fiber internet available to portions of the community (AT&T 2025). Earthlink also offers DSL and fiber service using AT&T's network (ISP 2025). Fixed wireless providers such as Succeed.Net, DigitalPath, T-Mobile Home Internet, and Verizon Fixed Wireless expand broadband options for residents (CIP 2025).

3.18.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the CEQA Guidelines states that the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to utilities and service systems if it would:

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

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 that 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.

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.

3.18.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Following is a discussion of the proposed project's potential impacts on water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, and energy and telecommunication facilities.

Water

The proposed project's water services would be provided by OPUD, and the project site would need to be annexed into OPUD's service area.

OPUD estimates that water demands in its service area for normal years would increase from approximately 1,754 AFY in 2025 to approximately 2,693 AFY in 2045. OPUD forecasts a water surplus of 4,790 AFY in 2025 and 3,751 AFY in 2045. OPUD forecasts that it would have sufficient water supplies to meet water demands in its service area for normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (OPUD 2022).

There is currently no existing water demand on the project site. Water demand estimates under the proposed project are included in Table 3.18-4, *Proposed Water Demands*. As shown in Table 3.18-4, the proposed project would result in 38,462 gallons per day (GPD) or 43 AFY of water demand. This is well within OPUD's forecasted water surplus and OPUD's projected increase in water demand of 939 AFY between 2025 and 2045.

Table 3.18-4 Proposed Water Demands

Proposed Use	Outdoor Water Use (GPD) [1]	Building Area (SF)	Indoor Water Use Rate (GPD)[2]	Indoor Water Use (GPD)	Total Water Use (GPD)
School Facilities	26,415	70,867	0.17	12,047	38,462

Source: Yuba 1992; District 2025

Notes:

SF = square feet

GPD = gallons per day

1. The Estimated Total Water Usage (ETWU) represents the projected annual water demand for the project. MTW group calculated the ETWU as 9,641,744 gallons per year which was then converted to acre-feet per year.
2. Table 4.3.1, Demand Rates, in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan provides the domestic water demand condition for schools which is reported as 5 gallons per minute per acre. This was converted to gallons per day per square feet.

As part of the proposed project, onsite water lines for potable water, irrigation, and fire-suppression would connect to the existing water main north of the project site on Blackbird Way. All proposed water system improvements would be designed and constructed in accordance with applicable Yuba County Public Works standards, the requirements of the local water purveyor, and the local fire authority, and would be subject to review and approval by Yuba County Public Works prior to construction. Additionally, the proposed project would be required to comply with state and local water conservation regulations, including CALGreen requirements for indoor water use reductions and site-specific irrigation efficiency measures, as well as the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinances that mandate water-saving landscaping practices. The project developer would also pay connection fees to support system maintenance and capital improvements necessary to serve new growth.

OPUD has sufficient water supplies to meet projected growth in its Plumas Lake service area for normal, single-dry, and multiple-dry years, and the proposed project's net increase in water demand is nominal compared to system capacity. Therefore, the proposed project would not require the construction of new or expanded water treatment facilities, and associated impacts would be less than significant.

Wastewater

OPUD provides wastewater services to its water service area. OPUD operates an activated sludge, tertiary wastewater treatment facility currently permitted for 3 MGD discharge. OPUD's wastewater treatment facility discharges into the Clark Lateral which flows into the Western Interceptor Drainage Canal which flows into the Bear River (OPUD 2022).

The Plumas Lake Specific Plan provides the sewage generation rate for wastewater collection and treatment for schools which is 2,000 GPD per acre (Yuba 1992). Wastewater generation estimates under the proposed project are included in Table 3.18-5, *Proposed Wastewater Generation*. As shown in Table 3.18-5, the proposed project would result in an increase of 3,543 GPD or 0.003 MGD.

Table 3.18-5 Proposed Wastewater Generation

Proposed Use, Building Area (SF)	Rate per SF (GPD/SF)[1]	Projected Wastewater (GPD)
70,867	0.05	3,543

Source: Yuba, County. 1992.

Notes:

SF = square feet

GPD = gallons per day

1. Table 4.2.1, Wastewater Generation Rates, in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan provides the sewage generation rate for schools which is reported as 2,000 gallons per day per acre. Divided 2,000 gallons per day per acre by 43,560 square feet to get GPD/SF

The amount of wastewater that would be generated by the proposed project is within the plant's total remaining daily treatment capacity, which is 1.7 MGD. In addition, the proposed project would install low flow plumbing fixtures that are required by the CALGreen Building Standards Code further reducing the proposed project's wastewater generation. All proposed sewer system improvements would be designed and constructed in accordance with applicable Yuba County Public Works standards and the requirements of OPUD would be subject to review and approval by Yuba County Public Works prior to construction. The project developer would also pay connection fees that go towards maintaining and expanding OPUD's wastewater collection system as needed, ensuring that new developments pay their fair share of system improvements. Therefore, the proposed project would not require the construction of new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities. This impact is less than significant.

Stormwater Infrastructure

Impacts related to storm drainage facilities are addressed in Section 3.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, Impact a. As shown in Figure 2-7, *Stormwater Control Plan*, the project site is divided into five Drainage Management Areas (DMAs) that convey runoff to designated BMPs for water-quality treatment and flow control. DMAs 1 through 4 treat runoffs using bioretention basins, pervious concrete, and underground detention systems that provide treatment and storage capacities exceeding required volumes, with overflows discharging either to a new MS4 connection at River Oaks Boulevard or directly to Reclamation District facilities. DMA 5 treats roadway runoff through planter box or biopod facilities, with overflow combining with DMAs 1 and 2 before discharging to the new MS4 system. Collectively, the proposed BMPs are sized to capture, treat, and detain stormwater runoff such that discharge rates leaving the site would be reduced to or below pre-development levels. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact to the stormwater infrastructure.

Energy Infrastructure

Electrical service to the project site would be provided by PG&E through connections to existing off-site/on-site electrical lines and new on-site infrastructure. As shown in Table 3.6-5, *Operational Electricity Consumption*, of Chapter 3.6, Energy, the total annual electricity consumption is estimated to be 889,382 kWh, accounting for the combined demand from the building, parking lot, and electric vehicles. The proposed project would consume electricity at a per capita rate that is lower (741 kWh/year) than the county average (6,699 kWh/year). Implementation of the proposed project would not generate an increase in natural gas since the campus would encompass only all-electric buildings on-site. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would result in no impact with respect to natural gas usage. Therefore, the proposed project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Telecommunication Infrastructure

Infrastructure supporting telecommunications services would be provided and installed on-site. The proposed project would connect to existing telecommunication infrastructure available in the project site area and would be served by existing telecommunication providers. The proposed project's connection to existing telecommunication facilities would not require the relocation or construction of new or expanded telecommunications facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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

Based on the analysis in Impact (a), OPUD has sufficient water supplies to meet existing and projected demands within its service area for normal, single-dry, and multiple-dry years. The proposed project is estimated to generate approximately 38,462 GPD (43 AFY) of new water demand. This is well within OPUD's forecasted water surplus and OPUD's projected increase in water demand of 939 AFY between 2025 and 2045. Therefore, OPUD has adequate supply and infrastructure capacity to serve the proposed project without the need for new or expanded treatment facilities. OPUD's 2020 UWMP found that water resources available to the area are adequate to meet existing and projected demands over the next 20 years (OPUD 2022).

Furthermore, development of the proposed project would be required to comply with the provisions of CALGreen, which contain requirements for indoor water use reduction and site irrigation conservation. Specifically, the proposed project would be required to adhere to mandatory non-residential measures outlined in Division 5.3, Water Efficiency and Conservation, of CALGreen, including those of Sections 5.303, Indoor Water Use, and 5.304, Outdoor Water Use.

Based on the preceding, there are adequate water supplies to meet the water demands of the proposed project. The OPUD would not be required to obtain new or expanded water supplies to serve the proposed project. Therefore, impacts on water supplies due to the proposed project would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that 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?

As described in Impact (a), OPUD operates a tertiary wastewater treatment facility permitted for 3 MGD. The proposed project would generate roughly 3,543 gpd (0.03 MGD) of wastewater, which is within the plant's remaining capacity of 1.7 MGD. The proposed project would also include CALGreen low-flow fixtures to further reduce flows. Therefore, OPUD has adequate capacity to serve the proposed project in addition to existing commitments, so no new or expanded wastewater facilities are required. Impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project 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?

The capacity and disposal data for the landfill is shown in Table 3.18-3. As shown in Table 3.18-3, the Ostrom Road Landfill has a residual capacity of 2,081 per day. Table 3.18-6, *Projected Solid Waste Generation*, shows that based on the building square footage, the proposed project is estimated to generate a net increase of approximately 496 pounds (0.25 tons) of solid waste per day. The total amount of solid waste expected to be generated under the proposed project would be minimal compared to the total permitted daily maximum solid waste tonnage per day of the landfill serving the area.

Additionally, CALGreen Section 5.408.1.1 requires that at least 65 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operations be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse. The proposed project would comply with these established standards. Based on the preceding, impacts on landfill capacity would be less than significant.

Table 3.18-6 Projected Solid Waste Generation

Proposed School Buildings (SF)	Generation Rate (lbs/SF/day)	Proposed Project Solid Waste Generation (pounds/day)	Proposed Project Solid Waste Generation (tons/day)[1]
70,867	0.007	496	0.25

Source: CalRecycle 2025d

Notes:

SF = square feet

1. 496 pounds per day, which converts to about 0.25 tons per day (496 pounds divided by 2,000 pounds per ton).

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Solid waste would be generated during construction and operation of the proposed project. The proposed project would comply with all regulations pertaining to solid waste, such as the California Integrated Waste Management Act and local recycling and waste programs. The proposed project would comply with all applicable laws and regulations and make every effort to reuse and/or recycle the construction debris that would otherwise be taken to a landfill. Section 5.408 of CALGreen requires that at least 65 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operations be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse. Hazardous waste, such as paint used during construction, would be disposed of only at facilities permitted to receive it in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations.

In addition, under Yuba County's waste & recycling program, schools and other public entities that exceed the commercial waste threshold (4 cubic yards/week) are required to participate in recycling programs consistent with AB 341 and must comply with the regional Mandatory Organic Waste Disposal Reduction Ordinance overseen by the Yuba-Sutter RWMA (SB 1383) (RWMA 2025). These local obligations further support that the proposed project would comply with all solid waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and disposal laws. The proposed project would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste disposal. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.18.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for utilities and service systems encompasses the Plumas Lake Specific Plan area and adjacent portions of southern Yuba County that are served by OPUD, Recology Yuba-Sutter (Ostrom Road Landfill), and the regional storm-drainage network.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to utilities and service systems?

Water

Planned development growth in the OPUD service area is projected to increase total water demand from approximately 1,754 AFY in 2025 to 2,693 AFY in 2045 for normal years. OPUD also forecasts a water surplus of 4,790 AFY in 2025 and 3,751 AFY in 2045. OPUD forecasts that it would have sufficient water supplies to meet water demands in its service area for normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (OPUD 2022). The proposed project would add approximately 38,000 gpd (43 AFY). This is well within OPUD's forecasted water surplus and OPUD's projected increase in water demand of 939 AFY between 2025 and 2045.

Future development projects within OPUD's service area would be required to comply with state and local water conservation regulations, including CALGreen requirements for indoor water use reductions and site-specific irrigation efficiency measures, as well as the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinances that mandate water-saving landscaping practices. Additionally, developers must pay connection fees to support system maintenance and capital improvements necessary to serve new growth. Larger projects may also be subject to Water Supply Assessments under SB 610/221 to verify sufficient supplies, evaluate alternative sources, and ensure long-term reliability. Compliance with these regulatory measures ensures that cumulative water demands from future development would not exceed OPUD's planned supplies and would not require unplanned expansion of water treatment or distribution facilities. Therefore, cumulative impacts on water supply would be less than significant, and the proposed project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable.

Wastewater

OPUD operates a tertiary wastewater treatment facility with a permitted discharge of 3 MGD. System-wide flows, including cumulative development in the Plumas Lake area, remain below the plant's design and regulatory capacity. The proposed project would generate approximately 0.003 MGD which is within the plant's remaining capacity of 1.7 MGD.

The OPUD expands and upgrades its sewer collection system based on needs identified in the SSMP. All future development within OPUD's larger service area is reviewed on a project-by-project basis to ensure that existing capacity is sufficient to convey wastewater from new development and to evaluate whether construction of new sewer lines could result in significant environmental effects. Through connection fees and development agreements, OPUD can maintain and expand its wastewater collection system as needed, ensuring that new developments pay their fair share of system improvements. Accordingly, cumulative impacts on wastewater infrastructure and treatment would be less than significant, and the proposed project would not contribute to any cumulatively considerable effects.

Stormwater Infrastructure

As discussed in Section 3.10, the proposed project would increase impervious surfaces which could increase stormwater runoff, which in turn could impact stormwater infrastructure. The project would incorporate measures such as bioretention basins, porous pavement, and detention systems to capture and treat stormwater, prevent erosion, and maintain groundwater recharge consistently with pre-development conditions. Other future projects in the area would be subject to similar requirements. The project would be designed in accordance with Yuba County storm drain design standards and applicable state and local stormwater regulations, including on-site detention, treatment, and management of post-development peak flows. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Energy Infrastructure

The energy service providers serving the proposed project have sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed project without substantial infrastructure upgrades. Under cumulative conditions, regional growth in and around Yuba County would increase electricity and heating fuel demand; however, these increases would occur within the planning horizons of PG&E, which regularly expand and upgrade infrastructure to meet projected needs. Because the proposed project is not an uncommon project within the area and was anticipated as part of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan, it would not result in or contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact on electric power or natural gas facilities. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

Telecommunication Infrastructure

Telecommunication services in the Plumas Lake area are provided by private carriers such as AT&T and Comcast. The proposed project would create only a minor increase in demand that can be met by existing scalable infrastructure. Cumulative growth in the area would similarly be accommodated through ongoing provider upgrades, and no new major facilities would be required. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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3.19 WILDFIRE

This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions on the project site related to wildfire, and the potential impacts of the project on wildfire.

