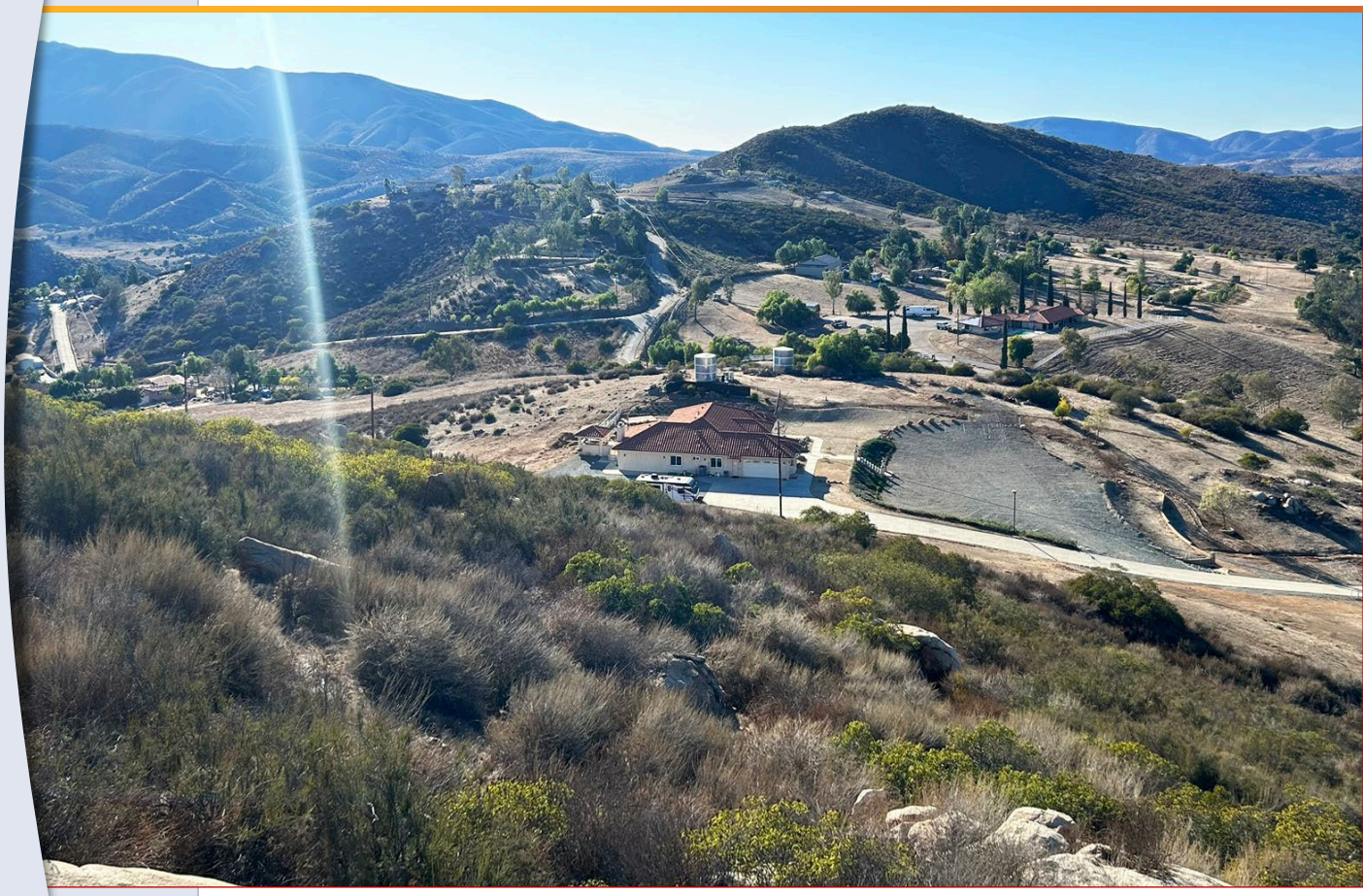


Final Environmental Assessment/Initial Study/Negative Declaration

Jamul Indian Village Land Disposal and Exchange

Prepared for:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

October 2025

Final Environmental Assessment/Initial Study/Negative Declaration

Jamul Indian Village
Land Disposal and Exchange

Prepared for:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
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October 2025

