COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & BUILDING

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

PLN-2039
04/2019

Project Title & No. Grolle Variance N-DRC2024-00008 ED25-0041

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED: The proposed project could have a "Potentially Significant Impact" for environmental factors checked below. Please refer to the attached pages for discussion on mitigation measures or project revisions to either reduce these impacts to less than significant levels or require further study.

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

DETERMINATION:

On the basis of this initial evaluation, the Environmental Coordinator finds that:

☐ The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

David Moran			7/14/2025
Prepared by (Print)	Signature		Date
		Environmental Coordinator	
Eric Hughes			
Reviewed by (Print)	Signature		Date

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Project Environmental Analysis

The County's environmental review process incorporates all of the requirements for completing the Initial Study as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The Initial Study includes staff's on-site inspection of the project site and surroundings and a detailed review of the information in the file for the project. In addition, available background information is reviewed for each project. Relevant information regarding soil types and characteristics, geologic information, significant vegetation and/or wildlife resources, water availability, wastewater disposal services, existing land uses and surrounding land use categories and other information relevant to the environmental review process are evaluated for each project. Exhibit A includes the references used, as well as the agencies or groups that were contacted as a part of the Initial Study. The County Planning Department uses the checklist to summarize the results of the research accomplished during the initial environmental review of the project.

Persons, agencies or organizations interested in obtaining more information regarding the environmental review process for a project should contact the County of San Luis Obispo Planning Department, 976 Osos Street, Rm. 200, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93408-2040 or call (805) 781-5600.

A. Project

DESCRIPTION: Request by **Kenneth Grolle** for a Variance to allow grading on slopes that exceed 30 percent for the purpose of constructing a 16-foot-wide, 1,650 foot long asphalt driveway to serve a new 6,025 square-foot single-family residence, a 2,025 square-foot residential accessory structure containing a workshop, garage, and carport, utility trenching, a new septic leach field, a new well and water storage tank, and erosion and sediment control measures. The proposed grading activities will result in approximately 2.48 acres of site disturbance including 41,897 square-feet of impervious surface area and 4,000 cubic-yards of cut and fill. The project site is an irregularly shaped parcel of 143 acres located at 11995 Santa Rosa Creek Road, about 7 miles west of the unincorporated community of Templeton and 0.5 miles north of Highway 46. The parcel is within the Agriculture land use category and within the Adelaida Sub-area of the North County Planning Area. The project site is subject to the Geologic Hazard Area (GSA) Combining Designation.

The project will be constructed in a single phase and will impact two adjoining parcels as shown below in Figure 2. The residence and associated buildings, leach field and water facilities will be located on APN 014-201-045. The proposed all weather access road will extend northward from Santa Rosa Creek Road across an easement through the adjoining 182 acre parcel (APN 014-201-049) owned by the Round Top Events Ranch, LLC.

The regional location of the project site is shown in Figure 1; an aerial view of the project site and vicinity is provided in Figure 2. Table 1 provides a summary of project components.

Table 1 – Project Components

Components	Quantities (approx.)
Residence	6,025 sf
Detached garage, workshop and carport	2,025 sf
Patio	408 sf
Grade and construct a new 16 foot wide all weather access road. Extend utilities to building site	95,870sf
Septic leach field and associated trenching	3,200 sf
Well and water tank	500 sf
Total Area of Disturbance:	**108,028sf/ 2.48 acres**
4,000 cy of cut, 4,000 cy of fill	**--**

Background

In 1978, the subject property entered into a Land Conservation Act contract (LCA) that was comprised of four (4) contiguous parcels. The parcel where the majority of project related improvements are proposed was created from one of these four parcels by Parcel Map COAL 85-352 (Parcel 4, 40/PM/46) in 1986. In 2020, the property owner (Kenneth Grolle Family Trust) applied to the County to rescind the portion of the Land Conservation Act (LCA) contract affecting the project site and enter into a replacement Open Space Easement Agreement. The request was approved in 2021 (Reso. No. 2021-089). The Open Space Easement Agreement reserved certain rights for the property owner(s) including the right to allow the construction of buildings and associated improvements within four (4) building permissible areas as shown below in Figure 3. The following uses are allowed in Building Permissible Areas, 2, 3, and 4.

- Two primary dwellings, residential accessory uses, and an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) and other ancillary accessory uses allowed by the land use ordinance, such as platform decks, docks, etc. may occupy an aggregate area(s) up to 10 acres (subject to permitting requirements in effect at the time of submittal).
- Agricultural accessory structures and uses including specialized animal facilities and nursery specialties are allowed (subject to permitting requirements in effect at the time of submittal) and may occupy an aggregate area of up to 10 acres.
- Renewable energy facilities generating energy for on-site use may occupy an aggregate area of up to 3 acres, exclusive of rooftop solar.

In October 2023, the Kenneth Grolle Family Trust applied for a major grading permit (GRAD2023-00149) for the construction of a new driveway to accommodate a single-family residence, workshop, and carport. This application later expired, and the applicant subsequently applied for a new major grading permit (GRAD2025-00007) in January 2025 to be processed concurrently with a variance to allow grading on slopes that exceed 30 percent. The proposed structures are situated within Building-Permissible Area 3 as shown in Figure 3.

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Baseline Conditions

The project site is located west of Templeton in a rural area of the County where the dominant land use is ranching and small-scale crop production on parcels ranging in size from 7 acres to over 180 acres. The topography of the project site consists of moderate to steeply sloping hills that trend northwest on the eastern slopes of the Santa Lucia Range east of the Los Padres National Forest. The hills contain scattered to very dense oak trees and annual grasses as well as dense stands of chaparral. Accordingly, the project site is within a Very High Fire Hazard Area. According to CalFire data, the project site has not been affected by a wildfire since at least 1950.

An unnamed ephemeral drainage flows northwest to southeast through the project site into a stock pond on the adjoining parcel to the south. One 'blue-line' creek (Cienega Creek) crosses the southern portion of the parcel outside the area of disturbance; the creek supports a well-established corridor of riparian and riverine vegetation.

Existing improvements include un-paved ranch roads and fencing. Historical aerial photography indicates no evidence of previous or ongoing crop production or structures; livestock grazing has been practiced on the project site since at least 1994.

The project site will take vehicular access from Santa Rosa Creek Road, a County maintained rural collector; traffic counts taken by the County in 2022 north of SR 46 revealed an average daily traffic volume of 134 and an afternoon peak hour volume of 11. The new all-weather access road will extend across the northeast corner of the adjacent parcel to the south owned by the Round Top Events Ranch, LLC. This parcel has been improved with two single-family residences, an agricultural pond and a series of ranch roads; vegetation and topography are similar to the project site. The level area adjacent to SR 46 is used for crop production. No new structures are proposed on this parcel.

Ordinance Modifications. No ordinance modifications have been requested for this project.

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER(S): 014-201-045, 014-201-049

Latitude: 35º 32' 24.2" N **Longitude:** 120.º 52'' 8.7"W **SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT #** 2

B. Existing Setting

Plan Area: North County **Sub:** Adelaida **Comm:** Rural

Land Use Category: Agriculture

Combining Designation: Geologic Study

Parcel Size: 143 acres

Topography: Moderately sloping to steeply sloping

Vegetation: Scattered Oaks Grasses

Existing Uses: Undeveloped single-family residence(s)

Surrounding Land Use Categories and Uses:

North: Agriculture; undeveloped ***East:*** Agriculture; vacant single-family residence(s)

South: Agriculture; single-family residence(s) ***West:*** Agriculture; single-family residence(s)

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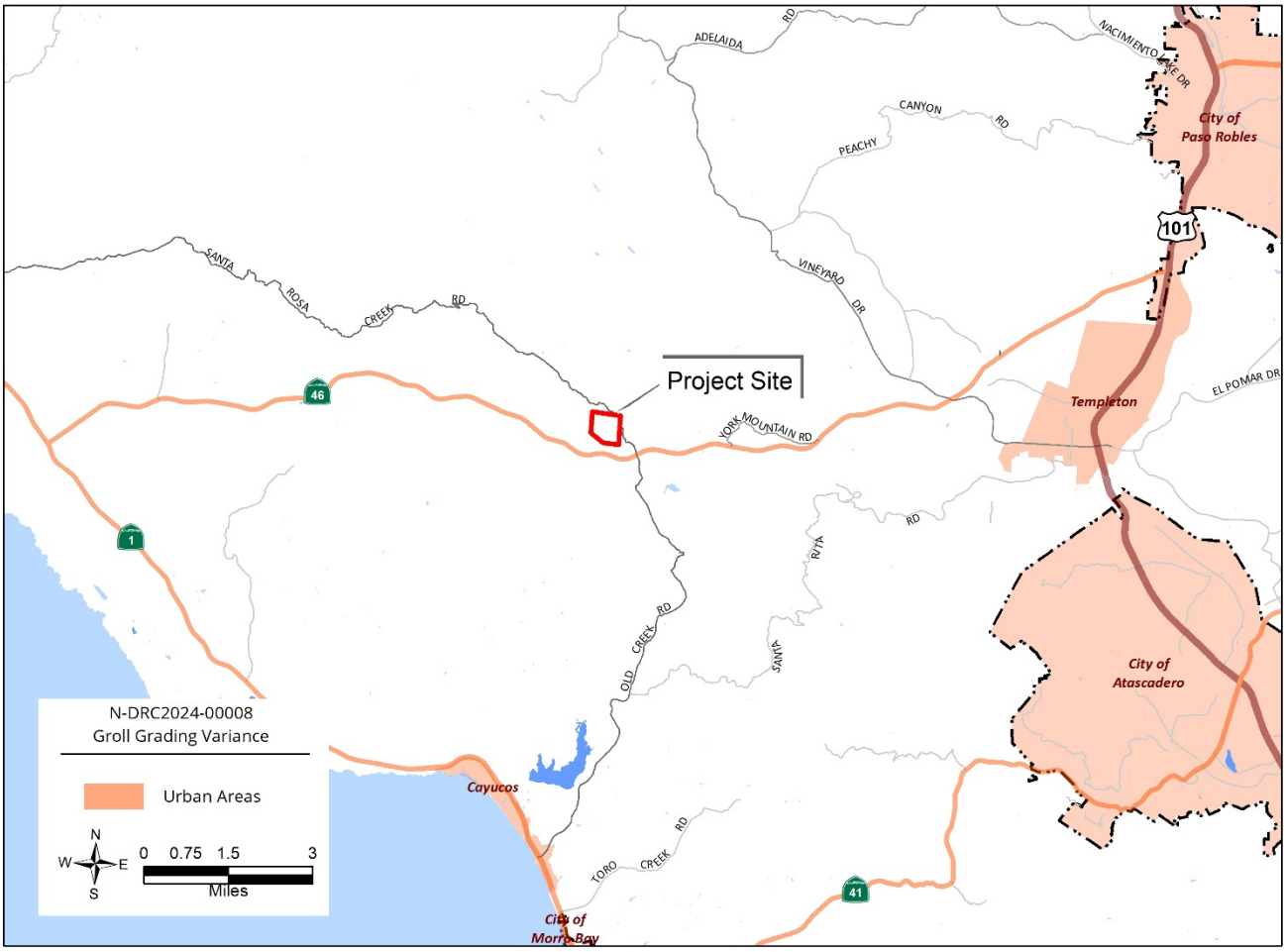