Notice of Preparation Public Comments

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on June 20, 2025, to inform responsible agencies and the public of its intent to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period from June 20, 2025, to July 21, 2025.

No comments related to wildfire were raised during the NOP comment period.

3.19.1 Regulatory Framework

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to wildfire and applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

FEDERAL

International Fire Code

The International Fire Code establishes minimum requirements for fire prevention and fire protection systems using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. This code regulates minimum fire safety requirements for new and existing buildings, facilities, storage, and processes. The International Fire Code includes general and specialized technical fire and life safety regulations addressing fire department access, fire hydrants, automatic sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, fire, and explosion hazards safety, use and storage of hazardous materials, protection of emergency responders, industrial processes, and many other topics. The International Fire Code is issued by the International Code Council, an international organization of building officials. The International Fire Code is the basis for the California Fire Code (CFC), discussed below.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) mission is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any natural disaster, including earthquakes, flooding, and wildfires. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA created and maintained the National Risk Index, which is a dataset and online tool to help illustrate the US communities most at risk

for 18 natural hazards including avalanches, coastal flooding, cold waves, drought, earthquakes, hail, heat wave, hurricanes, ice storms, landslides, lightning, riverine flooding, strong wind, tornados, tsunamis, volcanic activity, wildfire, and winter weather. It was designed and built by FEMA in close collaboration with various stakeholders and partners in academia; local, state, and federal government; and private industry. Data are provided by federal agencies, state agencies, and academic and research institutions, and risk ratings are determined by census tract and county (FEMA 2025).

National Fire Protection Association Standards

National Fire Protection Association Standards (NFPA) codes, standards, recommended practices, and guides are developed through a consensus standards development process approved by the American National Standards Institute. NFPA standards are recommended (advisory) guidelines in fire protection but are not laws or "codes" unless adopted or referenced as such by the CFC or local fire agency. Specific standards applicable to wildland fire hazards include, but are not limited to (TSC 2020; ES 2025):

- NFPA 1141, Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Wildlands
- NFPA 1142, Water Supplies for Suburban and Rural Fire Fighting
- NFPA 1143, Wildland Fire Management
- NFPA 1144, Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire
- NFPA 1710, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations

STATE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is dedicated to the fire protection and stewardship of over 31 million acres of California's wildlands. The Office of the State Fire Marshal supports CAL FIRE's mission to protect life and property through fire prevention engineering programs, law and code enforcement, and education. The Office of the State Fire Marshal provides for fire prevention by enforcing fire-related laws in State-owned or -operated buildings; investigating arson fires in California; licensing those who inspect and service fire protection systems; approving fireworks for use in California; regulating the use of chemical flame retardants; evaluating building materials against fire safety standards; regulating hazardous liquid pipelines; and tracking incident statistics for local and State government emergency response agencies. The California Fire Plan is the State's Road map for reducing the risk of wildfire through planning and prevention to reduce firefighting costs and property losses, increase firefighter safety, and contribute to ecosystem health. The California Fire Plan is a cooperative effort between the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and CAL FIRE.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Responsibility Areas

CAL FIRE publishes maps recommending fire hazard severity zones for every California county. The maps identify lands in California as falling within one of the following management areas: local responsibility area (LRA), state responsibility area (SRA), and federal responsibility area (FRA). Within each of these areas, a single agency has direct responsibility: in LRAs, local fire departments or fire protection districts are responsible; in SRAs, CAL FIRE is responsible; in FRAs, federal agencies such as the United States Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of Defense, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and Department of the Interior are responsible (OSFM 2025).

State Responsibility Areas Fire Safe Regulations

Section 4290, Hazardous Fire Areas, of the California Public Resources Code (PRC) includes fire safety regulations that apply to development to decrease the risk of wildfire events. Section 4290 establishes minimum standards for roads for fire equipment access; standards for signs identifying streets, roads, and buildings; private water supply resources for emergency fire use; fuel breaks and greenbelts; basic emergency access; and wildland fuel modification. Section 4290 works in conjunction with current and new building construction development standards in SRAs, defined by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as an area in which the State has primary financial responsibility for preventing and suppressing fires. Section 4291, Mountainous, Forest-, Brush- and Grass-Covered Lands, of the PRC requires annual defensible space of 100 feet to be provided around all structures in or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or any land that is covered with flammable material. SRA Fire Safe Regulations do not supersede local regulations that equal or exceed minimum State regulations.

California Office of Emergency Services

The California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) was established on January 1, 2009, and created by Assembly Bill (AB) 38, which merged the duties, powers, purposes, and responsibilities of the former Cal OES with those of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security. Cal OES is responsible for the coordination of overall state agency response to major disasters in support of local government. It is responsible for ensuring the State's readiness to respond to and recover from all hazards—natural, man-made, emergencies, and disasters—and for assisting local governments in their emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and hazard mitigation efforts. In 2018, Cal OES completed a State Hazard Mitigation Plan, which designated fire hazard severity zones and wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas (OEM 2018).

Senate Bill 1241

SB 1241 requires that the fire hazard severity zone maps prepared by CAL FIRE be included in each general plan in the state. Each map sets the foundation for subsequent policies, usually in a general plan's safety element, to address fire prevention and protection in areas with a High or Very High FHSZ. SB 1241 additionally requires that General Plan Safety Elements get reviewed by CAL FIRE prior to adoption to ensure policies provide adequate wildfire protection.

California Building Code

Building Design Standards

The California Building Code (CBC), Part 2 of 24 California Code of Regulations, identifies building design standards, including those for fire safety. The CBC is updated on a three-year cycle. It is effective statewide, but a local jurisdiction may adopt more restrictive standards based on local conditions under specific amendment rules prescribed by the State Building Standards Commission. Commercial and residential buildings are plan checked by local city and county building officials for compliance with the CBC and any applicable local edits. Typical fire safety requirements of the CBC include the installation of sprinklers in all high-rise buildings and other facilities; the establishment of fire-resistance standards for fire doors, building materials, and particular types of construction in High FHSZs; requirements for smoke-detection systems; exiting requirements; and the clearance of debris.

Materials and Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure

Chapter 7A of the CBC, Materials and Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure, prescribes building materials and construction methods for new buildings in an FHSZ. Chapter 7A contains requirements for roofing; attic ventilation; exterior walls; exterior windows and glazing; exterior doors; decking; protection of underfloor, appendages, and floor projections; and ancillary structures.

California Fire Code

The CFC incorporates, by adoption, the International Fire Code of the International Code Council, with California amendments. This is the official fire code for the state and all political subdivisions. It is found in California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 9, and, like the CBC, it is revised and published every three years by the California Building Standards Commission. Also like the CBC, the CFC is effective statewide, but a local jurisdiction may adopt more restrictive standards based on local conditions. The CFC is a model code that regulates minimum fire safety regulations for new and existing buildings; facilities; storage; processes, including emergency planning and preparedness; fire service features; fire protection systems; hazardous materials; fire flow requirements; and fire hydrant locations and distribution. Typical fire safety requirements include installation of sprinklers in all high-rise buildings; the establishment of fire

resistance standards for fire doors, building materials, and particular types of construction; and the clearance of debris and vegetation within a prescribed distance from occupied structures in wildfire hazard areas.

Wildland-Urban Interface Areas

Chapter 49 of the CFC, Requirements for WUI Fire Areas, prescribes construction materials and methods in fire hazard severity zones; requirements generally parallel CBC Chapter 7A.

Defensible Space

California PRC Sections 4291 et seq. require that brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth within 100 feet be removed around all buildings on or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or land covered in flammable materials. Requirements regarding hazardous vegetation and fuel management are also contained in Sections 4906 and 4907 of the CFC.

2024 California Strategic Fire Plan

The purpose of the 2024 California Strategic Fire Plan is to guide and coordinate efforts to create a safer and more resilient California in the face of escalating wildfire threats. The plan sets the direction for all levels of CAL FIRE and its partners, aiming to:

- Strengthen wildfire prevention, response, and recovery
- Maximize partnerships across state, federal, tribal, local government, and community organizations
- Embrace technology and improve efficiency to enhance operations and reduce administrative barriers
- Restore and maintain forest and landscape health to reduce wildfire severity and protect natural resources
- Increase public safety and community resilience to wildfires by promoting risk reduction, adaptation planning, and supporting defensible space and home hardening initiatives.

These objectives are implemented through targeted strategies such as increasing the pace and scale of forest management, expanding the use of prescribed fire, supporting local action plans, and investing in advanced firefighting resources and detection technologies. The overarching goal is to reduce catastrophic wildfire risk while supporting California's environmental and economic priorities (CAL FIRE 2024).

2021 California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan

The Governor's Forest Management Task Force developed California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, which is a framework for establishing healthy and resilient forests that can withstand and adapt to wildfire, drought, and climate change. This plan accelerates efforts to restore the health and resilience of California's forests, grasslands, and natural places; improves the fire safety of communities; and sustains the economic vitality of rural forested areas. CAL FIRE, in partnership with the US Forest Service, intends to scale up forest thinning and prescribed fire; integrate climate adaptation into the statewide network of regional forest and community fire resilience plans; improve the electricity grid resilience, and promote sustainable land use (FMTF 2021).

California Public Utilities Commission

In 2007, wildfires in southern California were ignited by overhead utility power lines and aerial communication facilities near power lines. In response, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) began considering and adopting regulations to protect the public from fire hazards due to overhead power lines and nearby aerial communication facilities. The CPUC published a Fire Threat Map under Rulemaking 15-05-006, following procedures in Decision 17-01-009, revised by Decision 17-06-024, which adopted a work plan for the development of a utility High Fire Threat District where enhanced fire safety regulations in Decision 17-12-024 apply (CPUC 2021). Fire regulations require electric utilities to (CPUC 2017):

- Prioritize the correction of safety hazards.
- Correct nonimmediate fire risks in "Tier 2" (elevated fire threat) areas on the CPUC High Fire-Threat District within 12 months, and in "Tier 3" (extreme fire threat) areas within 6 months.
- Maintain increased clearances between vegetation and power lines within the High Fire Threat District.
- Maintain stricter wire-to-wire clearances for new and reconstructed facilities in Tier 3 areas.
- Conduct annual inspections of overhead distribution facilities in rural areas of Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas.
- Prepare a fire prevention plan annually if overhead facilities exist in the High Fire Threat District.

Comprehensive School Safety Plans

California Education Code *S*ection 32281(a) requires every kindergarten through grade twelve public school to develop and maintain a Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP) designed to address campus risks, prepare for emergencies, and create a safe, secure learning environment for students and school personnel. The law requires designated stakeholders to annually engage in a systematic planning process to develop strategies and policies to prevent and respond to

potential incidents involving emergencies, natural and other disasters, and other safety aspects. CSSPs must be available for public inspection, except for sensitive tactical response information (CDE 2026).

REGIONAL

County of Yuba Office of Emergency Services

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) in Yuba County is dedicated to coordinating disaster planning and response efforts before, during, and after emergencies. Its mission is to protect public safety and property by working with stakeholders and first responders. OES also provides preparedness and educational resources to help residents make informed decisions during emergencies (Yuba 2023).

Yuba County 2021 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2021 Yuba County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) Update was developed by Yuba County, its two incorporated communities, and nine special districts as an update to the 2015 FEMA-approved LHMP. Its primary purpose is to guide efforts to reduce the risks and impacts of hazard events, protect people and property, and strengthen community resilience. The plan outlines the hazard mitigation planning process, identifies local hazards and vulnerabilities, and establishes goals and strategies to reduce risk. It also ensures continued eligibility for federal disaster assistance programs (Yuba 2021a).

The Yuba County LHMP determined wildfire as a priority hazard in Yuba County (Yuba 2021b). As part of the mitigation strategy, several new actions were introduced to address multiple hazard types, including wildfire. Action 13, Fuel Reduction Project, and Action 14, Wildfire Mitigation (Fuels Management), are both new countywide initiatives aimed at reducing wildfire risk. These actions focus on prevention, protecting property, and conserving natural resources through proactive fuels management and vegetation treatment (Yuba 2021b).

Yuba County Wildfire Hazard Reduction Program

The Yuba County Resource Conservation District (RCD) implemented a program to support small, underserved forest landowners in the Yuba County foothills by providing outreach, education, Forest Management Plans, and forest thinning treatments. The goal was to promote healthier, fire-resilient forests and empower landowners to manage their land in the future. Funded by CAL FIRE's Wildfire Resilience Program, the project successfully secured funding to treat 100 acres to improve forest health and community safety (YCRCD 2025).

Yuba County General Plan

Public Health and Safety Element

- **Policy HS2.1**: Prior to approval, new developments proposed in areas of very high, high, or moderate fire hazard, as designated on maps maintained by Cal Fire, shall demonstrate compliance with Fire Safety Regulations and local regulations for defensible space, ignition-resistant construction materials, property maintenance to reduce fuels, natural hazards disclosure requirements, emergency access and multiple access points, availability of water for fire suppression, and other relevant building and development standards.
- **Policy HS2.2**: The County will communicate with appropriate local, state, and federal fire protection personnel during the development review process and will condition projects considering input from these agencies to require defensible space, fire-wise landscaping, fuel breaks, emergency access, fire flow, hydrants, sprinkler systems, fire stations and other improvements and conditions, as appropriate.
- **Policy HS2.3**: New development projects shall pay on a fair-share basis for fire stations, equipment, and other fire suppression improvements necessary to provide adequate fire protection services.
- **Policy HS2.8**: Communication and electricity infrastructure in areas prone to wildfire should be located and designed to avoid interruptions during periods of fire activity.
- **Policy HS2.10**: New developments shall provide access that will allow safe evacuation and movement of firefighting equipment during a wildfire. Evacuation routes shall have the capacity to accommodate traffic in relation to the population served.
- **Policy HS2.11**: New developments in moderate, high, or very high fire hazard areas cannot propose limited access roads unless such access limitations do not adversely affect fire response and suppression.
- **Policy HS-9.2:** The County will provide public access to emergency response procedures in such locations as the Government Center, the County library, and public schools, as well as on the Yuba County website and through social media, and will otherwise promote awareness of emergency response and evacuation plans.
- **Policy HS-9.3:** The County will coordinate with Caltrans to maintain Highways 20, 70, 49, and 65 in the lower half of the county, and the County will maintain Marysville Road, Frenchtown Road, and La Porte–Quincy Road in the upper half of the county as primary emergency access and evacuation routes and improve other roads as necessary, such as Plumas Arboga Road, to create additional evacuation routes (Public Health & Safety-Figure 14).