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State of California – Natural Resources Agency
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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
ADOPTION OF A NEGATIVE DECLARATION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), as lead agency, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), hereby adopts the Initial Study (IS), Final Negative Declaration (ND), for the proposed Jamul Indian Village Land Disposal and Exchange Project, in in San Diego County, California, State Clearinghouse No. 2025080122.

The Project is a land exchange between the Jamul Indian Village of California (Tribe) and CDFW. CDFW will dispose of the 1.1-acre Disposal Property, part of the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve (RJER) to the Tribe for future cemetery expansion. In exchange, the Tribe will exchange a 4.0-acre parcel to CDFW to be added to the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area (HCWA) for conservation. The Project does not propose any development activities, and future activities associated with the Disposal Property will be subject to applicable Federal, State, and local regulations.

The Draft IS/ND was made available to the public on August 4, 2025, for a 30-day public review period under CEQA, which concluded on September 3, 2025. CDFW prepared a Final IS/ND that includes consideration of all the comments received during the 30-day public review period. The Final IS/ND documents CDFW's Lead Agency determination that implementation of the Project would not result in significant effects to the environment.

CDFW makes the following findings as part of its adoption of the Final IS/ND and approval of the proposed Project: (1) CDFW has independently reviewed and analyzed the IS/ND and other information in the record, including the public comment letter received during the public review period, and has considered the information contained therein prior to acting upon or approving the proposed Project; (2) the IS/ND prepared for the proposed Project has been completed in compliance with CEQA and consistent with state guidelines implementing CEQA; and (3) the IS/ND represents the independent judgment and analysis of CDFW as Lead Agency for the proposed Project.

The documents and other materials that constitute the record on which the Project approval is based are located at the CDFW office: 3883 Ruffin Road, San Diego, CA 92123.

10/08/2025
Date of Approval

Glen M. Lubcke, Environmental Program Manager

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 1-1
- 1.1 Overview 1-1
- 1.2 Project Overview 1-1
- 1.3 Environmental Review Process 1-1
- 1.4 Summary of Impact Conclusions 1-2
- 1.5 Document Organization 1-2

2 COMMENTS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS 2-3
- 2.1 Introduction 2-3
- 2.2 Comments Received on the EA/IS/ND 2-3
- 2.3 Comments and Responses 2-3

3 LIST OF PREPARERS AND REVIEWERS 3-1
- 3.1 Lead Agencies 3-1
- 3.2 Preparers 3-1

Appendices

Appendix A Notice of Intent, Newspaper Postings and CDFW/USFWS website postings

Appendix B Comment Letter

Appendix C Draft EA/IS/ND

Tables

Table 2-1 Comments Received on the EA/IS/ND 2-3

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
DOI	Department of Interior
EA	Environmental Assessment
EA/IS/ND	Environmental Assessment/initial Study/Negative Declaration
EBKI	Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
HCWA	Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area
IS	Initial Study
JIV or Tribe	Jamul Indian Village of California
ND	Negative Declaration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RJER	Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WCB	Wildlife Conservation Board

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency pursuant to its permitting authority under the California Fish and Game Code for the proposed Jamul Indian Village Land Disposal and Exchange Project. The NEPA lead agency is the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This Final Environmental Assessment/Initial Study/Negative Declaration (EA/IS/ND) was prepared pursuant to CEQA (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.) and in accordance with the guidelines for implementation of CEQA (CEQA Guidelines; 14 CCR 15000 et seq.), as well as in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures outlined in the Department of Interior (DOI) NEPA Interim Final Rulemaking 7-2025.