Figure 1 -- Project Location

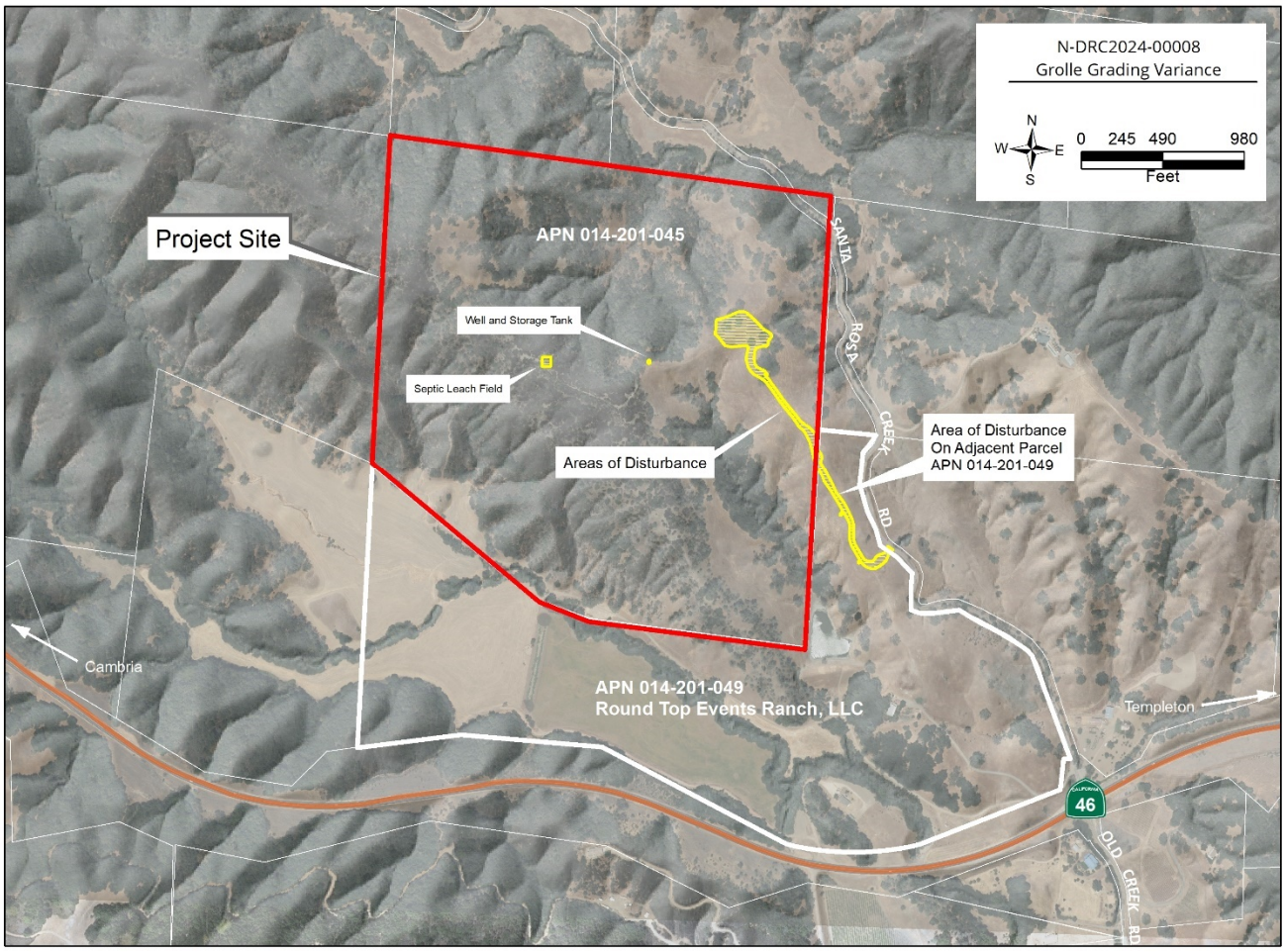

Figure 2 – Aerial View of the Project Site and Area of Disturbance

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist



Figure 3 – Overall Site Plan

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

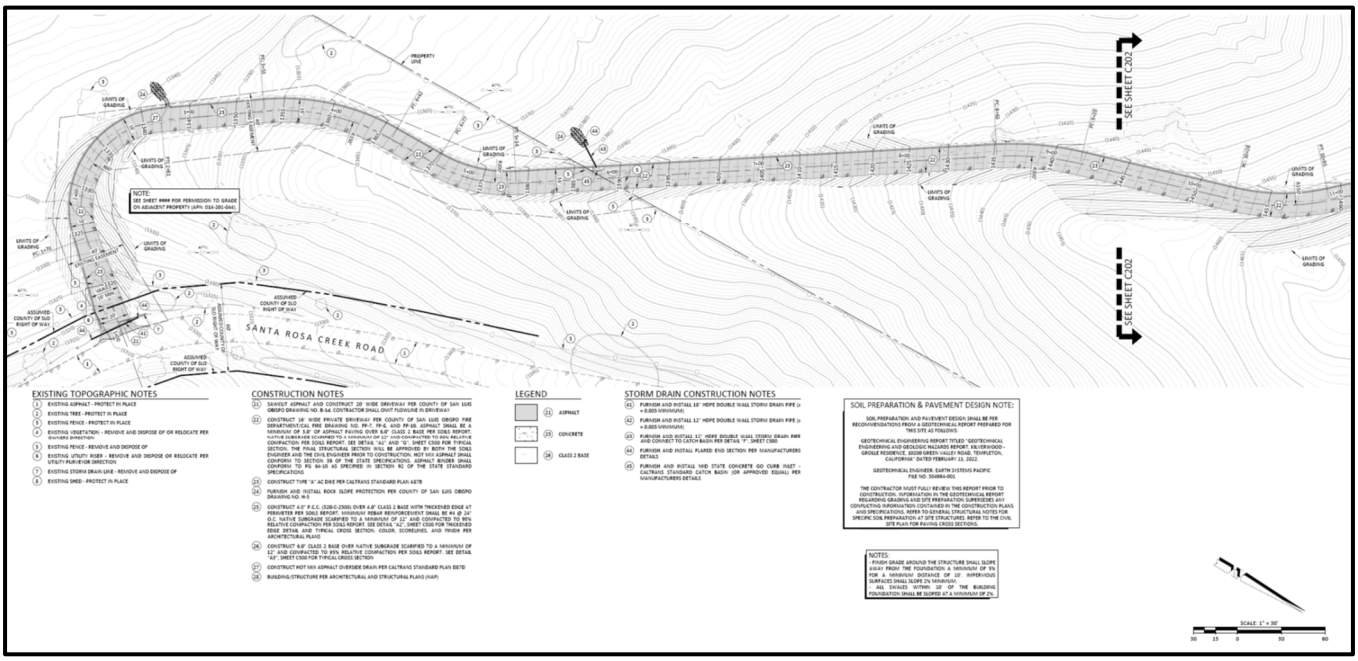

Figure 4 – Grading and Drainage Plan, South Portion

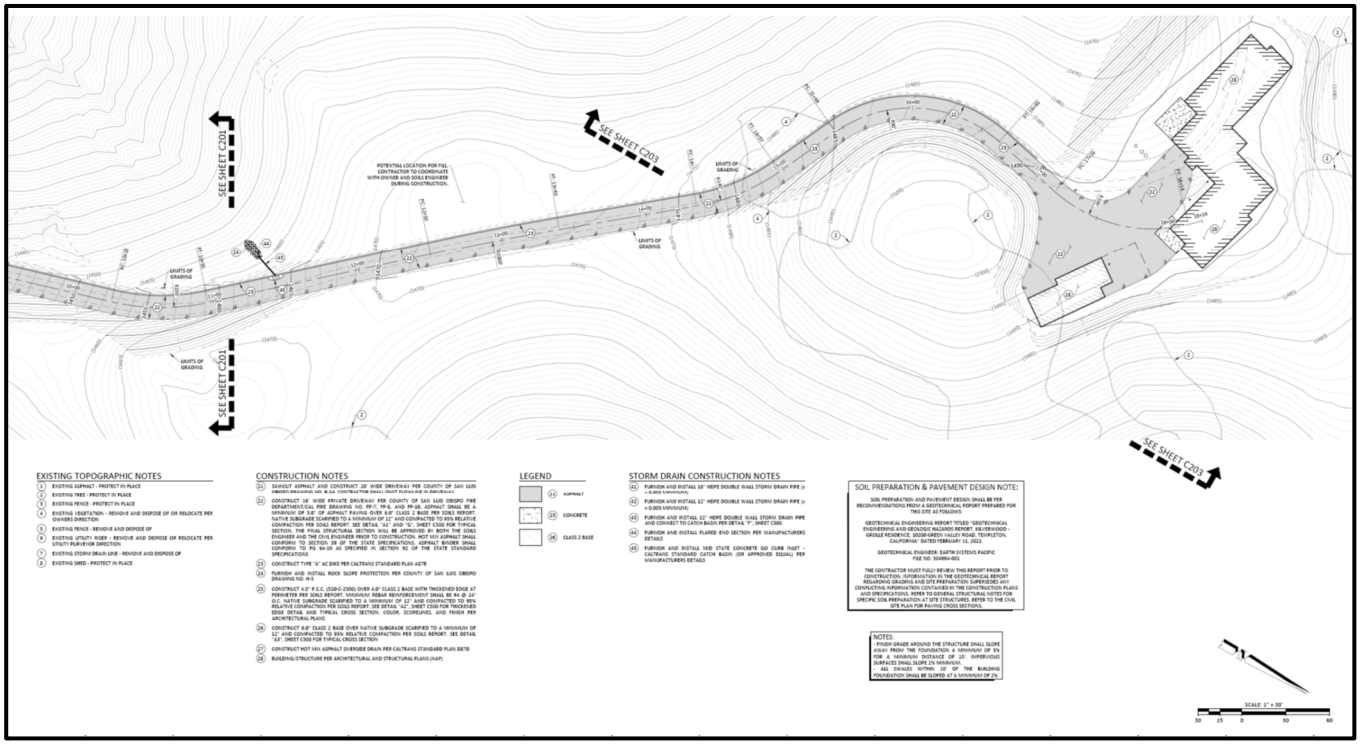

Figure 5 – Grading and Drainage Plan, North Portion

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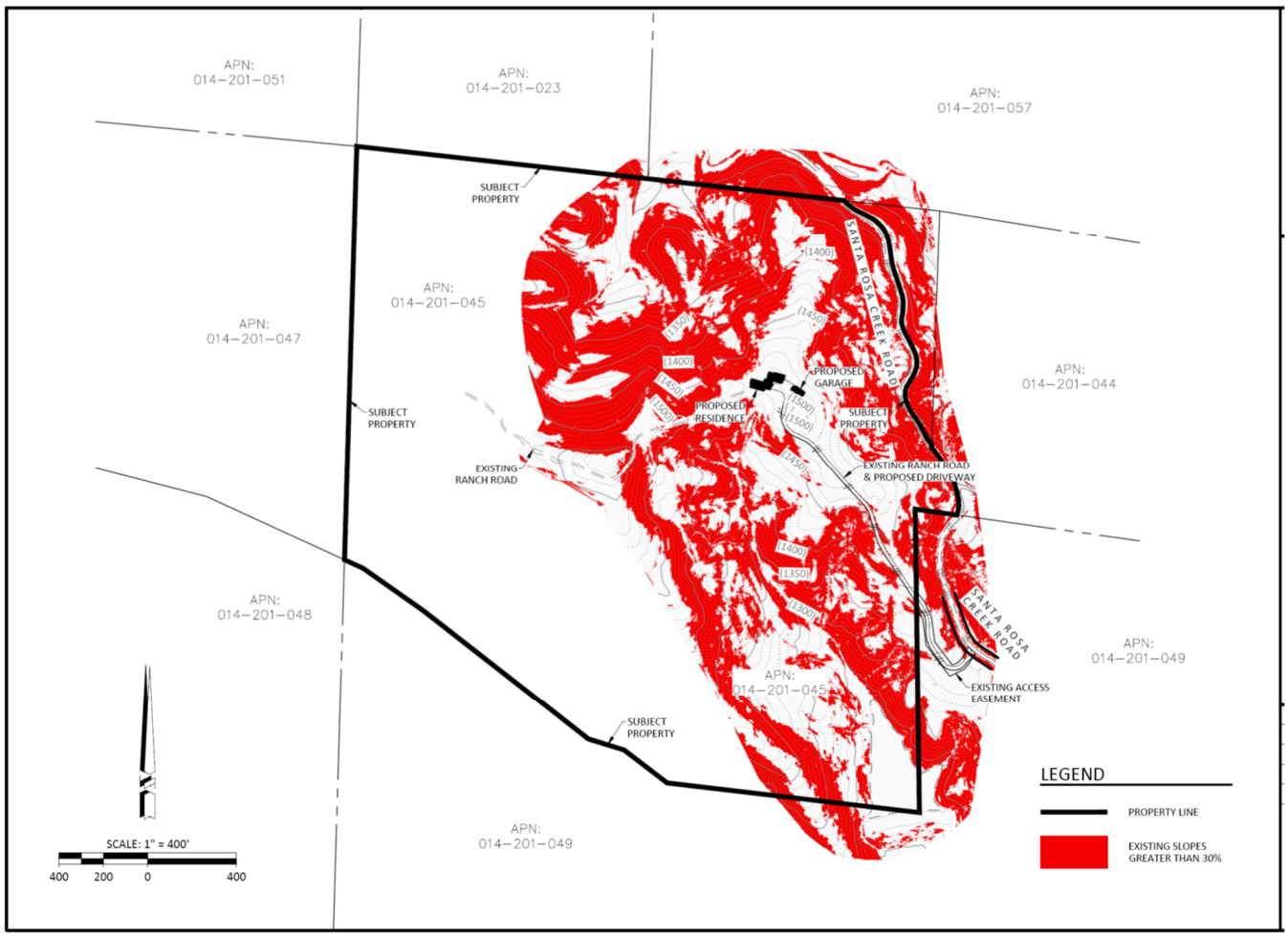

Figure 6 – Slope Map

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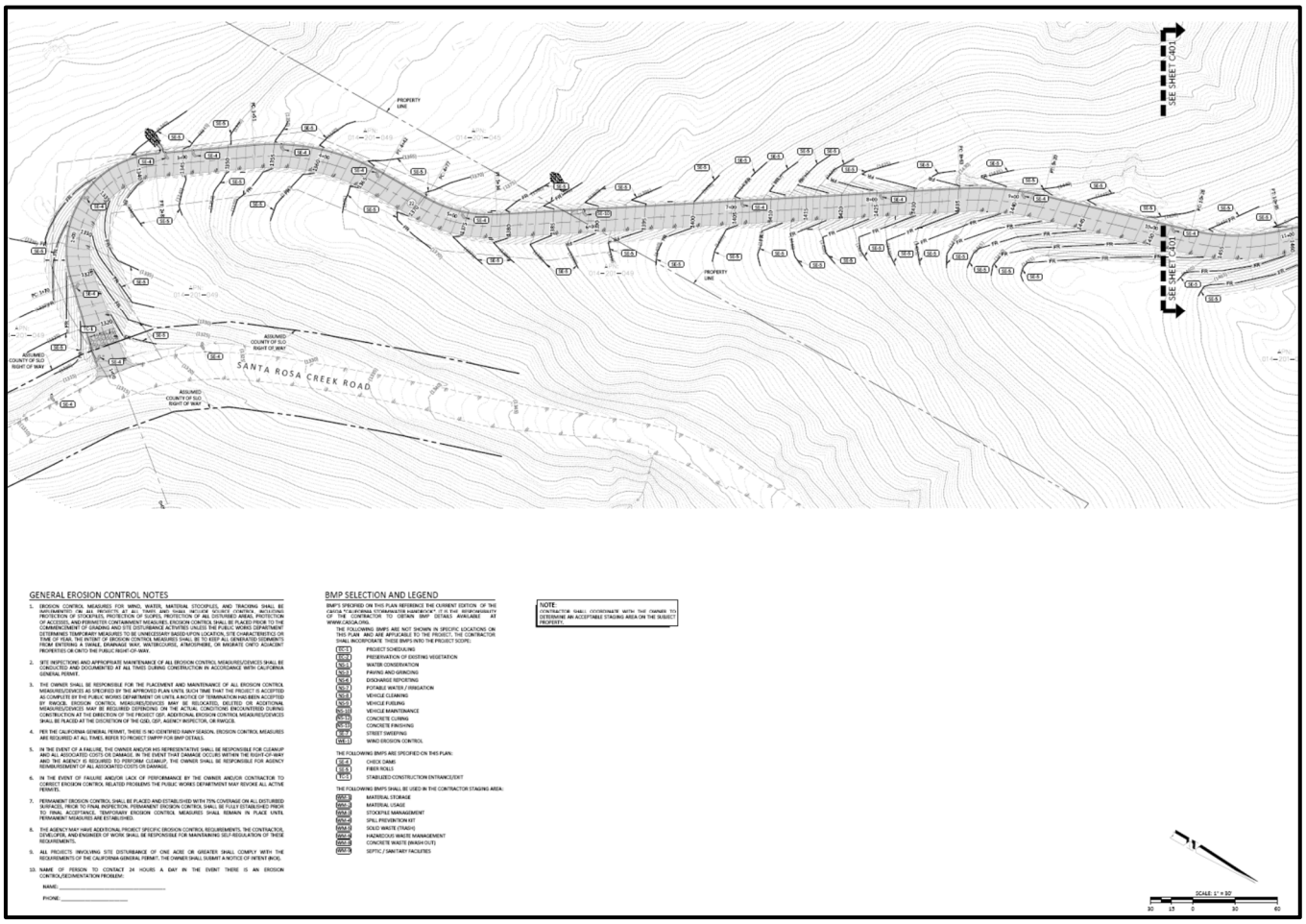

Figure 7 – Erosion Control Plan, South Portion

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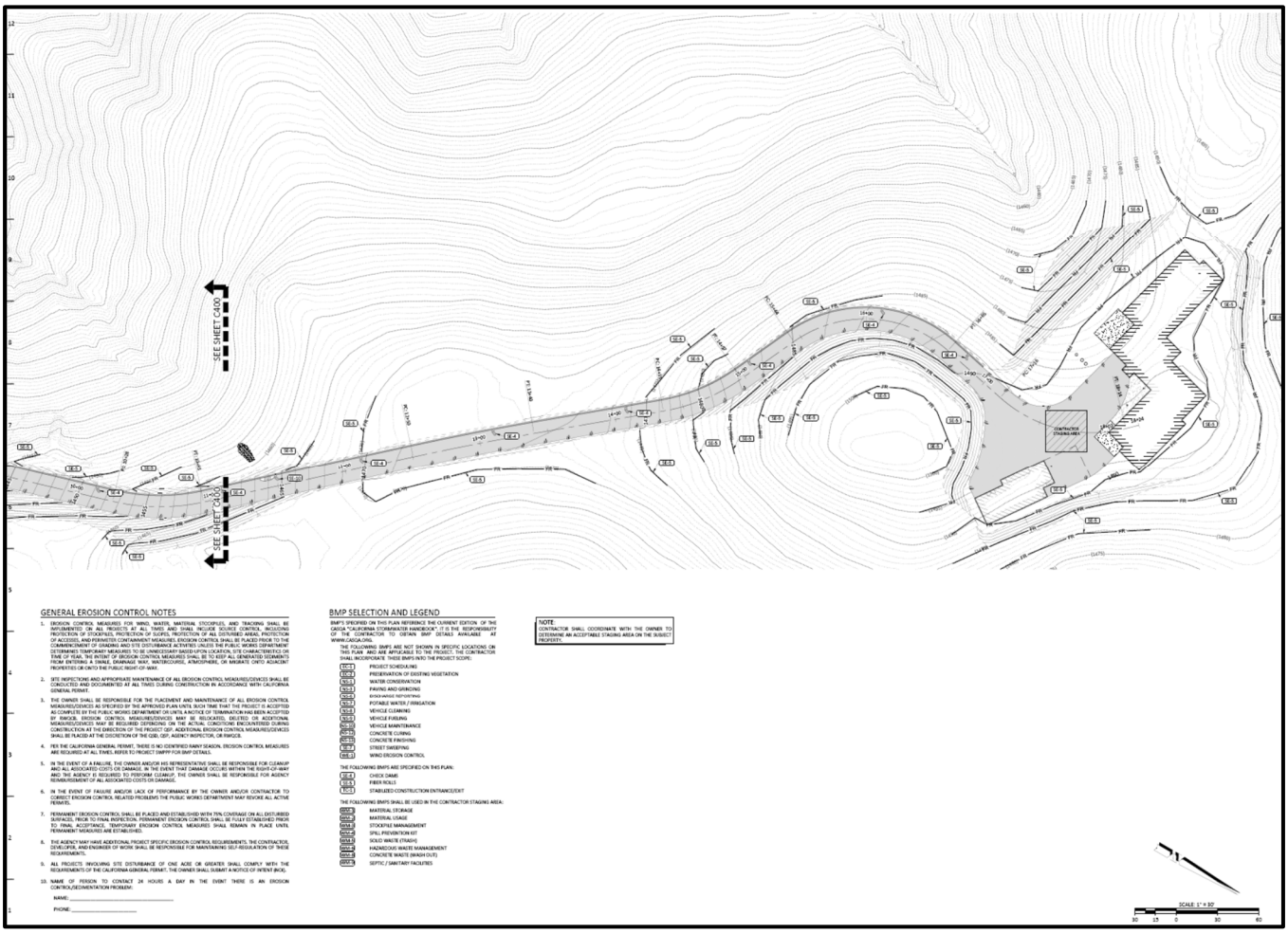

Figure 8 – Erosion Control Plan, North Portion

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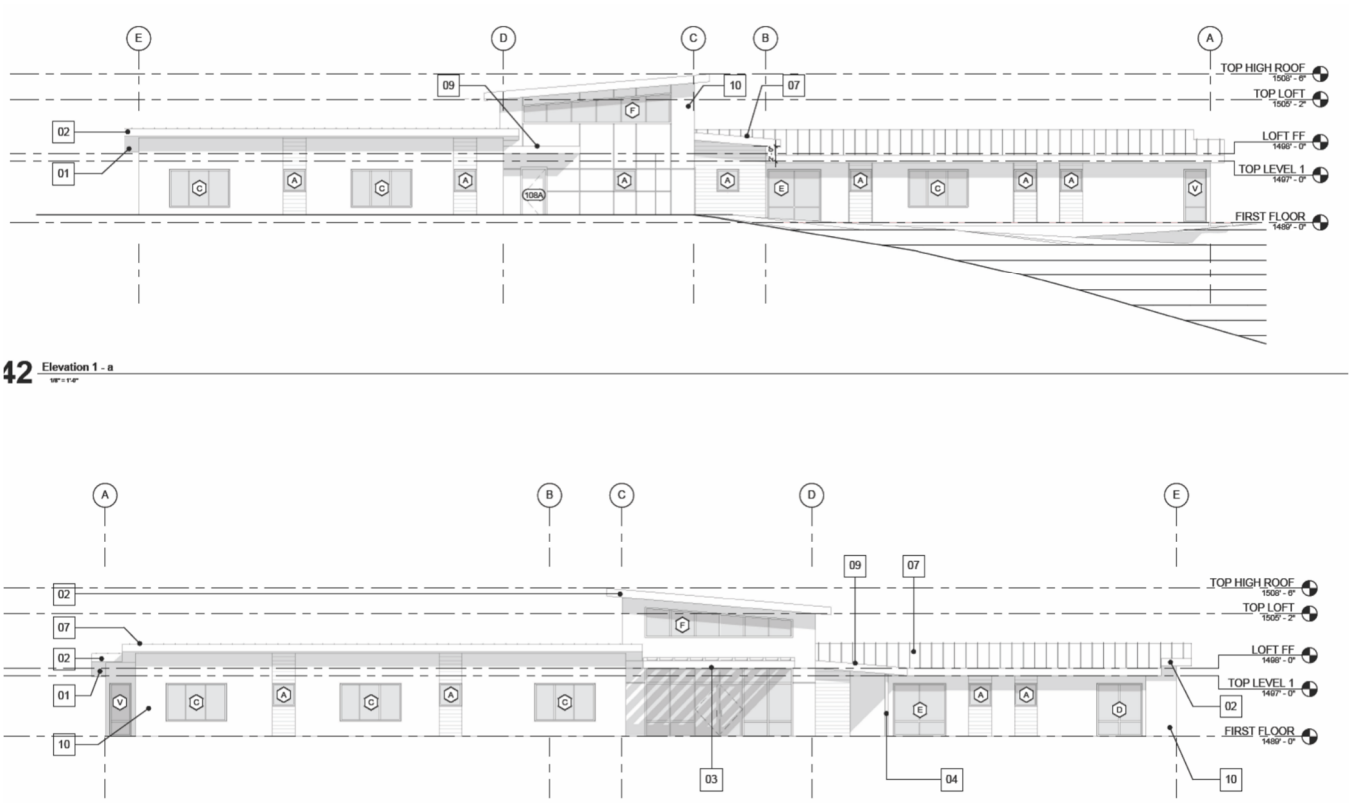

Figure 9 – Preliminary Residence Elevations

C. Environmental Analysis

The Initital Study Checklist provides detailed information about the environmental impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures to lessen the impacts.

I. AESTHETICS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:					
(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 non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Based on the description provided in the Baseline Conditions, the visual qualities of the project site and surrounding area are considered moderately high.