Yuba County Ordinance Code

Chapter 10.05: Building Standards Construction Code

This chapter sets minimum regulations to protect public health and safety, with a specific focus on fire hazards, for all building construction, alteration, and maintenance in unincorporated Yuba County. It enforces the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), including the CFC (Title 24, Part 9), making state fire safety rules legally binding locally. The chapter requires the strictest applicable fire safety provisions to be followed when conflicts arise and allows existing buildings to continue operation unless the building official mandates upgrades for safety. Overall, it integrates the CFC into local law to reduce wildfire risks and enhance community resilience.

Chapter 11.22: Fire Safe Regulations

These establish minimum wildfire protection standards under California's Public Resources Code Section 4290. Covering new buildings and subdivisions in SRAs, the regulations mandate defensible space, emergency access routes, water supply for firefighting, and ongoing maintenance of fuel reduction zones. For example, driveways must be at least 12 feet wide with 15 feet of vertical and horizontal clearance; longer driveways require turnouts and turnarounds for fire apparatus. Structures must have visible addresses posted at driveway entrances, and all new buildings in SRAs must provide a minimum 3,000-gallon emergency water supply (pond, tank, or pool) approved by local fire authorities.

Section 11.22.050: Emergency Access

Section 11.22.050 requires that all roads and private driveways, unless exempt, be constructed to allow safe access for both emergency wildland fire equipment and civilian evacuation. New roads, driveways, and buildings must have clearly visible and legible address signs installed before final approvals. Roads must meet specific construction standards, including load-bearing capacity and vertical clearance. Driveways must be at least 12 feet wide with 15 feet of clearance from combustible vegetation, include turnouts and turnarounds as needed based on length, and adhere to slope limits unless approved by the fire district. All new roadway structures must meet load, clearance, and signage standards.

3.19.2 Existing Conditions

According to Public Resources Code Sections 4103 and 4104, the term "wildfire" refers to any uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels that threatens to destroy life, property, or resources. In recent years, wildfires have been moving from traditionally wildland areas with natural vegetation into more urban areas, that is, the WUI, threatening homes, businesses, and essential infrastructure. Though wildfires play an important role in the ecology of many natural

habitats, risks to human safety and property increase as urban development moves into areas susceptible to wildfire hazards.

WILDFIRE HISTORY

According to CAL FIRE, Plumas Lake has experienced the following fires (CAL FIRE 2025c):

- **2019 Columbia.** On June 16, 2012, the CAL FIRE, Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit, responded to a wildfire incident near Columbia. The fire was fully contained the same day and burned a total of 82.99 acres. The cause of the fire was determined to be equipment use. The fire perimeter was mapped using ground-based GPS methods.

WILDFIRE HAZARDS

According to CAL FIRE's Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps, the project site is not in an FHSZ in the LRA or SRA. However, the southern portion of Plumas Lake is in a Moderate FHSZ for the LRA (CAL FIRE 2025d).

FACTORS INFLUENCING WILDFIRE

Weather

Weather components such as temperature, relative humidity, wind, and lightning also affect the potential for wildfire. High temperatures and low relative humidity dry out fuels that feed the wildfire creating a situation where fuel will more readily ignite and burn more intensely. Wind is the most treacherous weather factor. The greater the wind, the faster a fire will spread, and the more intense it will be (Yuba 2021c).

Late summer to fall is the period that is the most subject to wildfires, especially during the occasionally occurring north wind events. Weather conditions significantly impact the potential for fire ignition, as well as rates of spread, intensity, and direction in which fires burn. Wind is considered the most variable and difficult weather element to predict. The direction and velocity of surface winds can directly control the direction and rate at which fire spreads. Upper-level winds can carry embers and firebrands downwind, causing spot fires ahead of the main fire. Weather conditions can change rapidly as upper-level wind currents and pressure systems in the western states shift locations, and both dry and wet frontal systems move through the mountainous terrain. Frontal winds associated with low-pressure systems moving across the area can create hazardous fire conditions. Winds in advance of the frontal system can reach speeds exceeding 60 miles per hour (mph) over ridges. Lightning also ignites wildfires, often in difficult-to-reach terrain for firefighters. Lightning poses a serious problem during the summer months. Numerous wildfires have resulted from dry lightning between July and August (more than 1,100 reported between 2001 and 2013). Also of concern is that during periods of drought

the threat of wildfire increases. High wind events have continued to be a factor in wildfire spread and intensity in areas of Yuba County (Yuba 2021c).

Fuel

Fuel is the material that feeds fire and is a key factor in wildfire behavior. Fuel is generally classified by type and by volume. Fuel sources are diverse and include everything from dead tree leaves, twigs, and branches to dead standing trees, live trees, brush, and cured grasses. Also to be considered as a fuel source are man-made structures, such as homes, and other associated combustibles. The type of prevalent fuel directly influences the behavior of wildfire. Fuel is the only factor that is under human control (Yuba 2021c). Types of fuel within and near the project site are the residential areas north and east of the project site; the agricultural and vegetated areas to the west, east, and south of the project site; and fallow agricultural land on the project site that has overgrown weeds and vegetation.

Topography

An area's terrain and land slopes affect its susceptibility to wildfire spread. Both fire intensity and rate of spread increase as slope increases due to the tendency of heat from a fire to rise via convection. The arrangement of vegetation throughout the hillside can also contribute to increased fire activity on slopes (Yuba 2021c). The project site is generally flat, with ground elevations generally ranging from about 40 to 45 feet above mean sea level (msl). On the west side of the project site, there is a drainage swale with a low point (thalweg) around 30 feet msl. The banks of this swale have gentle slopes, roughly a 4:1 ratio (horizontal to vertical) or flatter in the area near the project site (GEOCON 2024).

Human Actions

Most wildfires are ignited by human action, the result of direct acts of arson, carelessness, or accidents. Many fires originate in populated areas along roads and around homes and are often the result of arson or careless acts such as the disposal of cigarettes, use of equipment, or debris burning. Recreation areas that are in high fire hazard areas also result in increased human activity that can increase the potential for wildfires to occur (Yuba 2021c).

Climate Change

Warmer temperatures can exacerbate drought conditions. Drought often kills plants and trees, which serve as fuel for wildfires. Warmer temperatures could increase the number of wildfires and pest outbreaks, such as the western pine beetles. Cal-Adapt’s wildfire tool predicts the potential increase in the amount of burned areas for the years 2080 to 2089, as compared to 2010 conditions (Yuba 2021c). Cal-Adapt predicts that wildfire risk in Yuba County will increase slightly (and much less than other California counties) in the near term and subside during mid- to late-century. Likely, in Yuba County, precipitation patterns, high levels of heat, topography, and fuel load will determine the frequency and intensity of future wildfire (Yuba 2021c).

Evacuation and Access

Evacuation routes are designated roadways that allow many people to quickly leave an area due to a potential or imminent disaster. These routes should have sufficient capacity to accommodate the needs of the community, be safely and easily accessible, and allow people to travel far enough away to be safe from emergency conditions.

The primary evacuation route from the project site is State Route (SR) 70, which connects SR-65 to the north. None of the surrounding surface streets are identified as an evacuation route (Yuba 2011).

Should the need for evacuation arise, evacuation instructions are broadcasted by local authorities via CodeRED alerts, ZoneHaven, radio, TV, telephone, email, or text message. The County also operates hi-lo sirens to notify the community of evacuation orders. The County also maintains up-to-date evacuation and road closure information on the County's "Emergency Information Page" (Yuba County 2025a).

3.19.3 Standards for Analysis

Appendix G, "Environmental Checklist Form," of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that, "If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones," the proposed project would result in a significant impact related to wildfire if it would:

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

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.

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.

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.

3.19.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) Would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

CAL FIRE maps show that the project site is not within a Very High FHSZ nor a SRA (CAL FIRE 2025d). The proposed project would be required to comply with all applicable design, safety, and fire protection standards outlined in the CFC, CBC, and Yuba County Ordinance Code. Construction and operation of the proposed project would be subject to review and approval by the Division of State Architect (DSA), who are responsible for reviewing and ensuring that school projects provide adequate structural safety, fire and life safety, and accessibility. California Department of Education (CDE) would review and approve the school site and design. Further, since the proposed project includes improvements to the public right of way, the County would review the proposed project and roadway network for proper circulation and access. With the exception of the roadway improvements, all construction activities would occur within the project boundaries and would not obstruct public roadways. As a school project, the proposed project would be required to comply with the CSSP requirements pursuant to California Education Code Sections 32280–32289.5. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan for the proposed project would establish procedures for emergency preparedness and response, including evacuation, communication, and coordination protocols for a range of natural and human-caused hazards. Education Code Section 32282(a) states that the CSSP must include procedures for safe ingress and egress of students, parents/guardians, and school employees to and from the school site. Preparation and implementation of the CSSP for the proposed project would reduce potential risks to students, staff, and visitors in the event of an emergency.

In the event of an evacuation order, the County Office of Emergency Services identifies the evacuation zones and establishes evacuation routes. Persons are notified of an evacuation order by siren, CodeRED alerts, ZoneHaven, radio, TV, telephone, email, and/or text message. Evacuation routes are identified and displayed on the County's interactive evacuation information map (Yuba County 2025a, 2025b). Roadwork and lane closures are staged in a manner to reduce impacts to circulation to the extent feasible. However, off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard, a primary access route to SR-70 (an identified evacuation route) (see Figure 2-6, *Conceptual Site Plan*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*), may result in temporary road closures that can interfere with emergency response and evacuations during an emergency. Therefore, temporary roadway closures during construction could interfere with emergency response or local evacuation efforts.

Although the Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 11.22.050, Emergency Access, establishes standards to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and evacuation, including requirements for roadway width, signage, clearance, and structural integrity, compliance with these standards and best practices during construction of roadway improvements alone do not

eliminate the potential risk posed by temporary construction-related closures on River Oaks, since it is a primary route to SR-70.

Therefore, with compliance with DSA, CDE and County review and approval of project design and plans, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact during operation. During construction, this impact is potentially significant, particularly during periods of heightened wildfire risk or other emergencies, unless construction is carefully coordinated with emergency service providers and managed to ensure continuous emergency access and egress. As such, the proposed project during construction, specifically the roadway off-site improvements, would be potentially significant.

Significance without Mitigation: Potentially significant.

Impact WIL-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary route to SR-70, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could impair emergency response or evacuation access.

> **Mitigation Measure WIL-1:** The project applicant shall prepare a Traffic Control Plan to ensure that alternate routes are provided and maintained during temporary road closures or construction activities along River Oaks Boulevard. The Traffic Control Plan shall detail traffic detour routes, emergency vehicle access provisions, and coordination protocols with local emergency service providers. The plan shall be submitted to the Yuba County Department of Public Works for review and approval prior to the start of construction for the roadway improvements on River Oaks Boulevard.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would ensure that emergency access and evacuation routes remain functional throughout the construction period. By requiring the identification and maintenance of alternate routes, and coordination with emergency services, the mitigation measure would prevent unanticipated delays or access barriers. As such, the potential for the project to impair emergency response or evacuation would be adequately addressed, and the impact would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, would the project exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

The project site is not designated Very High FHSZ and is not within a SRA (CAL FIRE 2025d). The project site does not have any building structures and contains fallowed agriculture land.

The project site is generally flat and would not exacerbate wildfire risk due to slope. The Yuba County LHMP states that Yuba County is widely exposed to strong straight-line winds, which can affect all areas and may occur with or without storms (Yuba 2021c, p. E-80). High winds can increase wildfire risks, especially during periods with dry vegetation. The proposed project would need to comply with the CBC, which helps regulate construction techniques that minimize damage from windstorms such as Section 1609, Wind Load. Further, the proposed project does not include high-rise buildings and would not affect prevailing winds during operation.

In addition, the County's LHMP and Emergency Operations Plan provide guidance to effectively respond to and mitigate wildfire risks. Although the project site is not in or near a SRA or a Very High FHSZ, compliance with applicable laws and regulations regarding wildfire emergencies would ensure that the proposed project would not exacerbate wildfire risk. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant, and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

c) Would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

The project site is not in a designated Fire Hazard Severity Zone or Very High FHSZ under either LRA or SRA designations. The project site is not within a SRA. Currently, the project site contains fallow agricultural land, and development of the proposed project would require the extension of utility connections, including electricity, water, and sewer lines to serve the proposed project. In addition, off-site roadway improvements are planned along River Oaks Boulevard, which could result in temporary construction-related impacts to provide access to the proposed project and ensure adequate vehicle circulation along River Oaks Boulevard.

The proposed project's utility and roadwork improvements are typical of new development projects and do not represent infrastructure that could exacerbate fire risk or result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment. The proposed project would be required to comply with the most recent editions of the CBC (Title 24, Parts 2 and 9) and CFC, as well as the Yuba County Ordinance Code Section 11.22.050, which requires roads to be designed for safe access by emergency wildland fire equipment and for civilian evacuation.