The Final EA/IS/ND will be used by CDFW and USFWS (as the CEQA and NEPA lead agencies, respectively), in conjunction with other information developed in CDFW's and USFWS's formal record, to act on the Jamul Indian Village of California's (JIV's or Tribe's) request to dispose of part of the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve (RJER) to the Tribe for future cemetery expansion, in exchange for a 4.0-acre parcel to be added to the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area (HCWA) for conservation. CDFW will adopt the Final EA/IS/ND if, based on the whole record including the Draft EA/IS/ND and comments received, it determines that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed Project will have a significant effect on the environment (14 California Code of Regulations 15074[b]). USFWS will use this Final EA/IS/ND to prepare a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), in accordance with Section 1.6 of the DOI's NEPA Interim Final Rulemaking 7-2025.

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The JIV is requesting to acquire a 1.1-acre portion of the RJER from CDFW for their future cemetery expansion. To accommodate this request, CDFW is proposing to dispose of 1.1 acres of the RJER (Disposal Property) in exchange for the approximately 4.0-acre Slee property (Exchange Property) recently purchased by the Tribe, adjacent to the HCWA.

CDFW's approval of the requested land disposal/exchange is a discretionary action subject to environmental review in accordance with the CEQA. While the RJER is owned and managed by CDFW, it was established, in part, with funding from a USFWS Section 6 grant under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, along with a grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). Section 6 enables USFWS to provide Federal financial assistance through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to states and territories to support the development and implementation of conservation programs for the benefit of resident listed, candidate, and at-risk species on non-Federal lands. Because Federal Section 6 grant funding was used to purchase the 1.1-acre Disposal Property, which is a portion of the RJER acquisition, USFWS is required to review and approve land disposals/exchanges in the RJER. Thus, the land disposal/exchange is subject to approval from USFWS, and environmental review in accordance with NEPA is required. To complete the Proposed Action, pursuant to USFWS, Federal Financial Assistance Manual Part 520, Chapter 7.37, (Real Property, After Close of Escrow), a Notice of Federal Participation must be recorded on title to the Exchange Property indicating that it has a Federal nexus due to its substitution for the Disposal Property.

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA and NEPA, CDFW and USFWS prepared a joint EA/IS, to evaluate environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Action. The document determined that the project would not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, and an EA/IS/ND was prepared.

On August 4, 2025, CDFW filed a notice of intent (NOI) to adopt a Negative Declaration with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (State Clearinghouse) and released the Draft EA/IS/ND for a 30-day public review period. The NOI for the Draft EA/IS/ND was distributed to federal, state, and local agency representatives, and other interested individuals. Project documents were published to the State Clearinghouse (https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2025080122), CDFW website (https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/CEQA/jamul-indian-villagedraft-dea-is-nd) and USFWS website (https://www.fws.gov/office/carlsbad-fish-and-wildlife/available-public-review). Additionally, a public notice was published in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, a newspaper of general circulation in the project area, on August 4, 2025, announcing the availability of the Draft EA/IS/ND for public review in compliance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15072(b). In accordance with Section 15105(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the public review and comment period began on August 4, 2025, and ended on September 3, 2025. A copy of the NOI, *San Diego Union Tribune* Newspaper posting and CDFW/USFWS website postings are provided with this Final EA/IS/ND (Appendix A). A copy of the bracketed written comment received on the Draft EA/IS/ND is contained in this Final EA/IS/ND (Appendix B).

This Final EA/IS/ND incorporates the comment received during the public review period and contains a response to the comment by the CEQA lead agency (CDFW). The comment received resulted in minor additions to the Draft EA/IS/ND to include reference to the comment; however, the Draft EA/IS/ND has not been revised following issuance of the NOI. The Final EA/IS/ND includes the following:

- a list of the one organization that commented on the Draft EA/IS/ND (Chapter 2);
- the comment received on the Draft EA/IS/ND, including responses to the comment (Chapter 2); and
- the Draft EA/IS/ND (Appendix C).