The primary vantages for public views in the area are provided by Santa Rosa Creek Road, a county-maintained rural roadway that extends north from State Route 46 following the canyon formed by Santa Rosa Creek through moderately-to-steeply sloping hills of the Santa Lucia Range. North of SR 46, Santa Rosa Creek Road follows a meandering course through hillsides covered with dense stands of oak trees and annual grasses; views from the roadway are constrained by frequent stands of oak trees and associated vegetation, and by the surrounding terrain and road cuts. As discussed in the baseline conditions, traffic counts for Santa Rosa Creek Road taken north of Highway 46 in 2022 revealed an average daily traffic volume of 134 and an afternoon peak hour volume of 11.

The site is also visible briefly to motorists travelling on State Route 46 which connects the community of Templeton with Highway 1 to the west.

Conservation and Open Space Element. The Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) identifies several goals for visual resources in rural parts of the county:

- Goal VR 1: The natural and agricultural landscape will continue to be the dominant view in rural parts of the county.
- Goal VR 2: The natural and historic character and identity of rural areas will be preserved.
- Goal VR 3: The visual identities of communities will be preserved by maintaining rural separation between them.
- Goal VR 7**:** Views of the night sky and its constellation of stars will be maintained.

Some of the strategies identified to accomplish the goals listed above include encouraging project designs that emphasize native vegetation and conforming grading to existing natural forms, as well as ensuring that new development follows the Countywide Design Guidelines to protect rural visual and historical character.

Countywide Design Guidelines. The Countywide Design Guidelines identify objectives for both urban and rural development. Rural area guidelines applicable to the project include the following:

- Objective RU-5: Fences and screening should reflect an area's rural quality.
- Objective RU-7: Landscaping should be consistent with the type of plants naturally occurring in the County and should limit the need for irrigation.

Inland Land Use Ordinance. The Land Use Ordinance sets forth standards for exterior lighting (LUO Section 22.10.060). In accordance with these standards, exterior lighting must be shielded and directed onto the source parcel and away from roadways and adjacent parcels. In addition, LUO Section 22.10.095 sets forth highway corridor design standards that apply to new development along portions of Highway 41 and Highway 101. Lastly, Section 22.14 establishes a combining designation for visual resources; the project lies outside the areas where these regulations apply.

The only Officially Designated State Scenic Highway in San Luis Obispo County is Highway 1. The project site is not visible from Highway 1.

Discussion

(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

For the purpose of determining significance under CEQA, a scenic vista is defined as a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. If the project would substantially degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, designated scenic routes, or from other public or recreation areas, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on the scenic vista.

While the project vicinity has a moderate-to-high scenic value and an appealing rural and agricultural character, it is not considered a scenic vista as it is not officially or unofficially designated as such. Therefore, the project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and *no impacts would occur.*

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

The project site is not located along, nor visible from, a designated state scenic highway or eligible state scenic highway (Caltrans 2025) and does not provide expansive views of a highly valued

landscape for the benefit of the general public. It does not lie within the areas subject to the Highway Corridor Design standards set forth in LUO Section 22.10.095 nor is it subject to the Combining Designation for visual resources. The project will result in the removal of one mature valley oak tree; other oak trees may be impacted and/or trimmed during project construction. Overall, the project would not result in substantial damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway, and *no impacts would occur.*

(c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The residence and about 80 percent of the access road improvements will be constructed on APN 014-201-045 which contains steep slopes with scattered to dense stands of oak trees, annual grasses and chaparral. The access road will extend northward from Santa Rosa Creek Road generally following the alignment of an existing unimproved ranch road that follows a meandering path along the ridgeline to a relatively level building site located more or less in the center of the parcel and surrounded by mature oak trees (Figures 2 and 10). As discussed in the setting, above, Santa Rosa Creek Road carries a fairly low average daily traffic volume. Therefore, public viewership of the project site from the road is currently very low.

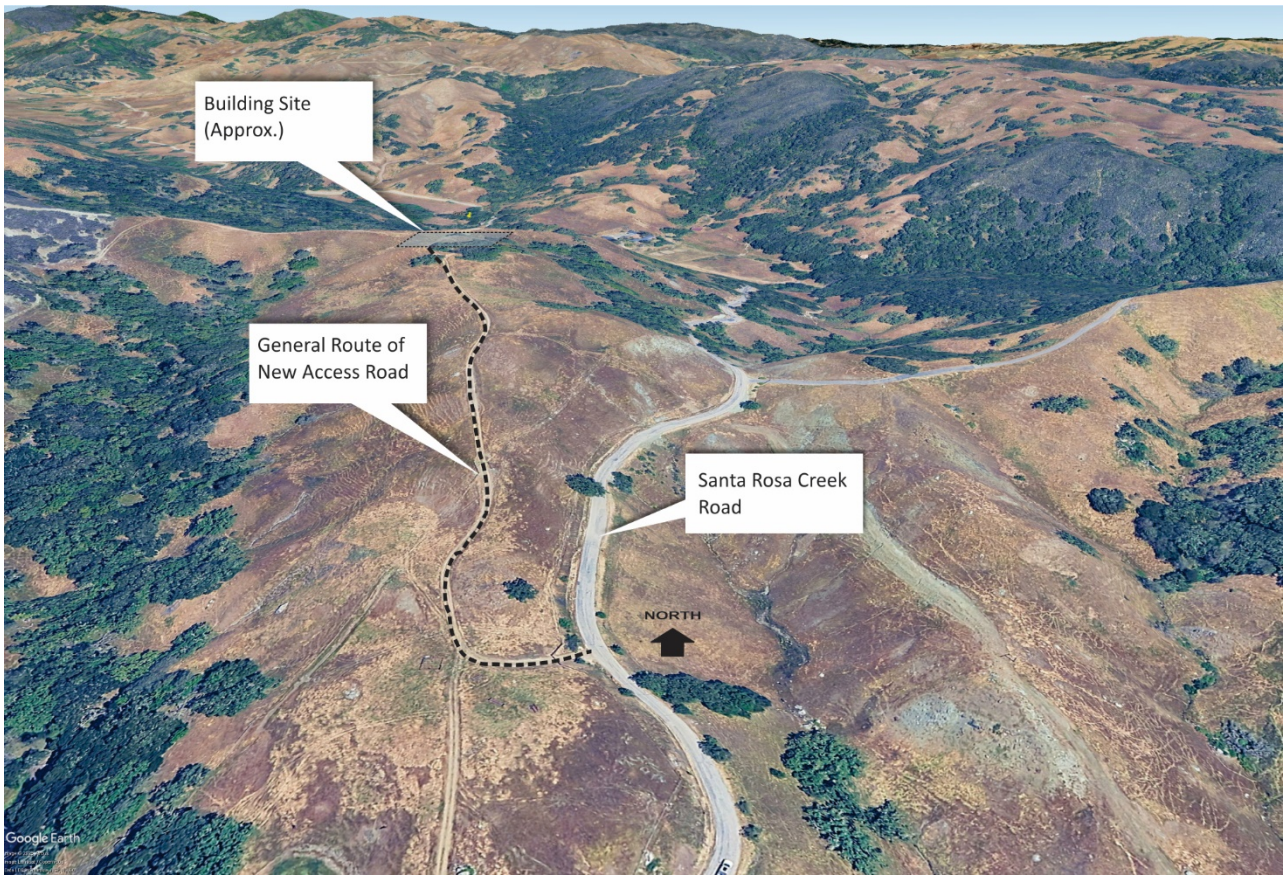

Figure 10 – Aerial Oblique View of the Project Site looking North

Construction of the all-weather access road and residence will change the visual and aesthetic character of the project site. The overall site plan (Figure 3) shows the proposed all weather access road extending northward from Santa Rosa Creek Road following the general alignment of an existing unimproved ranch road (Figure 10). The new roadway will follow a northward trending ridgeline through annual grasses to a relatively level building site located at the top of the hill where the residence, garage and workshop will be constructed. Construction of the roadway will require grading on slopes greater than 30 percent (Figure 6); one mature oak tree is proposed for removal. Preliminary elevations for the residence (Figure 11) show a split-level structure with a metal hip roof that will extend about 19 feet above the graded building site.

Figure 11 provides an illustration of areas (shown in green) with a line-of-sight view of the residence, assuming a building height of 23 feet at the highest point above the existing grade *and assuming no intervening visual obstructions such as buildings or vegetation*. As shown in Figure 11, the residence may be briefly visible at a distance from Santa Rosa Creek Road and a short section of SR 46. However, as conditioned, the project is not expected to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views because:

- The existing visual character of public views along Santa Rosa Creek Road in the vicinity of the project site will be maintained.
- The size, scale and character of development associated with the project are consistent with the visual character of existing surrounding development.
- The primary opportunity for the public to view the project site is associated with motorists travelling on Santa Rosa Creek Road. As shown in Figures 10 and 11, views of the access road and residence will be completely screened by dense vegetation and the intervening terrain.
- As shown on Figure 11, the residence and access road may be briefly visible to passing motorists from a 0.25 mile section of the SR 46 located about 0.5 miles to the south. Assuming an average speed of 45 miles per hour, these features may be in view for about one minute to motorists. Although SR 46 carries a relatively high volume of daytime traffic, views of the project site will be very brief and at a distance where the residence and roadway will be largely indistinguishable from the surrounding terrain. In addition, views of the project site from this section of SR 46 are largely blocked by the intervening dense stand of oak trees on the hillside facing south.

Based on the preceding analysis, project impacts associated with the potential degradation of the existing visual character or quality of public views are expected to be *less than significant*.

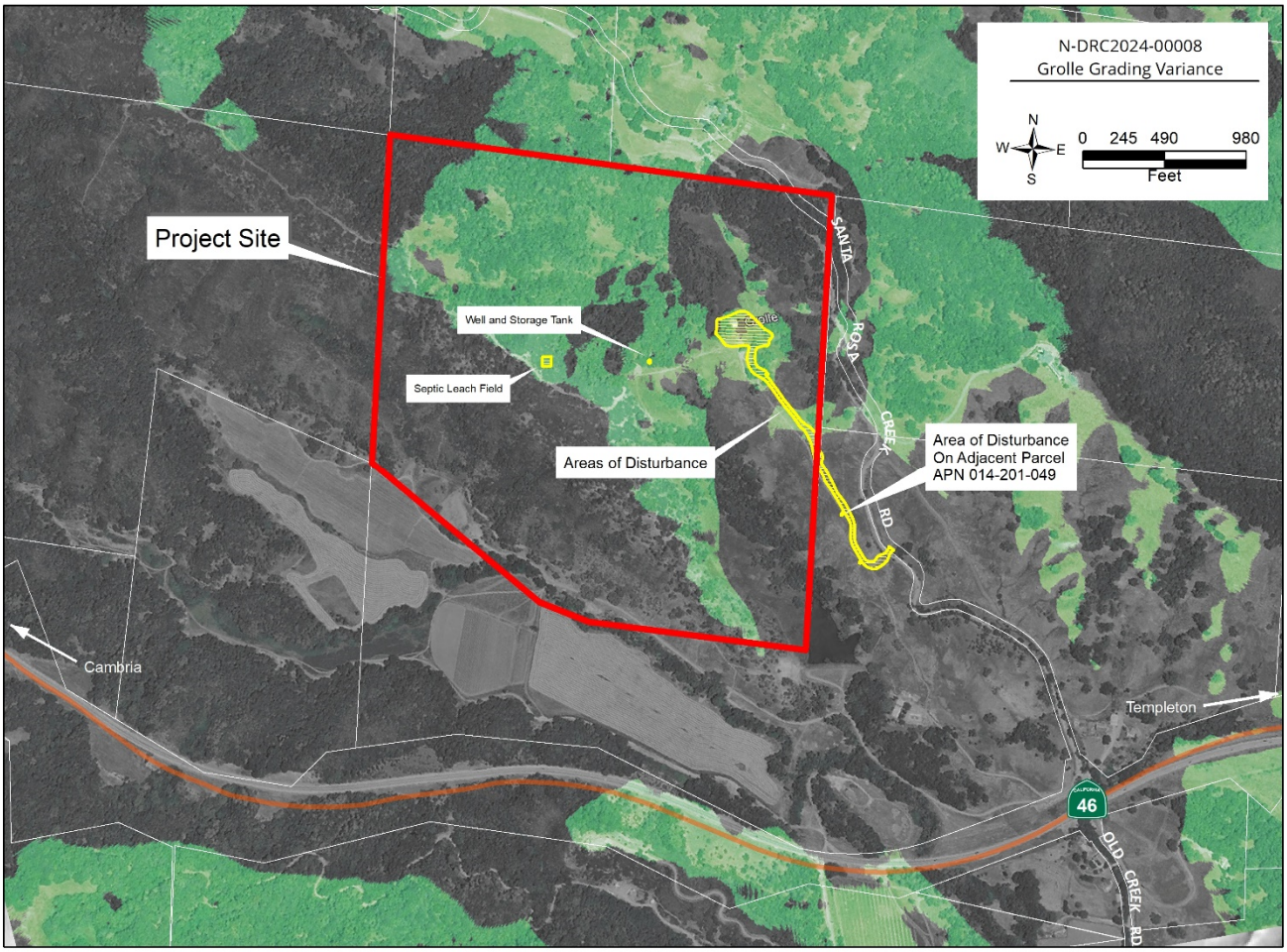

Figure 11 -- Areas With A Line of Sight View of Project Components (shown in green)

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

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjects public viewing locations to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visible at night, or if project illumination results in a noticeable spillover effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements, and atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. If the project results in direct visibility of a substantial number of lighting sources, or allows a substantial amount of light to project toward the sky, significant impacts on nighttime views and aesthetic character would result.

The project is located in an area with low existing levels of light pollution (Darksitefinder.com 2025). The dwelling will introduce new sources of light to the project site associated with a new single family residence. The project will be conditioned to comply with county standards for exterior lighting which require light to be confined to the site of the source. Therefore, potential impacts associated with the creation of a new source of substantial light would be *less than significant.* See also mitigation measure BIO-3 in section IV. Biological Resources.

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Conclusion

The project is not located within view of a scenic vista or State Scenic Highway and would not result in a substantial change to scenic resources in the area. The project is consistent with existing policies and standards in the County LUO and COSE related to the protection of scenic resources. New sources of light will be subject to compliance with the County's exterior lighting standards as prescribed in LUO Section 22.10.060. Impacts to aesthetic resources would be *less than significant*.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
(a)	Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The California Department of Conservation (CDOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts to California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality as well as current and previous land use. For purposes of CEQA compliance, the FMMP categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique

Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land as "agricultural land." Non-agricultural designations include Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land, and Water.

Chapter 6 of the County Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) identifies resource management goals, policies, and strategies to protect agricultural soils from conversion to urban and residential uses. Important Agricultural Soils within the County are identified in Table SL-2 of the COSE and Policy SL 3.1 states that the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses shall be evaluated using the applicable policies in the COSE and Agricultural Element.

Soils of the site are described in detail below. The acreage and corresponding farmland classifications are provided in Tables 2 and 3.

Map Unit: 162—Lompico-McMullin complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes

Lompico: 30 percent

The Lompico component makes up 30 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 50 to 75 percent. This component is on mountains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale and/or sandstone. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 20 to 40 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is low. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. Irrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Mcmullin: 20 percent

The McMullin component makes up 20 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 50 to 75 percent. This component is on mountains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, lithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is somewhat excessively drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R015XE101CA Shallow Gravelly Loamy ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. Irrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Map Unit: 163—Los Osos-Lodo complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes

Los osos: 40 percent

The Los Osos component makes up 40 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 50 to 75 percent. This component is on mountains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale and/or sandstone. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 20 to 40 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. This component is in the R015XE020CA Fine Loamy 9-13 ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. Irrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Lodo: 30 percent

The Lodo component makes up 30 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 50 to 75 percent. This component is on mountains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from sandstone and/or shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, lithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is somewhat excessively drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 4 percent. This component is in the R015XE104CA Shallow Gravelly Fine Loamy ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. Irrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Dibble, clay loam: 10 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Dibble soil is a minor component.

Rock outcrop: 10 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Rock outcrop soil is a minor component.

Map Unit: 165—McMullin-Rock outcrop complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes

Mcmullin: 45 percent

The McMullin component makes up 45 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 50 to 75 percent. This component is on mountains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, lithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is somewhat excessively drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R015XE101CA Shallow Gravelly Loamy ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. Irrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Rock outcrop: 20 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major soil components. The Rock outcrop is a miscellaneous area.

Shimmon, loam: 10 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Shimmon soil is a minor component.

Lompico, loam: 10 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Lompico soil is a minor component.

Map Unit: 173—Mocho clay loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, MLRA 14

Mocho: 75 percent

The Mocho component makes up 75 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 0 to 2 percent. This component is on alluvial flats, alluvial plains. The parent material consists of alluvium derived from sedimentary rock. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is high. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. This component is in the R014XE025CA Fine Loamy Bottom ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 4c. Irrigated land capability classification is 1 This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 3 percent. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Still: 10 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Still soil is a minor component.

Haploxerolls, gravelly overwash: 5 percent

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Haploxerolls soil is a minor component.

Xerorthents: 5 percent

Map Unit: 188—Rincon clay loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes, MLRA 14

Rincon: 90 percent

The Rincon component makes up 90 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 9 percent. This component is on terraces on valleys, alluvial fans on valleys. The parent material consists of clayey alluvium derived from sedimentary rock. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is high. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R014XE025CA Fine Loamy Bottom ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 4e. Irrigated land capability classification is 2e. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 4 percent.

As shown in Table 2, two of the soils present on the project site are considered prime farmland by the COSE. However, neither of these soils underlie the area of disturbance.

Table 2 – Farmland Classifications of the COSE and Corresponding Acreages

Soil	COES Classification	Acres of the Project Site	Acres Within the Area of Disturbance
McMullen rock outcrop, 50 – 75 % slopes	Not Prime	46.4	0.00
Lompico McMullen 50 – 76% slopes	Not Prime	56.7	1.0
Rincon clay loam, 2 – 9 % slopes	Prime if Irrigated	0.4	0.0
Los Osos lodo, 50 – 75% slopes	Not Prime	33.8	1.48
Moch clay loam, 0 – 2% slopes	Prime if Irrigated	5.5	0.0
Total:		**143.0**	**2.48**[1]

Source: Classifications based on Table SL-2 of the County General Plan's Conservation/Open Space Element

1. Includes areas on adjacent parcel APN 014-201-049.

Table 3 provides a summary of farmland classifications for soils on the project site as determined by the FMMP. As shown in Table 3, the project site contains important farmland for crop production by the FMMP, but not within the area of disturbance.