Because the project site is not in a designated FHSZ or Very High FHSZ, and compliance with applicable fire and building codes would reduce potential fire-related risks, the proposed infrastructure improvements would not significantly exacerbate wildfire risk. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

d) Would the project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

The project site is not in a designated Fire Hazard Severity Zone or Very High FHSZ under either LRA or SRA designations, and is not within a SRA. The project site is generally flat, with ground elevations ranging from approximately 40 to 45 feet above msl. A drainage swale located west of the site has a low point (thalweg) around 30 feet msl, with gently sloping banks at a ratio of roughly 4:1 (horizontal to vertical) or flatter in the vicinity of the project area (GEOCON 2024). Additionally, according to FEMA Flood Maps, the project site is in an area of reduced flood risk due to existing levee protection (FEMA 2011). Construction activities associated with the proposed project would comply with the CFC and incorporate best management practices (BMP) to manage runoff and erosion. Given these factors, the proposed project would not expose people or structures to significant risks related to flooding, landslides, or post-fire slope instability. Therefore, this impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is necessary.

Significance without Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.19.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative setting for wildfire-related impacts is the Plumas Lake area, an unincorporated community in southwestern Yuba County that is planned for urban growth under the Yuba County General Plan. Plumas Lake is transitioning from primary agricultural uses to a mix of residential, commercial, and public facilities, including new schools, parks, and infrastructure improvements. The area is served by local fire protection districts and is supported by regional evacuation planning coordinated through Yuba County's LHMP and Emergency Operations Plan. While the project site is not within a Very High FHSZ designation, the southern portion of Plumas Lake is in a Moderate FHSZ for the LRA. Cumulative development has the potential to increase demands on emergency response infrastructure and strain evacuation routes.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to wildfire?

The proposed project is not in a state or local Very High FHSZ and is not within a SRA. The project site does not border or encroach upon wildland areas with high fire risk. The project site is currently undeveloped and generally flat. The proposed project would include standard infrastructure improvements such as utility connections and off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard. Cumulatively, development in the Plumas Lake area—including residential growth, commercial projects, and other public facilities—would incrementally increase the demand for emergency services and evacuation capacity. However, the proposed

project and other cumulative projects are required to comply with existing regulations, including the CFC, CBC, and the County Ordinance Code.

While the off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard could result in temporary interruptions or delays to emergency access and evacuation routes, Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would ensure these disruptions are managed with an approved Traffic Control Plan, including coordination with emergency responders and detour planning.

Given that the project site is not within a very high fire risk zone, and considering compliance with applicable codes and mitigation measures, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact when combined with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects. With implementation of Mitigation Measure WIL-1 and compliance with applicable emergency access and fire safety regulations, the proposed project would not result in cumulatively considerable wildfire impacts. The cumulative effect related to wildfire risk, emergency response, or evacuation impairment would be less than significant.

Significance with Mitigation: Less than significant.

3.19.6 References

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4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the alternatives analysis for the proposed project, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a discussion of reasonable project alternatives that would "feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[a]).

The discussion includes an explanation of the methodology used to select alternatives to the proposed project, with the intent of identifying potentially feasible alternatives that could avoid or substantially lessen the significant impacts identified for the proposed project while still meeting most of the basic project objectives, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a). This chapter identifies a reasonable range of alternatives that meet these criteria, and these alternatives are evaluated with respect to minimizing adverse environmental effects as compared to the proposed project. It also describes other alternatives and alternative concepts that were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration and the reasons for their elimination. For the alternatives selected for analysis, this chapter evaluates the impacts of the alternatives against baseline environmental conditions and compares the potential impacts of the alternatives with those of the proposed project. Finally, as required under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e), based on this analysis, this chapter then discusses the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

The discussion in this chapter is intended to inform the public and decision makers of feasible alternatives to the proposed project that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a), *Consideration and Discussion of Alternatives to the Proposed Project*, states that:

> An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible. The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. There is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason.

4.2 FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the basis for determining the range of CEQA alternatives and identifies the specific alternatives that are analyzed in this Draft EIR. The primary factors considered when determining feasible alternatives to the proposed project are the identified project objectives and the significant impacts that have been identified for the proposed project.

4.2.1 Project Objectives

Section 2.5, *Statement of Project Objectives*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, lists the objectives that have been established for the proposed project and will aid decision makers in their review of the project, the project alternatives, and associated environmental impacts. The objectives include:

- The primary purpose of the proposed project is to construct and operate a new middle school for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District to serve the Plumas Lake community to provide adequate middle school services for the build-out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.
- Provide sufficient classroom space to accommodate current and projected enrollment growth in the Plumas Lake community, consistent with the District's long-term facilities planning goals.
- Realign enrollment boundaries to provide adequate student-to-teacher ratio to support high-quality instruction to all schools within the District, which includes repurposing the existing Riverside Meadows Middle School as an elementary school.
- Provide educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs, including science, technology, and arts education.
- Improve neighborhood access to elementary school services by siting a new school within an area of planned residential growth.
- Minimize student travel distances and promote walkability and safe routes to school for families in the surrounding area.
- Enhance opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement through the development of modern athletic and recreational facilities.

4.2.2 Significant Impacts

Apart from the No Project Alternative, alternatives to a project should be evaluated because of their ability to feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project and avoid or lessen the project's identified significant impacts. The proposed project would result in 11 significant impacts that would be reduced to less -than-significant impacts with the implementation of mitigation measures. The proposed project would result in one significant and unavoidable impact, as noted further below.

LESS-THAN-SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS WITH MITIGATION

The following impacts were found to be less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures.

- Impact AIR-1: Construction activities could generate fugitive dust emissions that would contribute to the SVAB's nonattainment status for State PM_{10} standards.
- Impact BIO-1: The proposed project would have a potentially significant impact on special-status wildlife, birds, and plants.
- Impact BIO-2: The proposed project would have a potentially significant impact on migratory birds and nursery sites.
- Impact CUL-1: The proposed project has a moderate to low potential in uncovering pre-contact resources during construction.
- Impact CUL-2: The proposed project has the potential in uncovering cultural resources during construction.
- Impact GEO-3: The proposed project could result in a potentially significant impact due to the presence of paleontological resources.
- Impact GHG-1: The proposed project does not currently implement the second required Sac Metro AQMD's Tier 1 best management practice (BMP) of including electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure consistent with the current CALGreen Tier 2 nonresidential measures. As a result, operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions may result in a cumulative GHG impact.
- Impact HAZ-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary link to State Route 70, temporary off-site construction activities along River Oaks Boulevard could impair emergency response or evacuation access.
- Impact T-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary route to State Route 70, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could result in inadequate emergency access.
- Impact TCR-1: The proposed project has the potential to discover unknown tribal cultural resources during construction.

- Impact WIL-1: Because River Oaks Boulevard is the primary route to State Route 70, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could impair emergency response or evacuation access.

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

The following impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable even with implementation of mitigation measures.

- Impact AGF-1: The proposed project would convert approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use.
- Impact AGF-2: Cumulative Loss of Farmland.

4.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) requires EIRs to identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) provides that among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in the EIR are (i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (ii) infeasibility, or (iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts. Following is a discussion of alternatives considered and rejected, along with the reasons that alternative was not included in the analysis.

4.3.1 Alternative Site

CEQA requires that the discussion of alternatives focus on alternatives to the project or its location that can avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects of the project. The key question and first step in the analysis is whether any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project in another location. Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need to be considered for inclusion in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126[5][B][1]). In general, any development of the size and type proposed by the project in a different location would have substantially the same impacts on aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, energy, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, and utilities and service systems; however, impacts to agriculture and forestry and biological resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, noise, and wildfire could differ (i.e., either greater or lesser impacts). The District does not own any other property within the Plumas Lake area that could be used for the proposed project. Additionally, relocating the proposed project to an alternative site would not meet the project objectives of providing a new middle school to serve the Plumas Lake community and adequate middle school services for the build-out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Therefore, this alternative is rejected from further consideration.

4.3.2 Preserving Agricultural Use in the Project Site

The project site consists of approximately 25 acres of fallow agricultural land, as shown in Figure 2-3, *Aerial View with Photograph Locations*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*. The project site is designated Valley Neighborhood under the Yuba County General Plan and zoned Specific Plan District (SP). It is also located within the Plumas Lake Specific Plan (PLSP) area, where it carries a Medium Density Residential (RM) land use designation allowing up to four dwelling units per acre. The PLSP establishes a transitional area between the urban development to the north and agricultural lands to the south, providing detailed planning regulations to guide growth and minimize land use conflicts. Existing uses surrounding the project site include residential development to the north, active agricultural land to the west, and fallow agricultural fields to the south and east. The terrain is flat and characterized primarily by fallow agricultural land with overgrown weeds and vegetation in the northern portion. Remnants of former agricultural operations, such as rubber irrigation tubing, remain on-site.

Given the existing land use designation and zoning, as well as the pattern of surrounding development, it is highly unlikely that the project site would remain vacant or continue in agricultural use over the long term. Although under this alternative all potentially significant impacts, including the significant and unavoidable agricultural resources impact associated with the proposed project, would be avoided, the assumption that the project site would remain in agricultural use is not consistent with the County's adopted land use plans. The PLSP specifically anticipates urban development in this area and establishes land use designations and zoning to accommodate that planned growth. Additionally, the District's goals and objectives for providing educational facilities in response to projected growth further reinforce the expectation that the project site will transition away from agricultural use.

For these reasons, maintaining the project site in agricultural use is considered infeasible and this alternative is rejected.

4.4 ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

The following alternatives have been determined to represent a reasonable range of alternatives that have the potential to feasibly attain most of the objectives of the proposed project and that may avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the proposed project.

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative – Increase Enrollment Capacity at Existing Campuses
- Alternative 2: No Project Alternative – Implement a Districtwide Year-Round School Program
- Alternative 3: Early Education Campus
- Alternative 4: Reduced Middle School Buildout

4.5 ALTERNATIVE 1: NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE – INCREASE ENROLLMENT CAPACITY AT EXISTING CAMPUSES

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires evaluation of a "No Project" Alternative. Under this alternative, the proposed project would not be implemented, and the project site would remain developed in the future consistent with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan land use designation of Medium Density Residential (RM), allowing up to four dwelling units per acre. Therefore, the project site would be developed with 100 dwelling units.

Students currently enrolled at River Meadows Middle School would continue attending their existing campus, and students from Cobblestone Elementary School and Rio Del Oro Elementary School would not be redistributed.

This alternative would not provide a new middle school, meaning that future student growth within the Plumas Lake area and Yuba County would need to be accommodated at existing campuses. This includes Cobblestone Elementary School (Grades K–5), Rio Del Oro Elementary School (Grades K–5), and Riverside Meadows Intermediate School (Grades 6–8). As enrollment continues to increase, these schools would experience further growth pressures, particularly at the elementary level, potentially resulting in larger class sizes and strained resources. In addition, the District would continue to lack proper middle school facilities designed to serve the growing local population, leaving students without a dedicated campus for Grades 6–8 that meets modern educational and safety standards.

This alternative would not meet any of the District's proposed project objectives, including expanding enrollment capacity or providing appropriately scaled middle school facilities to support anticipated population growth.

4.5.1 Aesthetics

Under Alternative 1, the proposed middle school would not be constructed, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. As a result, there would be no impacts to visual/aesthetics resources because no new physical development would occur on-site. This alternative would not construct or install any of the proposed project components and, as such, this alternative would not create impacts related to light and glare.

Under this alternative, the project site would continue to remain consistent with its Valley Neighborhood General Plan designation and Plumas Lake Specific Plan RM zoning. As such, in the future, development of approximately 100 dwelling units may occur. Development of approximately 100 dwelling units would convert the project site from fallow agricultural land to residential use. Future development of residential units would result in similar visual impacts

and introduce new sources of light and glare to the area. However, such impacts would be consistent with the surrounding residential development, and impacts to aesthetics would be similar to the proposed project.

In addition, since the proposed middle school would not be constructed, existing campuses would require construction of new educational facilities to better accommodate an increased number of students. The development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would result in impacts to aesthetics similar to the proposed project.

4.5.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Under Alternative 1, no construction or new operational activities would occur. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's Mitigation Measure AGF-1, and the remaining thresholds would include no impacts by not developing the fallow agricultural land.

Under this alternative, the project site would remain consistent with its Valley Neighborhood General Plan designation and Plumas Lake Specific Plan RM zoning. As such, in the future, development of approximately 100 dwelling units may occur that would convert the site from fallow agricultural land to residential use. Future development of residential units would result in the conversion of existing fallow agricultural land, including areas mapped as Prime Farmland, would be permanently converted to nonagricultural use. Due to the conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable with incorporation of Mitigation Measure AGF-1.

In addition, potential development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would have no impact on agricultural land due to their developed nature.

Further, the project site does not contain forest resources, timberland, or land under a Williamson Act contract. As with the proposed project, no impacts on forestry resources would occur.

4.5.3 Air Quality

Under Alternative 1, no construction or new operational activities would occur. As such, no new vehicle trips, nor emissions would be generated. The site would remain as fallow agricultural land and no air quality impacts would occur. By not developing the fallow agricultural land, Mitigation Measure AIR-1 would not be needed, and the impacts would remain as less than significant.

Under this alternative, future development associated with the construction of residential development allowed under the existing land use and zoning would result in impacts to air quality during construction and operation. Operational emissions would also occur from residential vehicle trips and energy use, but at levels lower than those associated with a school

campus. This alternative would not conflict with applicable air quality plans, expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or create objectionable odors. Because development intensity would be reduced compared to the proposed project, construction-related and operational emissions would also be lower. As a result, potential contributions to the Feather River Air Quality Management District's PM_{10} nonattainment status and cumulative air quality impacts would be reduced relative to the proposed project. Alternative 1 would result in reduced air quality impacts compared to the proposed project.