1.4 SUMMARY OF IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

CDFW has found, based on the analysis conducted in this Final EA/IS/ND (including the comment received), that there is no substantial evidence that the project would have a significant environmental impact. Substantial evidence includes facts, reasonable assumptions predicated upon facts, and expert opinion supported by facts. Argument, speculation, and unsubstantiated opinion or narrative do not constitute substantial evidence (CEQA Section 21080[e]; State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064[f][5]).

1.5 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This Final EA/IS/ND is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1: "Introduction." This chapter provides an introduction to the Final EA/IS/ND and public review process, including organization of this document.
- Chapter 2: "Comments and Responses to Comments." This chapter presents the comment received during the public review period and a response to comment.
- Chapter 3: "List of Preparers." This chapter identifies report preparers.

2 COMMENTS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains reproduced comments from the letter received during the public review period for the EA/IS/ND, which concluded on September 3, 2025. The comment letter is presented in its entirety in Appendix B. Responses to the comment received on the Draft EA/IS/ND are also provided in this chapter. No further typographical or editorial revisions were suggested in the comment, thus no further changes to the Draft EA/IS/ND have been made. In accordance with Section 15073.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, the comments do not warrant a need to recirculate the EA/IS/MND because recirculation is only required when the new information added (1) identifies a new, avoidable significant effect and mitigation measures or project revisions must be added in order to reduce the effect to less than significant or (2) leads to a determination by the lead agency that the proposed mitigation measures or project revisions will not reduce potential effects to less-than-significant levels and new measures or revisions must be required. None of the additional details included in the Final EA/IS/ND meet those standards as required to support the recirculation of the Draft EA/IS/ND.

2.2 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE EA/IS/ND

Table 2-1 presents the list of commenters, including the numerical designation for each comment letter received, the author of the comment letter, and the date of the comment letter.

Table 2-1 Comments Received on the EA/IS/ND

Letter No.	Commenter	Date
ORGANIZATION		
O1	Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians	August 4, 2025

2.3 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The comment received on the Draft EA/IS/ND and the response to the comment are provided below. The comment letter is reproduced verbatim in its entirety. No edits have been made to the original comment and if applicable, spelling, grammatical, and other errors have been retained.

2.3.1 Organizations

Letter O1 Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians

Robert Pinto, Sr., Tribal Chairman,
Date, 2025

Comment O1-1

The Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians (EBKI), a federally recognized and self-governing Indian Tribe in east San Diego County, California, reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment/Initial Study/Negative Declaration (EA/IS/ND) for the Jamul Indian Village Land Disposal and Exchange Project. EBKI has no concerns with or comments for the EA/IS/ND.

EBKI fully supports and encourages the expedient approval of the Project as proposed.

Please direct any questions to the EBKI chief executive officer, Mr. Will Micklin, by telephone at (619) 368-4382, or by email at ceo@ebki-nsn.gov. Thank you

Response O1-1

The comment notes that EBKI has reviewed the Draft EA/IS/ND and has no concerns with the adequacy of the document. The comment also notes that EBKI supports the proposed Project and directs the reader to contact EBKI chief executive officer, Mr. Will Micklin with any queries. As the comment does not raise any specific issues with respect to the content and adequacy of the Draft EA/IS/ND, no further response is necessary. This comment is noted for the record and will be forwarded to the decision makers for their review and consideration.

3 LIST OF PREPARERS AND REVIEWERS

3.1 LEAD AGENCIES

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Mary Beth Woulfe ..... Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Section 6 Coordinator
Becky Miller ..... Regional Manager

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Glen M. Lubcke ..... Environmental Program Manager
Jessie Lane ..... Environmental Scientist
Jennifer Turner ..... Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Erinn Wilson-Olgin ..... South Coast Region (Region 5) Regional Manager

3.2 PREPARERS

Ascent

Rid Hollands ..... Project Manager
Chad Beckstrom, AICP ..... Principal-in-Charge
Curtis Alling, AICP ..... Strategic Advisor

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