Table 3 – Farmland Classifications of the FMMP and Corresponding Acreages

FMMP Classification	Acres	Acres Within the Area of Disturbance
Grazing	119.3	2.48
Farmland of Local Importance	3.7	0.0
Farmland of Local Potential	8.3	0.0
Non-Farmland	11.5	0.0
Total:	**143.0**	**2.48**[1]

Source: Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2023

1. Includes areas on adjacent parcel APN 014-201-049.

The Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agriculture or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. The project site is within the Templeton Agricultural Preserve but is not subject to an active Williamson Act contract. As discussed in the Background section of this Initial Study, in 1978, the subject property entered into a Land Conservation Contract that was comprised of four (4) parcels. In 2020, the Kenneth Grolle Family Trust applied to the County to rescind a portion of the Contract, and enter into a replacement Open Space Easement Agreement for the subject project parcel that was approved in 2021 (Reso. No. 2021-089). The Open Space Easement Agreement reserved certain rights for the property owner(s) including the right to allow the construction of buildings and associated improvements within four (4) building permissible areas as shown below in Figure 3. The remaining portions of the site are precluded from further development and must remain as open space.

According to California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 12220(g), forest land is defined as land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. Timberland is defined as land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees.

(a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

As shown in Table 3, according to the FMMP, the area of disturbance does not contain any soils mapped as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Therefore, there would be *no impact*. In addition, owing to the steep slopes and lack of irrigation water, the project site is not suitable for crop production.

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

The project site is located within the *Agriculture* land use category and is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract; a single family dwelling is an allowable use within the buildable areas designated by the Open Space Agreement. Therefore, as conditioned, the project would not result in a conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract and *no impacts would occur.*

(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))?

The project site does not include land use designations or zoning for forest land or timberland as defined by the Public Resources Code; *no impacts would occur.*

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

The project site contains stands of oak trees that meet the definition of "forest land" as prescribed in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g). The project site supports a mixed oak woodland community. Based on the current project plans, it is expected that up to one valley oak tree may be removed, and up to five valley oak trees and one coast live oak tree may be impacted as a result of the proposed development.

In addition, the project is encumbered by an Open Space Agreement that prevents the removal of oak trees outside of the designated building areas. Therefore, the vast majority of forest lands will be preserved in perpetuity. Therefore, the project will result in *no impact* relating to the conversion of forest land to a non-forest use.

(e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The project site is generally surrounded by large (ie, >20 acres) parcels some of which are used for livestock grazing and small-scale crop production. As discussed in the project description, there is no evidence of crop production associated with the project site, owing to the steepness of the terrain and the absence of suitable soils and irrigation water.

Surrounding agricultural uses may be temporarily affected by noise and dust generated during the construction of the project. These impacts would be temporary in nature and would not result in the direct impairment or conversion of agricultural land to other uses.

Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

The project would result in less than significant impacts relating to the conversion of farmland, forest land, or timber land to non-agricultural uses or non-forest uses and would not conflict with agricultural zoning or otherwise adversely affect agricultural resources or uses. Potential impacts to agricultural resources would be *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable* and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None necessary.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

III. AIR QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:					
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan

The San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD) San Luis Obispo County 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP) is a comprehensive planning document intended to evaluate long-term air pollutant emissions and cumulative effects and provide guidance to the SLOAPCD and other local agencies on how to attain and maintain the state standards for ozone and particulate matter 10 micrometers or less in diameter (PM_{10}). The CAP presents a detailed description of the sources and pollutants that impact the jurisdiction's attainment of state standards, future air quality impacts to be expected under current growth trends, and an appropriate control strategy for reducing ozone precursor emissions, thereby improving air quality. Project consistency with the CAP is determined by considering whether the project incorporates the relevant land use planning and transportation control measures and strategies outlined in the CAP.

The County is currently designated as a non-attainment area for ozone and PM_{10} under state ambient air quality standards. Construction and operation of the project would result in emissions of ozone precursors including reactive organic gasses (ROG) and nitrous oxides (NO_X) as well as fugitive dust emissions (PM_{10}) and exhaust particulates.

SLOAPCD Criteria Pollutant Thresholds

The SLOAPCD has developed a CEQA Air Quality Handbook (most recently updated with a November 2017 Clarification Memorandum) to help local agencies determine the significance of project-specific air quality impacts and to determine whether mitigation measures are needed. To assist in this task, the Handbook includes screening criteria to determine the significance of project impacts. For example, according to the Handbook, a project with grading in excess of 4.0 acres and moving 1,200 cubic yards of earth per day can exceed the construction threshold for respirable particulate matter (PM_{10}).

The use of heavy equipment and earth-moving operations during project construction can generate fugitive dust and engine combustion emissions that may have substantial temporary impacts on local air quality. Combustion emissions, such as nitrogen oxides (NOx), reactive organic gases (ROG), greenhouse gases (GHG), and diesel particulate matter (DPM), are most significant when using large, diesel-fueled scrapers, loaders, bulldozers, haul trucks, compressors, generators, and other heavy equipment. The SLOAPCD has established thresholds of significance for each of these contaminants.

Operational impacts are focused primarily on the indirect emissions (i.e., motor vehicles) associated with residential, commercial, and industrial development. Certain types of projects can also include components that generate direct emissions, such as power plants, gasoline stations, dry cleaners, and refineries (referred to as stationary source emissions). Table 1-1 of the APCD's CEQA Handbook provides screening criteria based on the size of different types of projects that would normally generate sufficient motor vehicle trips that would cause an exceedance of the operational thresholds for ozone precursors. A project consisting of 99 single family residences generating 970 average daily vehicle trips would be expected to exceed the 25 lbs/day operational threshold for ozone precursors.

The APCD has also estimated the number of vehicular round trips on an unpaved roadway necessary to exceed the 25 lbs/day threshold of significance for the emission of particulate matter (PM10). According to the APCD estimates, an unpaved roadway of one mile in length carrying 6.0 round trips would likely exceed the 25 lbs/day PM10 threshold.

The prevailing winds in the project vicinity are from the north and west.

Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive receptors are people with an increased sensitivity to air pollution or environmental contaminants, such as the elderly, children, people with asthma or other respiratory illnesses, and others who are at a heightened risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to air pollution. Some land uses are considered more sensitive to changes in air quality than others, due to the population that occupies the uses and the activities involved. Sensitive receptor locations include schools, parks and playgrounds, day care centers, nursing homes, hospitals, and residences. The nearest sensitive receptors are single-family residences to the south and east that are more than 1,000 feet from areas to be graded for the access road.

Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) is identified as a toxic air contaminant by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Serpentine and other ultramafic rocks are fairly common throughout San Luis Obispo County and may contain NOA. If these areas are disturbed during construction, NOA-containing particles can be released into the air and have an adverse impact on local air quality and human health. Based on SLOAPCD's NOA Screening Map, the project site is located in an area identified as having the potential for soils containing NOA.

Developmental Burning

As of February 25, 2000, the APCD prohibits developmental burning of vegetative material within San Luis Obispo County. However, under certain circumstances where no technically feasible alternatives are available, limited developmental burning under restrictions may be allowed. Any such exception must complete the following prior to any burning: APCD approval; payment of fee to APCD based on the size of the project; and issuance of a burn permit by the APCD and the local fire department authority. As a part of APCD approval, the applicant shall furnish them with the study of technical feasibility (which includes costs and other constraints) at the time of application.

Discussion

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

In order to be considered consistent with the 2001 San Luis Obispo County CAP, a project must be consistent with the CAP's land use planning and transportation control measures and strategies (SLOAPCD 2012). These strategies include, but are not limited to, planning compact communities with higher densities, providing for mixed land use, and balancing jobs and housing.

The project does not include development of retail or commercial uses that would be open to the public, therefore, land use planning strategies such as mixed-use development and planning compact communities are generally not applicable. The project would result in the construction of a single family residence that would typically be occupied by three full-time residents. Therefore, the project would not generate a significant number of employees and would not significantly affect the local area's jobs/housing balance.

Adopted transportation control measures include, but are not limited to, a voluntary commute options program, local and regional transit system improvements, bikeway enhancements, and telecommuting programs. The voluntary commute options program targets employers in the county with more than 20 full time employees; the project consists of a single family residence and would have no employees. The project would not conflict with regional plans for transit system or bikeway improvements.

Overall, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the CAP; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

(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?

The County is currently designated as a non-attainment area for ozone and PM_{10} under state ambient air quality standards. Construction and operation of the project would result in emissions of ozone precursors including reactive organic gasses (ROG) and nitrous oxides (NO_X) as well as fugitive dust emissions (PM_{10}).

Construction Emissions

Based on the project description, the project will have an area of disturbance of about 2.48 acres and will involve 4,000 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 4,000 cy of fill. Construction activities will result in the generation of dust, as well as short-term construction vehicle emissions. Using the SLOAPCD's CEQA Air Quality Handbook (2012) and Clarification Memorandum (2017), construction-related emissions were calculated for the project and are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 -- Estimated Construction-Related Emissions

Pollutant	Total Estimated Emissions	APCD Emissions Threshold	Mitigation Required?
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG) + Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) (combined)	60.2 lbs./day[1]	137 lbs./day	No
	2.41 tons /quarter[1]	2.5 tons/quarter	No
Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM)	2.61 lbs. /day[2]	7 lbs./day	No
	0.078 tons/quarter[2]	0.13 tons/quarter	No
Fugitive Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	1.86 tons[3]/quarter	2.5 tons/quarter	No

Notes:

1. Based on 8,000 cubic yards of material moved and 0.113 pounds of combined ROG and NOx emissions per cubic yard of material moved and 15 construction days.
2. Based 8,000 cubic yards of material moved and 0.0049 pounds of diesel particulate emissions per cubic yard of material moved and 15 construction days.
3. Based on 2.48 total acres of disturbance and 0.75 tons of PM10 generated per acre of disturbance per month and 15 days of construction/grading per quarter.

As shown in Table 4, project construction related emissions are not expected to exceed the daily or quarterly emissions thresholds for ozone precursors or diesel particulates. Therefore, project impacts associated with the exceedance of SLOAPCD daily and quarterly emissions thresholds and will be considered *less than significant*.

Operation-Related Emissions. The project consists of a single family residence that will likely generate about 9.0 average daily trips. Accordingly, project-specific and cumulative operational impacts are considered *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable*.

The project will not result in travel on an unpaved roadway.

Overall, impacts related to the exceedance of federal, state, or SLOAPCD ambient air quality standards due to operational activities would be *less than significant*.

(c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Sensitive receptors are people or other organisms that may have a significantly increased sensitivity to exposure to air pollution by virtue of their age and health (e.g. schools, day care centers, hospitals, nursing homes), regulatory status (e.g. federal or state listing as a sensitive or endangered species), or proximity to the source. The nearest sensitive receptors are residences located more than 1,000 feet from the area of disturbance. Although these residences may be occupied by sensitive receptors, the distance from the area of disturbance, combined with the prevailing winds and the intervening terrain is not expected to result in exposure to diesel particulates and fugitive dust from construction activities. Therefore, potential impacts to sensitive receptors would be *less than significant.*

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

Construction activities have the potential to emit odors from diesel equipment, paints, solvents, fugitive dust, and adhesives. Any odors generated by construction activities would be intermittent and temporary, and generally would not extend beyond the construction area. Following construction of site improvements and the residence, the project site would be limited to residential uses and would not include any components or operational activities that would generate substantial long-term adverse odors. Therefore, odors generated by the project would be short-term, intermittent, and *less than significant*.

The project site is located in an area identified as containing NOA which may be mobilized during ground disturbance activities. This impact is considered less *than significant with mitigation*. Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2 are recommended that require implementation of SLOACPD testing, notification, and disposal protocol to reduce the potential to release NOA during proposed ground disturbance activities and to mitigate health risks if NOA is detected.

The project does not propose to burn any onsite vegetative materials and would be subject to SLOAPCD restrictions on developmental burning of vegetative material; therefore, the project would have *no impact* relating to substantial air pollutant emissions from such activities.

Conclusion

The project would be consistent with the SLOAPCD's Clean Air Plan. Construction and operational but diesel emissions associated with the project will not exceed APCD thresholds nor are they likely to adversely impact surrounding sensitive receptors. In addition, the project site may contain NOA. Therefore, potential impacts to air quality would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Mitigation

AQ-1 **Naturally Occurring Asbestos Survey. Prior to issuance of grading or construction permits**, the applicant shall retain a registered geologist to conduct a geologic evaluation of the property, including sampling and testing for NOA in full compliance with SLOAPCD requirements and the CARB ATCM for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations (17 CCR 93105). This geologic evaluation shall be submitted to the County Department of Planning and Building upon completion. If the geologic evaluation determines that the project would not have the potential to disturb NOA, the applicant must file an Asbestos ATCM exemption request with the SLOAPCD.

AQ-2 **Naturally Occurring Asbestos Remediation.** If NOA are determined to be present on-site per AQ-3, proposed earthwork, demolition, and construction activities for initial site improvements and future residential development shall be conducted in full compliance with the various regulatory jurisdictions regarding NOA, including the CARB ATCM for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations (17 CCR 93105) and requirements stipulated in the National Emission Standard for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP; 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 61, Subpart M – Asbestos). These requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Written notification, within at least 10 business days of activities commencing, to the SLOAPCD;
2. Preparation of an asbestos survey conducted by a Certified Asbestos Consultant; and
3. Implementation of applicable removal and disposal protocol and requirements for identified NOA.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Regulatory Setting

Federal Laws and Regulations

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking (pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb) bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. This includes substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior. Activities that may result in the take of a bald or golden eagle require permits; the three activities eligible for permits include to remove or relocate an eagle nest; to transport, exhibit, collect, or control eagles or eagle parts, and for incidental take of eagles.

Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters. The purpose of the CWA is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of all waters of the U.S. Permitting is required for filling waters of the U.S. (including wetlands). Permits may be issued on an individual basis or may be covered under approved nationwide permits.

Endangered Species Act. The federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) provides the legal framework for the listing and protection of species (and their habitats) identified as being endangered or threatened with extinction. "Critical Habitat" is a term within the FESA designed to guide actions by federal agencies and is defined as "an area occupied by a species listed as threatened or endangered within which are found physical or geographical features essential to the conservation of the species, or an area not currently occupied by the species which is itself essential to the conservation of the species." Actions that jeopardize endangered or threatened species and/or critical habitat are considered a 'take' under the FESA. "Take" under federal definition means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.

Projects that would result in "take" of any federally listed threatened or endangered species, or critical habitats, are required to obtain permits from the USFWS through either Section 7 (interagency consultation with a federal nexus) or Section 10 (Habitat Conservation Plan) of FESA, depending on the involvement by the federal government in permitting and/or funding of the project. Through Section 10, it is required to prepare a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to be approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which results in the issuance of an Incidental Take Permit (ITP). Through Section 7, which can only occur when a separate federal nexus in a project exists (prompting interagency consultation), a consultation by the various federal agencies involved can take place to determine appropriate actions to mitigate negative effects on endangered and threatened species and their habitat.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act. All migratory, non-game bird species that are native to the U.S. or its territories are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (50 C.F.R. Section 10.13), as amended under the Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act of 2004. MBTA makes it illegal to purposefully take (pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect) any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird, except under the terms of a valid Federal permit. Migratory non-game native bird species are protected by international treaty under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

State Law and Regulations

California Endangered Species Act. The California Endangered Species Act (CESA), similar to FESA, contains a process for listing of species and regulating potential impacts to listed species. State threatened and endangered species include both plants and wildlife, but do not include invertebrates. The designation "rare species" applies only to California native plants. State threatened and endangered plant species are regulated largely under the Native Plant Preservation Act in conjunction with the CESA. State threatened and endangered animal species are legally protected against "take." The CESA authorizes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to enter into a memorandum of agreement for take of listed species to issue an incidental take permit for a state-listed threatened and endangered species only if specific criteria are met.

Section 2080 of the CESA prohibits the take of species listed as threatened or endangered pursuant to the Act. Section 2081 allows CDFW to authorize take prohibited under Section 2080 provided that: 1) the taking is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity; 2) the taking will be minimized and fully mitigated; 3) the applicant ensures adequate funding for minimization and mitigation; and 4) the authorization will not jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA defines a "project" as any action undertaken from public or private entity that requires discretionary governmental review (a non-ministerial permittable action). All "projects" are required to undergo some level of environmental review pursuant to CEQA, unless an exemption applies. CEQA's environmental review process includes an assessment of existing resources, broken up by categories (i.e., air quality, aesthetics, etc.), a catalog of potential impacts to those resources caused by the proposed project, and a quantifiable result determining the level of significance an impact would generate. The goal of environmental review under CEQA is to avoid or mitigate impacts that would lead to a "significant effect" on a given resource; section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines defines a "significant effect" as *a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment, but may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.*

California Fish and Game Code (CFGC). The California Fish and Game Code (CFGC) is one of the 29 legal codes that form the general statutory law of California. A myriad of statutes regarding fish and game are specified in the CFGC; the following codes are specifically relevant to the proposed Project:

California Native Plant Protection Act. Sections 1900-1913 of the California Fish and Game Code contain the regulations of the Native Plant Protection Act of 1977. The intent of this act is to help conserve and protect rare and endangered plants in the state. The act allowed the CFGC to designate plants as rare or endangered.

Lake and Streambed Alteration. Section 1602 of the CFGC requires any person, state, or local governmental agency to provide advance written notification to CDFW prior to initiating any activity that would: 1) divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or remove material from the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or 2) result in the disposal or deposition of debris, waste, or other material into any river, stream, or lake. The state definition of "lakes, rivers, and streams" includes all rivers or streams that flow at least periodically or permanently through a well-defined bed or channel with banks that support fish or other aquatic life, and watercourses with surface or subsurface flows that support or have supported riparian vegetation.

Nesting Birds. Sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3513 of CFGC states that it is "unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation

made pursuant thereto," and "unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds of prey or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird" unless authorized.

Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) not only regulates impacts to water quality in federal waters of the U.S. under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, but also regulates any isolated waters that are impacted under the state Porter Cologne Act utilizing a Waste Discharge Requirement. Discharge of fill material into waters of the State not subject to the jurisdiction of the USACE pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act may require authorization pursuant to the Porter Cologne Act through application for waste discharge requirements or through waiver of waste discharge requirements.