In addition, future development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would generate air quality impacts; however, at a lower intensity due to the developed nature of the existing campuses. Therefore, impacts on air quality would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.5.4 Biological Resources

Under Alternative 1, no construction would occur, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. The No Project Alternative would have no impacts on biological resources, and Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-7 would not be needed. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 1, future residential development may occur and result in the removal of vegetation, grading, and other ground-disturbing activities on-site. These activities could result in direct or indirect impacts on special-status species, nesting birds, and other biological resources through habitat removal, disturbance, or potential mortality. Because development would still occur on the project site, the types of biological resource impacts would be similar to those of the proposed project. As with the proposed project, these impacts would be potentially significant and would require incorporation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 and BIO-2. Therefore, impacts on biological resources under Alternative 1 would be similar to those of the proposed project.

Due to the developed nature of the existing school campuses, although unlikely, potentially significant biological resources may be discovered during the CEQA review process and result in similar impacts to biological resources.

4.5.5 Cultural Resources

No construction would occur at the project site under Alternative 1, as such, no ground-disturbing activities would occur. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's potentially significant impacts, and Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 would not be required. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

However, future residential development associated with the land use and zoning designation would involve construction and soil-disturbing activities would still occur, creating the potential to uncover previously unknown archaeological or historic resources, including human remains. Any such discoveries would require the same mitigation measures as the proposed project, including avoidance, treatment, or consultation with appropriate authorities and tribes. Therefore, impacts to cultural resources under this alternative would be similar to those of the proposed project.

Due to the developed nature of the existing school campuses, although unlikely, potentially significant cultural resources may be discovered during the CEQA review process or ground-disturbing activities, and would potentially result in similar impacts to cultural resources.

4.5.6 Energy

Under Alternative 1, no construction or new operational activities would occur associated with the proposed middle school, and no new energy consumption would be generated. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Future development of approximately 100 residential units would result in temporary energy use for building equipment and construction vehicles. Long-term operational energy would be associated with residential electricity, heating, and fuel use. While existing campuses would continue to serve a larger student population, the operational energy demand of a residential development is lower than that of the proposed middle school, which includes larger buildings, athletic facilities, and campus-wide systems. Overall, energy consumption under this alternative would be less than the proposed project, and energy-related impacts would be reduced.

In addition, development of additional educational facilities at existing campuses is not expected to generate a substantial increase in energy usage due to the developed nature of the existing campuses.

4.5.7 Geology and Soils

No new construction activities, including grading, would occur under Alternative 1. Alternative 1 would eliminate the less-than-significant impacts of the proposed project. Mitigation Measure GEO-1, related to paleontological resources, would not be needed.

Under Alternative 1, development of approximately 100 residential units would involve grading, excavation, and other earthwork, with the potential for erosion, loss of topsoil, and exposure to soil hazards such as expansive soils or liquefaction. New structures could be affected by seismic ground shaking or other geologic hazards. Because development would still occur, the types and significance of geology- and soils-related impacts would be similar to those identified for the proposed project.

Due to the developed nature of the existing school campuses, although unlikely, potentially significant paleontological resources may be discovered during the CEQA review process or ground-disturbing activities, and result in similar geology and soils-related impacts.

4.5.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Under Alternative 1, no construction or new operational activities would occur associated with the middle school campus, and no new emissions would be generated. The No Project Alternative would have no impact on GHG emissions, and Mitigation Measure GHG-1 would not be needed. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's impacts.

Under Alternative 1, construction of approximately 100 residential units would generate temporary GHG emissions similar in type but lower in magnitude than those associated with construction of the proposed middle school. Operational GHG emissions would be limited to typical residential energy use and vehicle trips.

In addition, future development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would have generated GHG emissions and the overall distance to an education facility would increase, resulting in an increase in GHG emissions.

4.5.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No new construction or new facilities would be developed under Alternative 1, and would not involve the transport, use, or storage of hazardous materials beyond those associated with existing agricultural activities on the site. No soil disturbance would occur; therefore, no previously unidentified hazardous materials or contaminants would be encountered. The alternative would not introduce new hazards related to schools, airports, wildfire areas, or known hazardous sites. Because no major off-site improvements would be constructed along River Oaks Boulevard, Mitigation Measure WIL-1 from the proposed project would not apply.

However, future construction of residential units on the project site would require soil disturbance, the use of typical hazardous materials, and other activities similar to the proposed project. Although unlikely, construction of additional educational facilities at existing campuses may uncover potentially significant hazardous materials and result in greater impacts to hazards and hazardous materials.

4.5.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Under Alternative 1, no construction or new operational activities would occur, and the project site would continue as fallow agricultural land. Because this alternative would not involve any changes to the proposed project site, it would have no impact with respect to hydrology and water quality and would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 1, future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new impervious surfaces, grading, and drainage infrastructure. Stormwater runoff patterns would be altered compared to existing conditions, potentially increasing runoff, erosion, and pollutant transport. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would conform to federal, State, and regional policies regarding hydrology and water quality resulting in similar impacts to the proposed project.

4.5.11 Land Use and Planning

Under Alternative 1, the project site would continue as fallow agriculture, and the Plumas Lake Specific Plan Medium Density Residential (RM) designation and General Plan Valley Neighborhood land use designation would remain. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Additionally, this alternative would allow for future development of residential units on the project site, consistent with the existing land use and zoning. Development of the residential uses on the project site would not physically divide an established community or conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts. Similarly, development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would not physically divide an established community or conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. Therefore, overall impacts associated with land use and planning would be reduced under this alternative.

4.5.12 Noise

No construction or new operational noise and vibration would be generated under Alternative 1. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Construction activities associated with future residential development would generate temporary noise from grading, equipment, and vehicle movement. Operational noise would include typical neighborhood activity and residential traffic. Noise levels would be lower than the proposed middle school, which includes higher-traffic peak hours, athletic fields, and campus operations. Impacts would be reduced under this alternative.

In addition, future development of new educational facilities would generate noise levels and sources consistent with an existing school campus. No new noise impacts would occur.

4.5.13 Population and Housing

Alternative 1 would not introduce any housing, commercial space, or residents; therefore, this alternative would not induce population growth directly or indirectly. The project site does not contain any dwelling units, so this alternative would not displace any existing people or housing. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 1, future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to the Plumas Lake area. Because the proposed project does not create new housing or induce population growth, the population increase under this alternative would be greater than under the proposed project.

Development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would support students already in the district's service boundaries, and any new employment opportunities would be filled by the regional job pool. Therefore, no new or additional impacts associated with population and housing would occur.

4.5.14 Public Services

Under Alternative 1, the project site would remain as fallow agriculture. There would be no increase in employees and no increase in demand for fire, police, school, library, or park services. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 1, the future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to the Plumas Lake area, increasing demand for police, fire, and emergency services compared to existing conditions. No new public service facilities would be required, beyond those planned for the area. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Development of new educational facilities at existing campuses would support students already in the district's service boundaries, and any new employment opportunities would be filled by the regional job pool. Due to the increase in students at the identified campuses, an increase in police and fire services may occur. However, no new or expanded facilities or public services would be required to accommodate increased enrollment at existing school campuses. Overall, this alternative would result in an increase in public services.

4.5.15 Recreation

Under Alternative 1, the proposed project would not be developed, and the project site would remain fallow agricultural land. This alternative would not induce direct or indirect population growth, so it would not increase demand for recreational facilities. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 1, the development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to Plumas Lake, increasing demand for existing parks and recreational facilities. While no new recreational facilities would be constructed as part of this alternative, the additional population could result in substantial or accelerated physical deterioration of existing facilities. Recreation-related impacts would be greater than the proposed project.

Construction of new educational facilities at existing campuses would serve students already within the school district and not result in an increase in recreational uses. Therefore, no impacts on recreational facilities would be introduced associated with the construction of new educational facilities at existing campuses.

4.5.16 Transportation

Under this alternative, the consolidation of trips from other schools to the project site would not occur, and this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts and Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would not be needed.

Under Alternative 1, the project site would be developed with approximately 100 residential units, introducing new residents and associated vehicle trips for commuting, errands, and daily activities. Additionally, because no new middle school would be constructed, students would continue attending existing schools (Cobblestone Elementary, Rio Del Oro Elementary, and Riverside Meadows Intermediate School), increasing travel distances and vehicle trips compared to the proposed project. As a result, vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) could be higher under this alternative than under the proposed project.

In addition, River Oaks Boulevard serves as a primary access route to State Route (SR-) 70 and functions as an emergency evacuation route. Under this alternative, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could occur and result in inadequate emergency access and incorporation of a mitigation measure like Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be required.

In addition, construction of new educational facilities to facilitate the increase of students at existing campuses would have the potential to generate greater VMT, because the proposed project minimizes student travel distances and promotes walkability and safe routes to school for families in the surrounding area. Impacts would be greater under this alternative.

4.5.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

No earthwork or soil disturbance would occur under this alternative, and any undiscovered subsurface cultural resources at the project site would not be altered. This alternative, compared to the proposed project, would eliminate the proposed project's potentially significant impact, and Mitigation Measure TCR-1 would not be required.

Grading and construction for residential development could disturb previously unknown tribal cultural resources. Standard mitigation measures, such as preconstruction surveys and tribal consultation, would be required if such resources are discovered. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Due to the developed nature of the existing school campuses, although unlikely, potentially significant tribal cultural resources may be discovered during the CEQA review process or ground-disturbing activities, and result in similar impacts to cultural resources.

4.5.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Under Alternative 1, the project site would not be developed, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. Since no development on the project site would occur under this alternative, this alternative would have no impact on service system demand for water, wastewater, solid waste, stormwater infrastructure, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Residential development would increase demand for water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste, and energy services. However, the magnitude of demand would be less than that of a middle school campus. Utility infrastructure would require extensions and connections similar to the proposed project and impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Construction of new educational facilities at existing campuses would connect or use existing utilities and service systems at the existing campuses. An increase in utilities and service systems at the existing campuses would occur to service the increase in students at the existing campuses. Overall, this alternative would be greater than under the proposed project.

4.5.19 Wildfire

Under Alternative 1, the project site would not be developed, and the project would remain fallow agricultural land. Additionally, under this alternative, the proposed project site would not be in a very high fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) and not within any other FHSZ under either a local responsibility area (LRA) or state responsibility area (SRA) designations. As a result of no development on the project site, impacts for wildfire would not occur. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts and Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would not be needed.

Under Alternative 1, future development of approximately 100 residential units would not occur within a FHSZ under either a LRA or SRA designation. The future development would remain in compliance with California Building Code wildfire standards, defensible space, and local fire regulations would ensure risks remain less than significant. Construction could temporarily block local streets or key access roads, including portions of River Oaks Boulevard, which serves

as a primary evacuation route to SR-70. In such cases, a mitigation measure like the proposed project's Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be needed. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Construction of new educational facilities at existing campuses would be constructed in accordance with the California Building Code, Fire Code, and adhere to other regulatory requirements. Further, the Plumas Lake area is not within a FHSZ under either a LRA or SRA designation. Therefore, impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.6 ALTERNATIVE 2: NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE – IMPLEMENT A DISTRICTWIDE YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL PROGRAM

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires evaluation of a "No Project" Alternative. Under this alternative, the proposed middle school would not be constructed, and the project site would remain consistent with its Valley Neighborhood General Plan designation and Plumas Lake Specific Plan Medium Density Residential (RM) zoning, which allows up to four dwelling units per acre. Students currently enrolled at River Meadows Middle School would continue attending their existing campus, and students from Cobblestone Elementary School and Rio Del Oro Elementary School would not be redistributed.

To accommodate projected enrollment growth without constructing new facilities, the District would implement a districtwide year-round school program. A Year-Round School Task Force has been established to develop schedules, logistics, and implementation steps for the 2026–27 school year. Under this program, all schools in the District would transition to a year-round instructional calendar with four instructional tracks, where three tracks are in session at any given time and one track is on break. This structure would provide approximately 375 additional student seats and 16 additional classrooms districtwide, including 10 at the elementary school level. Two common calendar formats are:

- 60/20 schedule: 60 instructional days followed by a 20-day break.
- 45/15 schedule: 45 instructional days followed by a 15-day break.

Alternative 2 would partially meet two of the District's project objectives. The districtwide year-round program would provide approximately 375 additional student seats and 16 classrooms, helping to accommodate projected enrollment growth. In addition, the staggered instructional tracks would partially support student-to-teacher ratios by redistributing new students across existing campuses. All other objectives, including constructing a new middle school, providing modern educational facilities, improving neighborhood access, reducing travel distances, and enhancing opportunities for physical activity and extracurricular programs, would not be met under this alternative.

4.6.1 Aesthetics

Under Alternative 2, the proposed middle school would not be constructed, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. As a result, there would be no impacts to visual/aesthetics resources because no new physical development would occur on-site. This alternative would not construct or install any of the proposed project components and, as such, this alternative would not create impacts related to light and glare.

Under this alternative, the project site would continue to remain consistent with its Valley Neighborhood General Plan designation and Plumas Lake Specific Plan RM zoning. As such, in the future, development of approximately 100 dwelling units may occur. Development of approximately 100 dwelling units would convert the site from fallow agricultural land to residential use. Future development of residential units would result in similar visual impacts and introduce new sources of light and glare to the area. However, such impacts would be consistent with the surrounding residential development, and impacts to aesthetics would be similar to the proposed project.

4.6.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Under Alternative 2, no construction or new operational activities would occur. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's Mitigation Measure AGF-1, and no impacts would occur to the fallow agricultural land.

Under this alternative, the project site would continue to remain consistent with its Valley Neighborhood General Plan designation and Plumas Lake Specific Plan RM zoning. As such, in the future, development of approximately 100 dwelling units may occur that would convert the site from fallow agricultural land to residential use. Future development of residential units would result in the conversion of existing fallow agricultural land, including areas mapped as Prime Farmland, would be permanently converted to nonagricultural use. Due to the conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Further, the project site does not contain forest resources, timberland, or land under Williamson Act contract. As with the proposed project, no impacts on forestry resources would occur.