Special Status Species and Sensitive Habitat Regulations

For the purposes of this biological resources assessment, special status species are those plants and animals listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered by the USFWS under the FESA; those listed or proposed for listing as rare, threatened, or endangered by the CDFW under the CESA; animals designated as "Species of Special Concern," "Fully Protected," or "Watch List" by the CDFW; and plants with a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) of 1, 2, 3, or 4.

California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)

"Special Plants" and "Special Animals" are broad terms used to refer to all the plant and animal taxa inventoried by the CNDDB, regardless of their legal or protection status (CNDDB 2020a and 2020b). The Special Plants list includes vascular plants, high priority bryophytes (mosses, liverworts, and hornworts), and lichens. The Special Animals list is also referred to by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as the list of "species at risk" or "special status species."

According to the CNDDB (2020a, 2020b), Special Plants and Animals lists include: taxa that are officially listed or proposed for listing by California or the Federal Government as Endangered, Threatened, or Rare; taxa which meet the criteria for listing, as described in Section 15380 of CEQA Guidelines; taxa deemed biologically rare, restricted in range, declining in abundance, or otherwise vulnerable; population(s) in California that may be marginal to the taxon's entire range but are threatened with extirpation in California; and/or taxa closely associated with a habitat that is declining in California at a significant rate. Separately, the Special Plants List includes taxa listed in the California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California, as well as taxa determined to be Sensitive Species by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or U.S. Forest Service. The Special Animals List distinctively includes taxa considered by the CDFW to be a Species of Special Concern (SSC) and taxa designated as a special status, sensitive, or declining species by other state or federal agencies.

Federal and State Endangered Species Listings

The Federal and California Endangered Species Acts are the regulatory documents that govern the listing and protection of species, and their habitats, identified as being endangered or threatened with extinction (see Sections 1.5.1and 1.5.2). Possible listing status under both Federal and California ESA includes Endangered and Threatened (FE, FT, CE, or CT). Species in the process of being listed are given the status of either Proposed Federally Endangered/Threatened, Candidate for California Endangered/Threatened (PE, PT, CCE, or CCT). The CESA has one additional status: Rare (CR).

Global and State Ranks

Global and State Ranks reflect an assessment of the condition of the species (or habitats, see 1.6.6 below) across its entire range. Basic ranks assign a numerical value from 1 to 5, respectively for species with highest risk to most secure. Other ranking variations include rank ranges, rank qualifiers, and infraspecific

taxon ranks. All Heritage Programs, such as the CNDDB use the same ranking methodology, originally developed by The Nature Conservancy and now maintained and recently revised by NatureServe. Procedurally, state programs such as the CNDDB develop the State ranks. The Global ranks are determined collaboratively among the Heritage Programs for the states/provinces containing the species. Rank definitions, where G represents Global and S represents State, are as follows:

- **G1/S1:** Critically imperiled globally/in state because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer populations).
- **G2/S2:** Imperiled globally/in state because of rarity (6 to 20 populations).
- **G3/S3:** Vulnerable; rare and local throughout range or in a special habitat or narrowly endemic (on the order of 21 to 100 populations).
- **G4/S4:** Apparently secure globally/in state; uncommon but not rare (of no immediate conservation concern).
- **G5/S5:** Secure; common, widespread, and abundant.
- **G#G#/S#S#:** Rank range - numerical range indicating uncertainty in the status of a species, (e.g., G2G3 more certain than G3, but less certain that G2).
- **G/S#?:** Inexact numeric rank
- **Q:** Questionable taxonomy - Taxonomic distinctiveness of this entity is questionable.
- **T#:** Infraspecific taxa (subspecies or varieties) – indicating an infraspecific taxon that has a lower numerical ranking (rarer) than the given global rank of species.

California Rare Plant Rankings

Plant species are considered rare when their distribution is confined to localized areas, their habitat is threatened, they are declining in abundance, or they are threatened in a portion of their range.

The California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) categories range from species with a low threat (4) to species that are presumed extinct (1A). All but a few species are endemic to California. All of them are judged to be vulnerable under present circumstances, or to have a high potential for becoming vulnerable. Threat ranks are assigned as decimal values to a CRPR to further define the level of threat to a given species. The rare plant ranks and threat levels are defined below.

- **1A:** Plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere.
- **1B:** Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere.
- **2A:** Plants presumed extirpated in California, but common elsewhere
- **2B:** Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere
- **4:** Plants of limited distribution - a watch list
- **0.1:** Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat)
- **0.2:** Moderately threatened in California (20-80% occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
- **0.3:** Not very threatened in California (less than 20% of occurrences threatened/low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Animal Rankings

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) assigns one of three ranks to Special Animals: Watch List (WL), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Fully Protected (FP). Unranked species are referred to by the term Special Animal (SA).

Animals listed as Watch List (WL) are taxa that were previously designated as SSC, but no longer merit that status, or taxa that which do not yet meet SSC criteria, but for which there is concern and a need for additional information to clarify status.

Animals listed as California Species of Special Concern (SSC) may or may not be listed under California or federal Endangered Species Acts. They are considered rare or declining in abundance in California. The Special Concern designation is intended to provide the CDFW biologists, land planners, and managers with lists of species that require special consideration during the planning process to avert continued population declines and potential costly listing under federal and state endangered species laws. For many species of birds, the primary emphasis is on the breeding population in California. For some species that do not breed in California but winter here, emphasis is on wintering range. The SSC designation thus may include a comment regarding the specific protection provided such as nesting or wintering.

Animals listed as Fully Protected (FP) are those species considered by CDFW as rare or faced with possible extinction. Most, but not all, have subsequently been listed under the CESA or FESA. Fully Protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and no provision of the California Fish and Game code authorizes the issuance of permits or licenses to take any Fully Protected species.

Sensitive Habitats

Sensitive Natural Community is a state-wide designation given by CDFW to specific vegetation associations of ecological importance. Sensitive Natural Communities rarity and ranking involves the knowledge of range and distribution of a given type of vegetation, and the proportion of occurrences that are of good ecological integrity (CDFW 2018a). Evaluation is conducted at both the Global (G) and State (S) levels, resulting in a rank ranging from 1 for very rare and threatened to 5 for demonstrably secure. Natural Communities with ranks of S1-S3 are considered Sensitive Natural Communities in California and may need to be addressed in the environmental review processes of CEQA and its equivalents.

Environmental Setting

A biological resources assessment (BRA) was prepared for the project site in October, 2020 by Terra Verde Environmental Consultants, Inc., based on the project as described by application materials submitted in 2019. Subsequently, the project was revised to include additional areas of disturbance for water storage and septic leach fields. Accordingly, an addendum to the original BRA was prepared in July, 2025 by SWCA Environmental Consultants to include these areas and to address potential project impacts to oak trees. In addition, the addendum included a brief reconnaissance of the survey area to verify resources previously identified within the expanded areas of disturbance which have not changed since the original surveys. Both studies are incorporated herein by reference and are available for review in their entirety at the Department of Planning and Building located at 976 Osos Street, San Luis Obispo. The following is a summary of the findings and recommendations of these studies.

The project site is located within the York Mountain U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle, between the town centers of Templeton and Cambria. It is approximately 0.5 miles northwest of the intersection of Santa Rosa Creek Road, Old Creek Road, and State Route 46-West (Green Valley Road). It is bordered by Santa Rosa Creek Road to the north and east, rural residential/agriculture land to the south, and historically grazed oak woodland and grassland to the west. An unnamed USGS blue line

drainage flows generally northwest-southeast along the western edge of the survey area and drains into an agricultural stock pond. The greater surrounding landscape includes rural residential development, agriculture (e.g., vineyards, cattle grazing), and undeveloped woodland and chaparral habitats.

The proposed project site primarily consists of regularly grazed annual grasslands, with stands of oak woodland in and surrounding the site (see Appendix A of the 2020 BRA – Figure 2: Survey Area). There are also areas of exposed serpentine outcrops in the eastern and western portions of the survey area. The site is situated along a curved ridgeline with steep to moderate slopes on all sides. The ridgeline has elevations from 1,500 to 1,630 feet (457 to 497 meters) and the lowest elevation in the survey area, which is at the northern edge of the stock pond, is 1,300 feet (405 meters).

Methodology

Prior to conducting the original field surveys and those associated with the 2025 addendum, the biologists completed a background review of relevant resources pertaining to sensitive resources known to occur in the project vicinity. A list of regionally occurring special-status species was compiled based on records reported in the scientific database queries (see Appendix C of the 2020 BRA – Regionally Occurring Special-status Species). This species list was used to inform the field survey effort, and to determine an appropriate survey period for special-status botanical species with potential to occur on site. Following the background review, the biologists completed two surveys during which habitat was assessed, vegetation communities were classified, botanical and wildlife species were inventoried, and the potential for special-status botanical and wildlife species to occur on site was analyzed. In May, 2025, SWCA biologists conducted a field survey of the project site focusing on areas where the area of disturbance had been expanded as well as potential areas where impacts to oak trees could occur. The biologists assessed resources within these expanded areas and completed an inventory of oak trees within approximately 50 feet of proposed development to determine whether site conditions had changed since the original BRA was prepared.

Table 5 below summarizes the surveys completed on site.

Table 5 -- Summary of Biological Resources Surveys

Date	Focus
May 13, 2020	Spring botanical, wildlife inventory, and habitat assessment
June 11, 2020	Spring botanical inventory and wildlife inventory
May 12, 2025	Field survey of expanded areas of disturbance and oak tree inventory

Surveys were conducted on foot and lasted approximately 2 to 4 hours each day. The survey area encompassed the limits of proposed disturbance, an approximate 100-foot buffer on all sides, and the surrounding areas within view. During each survey, all botanical and wildlife species observed, including those detected by indirect sign (e.g., tracks, scat, skeletal remains, dens, burrows, or vocalizations) were documented (see Appendix D of the BRA – Botanical and Wildlife Species Observed). Botanical species identifications and taxonomic nomenclature followed *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California*, 2nd edition (Baldwin et al. 2012), as well as taxonomic updates provided in the Jepson eFlora database (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Vegetation communities and land cover types were characterized, and natural communities were classified using the second edition of *A Manual of California Vegetation* (MCV) classification system (Sawyer et al. 2009), as well as updates included in the MCV Online (CNPS 2020b).

The habitat requirements for each regionally occurring special-status species listed in Appendix C of the BRA were analyzed and compared to the type and quality of habitats observed on site during the field surveys.

The potential for many species to occur in the survey area was eliminated due to lack of suitable habitat, elevation range, soils/substrate, and/or known distribution of the species. Special-status species for which suitable habitat was identified on site are discussed in depth in the following section, and those determined to have no potential to occur based upon a lack of suitable habitat are not discussed. See Appendix C of the BRA for a complete list of regionally occurring species that were evaluated.

Habitats/Vegetative Communities

Vegetation communities and land cover types were assessed in the original BRA, classified, and mapped based on vegetation composition, structure, and density, with consideration of known land management practices (Figure 12). The original survey area totaled approximately 29.89 acres. Natural vegetation communities identified in the survey area were 22.61 acres of wild oats and annual brome grassland, 6.08 acres of mixed oak forest and woodland, 0.98 acre of Bishop manzanita chaparral, and 0.22 acre of needle grass grassland.

During the May 2025 survey, SWCA biologists noted that the vegetation communities observed on-site are generally consistent with what was identified in the original BRA. Additional needle grass grassland and bishop manzanita chaparral was mapped in the areas where the project had expanded beyond the May and June 2020 surveys.

A total of 111 vascular plant species were identified in the survey area, of which 34 (31 percent) were non-native. The natural vegetation communities are described below, and illustrated in Figure 12.

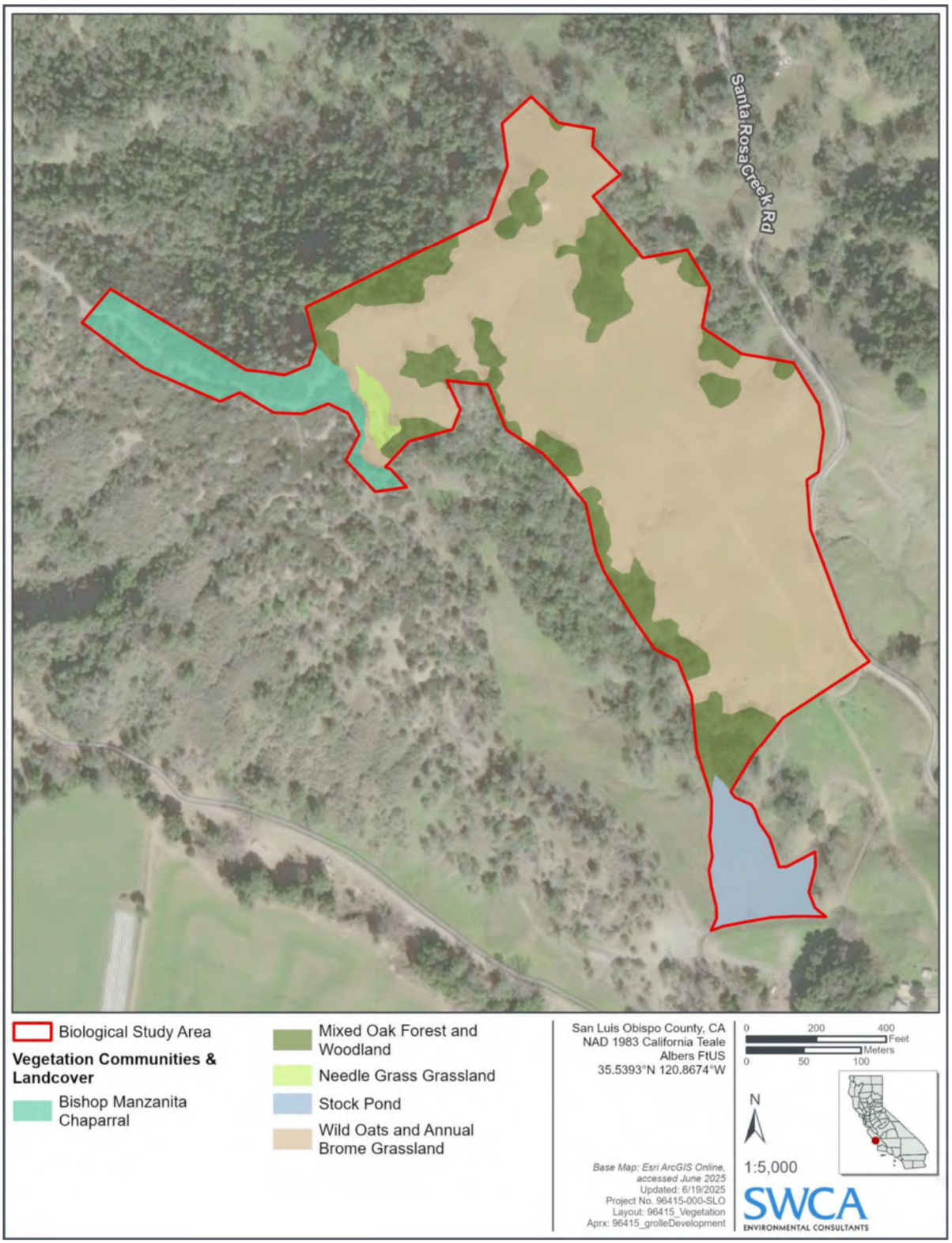

Figure 12 – Vegetative Communities of the Project Site

Wild Oats and Annual Brome Grasslands (22.61 acres)
Most of the survey area consists of annual grassland habitat, which occurs on the ridges and slopes of the survey area, between woodland and chaparral habitat. This community is dominated by slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*) and soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*) with wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*), Italian rye grass (*Festuca perennis*), Smooth cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris glabra*), miniature lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*), and blow wives (*Achyrachaena mollis*) scattered throughout. Portions of this community overlap with serpentine outcrops, particularly in the eastern portion of the survey area. Where serpentine outcrops are present, the herbaceous cover is sparse but notable species are in abundance, including Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri*; CRPR 4.2).

This species composition was used to determine the community classification, which most closely corresponds with the *Avena* spp. – *Bromus* spp. Semi Natural Herbaceous Alliance (wild oats and annual brome grasslands) in the MCV classification system. This community is widespread and may occur in any topographic setting in foothills, waste places, rangelands, and openings in woodlands at elevations below 7,200 feet (2,200 meters). This community provides habitat for nesting birds, burrowing mammals and their predators, herbivores, and other wildlife.

Mixed Oak Forest and Woodland (6.08 acres)
This community occurs in isolated patches in the grassland habitat, along the unnamed ephemeral drainage, and around the perimeter of the survey area. This community is dominated by valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) with scattered occurrences of foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) in the overstory and a thick understory of grasses and forbs. This species composition most closely corresponds with the *Quercus (agrifolia, douglasii, garryana, kelloggii, lobata, wislizeni)* Forest and Woodland Alliance Shrubland Alliance (mixed oak forest and woodland) in the MCV classification system. This community occurs in valleys, on gentle to steep slopes, and in moderately deep soils at elevations between 820 and 6,560 feet (250 and 2,000 meters). This community provides habitat for nesting birds, small and large mammals, and other wildlife.

Bishop Manzanita Chaparral (0.98 acre)
This community is primarily restricted to the serpentine outcrops in the northwestern portion of the survey area. This community is dominated by Bishop manzanita (*Arctostaphylos obispoensis*; California Rare Plant Rank [CRPR 4.3]) with scattered occurrences of foothill pine. Common associate species include California gilia (*Gilia achilleifolia*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), mouse-gray dudleya (*Dudelya abramsii* subsp. *murina*; CRPR 1B.3), and Palmer's spineflower. Understory vegetation cover varies in this community. A historical access road bisects this area and is mostly void of vegetation.

Although chaparral habitat dominated by Bishop manzanita is not included in MCV, this habitat closely corresponds to the structure and composition of manzanita-dominated shrublands, particularly *Arctostaphylos glauca* Shrubland Alliance (bigberry manzanita chaparral) in the MCV classification system. This type of chaparral occurs on outcrops and ridges, often in serpentine-derived soils at elevations between 1,470 to 5,580 feet (450 to 1,700 meters). Special-status plants are associated with this community and it provides habitat for nesting birds, small and large mammals, and other wildlife.

Needle Grass Grassland (0.22 acre)
This community occurs in the northwestern portion of the survey area, just east of the Bishop manzanita chaparral community. This community consists of a dominance of purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) at

equal to or greater than 10 percent cover, with other annual grasses and forbs throughout including slender wild oak, soft chess, miniature lupine, and blow wives.

This species composition most closely corresponds with the *Nassella* spp. *Melica* spp. Herbaceous Alliance (needle grass – melic grass grassland) in the MCV classification system. This community occurs on all topographic locations in a range of soil conditions including deep soils with high clay content, loamy, sandy, or silty derived from mudstone, sandstone, or even serpentine at elevations below 5,580 feet (1,700 meters). It should be noted that this community is also considered a CDFW sensitive natural community and is described in Section 3.2.3 of the BRA as *valley needlegrass grassland*. This community provides habitat for nesting birds, small mammals, and other wildlife.

Wildlife Habitats

The habitat within and adjacent to the survey area is suitable for a variety of common and special status wildlife species. Mixed oak woodland and chaparral habitats provide nesting opportunities for various raptor and passerine bird species; refugia and food resources for mammals, amphibians, and reptiles; and browsing opportunities for herbivores. Grassland habitat on site is suitable for ground-nesting birds; transient, foraging wildlife; and burrowing mammals. The ephemeral drainage adjacent to the survey area may provide seasonal aquatic habitat. The longer hydroperiod of the stock pond, however, is sufficient to support breeding amphibians and aquatic reptiles.

Two special-status wildlife species were directly observed during field surveys. Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*), a State Species of Special Concern, was observed at the edge of the stock pond and a pair of golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), a State Fully Protected species, were observed soaring over the survey area. Additionally, woodrat nests (middens) with the potential to be occupied by Monterey dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes luciana*; State Species of Special Concern) were observed within the oak woodland. No USFWS designated critical habitat (USFWS 2020a) overlaps the proposed project site.

A comprehensive list of all wildlife species observed during the surveys is included in Appendix D of the BRA – Botanical and Wildlife Species Observed.

Aquatic Resources

One unnamed ephemeral drainage (shown as Drainage 1 on Figure 13) lies west of the area of disturbance and drains into a stock pond southwest of the site. Drainage 1 originates on the property, approximately 300 feet south of the northern ridgeline and proposed east-west portion of road. The drainage exhibited a well-defined bed and bank and marginal evidence of flow in its upper limits, with more defined evidence including scour and debris wracking in its lower limits. Drainage 1 is dominated by mixed oak forest and woodland habitat with little to no evidence of ponding or wetland habitat in the understory. The vegetation community and structure of the drainage indicate that it is likely ephemeral and only flows during significant storm events.

The stock pond, created by a berm impounding Drainage 1, has been in place since at least 1994 (Google Earth 1994 – 2018) and was holding a substantial amount of water at the time of the field surveys. Emergent wetland vegetation was observed along the southern edge of the stock pond; however, that portion of the pond was outside of the survey area and a formal assessment of the emergent wetland community was not completed.

A small spring was observed on the west facing slope above Drainage 1. This spring was dry at the time of the survey, but some saturated soils were observed. This spring appears to have connectivity to Drainage 1.

During the May 2025 survey, SWCA biologists did not observe any notable changes to Drainage 1 or the stock pond. However, SWCA biologists observed a notable change in the limits of the small spring with connectivity to Drainage 1 (Drainage 2); at the time of the May 2025 survey, the upper reaches of this feature extended farther upslope than what was mapped during the 2020 surveys, and ponded water was observed in this feature. Further, two additional spring features (Drainage 3 and Drainage 4) with connectivity to Drainage 1 and one wetland feature were observed on site. The wetland feature is located at the upper reaches of Drainage 4 and is characterized by a dominance of wetland vegetation including iris-leafed rush (*Juncus xiphioides*) and spikerush (*Eleocharis macrostachya*). Drainage 2, Drainage 3, and Drainage 4 all maintain connectivity to Drainage 1. All hydrologic features are located in the western portion of the BSA, outside of the proposed development footprint.

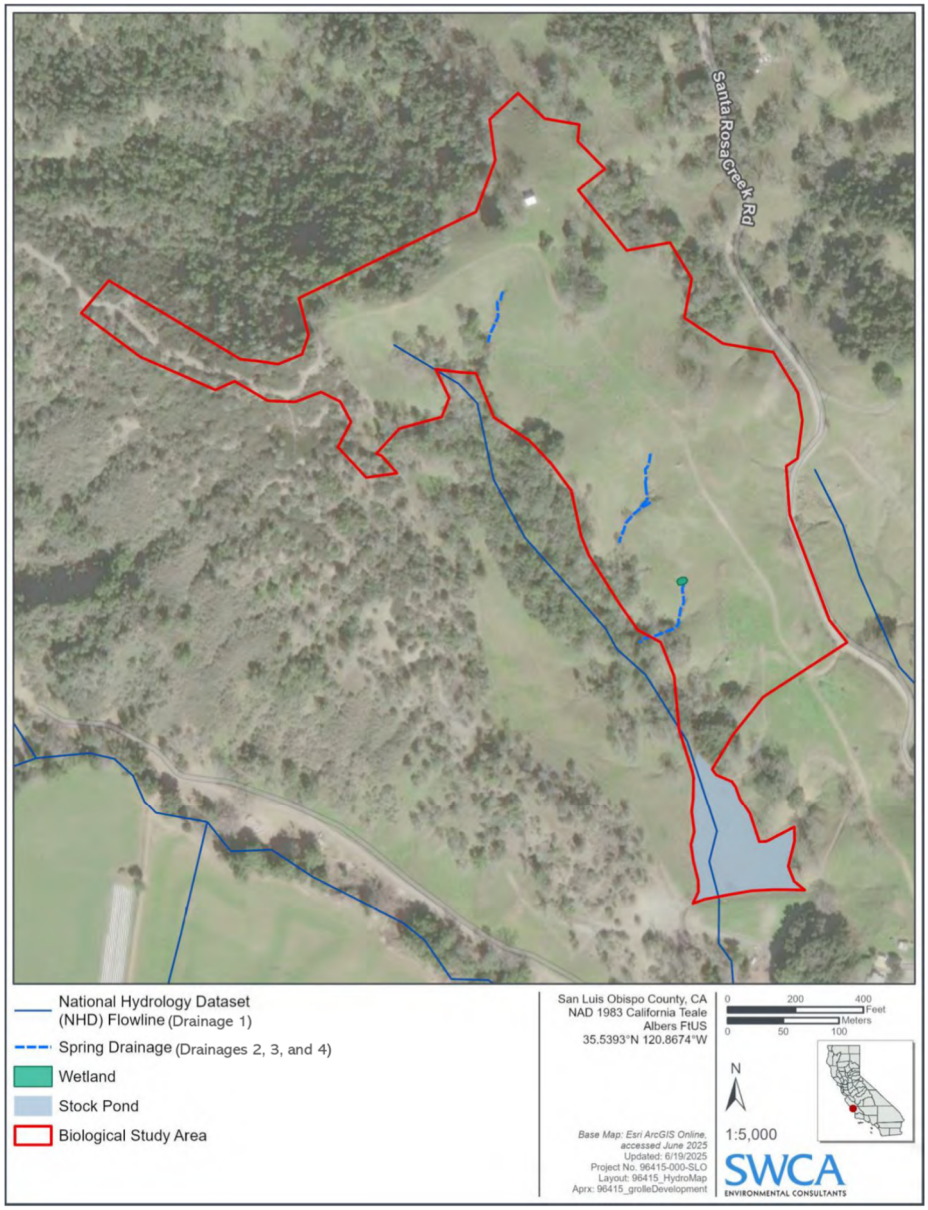

Figure 13 – Hydrologic Features

Sensitive Resources

The results of the background research indicated that two sensitive natural communities, 64 special-status plant species, and 36 special-status wildlife species occur regionally. The habitat requirements for each of these species were compared to the type and quality of habitat documented during the field survey. Following this assessment, it was determined that suitable habitat is present on site for 12 of the regionally occurring special-status plant species and 13 of the regionally occurring special-status wildlife species and nesting birds. Mature (> 6-inch diameter at breast height) valley oak and coast live oak trees are also in the survey area. These sensitive resources are discussed in the following sections.

Critical Habitats and Special Status Natural Communities

Waters and Wetlands

As discussed above, three hydrologic features were identified during the May and June 2020 surveys and three additional features were identified during the May 2025 survey. The potential jurisdiction of each feature under the CDFW, RWQCB, and/or USACE is discussed below.

Drainage 1 exhibits evidence of a well-defined bed and bank and evidence of flow. There was water in this feature at the time of the May 2025 survey. Therefore, Drainage 1 would likely be considered waters of the State under the jurisdiction of CDFW and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Because Drainage 1 lacks connection to traditionally navigable waters via direct connectivity or immediate adjacency to a tributary of a jurisdictional water, it is likely not considered waters of the U.S.

The stock pond contained water during the May and June 2020 and the May 2025 surveys. As such, this feature would likely be considered waters of the State under the jurisdiction of CDFW and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Because the stock pond lacks connection to traditionally navigable waters via direct connectivity or immediate adjacency to a tributary of a jurisdictional water, it is likely not considered waters of the U.S.

Drainages 2, 3, and 4 exhibit evidence of a well-defined bed and bank, but appear to be ephemeral in nature, exhibiting no evidence of flow at the time of the May 2025 survey. Therefore, they would likely be considered waters of the State under the jurisdiction of CDFW and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Because Drainages 2, 3, and 4 lack connection to traditionally navigable waters via direct connectivity or immediate adjacency to a tributary of a jurisdictional water, they are likely not considered waters of the U.S.

A wetland feature at the upper reaches of Drainage 4 was identified during the May 2025 survey. No water was present during the survey, but the feature was dominated by hydrophytic vegetation, specifically iris-leafed rush (*Juncus xiphioides*). Due to the dominance of hydrophytic vegetation, this feature would likely to be considered waters of the State under the jurisdiction of CDFW and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. However, because it lacks connection to traditionally navigable waters via direct connectivity or immediate adjacency to a tributary of a jurisdictional water, it is not likely considered waters of the U.S.

CNDDB Sensitive Natural Communities

One sensitive natural community was documented within the survey area: valley needlegrass grassland. This community was observed in the northwest portion of the survey area and is depicted as needle grass grassland community in Figure 12.

During the May 2025 survey, SWCA biologists observed a notable change in the distribution of the one CDFW Sensitive Natural Community (valley needlegrass grassland) on-site. The expanded distribution of valley needlegrass grassland was observed in the northwest portion of the survey area and the updated boundary

of this community was mapped in the field and is reflected in Attachment A – Figure A-3 of the July, 2025 BRA addendum.

USFWS Designated Critical Habitat

The original BRA notes that no USFWS-designated critical habitats are present within or adjacent to the project site. Based on updated background literature review, no changes to USFWS-designated critical habitat were noted.

Special-status Plant Species

The original BRA generated a list of 64 special-status plant species known to occur regionally. This list was further refined to 12 species by comparing the species' ranges and habitat requirements with the location of the BSA and the habitat types within it to create a target list of species with potential to occur in the BSA. Updated background research was conducted by SWCA in May 2025, and the new target list was revised to include the original 12 species and the addition of one species that was not listed and/or special status plant species with potential to occur on-site.

All plant species observed during the May and June 2020 surveys and the May 2025 survey were recorded, and this list is included in Attachment C of the 2020 BRA. Three special-status plant species were observed during the May and June 2020 surveys including Palmer's spineflower, mouse-gray dudleya, and Bishop manzanita. These three species were also observed during the May 2025 survey.

Botanical species identifications and taxonomic nomenclature followed *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California, 2nd edition* (Baldwin et al. 2012), as well as taxonomic updates provided in the Jepson eFlora (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Based on a lack of observed changes to the habitat types/conditions between 2020 and 2025, no updates to the original BRA's descriptions of special-status plant species with potential to occur within the BSA are proposed.

In addition to species listed on the federal and California Endangered Species Acts, special-status botanical species include those that are assigned a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS 2020a). Additionally, individual oak trees (*Quercus* spp.) and oak woodlands are considered a sensitive resource by the State of California and the County of San Luis Obispo.

The following paragraphs provide a description of the special-status plant species that have the potential to occur on site.

Hoover's Bent Grass (*Agrostis hooveri*), CRPR 1B.2

Hoover's bent grass is a perennial grass that is endemic to the coastal ranges of San Luis Obispo County. This species occurs in dry, sandy soils in association with open chaparral and oak woodland communities. It has been documented at elevations below 1,970 feet (600 meters). The typical blooming period is from April to August (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Documented threats to this species include development, vegetation clearing, and competition from non-native plants (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is approximately 5.5 miles northwest of the project site. This species was not observed during an appropriately timed botanical survey. As such, Hoover's bent grass is not expected to occur.

Bishop manzanita (*Arctostaphylos obispoensis*), CRPR 4.3

Bishop manzanita is a woody shrub that is endemic to California. Its known range is limited to a portion of the outer South Coast Ranges from southern Monterey County through southern San Luis Obispo County, with a few isolated occurrences further south in Santa Barbara County. This species typically grows in rocky,

serpentine soils in association with chaparral and closed-cone coniferous forests near the coast. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 200 to 3,000 feet (60 to 950 meters). The typical blooming period for Bishop manzanita is from February to March (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Known threats to this species are not well documented but likely include development.

Bishop manzanita was observed in the serpentine habitat in the northwestern portion of the survey area. An additional record in the CCH (2020) documents occurrence of this species from a collection 1.7 miles southeast of the historical Josephine School with the geolocational occurrence data shown on the property immediately southwest of the project site.

Carlotta Hall's lace fern (*Aspidotis carlotta-halliae*), CRPR 4.2

Carlotta Hall's lace fern is a perennial rhizomatous herb that is endemic to the Central Coast and South Coast Ranges of California. This species generally grows on serpentine slopes, crevices, and outcrops. It has been documented at elevations between 330 and 4,600 feet (100 and 1,400 meters). This species blooms year-round (Jepson Flora Project 2020). According to CCH (2020) records, the nearest documented occurrence is a 1910 collection approximately 12.9 miles south of the project site in upper Chorro Creek. There is suitable habitat for this species on site; however, it was not observed during the appropriately timed botanical surveys. As such, Carlotta Hall's lace fern is not expected to occur.

Cambria Morning-glory (*Calystegia subacaulis* subsp. *episcopalis*), CRPR 4.2

Cambria morning-glory is a perennial herb that is endemic to central California. Its known range is concentrated along the coastal ridges and foothills of the Outer South Coast Ranges of San Luis Obispo County. This species typically occurs in clay soils in association with various vegetation communities including grassland, chaparral, and woodland. It has been documented at elevations up to 1,640 feet (500 meters) and is known to tolerate disturbance. The typical blooming period is from April to June (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Threats to Cambria morning-glory include development, alteration of fire regimes, and competition from non-native species (CNPS 2020).

According to CCH (2020) records, the nearest documented occurrence is a 1929 collection approximately two miles northwest of the site. There is suitable habitat for this species within the grassland on site, but it was not observed during appropriately timed surveys. The record is outdated, and the plant was not detected during appropriately timed botanical surveys; therefore, Cambria morning-glory is not expected to occur.

San Luis Obispo Owl's-clover (*Castilleja densiflora* subsp. *obispoensis*), CRPR 1B.2

San Luis Obispo owl's-clover is an annual herb that is endemic to San Luis Obispo County. It is known to occur mostly in coastal areas along the Outer South Coast Ranges from just south of Ragged Point to Avila Beach, with several populations in the Irish Hills. This species typically grows in coastal grasslands at elevations up to 1,300 feet (400 meters) and may be somewhat tolerant of disturbance. The typical blooming period is from March to June (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Threats to San Luis Obispo owl's-clover include development and grazing (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is greater than five miles from the site. There is suitable habitat for this species within the grassland on site, but it was not observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys. As such, San Luis Obispo Owl's-clover is not expected to occur.

Brewer's Spineflower (*Chorizanthe breweri*), CRPR 1B.3

Brewer's spineflower is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs on rocky or gravelly soils (sometimes serpentine) in a variety of dry habitats at elevations between 200 and 2,600 feet (60 and 800 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is March through July (Jepson Flora Project 2020, CNPS 2020a). Documented threats to Brewer's spineflower include pipeline construction and road construction and maintenance (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is greater than five miles from the site. The serpentine habitat is suitable, but Brewer's spineflower was not observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys and is therefore not expected to occur.

Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri*), CRPR 4.2

Palmer's spineflower is an annual herb that is endemic to the Outer South Coast Ranges in western Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties. This species typically occurs on serpentine outcrops in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and valley and foothill grassland habitat at elevations between 200 and 2,300 feet (60 and 700 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is May through August (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Palmer's spineflower was observed in suitable serpentine habitat on the project site. An additional record in the CCH (2020) documents occurrence of this species from a 1956 collection less than 0.5 mile southeast of the project site.

Mouse-gray dudleya (*Dudleya abramsii* subsp. *murina*), CRPR 1B.3

Mouse-gray dudleya is a perennial herb that is only known to occur along the Outer South Coast Ranges in San Luis Obispo County. This species is typically on serpentine outcrops in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and valley and foothill grassland habitat at elevations between 400 and 1,000 feet (120 and 300 meters) and blooms May through June (Jepson Flora Project 2020, CNPS 2020a).

There is suitable habitat for mouse-gray dudleya in the serpentine outcrops on site and it was observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys. An additional record in CNDDB (CDFW 2020a) documents occurrence of this species greater than five miles from the project site.

Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae* subsp. *blochmaniae*), CRPR 1B.1

Blochman's dudleya is a perennial herb that is endemic to the Central Coast and South Coast of California along with some populations occupying the northern Channel Islands. This species typically occurs on open, rocky slopes, often on serpentine or clay-dominated soils in coastal bluff, coastal scrub, and grassland habitats at elevations below 1,500 feet (450 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is April through June (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Documented threats include grazing, trampling, development, erosion, and non-native plants (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB (CDFW 2020a) records, the nearest documented occurrence is a 1998 observation approximately five miles south of the project site along Old Creek Road. There is timed botanical surveys. As such, this species is not expected to occur.

Jones' Bush-mallow (*Malacothamnus jonesii*), CRPR 4.3

Jones' bush-mallow is a perennial shrub that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in open chaparral in foothill woodland at elevations between 820 and 2,700 feet (250 and 830 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is May through July (Jepson Flora Project 2020).

According to CNDDB (CDFW 2020a) records, the nearest documented occurrence is greater than five miles from the project site. There is suitable habitat in the woodlands on site for Jones' bush-mallow, but it was not observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys. As such, this species is not expected to occur.