4.6.3 Air Quality

Under Alternative 2, no construction or new operational activities would occur. As such, no new vehicle trips, nor emissions would be generated. The site would remain as fallow agricultural land and no air quality impacts would occur. Thus, Mitigation Measure AIR-1 would not be needed.

Under this alternative, future development associated with the construction of residential development allowed under the existing land use and zoning would result in impacts to air quality during construction and operation. Operational emissions would also occur from residential vehicle trips and energy use, but at levels lower than those associated with a school campus. This alternative would not conflict with applicable air quality plans, expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or create objectionable odors. Because development intensity would be reduced compared to the proposed project, construction-related and operational emissions would also be lower. As a result, potential contributions to the Feather River Air Quality Management District's PM_{10} nonattainment status and cumulative air quality impacts would be reduced relative to the proposed project. Alternative 2 impacts would result in reduced air quality impacts compared to the proposed project.

In addition, operation of a districtwide year-round program would generate greater air quality impacts at the existing campuses, posing a greater overall number of students (sensitive receptors) to potentially significant pollutants. Additional studies would be required to determine if a net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard. Therefore, this alternative would result in greater air quality impacts compared to the proposed project.

4.6.4 Biological Resources

Under Alternative 2 (No Project Alternative), no construction would occur, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. The No Project Alternative would have no impacts on biological resources, and Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-7 would not be needed. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 2, future residential development may occur and result in the removal of vegetation, grading, and other ground-disturbing activities on-site. These activities could result in direct or indirect impacts on special-status species, nesting birds, and other biological resources through habitat removal, disturbance, or potential mortality. Because development would still occur on the project site, the types of biological resource impacts would be similar to those of the proposed project. As with the proposed project, these impacts would be potentially significant and would require implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-7. Therefore, impacts of biological resources under Alternative 2 would be similar to those of the proposed project.

4.6.5 Cultural Resources

No construction would occur at the project site under this alternative, as such, no ground-disturbing activities would occur. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's potentially significant impacts, and Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 would not be required. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

However, future residential development associated with the land use and zoning designation would involve construction and soil-disturbing activities would still occur, creating the potential to uncover previously unknown archaeological or historic resources, including human remains. Any such, discoveries would require the same mitigation measures as the proposed project, including avoidance, treatment, or consultation with appropriate authorities and tribes. Therefore, impacts to cultural resources under this alternative would be similar to those of the proposed project.

4.6.6 Energy

Under Alternative 2, no construction or new operational activities would occur associated with the proposed middle school, and no new energy consumption would be generated. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Future development of approximately 100 residential units would result in temporary energy use for building equipment and construction vehicles. Long-term operational energy would be associated with residential electricity, heating, and fuel use. While existing campuses would continue to serve a larger student population, the operational energy demand of a residential development is lower than that of the proposed middle school, which includes larger buildings, athletic facilities, and campus-wide systems. Overall, energy consumption under this alternative would be less than the proposed project, and energy-related impacts would be reduced.

In addition, operation of a districtwide year-round program would generate greater demand for energy. Schools typically operate for 180 days of the year; this alternative would double the operational days, thereby resulting in an increase in energy demands. The existing campuses would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy as the campuses would continue to provide educational services consistent with the campuses intended use. However, the proposed project is intended to minimize student travel distances and under Alternative 2, students would travel or be driven greater distances, resulting in potentially wasteful or inefficient consumption of energy. Therefore, impacts of energy resources under Alternative 2 would be greater than the proposed project.

4.6.7 Geology and Soils

No new construction activities, including grading, would occur under Alternative 2. Alternative 2 would eliminate the less-than-significant impacts of the proposed project and Mitigation Measure GEO-1, related to paleontological resources, would not be needed.

Under Alternative 2, development of approximately 100 residential units would involve grading, excavation, and other earthwork, with the potential for erosion, loss of topsoil, and exposure to soil hazards such as expansive soils or liquefaction. New structures could be affected by seismic ground shaking or other geologic hazards. Because development would still occur, the types and significance of geology- and soils-related impacts would be similar to those identified for the proposed project.

4.6.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Under Alternative 2, no construction or new operational activities would occur associated with the middle school campus, and no new emissions would be generated. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts and Mitigation Measure GHG-1.

Under Alternative 2, construction of approximately 100 residential units would generate temporary GHG emissions similar in type but lower in magnitude than those associated with construction of the proposed middle school. Operational GHG emissions would be limited to typical residential energy use and vehicle trips. Overall, GHG emissions under this alternative would be less than those of the proposed project.

In addition, operation of a districtwide year-round program would generate greater demand for GHG. Schools typically operate for 180 days of the year; this alternative would double the operational days and students would travel or be driven greater distances, resulting in an increase in GHG emissions. Therefore, impacts to GHG emissions under Alternative 2 would overall be greater than the proposed project.

4.6.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No new construction or new facilities would be developed under this alternative, and would not involve the transport, use, or storage of hazardous materials beyond those associated with existing agricultural activities on the site. No soil disturbance would occur; therefore, no previously unidentified hazardous materials or contaminants would be encountered. The alternative would not introduce new hazards related to schools, airports, wildfire areas, or known hazardous sites. Because no major off-site improvements would be constructed along River Oaks Boulevard, Mitigation Measure WIL-1 from the proposed project would not apply.

Future construction of residential units on the project site would require soil disturbance, the use of typical hazardous materials and other activities similar to the proposed project. In addition, because future development would remain on the project site and River Oaks Boulevard serves as the primary connection to SR-70, temporary off-site construction activities along River Oaks Boulevard could affect emergency response or evacuation access. Therefore, WILD-1 would continue to apply to the residential project, and impacts would be reduced to less than significant.

In addition, operation of a districtwide year-round program would result in increased usage of cleaning supplies and other hazardous materials associated with school facilities. However, continued adherence with federal, state, and local regulations would reduce impacts. Therefore, typical use of hazardous materials and other activities would occur, similar to the proposed project.

4.6.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Under this alternative, no construction or new operational activities would occur under the Alternative 2, and the project site would continue as fallow agricultural land. Because this alternative would not involve any changes to the proposed project site, it would have no impact with respect to hydrology and water quality and would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 2, future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new impervious surfaces, grading, and drainage infrastructure. Stormwater runoff patterns would be altered compared to existing conditions, potentially increasing runoff, erosion, and pollutant transport. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.6.11 Land Use and Planning

Under Alternative 2, the project site would continue as fallow agricultural land, and the Plumas Lake Specific Plan Medium Density Residential (RM) designation and General Plan Valley Neighborhood land use designation would remain. Therefore, Alternative 2 would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Additionally, this alternative would allow for future development of residential units on the project site, consistent with the existing land use and zoning. Development of the residential uses on the project site would not physically divide an established community or conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts, thereby reducing impacts to land use and planning.

4.6.12 Noise

No construction or new operational noise and vibration would be generated under this alternative. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Construction activities associated with future residential development would generate temporary noise from grading, equipment, and vehicle movement. Operational noise would include typical neighborhood activity and residential traffic. Noise levels would be lower than the proposed middle school, which includes higher-traffic peak hours, athletic fields, and campus operations. Impacts would be reduced under this alternative.

In addition, operation of a districtwide year-round program would allow typical school use noises to occur throughout the year compared to the typical 180-day school year. Typical noises associated with the operation of a school campus would occur throughout the year, this would not represent a significant increase in a noise environment, or any new sources of noise. Therefore, overall impacts associated with noise under Alternative 2 would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.6.13 Population and Housing

Alternative 2 would not introduce any housing, commercial space, or residents; therefore, this alternative would not induce population growth directly or indirectly. The project site does not contain any dwelling units, so this alternative would not displace any existing people or housing. This alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 2, future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to the Plumas Lake area. Because the proposed project does not create new housing or induce population growth, the population increase under this alternative would be greater than under the proposed project.

4.6.14 Public Services

Under Alternative 2, the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. There would be no increase in employees and no increase in demand for fire, police, school, library, or park services. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 2, the future development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to the Plumas Lake area, increasing demand for police, fire, and emergency services compared to existing conditions. No new public service facilities would be required, beyond those planned for the area. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

Operation of a districtwide year-round program would require additional police and fire protection services and out-calls. Alternative 2 would support students already in the district's service boundaries as no expansion or development of new public service facilities would be required to accommodate the districtwide year-round program at existing school campuses. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.6.15 Recreation

Under Alternative 2, the proposed project would not be developed, and the project site would remain fallow agricultural land. This alternative would not induce direct or indirect population growth, so it would not increase demand for recreational facilities. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Under Alternative 2, the development of approximately 100 residential units would introduce new residents to Plumas Lake, increasing demand for existing parks and recreational facilities. While no new recreational facilities would be constructed as part of this alternative, the additional population could result in substantial or accelerated physical deterioration of existing facilities. Recreation-related impacts would be greater than under the proposed project, which does not induce population growth.

4.6.16 Transportation

Under Alternative 2, the consolidation of trips from other schools to the project site would not occur, and this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts and Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would not be needed.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with approximately 100 residential units, introducing new residents and associated vehicle trips for commuting, errands, and daily activities. Additionally, because no new middle school would be constructed, students would continue attending existing schools (Cobblestone Elementary, Rio Del Oro Elementary, and Riverside Meadows Intermediate School), increasing travel distances and vehicle trips compared to the proposed project. As a result, VMT could be higher under this alternative than under the proposed project.

In addition, River Oaks Boulevard serves as a primary access route to SR-70 and functions as an emergency evacuation route. Under this alternative, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could occur and result in inadequate emergency access and incorporation of a mitigation measure similar to EIR Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be required.

Operation of a districtwide year-round program would result in increased vehicle trips at each project site. However, the existing campuses are local-serving and do not induce new regional trips, so it is screened out of detailed VMT analysis, and operational VMT impacts would be less than significant, consistent with the proposed project. Overall, impacts associated with transportation would be greater than the proposed project.

4.6.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

No earthwork or soil disturbance would occur under this alternative, and any undiscovered subsurface cultural resources at the project site would not be altered. This alternative, compared to the proposed project, would eliminate the proposed project's potentially significant impact, and Mitigation Measure TCR-1 would not be required.

Under Alternative 2, the development of approximately 100 residential units would include grading and construction for residential development that could disturb previously unknown tribal cultural resources. Implementation of mitigation similar to Mitigation Measure TCR-1 would be required due to the potential of unknown TCRs uncovered during construction activities. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.6.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Under Alternative 2, the project site would not be developed, and the project site would remain as fallow agricultural land. Since no development on the project site would occur under this alternative, this alternative would have no impact on service system demand for water, wastewater, solid waste, stormwater infrastructure, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impacts.

Residential development would increase demand for water, wastewater, stormwater infrastructure, solid waste, and energy services. However, the magnitude of demand would be less than that of a middle school campus. Utility infrastructure would require extensions and connections similar to the proposed project and impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

The districtwide year-round program would overall generate impacts similar to the proposed project's water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste, and energy demands. Under Alternative 2, students at the project site would be distributed to existing campuses and not result in a direct or indirect growth in population. Therefore, impacts would remain similar to the proposed project.

4.6.19 Wildfire

Under Alternative 2, the project site would not be developed, and the project would remain fallow agricultural land. Additionally, the project site is not within a very high FHSZ under either an LRA or SRA designation. As a result of no development on the project site, impacts related to wildfire would not occur. Therefore, this alternative would eliminate the proposed project's less-than-significant impact, and Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would not be needed.

Under Alternative 2, future development of approximately 100 residential units within a non-high fire hazard zone that would remain in compliance with California Building Code wildfire standards, defensible space, and local fire regulations would ensure risks remain less than significant. Construction could temporarily block local streets or key access roads, including portions of River Oaks Boulevard, which serves as a primary evacuation route to SR-70. In such cases, a mitigation measure similar to the proposed project's Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be needed. Impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.7 ALTERNATIVE 3: EARLY EDUCATION CAMPUS

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with an early education campus rather than a new middle school. This alternative would reduce the scale of development compared to the proposed project. The number of classrooms would decrease from 44 to approximately 22 classrooms, and the design capacity would decrease from approximately 1,200 students to approximately 440 students.

The early education campus could serve transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and potentially early elementary grades. Under this alternative, grade-level allocations between the new campus and existing elementary schools would require ongoing annual evaluation by the District. Depending on year-to-year enrollment trends, kindergarten classes could be located either at the new campus or at existing elementary school sites. Similarly, sixth-grade placement could vary annually and may require assignment to either the existing elementary school campuses or the existing middle school campus. These operational adjustments would depend on districtwide enrollment levels in each academic year.

This alternative would provide educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs; improve neighborhood access to elementary school services, as off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard would enhance access; minimize student travel distances and promote walkability and safe routes, supported by roadway and circulation improvements; and enhance opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement. However, this alternative would not provide a new middle school facility within the Plumas Lake Elementary School District.

4.7.1 Aesthetics

Under this alternative, a smaller early education campus would be developed, which would still involve construction of classroom buildings and other educational facilities. The development of classroom buildings and other educational facilities would impact the visual character of the site and surrounding area, as well as introduce new sources of light and glare to the site. Although an early education campus would be smaller in scale, impacts under Alternative 3 would be similar to the proposed project.

4.7.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Although an early education campus would be developed within a smaller area, development of the early education campus would still convert the site from fallow agricultural land to an educational use. In addition, no forested areas or Williamson Act contracts exist on-site. Due to the conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. Despite the impact remaining significant and unavoidable, the area of disturbance would be reduced and impacts to associated agricultural resources would be reduced.

4.7.3 Air Quality

Alternative 3 would generate fewer air quality emissions, as a smaller early education campus would develop a smaller surface area and require less overall educational facilities. Although construction and operational activities would remain consistent, operational emissions would be reduced due to the significant reduction in students.

4.7.4 Biological Resources

Under Alternative 3, development of a smaller early education campus would still require ground disturbance and vegetation removal. In addition, project site specific impacts to special-status species, nesting birds, or habitat would remain similar to the proposed project. Required Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-7 for biological resources would still apply. Due to the reduction in scale, the overall area of ground disturbance would be less compared to the proposed project and impacts would be reduced.

4.7.5 Cultural Resources

Under Alternative 3, development of an early education campus would still require construction and soil-disturbing activities. The potential to uncover previously unknown archaeological or historic resources, including human remains, exist. Any such discoveries would require the incorporation of the proposed project's Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, including avoidance, treatment, or consultation with appropriate authorities and tribes. Therefore,

impacts to cultural resources under this alternative would be similar to those of the proposed project.

4.7.6 Energy

Alternative 3 would consume less energy sources than the proposed project, as the early education campus would develop a smaller surface area, require development of fewer educational facilities, and serve less students overall. Due to the reduction in scale of the educational campus and student capacity, impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.7.7 Geology and Soils

Under this alternative, development of an early education campus would require grading, excavation, and potential soil hazards (erosion, liquefaction, expansive soils) similar to the proposed project. Impacts related to geology and soils would be similar to the proposed project.

4.7.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Development of a smaller early education campus would result in the development of fewer educational facilities and overall students being served by the project. Due to the reduction in size, reduced number of students, and number of mobile source emissions under this alternative, impacts associated with GHG would be reduced.

4.7.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Under Alternative 3, operation for the early education campus involves the transport, use, or storage of hazardous materials, and no new hazards related to schools, airports, wildfire areas, or known hazardous sites would occur. This alternative would develop the same site at less intensity and would result in similar impacts relating to hazards and hazardous materials.

4.7.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Alternative 3 would develop the same site at less intensity, and stormwater runoff and water quality impacts would remain similar to the proposed project due to comparable site development and impervious surfaces. Impacts under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project relating to hydrology and water quality.

4.7.11 Land Use and Planning

The project site is undeveloped, and development of an early education campus would not physically divide an established community. An early education campus would develop the roadway similar to the proposed project and provide greater connectivity/circulation with the residential uses and the project site. As with the proposed project, the Plumas Lake Elementary School District School Board would exempt the early education campus, from local zoning in accordance with Government Code Section 53094. Therefore, impacts under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project relating to land use and planning.

4.7.12 Noise

The project site would continue to impact similar off-site receptors, as the project site would remain the same. Development of a smaller early education campus may reduce the duration of construction noise; however, the overall noise levels, groundborne vibration, and groundborne noise would remain consistent with the proposed project, as construction equipment would be similar. Due to the reduced scale of the educational campus, operational and traffic noise are expected to be reduced. However, impacts on ambient noise levels are expected to be similar to the proposed project. In addition, since the project site is in the same location, the project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels related to air travel, similar to the proposed project.

4.7.13 Population and Housing

Under Alternative 3, the early education campus would serve fewer students (approximately 440 students), but all students and staff would come from the existing population within the county and/or Plumas Lake. Therefore, the alternative would not directly induce population growth or require additional housing, and impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.7.14 Public Services

Under Alternative 3, the early education campus would serve fewer students (approximately 440 students), but most students and staff are expected to already reside in the county and/or Plumas Lake, as with the proposed project. However, the overall reduction in students and staff would reduce impacts on public services when compared to the proposed project.

4.7.15 Recreation

Under Alternative 3, the early education campus would serve fewer students (approximately 440 students), but most students and staff are expected to already reside in the county and/or Plumas Lake, as with the proposed project. Like the proposed project, the early education campus would be consistent with the Civic Center Act and would be made available for public use outside of school hours. Impacts to recreation would remain similar to the proposed project.

4.7.16 Transportation

The early education campus would serve fewer students (approximately 440 students) and staff. With the substantial reduction in students, the number of mobile sources would decrease, thereby decreasing the number of daily trips and VMT. Under this alternative, Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be needed as temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard could result in inadequate emergency access. Overall impacts associated with transportation would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.7.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

Under Alternative 3, development of a smaller early education campus would still involve construction and soil-disturbing activities. The potential to uncover previously unknown tribal cultural resources, including human remains, exist. Any such discoveries would require the incorporation of Mitigation Measure TCR-1, including avoidance, treatment, or consultation with appropriate authorities and tribes. Therefore, impacts to tribal cultural resources under this alternative would be similar to those of the proposed project.

4.7.18 Utilities and Service Systems

The early education campus would serve fewer students (approximately 440 students) and staff. With the substantial reduction in students, the early education campus would generate less demand for all utilities and service systems. Therefore, impacts on utilities and service systems would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.7.19 Wildfire

Under Alternative 3, the early education campus would be developed on the project site, which is not within a FHSZ under either an LRA or SRA designation. However, temporary off-site construction activities on River Oaks Boulevard would be similar and could impair emergency response or evacuation access, and Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be needed. Impacts under this alternative associated with wildfire would be similar to the proposed project.

4.8 ALTERNATIVE 4: REDUCED MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDOUT

Under Alternative 4, the project site would be developed with a reduced middle school buildout compared to the proposed project. This alternative would remove eight classrooms, reducing the total from 44 to 36 classrooms. As a result, the middle school's design enrollment would decrease from approximately 1,200 students under the proposed project to approximately 1,000 students.

The layout for this alternative would be similar to the District's earlier conceptual plan for the middle school, developed prior to identifying the need for the additional eight classrooms. Aside from the classroom reduction, all other core campus components would remain consistent with the proposed project, including administrative buildings, multipurpose space, athletic facilities, circulation, and parking areas.

Under Alternative 4, the reduced middle school buildout would partially meet two District objectives. These include providing sufficient classroom space to accommodate projected enrollment growth, as the reduced capacity addresses some but not all anticipated growth, and realigning enrollment boundaries to support student-to-teacher ratios, since the reduced capacity may help relieve some overcrowding, but less effectively than the full project. The alternative would fully meet the remaining five objectives, including constructing and operating a new middle school; providing educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs; improving neighborhood access to elementary school services, as off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard would enhance access; minimizing student travel distances and promoting walkability and safe routes, supported by roadway and circulation improvements; and enhancing opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement, as multipurpose and athletic facilities remain unchanged.

4.8.1 Aesthetics

Under Alternative 4, the reduced middle school buildout would still involve construction of buildings, grading, and landscaping. Impacts to the visual character of the site and surrounding area would be similar to the proposed project. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The project site would no longer be used for agricultural purposes. The reduction in classroom facilities does not change the conversion of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural uses. No forested areas or Williamson Act contracts exist on-site. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.3 Air Quality

Construction and operational activities would still occur under this alternative. While slightly less construction is required due to the reduced number of classrooms, fugitive dust and construction-related emissions would still occur. Operational emissions may be slightly lower due to fewer students, but impacts would be similar to the proposed project.

4.8.4 Biological Resources

Ground disturbance and vegetation removal would still occur. Impacts to special-status species, nesting birds, or habitat would remain similar to the proposed project. Required mitigation measures for biological resources would still apply. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.5 Cultural Resources

Construction could disturb archaeological or historic resources, similar to the proposed project. Required mitigation measures for inadvertent discoveries would still apply. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.6 Energy

Energy consumption for construction and operation would be slightly lower due to fewer classrooms, but overall energy use and efficiency considerations would remain similar to the proposed project. Impacts would be similar.

4.8.7 Geology and Soils

Grading, excavation, and potential soil hazards (erosion, liquefaction, expansive soils) would still occur. Impacts related to geology and soils would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Slightly fewer classrooms and students may reduce operational emissions marginally, but construction and operational GHGs would remain similar. Impacts would be less than significant, comparable to the proposed project.

4.8.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No new hazardous materials would be used beyond standard construction activities. Off-site improvements along River Oaks Boulevard would still occur, so traffic-related hazards would require mitigation similar to the proposed project (e.g., a Traffic Control Plan to maintain emergency access). Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Stormwater runoff and water quality impacts would remain similar to the proposed project due to comparable site development and impervious surfaces. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.11 Land Use and Planning

The District, as the lead agency under CEQA, and the Plumas Lake Elementary School District School Board (Board) would exempt the campus from local zoning in accordance with Government Code Section 53094. This provision allows the Board to render a City or County zoning ordinance inapplicable to the District's use, except for non-classroom facilities. Because of this exemption, the reduced middle school buildout does not need to be consistent with the Plumas Lake Specific Plan or RM land use designation. The project would therefore not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation, and no land use or environmental impacts would occur under this alternative. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.12 Noise

Construction and operational noise would be slightly reduced due to fewer classrooms, but activities would remain similar. Impacts would be slightly reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.8.13 Population and Housing

Under Alternative 4, the reduced middle school would serve fewer students (1,000 vs. 1,200), but all students would come from the existing population. Therefore, the alternative would not directly induce population growth or require additional housing, and impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.14 Public Services

Slightly fewer students would reduce demand for fire, police, and emergency services marginally. Core campus functions remain unchanged. Impacts would be similar but reduced compared to the proposed project.

4.8.15 Recreation

Athletic fields and multipurpose areas would remain, and the reduced middle school would continue to serve students from the existing District population. Since this alternative does not induce new residential growth, there would be no additional demand for recreational facilities beyond that considered for the proposed project. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.16 Transportation

Under Alternative 4, off-site improvements along River Oaks Boulevard would still be implemented. Temporary construction could affect access to local streets within the project site, so a traffic control plan similar to Mitigation Measure WIL-1 would be required to maintain emergency vehicle access. The project is local-serving and does not induce new regional trips, so it is screened out of detailed VMT analysis, and operational VMT impacts would be less than significant, consistent with the proposed project. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

Ground disturbance could affect previously unknown tribal cultural resources. Required mitigation measures would remain. Impacts would be the same as the proposed project.

4.8.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste, and energy demands would be slightly lower due to fewer students and classrooms, but overall utility infrastructure requirements would remain similar. Impacts would be slightly reduced.

4.8.19 Wildfire

The site is not within a high or very high FHSZ. The reduction in student enrollment slightly reduces exposure, and standard building codes, defensible space, and fire regulations would apply. Off-site roadway improvements still ensure safe access and emergency response. Impacts would be less than significant and similar to the proposed project.

4.9 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION

Table 4-1, *Comparison of Project Alternative Impacts*, compares the impact of each alternative to impacts of the proposed project. The impacts of each alternative are classified as having a reduced (↓), similar or comparable to (=), or greater (↑) level of impact when compared to the proposed project.

Table 4-1 Comparison of Project Alternative Impacts

Environmental Topic	Proposed Project[1]	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
3.1 Aesthetics	LTS	=	=	=	=
3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources	SU	=	=	↓	=
3.3 Air Quality	LTS/M	↓	↑	↓	=
3.4 Biological Resources	LTS/M	=	=	↓	=
3.5 Cultural Resources	LTS/M	=	=	=	=
3.6 Energy	LTS	↓	↑	↓	=
3.7 Geology and Soils	LTS/M	=	=	=	=
3.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions	LTS/M	↑	↑	↓	=
3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LTS/M	↑	=	↓	=
3.10 Hydrology and Water Quality	LTS	=	=	=	=
3.11 Land Use and Planning	LTS	↓	↓	=	=
3.12 Noise	LTS	↓	↓	=	↓
3.13 Population and Housing	LTS	↑	↑	=	=
3.14 Public Services	LTS	↑	=	↓	↓
3.15 Recreation	LTS	↑	↑	=	=
3.16 Transportation	LTS/M	↑	↑	↓	=
3.17 Tribal Cultural Resources	LTS/M	=	=	=	=

Table 4-1 Comparison of Project Alternative Impacts

Environmental Topic	Proposed Project[1]	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
3.18 Utilities and Service Systems	LTS	↑	=	↓	↓
3.19 Wildfire	LTS/M	=	=	=	=

Notes:

1. The impacts listed in this column represent the highest significance determination for each respective topic.

NI No Impact
LTS Less than Significant
LTS/M Less than Significant with Mitigation
SU Significant and Unavoidable

↓ Reduced impact in comparison to the proposed project
= Similar impact in comparison to the proposed project
↑ Greater impact in comparison to the proposed project

Table 4-2, *Ability to Meet Proposed Project Objectives*, identifies the ability of each of the project alternatives to meet the proposed project's objectives.

Table 4-2 Ability to Meet Proposed Project Objectives

Objective	Proposed Project	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
The primary purpose of the proposed project is to construct and operate a new middle school for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District to serve the Plumas Lake community to provide adequate middle school services for the build-out of the Plumas Lake Specific Plan.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Provide sufficient classroom space to accommodate current and projected enrollment growth in the Plumas Lake community, consistent with the District's long-term facilities planning goals.	Yes	No	Partial	Partial	Partial
Realign enrollment boundaries to provide adequate student-to-teacher ratio to support high-quality instruction to all schools within the District, which includes repurposing the existing Riverside Meadows Middle School as an elementary school.	Yes	No	Partial	Partial	Partial

Table 4-2 Ability to Meet Proposed Project Objectives

Objective	Proposed Project	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Provide educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs, including science, technology, and arts education.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Improve neighborhood access to elementary school services by siting a new school within an area of planned residential growth.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Minimize student travel distances and promote walkability and safe routes to school for families in the surrounding area.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Enhance opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement through the development of modern athletic and recreational facilities.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

4.9.1 Summary of Alternative 1: No Project Alternative – Increase Enrollment Capacity at Existing Campuses

Alternative 1, No Project Alternative – Increase Enrollment Capacity at Existing Campuses, would not result in the construction of the proposed middle school, but the future construction of approximately 100 residential units on the project site and construction of new educational facilities at existing campuses. Alternative 1 would reduce impacts associated with air quality, energy, land use and planning, and noise. However, this alternative would generate a greater impact in comparison to the proposed project associated with GHG, hazards and hazardous materials, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, and utilities and service systems. All other remaining impacts would remain consistent with the proposed project. Overall, this alternative would result in a greater number of environmental impacts. Furthermore, as seen in Table 4-2, *Ability to Meet Proposed Project Objectives*, this alternative would not meet any of the District's project objectives.