Santa Lucia Bush-mallow (*Malacothamnus palmeri* var. *palmeri*), CRPR 1B.2

Santa Lucia bush-mallow is a perennial deciduous shrub that is endemic to the Central Coast and Outer South Coast Ranges of California. This species typically occurs in interior valleys and foothills in chaparral habitat at elevations between 100 and 2,600 feet (30 and 800 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is May through July (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Documented threats include alteration of fire regimes (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB (CDFW 2020a) records, the nearest documented occurrence is approximately four miles northwest of the site. There is suitable habitat for Santa Lucia bushmallow on site, but it was not observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys. As such, it is not expected to occur.

Palmer's monardella (*Monardella palmeri*), CRPR 1B.2

Palmer's monardella is a perennial rhizomatous herb that is endemic to the Santa Lucia Ranges. This species typically occurs in chapparal or forest habitat on serpentine at elevations between 650 and 2,600 feet (200 and 800 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is from June through August (Jepson Flora Project 2020). Possible threats include development and trail maintenance (CNPS 2020a).

According to CNDDB (CDFW 2020a) records, the nearest documented occurrence is greater than five miles from the project site. There is suitable serpentine habitat for Palmer's monardella on site, but it was not observed during appropriately timed botanical surveys. As such, it is not expected to occur.

Small-Leaved Lomatium

Small-leaved lomatium is a perennial herb endemic to the Southern Coast Ranges of California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, closed-cone coniferous forests, and coastal scrub communities on serpentine soils at elevations ranging from 65 to 2295 feet (20–700 meters). The typical blooming period for this species is from January to June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025a).

According to CCH2 (CCH 2025), the nearest documented occurrence of this species is approximately 1.5 miles south of the BSA. Suitable habitat for this species is present on-site within the chaparral habitat; however, no unidentified *Lomatium* spp. were observed within the BSA during the appropriately timed surveys in 2020 and 2025. As such, this species is not expected to occur within the project area.

Native Oak Trees (*Quercus* spp.), Protected under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Senate Bill 1334/Kuehl Bill and California Public Resources Code 21083.4). Impacts to or removal of mature oak trees, which is defined as those greater than six inches in diameter at breast height, or oak woodland habitat is evaluated under CEQA. As a CEQA Lead Agency, the County of San Luis Obispo currently applies a 4:1 mitigation ratio for removed trees and a 2:1 mitigation ratio for impacted trees. Impacted and removed trees may require mitigation in the form of on-site plantings or off-site protection of existing oak woodland. At the time of the original BRA, no impacts to oak trees were anticipated. However, based on current site plans the project may impact up to six oak trees and may remove up to one oak tree.

Special-status Wildlife Species

The background research completed by Terra Verde to inform the original 2020 BRA generated a list of 36 special-status wildlife species known to occur regionally. This list was refined to 13 species by comparing the species' ranges and habitat requirements with the location of the BSA and the habitat types within it to

create a target list of species with potential to occur in the BSA. Updated background research was completed by SWCA in May 2025, and the target list from the original BRA was not revised. Based on a lack of observed changes to the habitat types/conditions between 2020 and 2025, no updates are proposed to the original BRA's descriptions of special-status wildlife with potential to occur within the BSA. The biologists determined that there is suitable habitat on site for 13 special-status wildlife species and nesting birds. A description of these special-status wildlife species follows.

Sensitive Amphibian Species

California Red-legged Frog (CRLF; *Rana draytonii*); Federal Status – Threatened, State Status – Species of Special Concern (CSC)
CRLF require permanent or semi-permanent bodies of water such as lakes, streams, and ponds with plant cover for foraging and breeding. Reproduction occurs in aquatic habitats from late November to early April. Egg masses are laid in the water following breeding, often on emergent vegetation. Once hatched, tadpoles consume algae from the water surface or on rocks and plants. Following metamorphosis, juvenile frogs may remain in the breeding ponds or disperse into uplands regardless of topography. CRLF have been documented dispersing over two miles from aquatic habitat. Dispersing frogs may seek refuge in small mammal burrows or soil fractures. This species is known to occur from Mendocino County to Northern Baja California and eastward through the Northern Sacramento Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills. It is known to occur at elevations below 5,000 feet (1,525 meters) (Zeiner et al. 1988-1990a).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrences are approximately 0.15 miles north of the project site. Potential breeding habitat, defined as deep pools with emergent vegetation and overhanging cover, was identified within the stock pond in the southwest portion of the survey area. The ephemeral drainage west of the survey area may provide a dispersal corridor for this species and there is also suitable upland habitat on site.

Coast Range Newt (*Taricha torosa*); State Status – CSC
Coast range newt is found along the coast and Coast Ranges in California from Mendocino County south to San Diego County at elevations below 4,200 feet (1,280 meters). This species may be found in habitats such as wet forests, oak woodland, chaparral, and rolling grasslands. Newts are terrestrial species which enter slow moving streams, side channels, or pools for aquatic breeding. Breeding may occur from late December through April. Females attach egg masses to submerged branches, vegetation, or rocks just below the surface of the water. Larvae transform and begin to live on land at the end of the summer or early fall (Thompson et al. 2016).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is approximately 0.15 miles north of the project site. The ephemeral drainage west of the site may contain sufficient breeding habitat for Coast Range newt. There is suitable upland refugia throughout the project site in the oak woodland, such as under fallen leaves and rotting logs,
and grasslands.

Lesser Slender Salamander (*Batrachoseps minor*); State Status – CSC
Lesser slender salamander is the smallest of the slender salamanders and is a less commonly encountered species than the similar and sympatric black-bellied slender salamander (*Batrachoseps nigriventris*). Its range is restricted to the Santa Lucia mountains of San Luis Obispo County, where it occupies forests of mixed oak, tanbark oak, sycamore, and laurel above 1,300 feet (400 meters). This salamander requires a damp

terrestrial environment and is mobile only during bouts of high humidity. They are oviparous and young hatch fully formed on land. Slender salamanders retreat to burrows when the soil dries or when the temperature nears freezing and are otherwise found in detritus, under rocks, logs, and downed wood.

Their diet is not well studied, but other slender salamanders persist on a variety of small invertebrates (Nafis 2020). According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is approximately 1.25 miles west of the project site. The woodland associated with the ephemeral drainage along the western boundary of the survey area provides suitable habitat for lesser slender salamander.

Western Spadefoot Toad (*Spea hammondii*); State Status – CSC
Western spadefoot toad generally inhabits lowlands, sandy washes, and river flood plains but also may be found in woodlands, grasslands, and chaparral where soils are sandy and loose. These toads will occupy small mammal burrows where they remain buried until the rainy season when they emerge to breed in ephemeral or seasonal pools. Seasonal pools and other breeding locations must stay inundated for at least 30 days for larvae to survive. Threats to this species include loss, degradation, and fragmentation of breeding and upland habitats (Nafis 2020).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest documented occurrence is approximately 9.5 miles east of the project site. The stock pond provides suitable breeding habitat for western spadefoot toad. Suitable upland refugia, like small mammal burrows, are present throughout the open grasslands on site.

Sensitive Invertebrate Species
Crotch Bumble Bee (*Bombus crotchii*), State – Candidate
Crotch bumble bees inhabit open grassland and scrub habitats primarily in California, from Sacramento south into Mexico, and from the pacific coast east into Nevada. Bumble bee colonies are annual; the queen mates in the fall and then overwinters alone. Crotch bumble bee overwintering sites have not been well-studied (Hatfield et al. 2018). Other bumble bees overwinter in soft, disturbed soil (Goulson 2010), or under leaf litter or other debris (Williams et al. 2014). Queens emerge between February and April (Thorp et al. 2010) and establish a colony by producing female workers and male drones. Colonies are usually underground in abandoned burrows made by ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), mice, and rats, or occasionally abandoned bird nests (Osborne et al. 2008). However, bumble bees may also nest above ground in tufts of grass or cavities in downed wood, rock walls, or brush piles. Crotch bumble bees are generalist foragers, feeding on a variety of flowering plants (Hatfield et al. 2018). Like other bumble bees, this species feeds on both the nectar and the pollen. Select food plant genera include *Fabaceae, Apocynaceae, Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, and Boraginaceae* (Hatfield et al. 2018). This species is threatened by loss of habitat due to agriculture and development and degradation of habitat due to invasive species, livestock grazing, herbicide use, and decreases in small mammal populations due to poisoning. According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest observation of Crotch bumble bee is a historical record (1968) approximately 11.5 miles southeast of the project site. There is potential for Crotch bumble bee to use portions of the project site, particularly to feed, overwinter, or colonize available refugia.

Sensitive Mammal Species
American badger (*Taxidea taxus*); State Status – CSC
The range of American badger covers most of North America. They range throughout California except the North Coast region (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin counties). They prefer open and arid habitats such as grasslands, meadows, savannahs, open-canopy desert scrub, and open chaparral. They are predators of fossorial rodents and are adept at excavating deep burrows to access their prey. As such,

where badgers are present, the landscape is dotted with large soil tailings, which are normally half-moon shaped. American badger shelter in burrows they have excavated and, while they are known to traverse a relatively small home range (up to 2.5 acres), they move among burrows frequently. They can be active at all times of day but are primarily nocturnal. This species occurs at elevations up to 12,000 feet (3,650 meters). Mating typically occurs from May through September but, because of delayed implantation, cubs are not born until early spring. Habitat conversion is a threat to this species (Zeiner et al. 1988 – 1990b).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest observation of American badger is a record from 2003 approximately 9.5 miles east of the project site. No sign of badgers, such as characteristic claw marks on the interior sides of den entrances, horizontally oriented elliptical den openings, and frequent prey excavations, was observed. However, the grassland within and adjacent to the project site provides suitable habitat for American badger, including a small mammal prey base. There is potential to encounter this species on site.

Monterey Dusky-footed Woodrat (*Neotoma macrotis luciana*); State Status – CSC
Monterey dusky-footed woodrat is a mostly nocturnal species that occurs along coastal California between Monterey Bay and Morro Bay. This species occurs in a variety of habitats but prefers areas with dense vegetative cover. Woodrats build and occupy middens, which are made from sticks, bark, and leaves at the base of trees, in understory shrubs, and on tree limbs. Threats to this species includes loss of habitat due to development and agriculture (Zeiner et al. 1988 – 1990c).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), there have been three observations between 10 and 11 miles north of the project site. Middens were observed in the woodland and scrub/chaparral habitat along the northern edge of the survey area.

Mountain Lion (***Puma concolor***)**;** State Status – Candidate Threatened
Mountain lions range throughout most of California from sea level to alpine meadows, with the exception of xeric regions of the Mojave and Colorado deserts in southeastern California. They are primarily a predator of small to large mammals but will also feed on birds, fish, insects, grass, and berries. Mountain lions are typically active at night and during dusk and dawn. Timing of reproduction can vary but, in California, most births occur in spring. Litter size is usually two to four young. Young remain with the mother until they are about two years old. Individual home ranges can be between three and 15 square miles, and male home ranges are typically larger than those of females. Habitat fragmentation due to development and associated roads and power transmission corridors restricts movement and increases proximity and encounter rates with humans, which can be detrimental to mountain lion populations (Zeiner et al. 1988 – 1990a).

Mountain lions in Southern California and Central Coast Regions were recently given Candidate status under the California Endangered Species Act and therefore have not previously been tracked by CNDDB. However, based on the known ecology and range of the species, mountain lions likely inhabit the adjacent undeveloped lands and dense riparian habitats near the project site. As such, there is potential for mountain lions to use the project site.

Pallid Bat (*Antrozous pallidus*); State Status – CSC
Pallid bat is common at low elevations throughout California and occurs in a variety of habitats including grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and mixed conifer forest. This species is most common in open, dry habitats with rocky areas for roosting, but may occasionally day roost in hollow trees and buildings. Night roosts generally occur in more open areas such as porches and open buildings (Zeiner et al., 1988 – 1990a).

According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest occurrence of this species is approximately seven miles southwest of the site. Marginally suitable habitat is present for pallid bat in the cavities of mature oak trees throughout the survey area.

Sensitive Reptile Species

Blainville's Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*); State Status – CSC
Blainville's horned lizard occurs in semi-arid mountains of western and southern California at elevations up to 8,000 feet (2,400 meters). This species inhabits grasslands, coniferous forests, woodlands, and chaparral, with open areas and patches of loose, sandy soil. It is frequently found near native ant hills, which are its preferred food source. It also forages on beetles, wasps, grasshoppers, flies, and caterpillars. The breeding season is from May to September, and nests are constructed in loose soil (Zeiner et al. 1988 – 1990e). Habitat conversion to housing and agriculture and the spread of non-native ants (e.g. Argentine ants) have caused this species to decline. Historically, this lizard was extensively exploited by the pet trade and the curio trade (Nafis 2020). According to CNDDB records (CDFW 2020a), the nearest occurrence of this species was approximately 10.25 miles south of the project site. There is moderately suitable habitat throughout the survey area.

Northern California Legless Lizard (*Anniella pulchra*); State Status – CSC
Northern California legless lizard is known to occur from the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley, south through the Inner and Outer South Coast Ranges at elevations up to 5,900 feet (1,800 meters) (Nafis 2020). This species requires sandy or loose loamy soils within coastal dune scrub, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, woodland, riparian, or forest habitats. It requires cover such as logs, leaf litter, or rocks and will cover itself with loose soil. Relatively little is known about the specific behavior and ecology of this species, but it is thought to be diurnal and breed between the months of March and July, giving birth to live young in the early fall. Population declines have been attributed to agricultural development, sand mining, use of off-road recreational vehicles, and habitat loss through spread of invasive, non-native vegetation such as ice plant (*Carpobrotus* sp.) (Zeiner et al. 1988 – 1990f).

According to CNDDB (CDFW 2020a), the nearest occurrence of this species was approximately 11 miles southeast of the project site. The woodland and scrub habitats throughout the survey area are suitable for Northern California legless lizard.

Southwestern Pond Turtle (*Actinemys pallida*); State Status – CSC
Western pond turtles historically ranged from Baja California north to British Columbia, generally west of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range. This genus has been divided into two proposed new species, Southwestern pond turtle and Northwestern pond turtle, with the division occurring roughly near the Bay Area of California (Stebbins and McGinnis 2018). Southwestern pond turtles inhabit many types of permanent and ephemeral aquatic habitats, including sloughs, rivers, ponds, lakes, vernal pools, and marshes, as well as humanconstructed water bodies such as irrigation ditches and impoundments and other humanmade bodies of water that provide adequate basking sites (e.g., logs, rocks, mats of floating vegetation, or open mud banks), emergent vegetation, and underwater refugia (e.g., rocks or submerged vegetation) (Spinks et al. 2003). The turtles also spend significant time on land, frequently moving between aquatic and upland habitats to nest, aestivate, and overwinter. Several southwestern pond turtles were observed during the surveys basking along the edge of the stock pond. An additional occurrence was documented approximately 0.15 miles north of the project site (CDFW 2020a).

Migratory Nesting Birds and Sensitive Avian Species

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*); State Status – Fully Protected
Golden eagle is designated by CDFW as a Fully Protected species, which prohibits take or possession, and is also protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (USFWS 2020c). Golden eagles occur in open and semi-open habitats, most commonly in mountainous areas where large trees for nesting and open hunting grounds with prey are abundant. Golden eagles primarily feed on small mammals, and will nest in trees, on cliffs, or other steep escarpments (Cornell 2015). The typical nesting period for golden eagles is from January 1 through September 15. This species is threatened by loss of forage and nesting habitat, secondary pesticide poisoning, and collisions with man-made structures.

Two golden eagles were seen flying over the project site during the surveys. An additional occurrence was documented within 7.7 miles of the site (CDFW 2020a). California ground squirrels, a common food source for golden eagle, were identified in the survey area. In addition, oak woodland habitat on site and in the vicinity may provide suitable nesting habitat.

Discussion

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

Special-Status Plants

Three special-status plant species were observed within the BSA: mouse-gray dudleya, Bishop manzanita, and Palmer's spineflower. The proposed project is expected to result in impacts to two special-status plant species: Palmer's spineflower and Bishop manzanita. Direct impacts to Palmer's spineflower and Bishop manzanita would include removal of individual plants and intact seed banks that occur within and immediately adjacent to work areas, as well as temporary and permanent conversion of occupied habitat. Indirect impacts to special status plants in adjacent areas may result from dust emissions during construction, altered hydrology, or the spread of non-native and invasive plant species to areas not previously impacted.

To construct the main access road, approximately fifteen feet of cut into the Palmer's spineflower population located adjacent to the existing two-track main access road is assumed, which will result in disturbance of up to 0.08 acre of Palmer's spineflower. In addition, to install the line for the septic system, approximately 85 feet of temporary disturbance into the Palmer's spineflower population located within the Bishop manzanita chaparral is assumed, which will result in disturbance of up to an additional 0.02 acre of Palmer's spineflower. This equates to approximately 11 percent of the mapped population within the BSA. To install the septic line and septic system, approximately 0.2 acres of the Bishop manzanita population would be temporarily impacted. This equates to approximately 9 percent of the mapped population within the BSA. As such, avoidance and minimization measures (AMMs) are recommended to protect special-status plant species during the project.