4.9.2 Summary of Alternative 2: No Project Alternative – Implement a Districtwide Year-Round School Program

Alternative 2, No Project Alternative – Implement a Districtwide Year-Round School Program, would not include development of the proposed middle school; however, would allow for the future construction of approximately 100 residential units on the project site, a year-round school program at existing campuses, and students at River Meadows Middle School, Cobblestone Elementary School, and Rio Del Oro Elementary would remain at their campuses. Alternative 2 would reduce impacts associated with land use and planning and noise. However, this alternative would generate a greater impact in comparison to the proposed project associated with air quality, energy, GHG, hazards and hazardous materials, population and housing, recreation, and transportation. All other remaining impacts would remain consistent with the proposed project. Overall, this alternative would result in a greater number of environmental impacts. Alternative 2 would partially meet two of the District's project objectives. The districtwide year-round program would provide approximately 375 additional student seats and 16 classrooms, helping to accommodate projected enrollment growth. In addition, the staggered instructional tracks would partially support student-to-teacher ratios by redistributing students across existing campuses. All other objectives, including constructing a new middle school, providing modern educational facilities, improving neighborhood access, reducing travel distances, and enhancing opportunities for physical activity and extracurricular programs, would not be met under this alternative.

4.9.3 Summary of Alternative 3: Early Education Campus

Alternative 3 (Early Education Campus) would develop an early education campus, reducing the scale of development with the design capacity would decrease from approximately 1,200 students to approximately 440 students. Alternative 3 would reduce impacts associated with agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, energy, GHG emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, public services, transportation, and utilities and service systems. All other remaining impacts would remain constant with the proposed project. Overall, this alternative would result in reduced impacts to nine of the environmental topics. This alternative would meet some of the District's objectives related to accommodating early education enrollment growth, enhanced elementary school access, minimizing student travel distances, and modernized educational facilities, athletic and recreational facilities. In addition, due to the substantial reduction in design capacity, this alternative would partially assist with the District-wide student-to-teacher ratios. However, this alternative would not provide a new middle school facility within the Plumas Lake Elementary School District and would not meet all project objectives.

4.9.4 Summary of Alternative 4: Reduced Middle School Buildout

Alternative 4 (Reduced Middle School Buildout) would develop a reduced middle school buildout, removing eight classrooms and decreasing the middle school's design enrollment from approximately 1,200 students to approximately 1,000 students. Alternative 4 would reduce impacts associated with noise, public services, and utilities and service systems. All other impacts would remain consistent with the proposed project. Overall, this alternative would result in reduced or similar impacts on environmental topics compared to the proposed project. Under Alternative 4, the reduced middle school buildout would partially meet two District objectives. These include providing sufficient classroom space to accommodate projected enrollment growth, as the reduced capacity addresses some but not all anticipated growth, and realigning enrollment boundaries to support student-to-teacher ratios, since the reduced capacity may help relieve some overcrowding, but less effectively than the full project. The alternative would fully meet the remaining five objectives, including constructing and operating a new middle school; providing educational facilities that meet current building codes, accessibility standards, and modern instructional needs; improving neighborhood access to elementary school services, as off-site roadway improvements along River Oaks Boulevard would enhance access; minimizing student travel distances and promoting walkability and safe routes, supported by roadway and circulation improvements; and enhancing opportunities for student physical activity and extracurricular involvement, as multipurpose and athletic facilities remain unchanged.

4.10 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

In addition to the discussion and comparison of impacts of the proposed project and the alternatives, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires that an "environmentally superior" alternative be selected and the reasons for such a selection be disclosed. In general, the environmentally superior alternative is the alternative to the proposed project that would be expected to generate the least number of significant impacts. Identification of the environmentally superior alternative is an informational procedure, and the alternative to the proposed project selected may not be the alternative to the proposed project that best meets the goals or needs of the Plumas Lake Elementary School District. Because CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) requires an evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, the proposed project under consideration cannot be identified as the environmentally superior alternative. Additionally, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2), if the environmentally superior alternative is the "no project" alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives.

The Reduced Middle School Buildout Alternative (Alternative 4) has been identified as the environmentally superior alternative. The reduction in overall design capacity and therefore the number of students would reduce impacts associated with noise, public services, and utilities and service systems. All impacts would result in similar or less impacts than the proposed project, ranging in significant and unavoidable to less than significant (see Table 4-1). Although Alternative 4 would accommodate projected enrollment growth, this alternative would not be able to accommodate all anticipated growth (objective 2) and assist with the student-to-teacher ratios effectively (objective 3). This alternative would not fully meet all of the project objectives and would not meet the needs and goals of the school and the District.

5. OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter provides a discussion of the effects of the proposed project based on the analyses presented in Sections 3.1 through 3.19 of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The topics covered in this chapter include effects found not to be significant, significant and unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible changes to the environment, and growth-inducing effects. A more detailed analysis of the effects that the proposed project would have on the environment and proposed mitigation measures to minimize significant impacts are provided in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, of this Draft EIR.

5.1 EFFECTS NOT FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANT

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15128, *Effects Not Found to Be Significant*, allows environmental issues for which there is no likelihood of significant impact to be "scoped out" and not analyzed further in the EIR. It was determined that the proposed project would not result in significant environmental impacts related to the following environmental impact issues, and they are not analyzed in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, of this Draft EIR.

5.1.1 Mineral Resources

The project site is within Mineral Resource Zone-4 (MRZ-4), which includes areas where available geologic information is inadequate to determine the presence or significance of mineral resources (CGS 2018). Therefore, the project site has no identified potential for aggregate or other mineral resources. The project site consists of a fallow agricultural parcel; no mineral extraction operations exist on-site nor near the project site. The Yuba County General Plan defines minerals as naturally occurring chemical elements or compounds formed through inorganic or organic processes, including materials such as coal, peat, bituminous rock, gold, sand, gravel, clay, crushed stone, limestone, diatomite, salt, borate, and potash (Yuba County 2011). However, no such mineral resources or active wells occur on or near the project site, and the nearest well is a plugged well approximately 0.3 mile southwest of the site (CalGEM 2025). The proposed project would not result in the loss of availability of any known or locally important mineral resources. Therefore, no impacts related to mineral resources would occur, and this topic was scoped out of the DEIR.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a) requires that "Direct and indirect significant effects of the project on the environment shall be clearly identified and described, giving due consideration to both the short- and long-term effects." CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. Table ES-1, *Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, in the *Executive Summary* of this Draft EIR summarizes the significant impacts, mitigation measures, and levels of significance with and without mitigation.

The following impacts would remain significant and unavoidable and no feasible mitigation measures were identified:

- **Impact AGF-1:** The proposed project would convert approximately 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use
- **Impact AGF-2:** Cumulative Loss of Farmland.

5.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss whether "Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely." The discussion shall consider primary and secondary impacts that generally commit future generations to similar uses, irreversible damage from environmental accidents, and irretrievable commitments of resources.

The following significant irreversible changes would be caused by implementation of the proposed project:

- The proposed project would include construction activities that would require the commitment of nonrenewable and/or slowly renewable energy resources, human resources, and natural resources such as lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt, steel, copper, lead, other metals, water, and fossil fuels. The proposed project would also require the use of natural gas and electricity, petroleum-based fuels, fossil fuels, and water. However, the proposed project does not represent an uncommon construction project that uses an extraordinary amount of raw materials in comparison to other development projects of a similar scope and magnitude.
- Operation of the proposed project would directly convert 25 acres of Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use and the project site would no longer have the potential to be used as a potential nesting site for migratory birds. Operation of the proposed project would also require continued use of electricity, petroleum-based fuels, fossil fuels, and water, similar to existing school operations. Operation of the proposed project would also require a

continued commitment of social services and public maintenance services (e.g., police, fire, electricity, etc.).

The commitment of resources required for the construction and operation of the proposed project would limit the availability of such resources for future generations or for other uses during the life of the proposed project.

5.4 GROWTH-INDUCING EFFECTS

Section 15126.2(e) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss the ways in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Typical factors may include the removal of obstacles to population growth, such as through a major expansion of a wastewater plant.

This section evaluates the proposed project's potential to create such growth inducements. As CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(e) states, "It must not be assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment." In other words, negative impacts associated with growth inducement occur only where the projected growth would cause significant adverse environmental impacts.

To address this issue, potential growth-inducing effects will be examined through analysis of the following questions:

- Would this project remove obstacles to growth, e.g., through the construction or extension of major infrastructure facilities that do not presently exist in the project area, or through changes in existing regulations pertaining to land development?
- Would this project result in the need to expand one or more public services to maintain desired levels of service?
- Would this project encourage or facilitate economic effects that could result in other activities that could significantly affect the environment?
- Would approval of this project involve some precedent-setting action that could encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment?

Please note that growth-inducing effects are not to be construed as necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment. This issue is presented to provide additional information on ways in which the proposed project could contribute to significant changes in the environment, beyond the direct consequences of developing the land use concept examined in the preceding sections of this EIR.

Would this project remove obstacles to growth, e.g., through the construction or extension of major infrastructure facilities that do not presently exist in the project area, or through changes in existing regulations pertaining to land development?

The proposed project would include the construction and operation of a middle school for the Plumas Lake Elementary School District (District). The proposed project also includes minor improvements to the public right-of-way to ensure adequate and safe access to the project site and connection to existing utilities that are typical of new construction. As substantiated in Section 3.18, *Utilities and Service Systems*, the proposed project would not include the construction of major infrastructure facilities and that demand for water, solid waste, electricity, and other utilities would be met by existing infrastructure. As substantiated in Section 3.17, *Transportation*, the proposed project would not conflict with applicable transportation plans and policies. These utility connections and minor public right-of-way improvements do not represent major infrastructure facilities that would remove obstacles to growth.

As stated in Section 3.11, *Land Use and Planning*, the District would be exempt from local planning regulations (Government Code Section 53094) due to the nature of the proposed project being used as an education facility. The construction and operation of the proposed middle school campus would be limited to the project site. Therefore, the District would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulations. This would not result in changes to land use regulations that would remove obstacles to growth.

Would this project result in the need to expand one or more public services to maintain desired levels of service?

Typically, the demand for schools is created by new housing development or activities that generate additional population. The proposed project does not include the development of new homes, which leads to an increase in student generation and thereby the need for additional school facilities. The proposed project includes the construction and operation of a middle school campus intended to serve the Plumas Lake community and District. The proposed project would not induce population growth in the area, either directly or indirectly. As substantiated in Section 3.14, *Public Services*, the proposed project may create a slight increase in the demand for public services, such as fire protection, police services, and library services but would not generate a substantial demand that would require new or physically altered public service facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the need to expand one or more public services to maintain desired levels of service.

Would this project encourage or facilitate economic effects that could result in other activities that could significantly affect the environment?

Construction of the proposed project would generate short-term employment that would be absorbed by the regional labor force, so it would not attract new workers to the region. The proposed project would generate approximately 50 to 60 staff positions, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel. These new employment positions would be absorbed by the regional labor force and would not attract new workers to the region. The proposed project would serve the educational needs of the students, districts, and general public in the Plumas Lake community and District. As such, the proposed project would not encourage or facilitate economic effects that could result in other activities that could significantly affect the environment.

Would approval of this project involve some precedent-setting action that could encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment?

The proposed project would include the construction of a new middle school meant to provide educational facilities to serve existing and planned residential growth anticipated under adopted local and regional plans, such as the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. District approval would not set a precedent that could encourage and facilitate local and regional activities and government actions that could significantly affect the environment. School construction activities to develop new school facilities are common state- and nationwide.

5.5 REFERENCES

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6. REPORT PREPARERS AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared by the Plumas Lake Elementary School District in consultation with the following organizations, consultants, and individuals.

LEAD AGENCY

Plumas Lake Elementary School District

Jeff Roberts ..... Superintendent, Educational Services

REPORT PREPARERS

PlaceWorks

Mailia Durand ..... Principal-in-Charge
Mariana Zimmerman ..... Associate Principal/Project Manager
Jasmine Osman ..... Senior Associate/Project Manager
Justine Garner ..... Associate II/Assistant Project Manager
Jessica Mendoza ..... Associate I
Lance Park ..... Senior Associate II
Chris Shields ..... Senior Associate II
Dina El Chammas Gass, PE, QSD ..... Senior Engineer II
Lexie Zimny ..... Associate I
Emily Parks ..... Associate II
Joseph Ruiz ..... Planner
Angel Castro ..... Project Planner
Cary S. Nakama ..... Graphics Specialist
Amanda Lukondi ..... Word Processor
Becky Golden-Harrell ..... Technical Editor
Gina Froelich ..... Senior Editor

Van Pelt Construction Services

Jennifer Gibb ..... Vice President, Business Development
Jennifer Kerr ..... Assistant Program Manager
Harshitha Paladugu ..... Project Coordinator

ECORP Consulting Inc.

Sandra Namoff ..... Consulting Botanist
Jeremy Adams ..... Cultural Resource Manager

GECON Consulting Inc.

Shane Rodacker, PE, GE ..... Senior Engineer
Jacob Bishop-Moser, PE ..... Senior Project Engineer
Tom DeSimone, PG, CEG ..... Senior Geologist

Kittleson & Associates Inc.

Mingmin Liu ..... Senior Engineering Associate
Fernando Sotelo ..... Principal Engineer

ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

Linda Fire Protection District

Kyle Heggstrom ..... Fire Chief

Yuba County Sheriff Department

Wendell Anderson ..... Sheriff