With implementation of mitigation measures BIO-5 and BIO-6, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Special Status Wildlife

Special-status Amphibians and Reptiles

Construction activities pose risks for direct and indirect impacts to special-status amphibians and reptiles. If CRLF, Coast Range newt, lesser slender salamander, or western spadefoot toad are using the drainages or stock pond, and/or associated vegetative cover, juveniles and adults may disperse through the upland habitat on site, particularly during the rainy season. Reptiles can be slow-moving, both because of behavioral adaptations to be camouflaged from predators and because of their ectothermic nature. This trait presents crushing hazards in the presence of relatively fast-moving equipment or even foot traffic. Blainville's horned lizard, lesser slender salamander, CRLF, Coast Range newt, and western spadefoot toad are presumed to be on the project site and rely heavily on burrows and other refugia for shelter from the elements, protection from predators, and/or reproduction. Heavy equipment and ground disturbing activities may collapse burrow systems or completely remove them, resulting in injury to or death of the inhabitants, or exclusion by the removal of a vital resource. Southwestern pond turtle is known to occur adjacent to the project site. Pond turtles bury eggs in soil upland of pond habitat. The nests are cryptic and are therefore vulnerable to destruction during earth disturbing activities. Vegetation may be removed during construction activities, which is a resource for ectotherms for temperature regulation and protection from predators. With implementation of mitigation measure BIO-12 this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Special-status Invertebrates

Crotch Bumble Bee

If Crotch bumble bee occurs in the project site, there is potential for direct and indirect impacts to occur during construction within scrub and grassland habitat. Heavy equipment and ground disturbing activities may collapse underground nests or disturb overwintering queens, resulting in injury to or death of the colony or queen. Vegetation removal may result in a reduction of available food sources for the colony and queen. With implementation of mitigation measure BIO-13, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Special-status Mammals

American Badger, Monterey Dusky-footed Woodrat, and Mountain Lion

If American badgers, Monterey dusky-footed woodrats, and mountain lions inhabit, forage in, or travel through the site, there is potential for direct or indirect impacts to occur during construction. Construction poses several risks to wildlife, such as vehicle strikes, crushing by equipment, and destruction of resources such as burrows, dens, and middens. Further, construction may impact or deter use of valuable habitat, yielding it unsuitable for special-status mammals. Indirect impacts may occur by removing available habitat, reducing prey base, or deterring movement patterns of wildlife caused by construction disturbances. With implementation of mitigation measures BIO-8, BIO-9 and BIO-10, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Pallid Bat

Indirect impacts to special-status bat species may occur if roosts are present in nearby trees, such as the oak trees in and adjacent to site. No trees are expected to be removed by construction; however, trees may be trimmed, and project disturbances will likely occur near the oak trees on site. As such, indirect impacts may occur because of increased short- and long-term anthropogenic

activity in the vicinity of roosts, deterring use of the area by bats. With implementation of mitigation measure BIO-11, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Sensitive and Nesting Birds

If project activities are planned to occur during the typical avian nesting season (i.e., February 1 through August 31), there is a potential for direct and indirect impacts to migratory nesting and special-status birds. Construction-related activities can destroy nests, remove nesting habitat, or cause disturbance that may lead to nest failure or otherwise harass nesting, resident, or transient birds. With implementation of mitigation measure BIO-14, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

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

CDFW Sensitive Natural Communities

With the modified distribution of the valley needlegrass grassland on-site; the updated project design is not expected to directly impact these resources. Valley Needlegrass Grassland is expected to be avoided; therefore, *no direct or indirect impacts* are anticipated.

(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?*

As described in the original BRA (Terra Verde 2020), direct impacts to jurisdictional aquatic habitats and/or CDFW sensitive natural communities would be avoided. With the additionally identified jurisdictional aquatic habitat and modified distribution of the valley needlegrass grassland on-site; the updated project design is not expected to directly impact these resources. No direct impacts to Drainage 1, the stock pond, or the spring are expected as a result of the project. However, indirect impacts to these features could result from erosion, sedimentation, and/or discharges of hazardous materials, such as fuel, from construction equipment. With implementation of mitigation measure BIO-4, this impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

(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?*

Wildlife Corridors

Maintaining connectivity between areas of suitable habitat is critical for the survival and reproduction of plants and wildlife. Intact habitats benefit plants by ensuring proper dispersal of pollen and seeds, which sustains or grows the population and contributes to the genetic health of the species. Wildlife need contiguous habitats to attain sufficient food resources for their energetic demands; to locate proper resting, burrowing, and/or nesting sites; to facilitate relatively long-distance travel or migration to seek out mates or resources; and for the safe and successful dispersal of young. The project site is in a rural area of northern San Luis Obispo County, in the southern Santa Lucia Range. Land use within and adjacent to the property is a mix of natural sloped woodland with patches of active agriculture (cattle grazing). Although land use practices in the project area have modified natural habitats and barriers for natural movement exist (State Route 46-west), habitat connectivity overall remains relatively intact. The project as planned may reduce the quality of natural habitat on site but is not expected to increase the current level of habitat

fragmentation in the region nor is it expected to create a barrier to wildlife movement. No new passage barriers are proposed within aquatic habitat.

During the May 2025 survey, SWCA botanists noted that the site conditions are consistent with what was identified in the original BRA. Therefore, the Project does not introduce significant features that would be expected to affect wildlife movement through surrounding natural habitats and impacts to wildlife movement are considered *less than significant*.

Migratory Nesting Birds and Sensitive Avian Species
In addition to species protected by the state or federal Endangered Species Acts, all native avian species are protected by state and federal legislation, most notably the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the CDFW Fish and Game Code. Collectively, these regulations make it unlawful to collect, sell, pursue, hunt, or kill native migratory birds, their eggs, nests, or any parts thereof. Avian species are expected to occur within and adjacent to the project site during all seasons and throughout construction of the proposed project. The potential to encounter and disrupt these species is generally highest between February 1 and August 31, when nests are likely to be active, when eggs or young are present. The eucalyptus grove to the east, oak trees to the north, and patches of coyote brush on the project site present the highest quality habitat for nesting, but open fields may also provide nesting habitat for various ground nesting species. Raptors are particularly drawn to large trees and structures, and they are generally less tolerant of disturbances than other species. With implementation mitigation measure BIO-14, impacts related to interference with the movement of migratory fish or wildlife would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

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

Impacts to, or removal of, mature oak trees (i.e., greater than five inches in diameter at breast height) or oak woodland habitat is evaluated under CEQA. As a CEQA Lead Agency, the County of San Luis Obispo currently applies a 4:1 mitigation ratio for removed trees and a 2:1 mitigation ratio for impacted trees.

The project site supports a mixed oak woodland community. Based on the current project plans, it is expected that up to one valley oak tree may be removed, and up to five valley oak trees and one coast live oak tree may be impacted as a result of the proposed development.

Impacts to oak trees may include trimming, compaction, or excavation within the critical root zone and placement of year-round or summer watering within the critical root zone. trimming and/or disturbance within the critical root zone of several trees may be required. Impacts to and removal of individual oak trees and oak woodland habitat are protected under CEQA via Senate Bill 1334 (Kuehl Bill) and California Public Resources Code 21083.4.

Table 6 identifies the mapped oak and bay trees within 50 feet of the area of disturbance and whether those trees are anticipated to be avoided, impacted, or removed.

With implementation of recommended mitigation measure BIO-7, project impacts associated with conflict with local ordinances or policies protecting biological resources are considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

Table 6 -- Oak Tree and Bay Tree Invetory and Summary of Potential Impacts

Species	Tree No. (See Figure 14)	No. of Trunks	Diameter of Trunk at Breast Height (inches)	Impacts
Valley Oak	1339	1	26	Avoid
Coast Live Oak	1340	1	50	Avoid
California Bay	1341	2	119	Avoid
Valley Oak	1342	1	37	Avoid
Valley Oak	1343	1	31	Remove – grading for access road
Valley Oak	1344	1	37	Avoid
Valley Oak	1345	1	24	Avoid
Valley Oak	1346	1	22	Impact – placement of fill within critical root zone
Valley Oak	1347	1	54	Impact – placement of fill within critical root zone
Coast Live Oak	1348	1	45	Avoid
Valley Oak	1349	2	24	Avoid
Valley Oak	1350	1	27	Avoid
California Bay	1351	5	86	Avoid
Valley Oak	1352	1	35	Avoid
Valley Oak	1353	1	35	Avoid
Valley Oak	1354	1	41	Impact – placement of fill within critical root zone
Valley Oak	1355	1	47	Avoid
Valley Oak	1356	1	32	Avoid
Coast Live Oak	1357	1	47	Impact – placement of fill within critical root zone
Coast Live Oak	1358	2	48	Avoid
Coast Live Oak	1359	1	30	Avoid
Coast Live Oak	1360	3	94	Avoid
Valley Oak	1361	1	27	Impact - Septic line trenching within critical root zone
Valley Oak	1362	1	21	Impact - Septic line trenching within critical root zone



Figure 14 -- Oak Tree Inventory

(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?

The project site is not located within an area subject to an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. Therefore, the project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted plan and there would be *no impact.*

Conclusion

Upon implementation of mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-14 potential impacts to biological resources would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Mitigation

BIO-1 Environmental Awareness Training. An environmental awareness training shall be presented to all construction personnel by a qualified biologist prior to the start of any project activities. The training shall include color photographs and a description of the ecology of all special-status species known or with potential to occur on site, as well as other sensitive resources requiring avoidance near the project site. The training shall include a description of protection measures required by discretionary permits, an overview of the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts, and implications of noncompliance with these regulations. The biologist will provide an overview of the required avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. A sign-in sheet with the name and signature of the qualified biologist who presented the training, and the names and signatures of the environmental awareness trainees will be kept. A fact sheet conveying the information provided in the environmental awareness training will be provided to all project personnel and anyone else who may enter the project site. Prior to issuance of grading or construction permits, the applicant shall provide a copy of a contract with an approved biologist and a scope of work including conducting the environmental awareness training. Prior to ground disturbance and following conclusion of the training, the biologist shall provide a copy of the completed sign-in sheet and the required fact sheet to the County.

BIO-*2* Site Maintenance and General Operations. The following general measures are recommended to minimize impacts during active construction and shall be shown on the project plans:

- The use of heavy equipment and vehicles shall be limited to the proposed project limits and defined staging areas/access points. The boundaries of each work area and staging area shall be clearly defined and marked with high visibility fencing or flagging. No work shall occur outside these limits.
- In the vicinity of sensitive resources and habitats including but not limited to Drainage 1, the stock pond, the spring, and the Valley Needlegrass Grassland, signs shall be posted at the boundary of the work area indicating the presence of sensitive resources.
- Project plans, drawings, and specifications shall show the boundaries of all sensitive resource areas and the location of erosion and sediment controls, delineation of construction limits, and other pertinent measures to ensure the protection of sensitive habitats and resources.
- Staging of equipment and materials shall occur in designated areas with appropriate demarcation and perimeter controls. No staging areas shall be located within 100 feet of sensitive habitat or jurisdictional aquatic resources.

- Secondary containment, such as drip pans, shall be used under construction equipment to prevent leaks and spills of potential contaminants.
- Washing of concrete, paint, or equipment, and refueling and maintenance of equipment shall occur only in designated staging areas. These activities will occur at a minimum of 100 feet from sensitive habitat or jurisdictional aquatic resources. Sandbags and/or absorbent pads and spill control kits shall always be available for use in the event of a spill or leak.
- Construction equipment shall be inspected by the operator daily to ensure that equipment is in good working order and that there are no fuel or lubricant leaks.
- Plastic monofilament netting (erosion control matting) or similar material will not be used on site due to the potential for entangling special-status small mammals or reptiles.
- Acceptable substitutes are coconut coir matting or tackified hydroseeding compounds.
- The use of pesticides (including rodenticides) and herbicides on the property shall follow all local, state, and federal regulations to avoid primary and secondary poisoning of sensitive species that may be using the site.

BIO-3 Lighting. Any temporary construction lighting or permanent lighting introduced for new developments shall avoid nighttime illumination of suitable habitat features for special-status species (i.e. adjacent grassland, chaparral, and oak woodland). Temporary construction lighting will be kept to the minimum amount necessary and shall be directed toward active work areas and away from open spaces. To minimize the effects of future exterior lighting on special-status wildlife species, all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be positioned and/or shielded to avoid direct lighting of off-site natural habitat areas. Exterior lighting shall be in accordance with International Dark Sky Association guidelines for reducing light pollution for the benefit of wildlife.

BIO-4 Jurisdictional Waters. In addition to BIO-2, the following recommendations are provided to protect drainages and aquatic resources from indirect impacts.

- Construction activity within 100 feet of drainages shall occur only when conditions are dry.
- To prevent erosion and sedimentation into jurisdictional waters during construction, an erosion and sedimentation control plan shall be developed and implemented. It shall outline Best Management Practices for temporary stabilization. Acceptable stabilization methods include the use of weed-free, natural fiber (i.e., non-monofilament) rolls, jute or coir netting, and/or other industry standard materials. Erosion control devices shall be installed and maintained for the duration of the project. The erosion and sedimentation control plan shall be submitted with grading and construction plans.
- Install protective fencing or similar around the mapped valley needlegrass grassland community to ensure no inadvertent impacts during construction activities such as overland travel, grading, or staging of equipment and materials. Prior to ground disturbance, the applicant shall provide photos and a letter from the biologist confirming that the protective measures have been installed.

BIO-5 Special-status Plant Species. The following specific recommendations are made to reduce the anticipated impact to special status plant populations to the maximum extent feasible:

- Install protective fencing or similar around special-status plant populations that are not expected to be impacted by the proposed project. Prior to ground disturbance, the applicant shall provide photos and a letter from the biologist confirming that the protective measures have been installed.

BIO-6 Special-Status Plant Species, Specific Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation. As proposed, the project will result in impacts to Palmer's spineflower and Bishop manzanita. The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures shall be implemented to address impacts to these species. Prior to issuance of grading and construction permits, measures shall be included in the approved contract and scope of work with the biologist.

Palmer's Spineflower

1. The extent of the mapped Palmer's spineflower shall be shown on all plan sets and used to protect Palmer's spineflower populations during project implementation.

2. Prior to construction, high visibility fencing shall be installed at the limits of ground disturbance in areas within 50 feet of Palmer's spineflower populations mapped in 2025. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of Palmer's spineflower. Prior to ground disturbance, the applicant shall provide photos and a letter from the biologist confirming that the protective measures have been installed.

3. In areas where Palmer's spineflower will be impacted by ground disturbance, the top four to six inches of top soil shall be salvaged during initial grading and spread in suitable habitat identified by a qualified biologist outside of the area of disturbance and existing mapped Palmer's spineflower populations. Prior to final inspection and sign-off, the applicant shall provide a report from the biologist detailing the results of these efforts.

Bishop Manzanita

4. The extent of the mapped Bishop manzanita chaparral shall be shown on all plan sets and used to protect Bishop Manzanita chaparral during project implementation.

5. Prior to construction, high visibility fencing shall be installed at the limits of ground disturbance in areas within 50 feet of Bishop manzanita chaparral. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of Bishop manzanita. Prior to ground disturbance, the applicant shall provide photos and a letter from the biologist confirming that the protective measures have been installed.

6. In areas where no ground disturbance will occur but vehicle and/or equipment access in necessary, Bishop manzanitas will be trimmed the minimum amount necessary to facilitate access, leaving as much of the plant intact to allow for resprouting. Limits of access routes shall be delineated using high visibility fencing.

7. Areas within the Bishop manzanita chaparral disturbed by project activities shall be monitored annually for three years for invasive plant species removal. Any invasive plant species identified within these areas shall be removed annually prior to seed set and disposed of at a landfill. Herbicides will not be used to manage invasive species in these areas to avoid impacts to the

special-status plants present in these habitats. Prior to final, the applicant shall submit to the County a monitoring and reporting plan, to be approved by the project biologist.

BIO-7 Oak Tree Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation. As proposed, the project is anticipated to result in the removal of one valley oak and impacts to up to five valley oak trees and one coast live oak tree. However, if during project implementation fewer trees are removed or impacted, as-built plans may be provided to the County upon completion of construction showing the reduced impacts to reduce mitigation requirements accordingly. The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures shall be implemented to address impacts to oak trees and must be shown on the plans:

1. The canopy edge and trunk location of oak trees located within 50 feet of proposed construction shall be surveyed and placed on all plan sets. The tree map shall be used to protect oak trees during project implementation.

2. Impacts to oak tree canopies or sensitive root zones should be avoided to the extent feasible. Impacts may include pruning, ground disturbance or placement of fill or impervious surfaces (e.g., asphalt, permanent structures) within the sensitive root zone, installation of year-round irrigation or other supplemental water within the sensitive root zone, and trunk damage.

3. Prior to ground-breaking, tree protection fencing shall be installed as close to the outer limit of the sensitive root zone as practicable for construction operations to protect trees located within 50 feet of construction that shall be preserved. The fencing shall be in place throughout the duration of construction. Demarcation such as t-posts and a minimum of two strands of yellow rope are adequate. Prior to ground disturbance, the applicant shall have the project biologist provide evidence to the County that the fencing has been installed.

4. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of oak trees.

5. A licensed arborist or qualified botanist shall be hired to oversee all removal or trimming of existing roots and necessary branch trimming.

6. Care shall be taken to avoid surface roots within the top 18 inches of soil. If any roots are exposed during construction, they shall be covered with a layer of soil to match existing topography.

7. Impacts to oak trees shall be assessed by a licensed arborist or qualified botanist prior to final inspection and reported to the County of San Luis Obispo.

8. For oak tree removals or impacts during project implementation, the applicant shall provide in-kind mitigation (on-site if feasible), typically 4:1 for removals and 2:1 for impacted trees.

9. Mitigation trees shall be planted within suitable habitat on-site and monitored for five years with the success goal of seventy-five percent survival by year five. Any mortality beyond this threshold during the five-year monitoring period shall be replaced with new plantings as soon as feasible, during the appropriate season. Prior to final inspection, the applicant shall provide a monitoring plan to be approved by the project biologist and the County.

BIO-8 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for American Badger. A qualified biologist shall complete a preconstruction survey, to be provided to the County, within 30 days prior to the

start of initial project activities to ensure American badgers are not present within proposed work areas. If potential dens are discovered, an exclusion buffer shall be established within 50 feet of the den. If active dens are found during the breeding and rearing season, no activity shall occur within 200 feet of the den without agency guidance and approval.

BIO-9 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Monterey Dusky-footed Woodrat. Prior to the start of work within 50 feet of suitable woodrat habitat, a survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to identify and flag woodrat middens for avoidance. A minimum 10-foot buffer area shall be clearly delineated around any woodrat middens that are discovered during the survey. Due to the likelihood of woodrats fleeing the midden as a result of nearby construction activity, a biologist shall monitor initial vegetation clearing and ground disturbance within 25 feet of woodrat middens. If woodrats are observed fleeing middens, work shall be temporarily halted until woodrats are outside the area of impact. Woodrat middens that are deemed unavoidable shall be carefully dismantled mechanically (e.g., excavator with thumb) or with hand tools from the top down, allowing woodrats to escape unharmed. A biological monitor shall be present for dismantling. Results of the survey shall be submitted to the County prior to ground disturbance.

BIO-10 Avoidance Measures for Mountain Lion. The general avoidance and minimization measures listed in Section 4.2.1 will avoid or minimize impacts to mountain lions. In particular, the measure related to the use of rodenticides is important. Anticoagulant rodenticides, such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difenacoum, and difethialone as well as other pesticides and herbicides have negative effects on mountain lion populations in Southern California and the Central Coast. Therefore, the use of these products on the property shall follow all local, state, and federal regulations to avoid primary and secondary poisoning of mountain lions.

BIO-11 Preconstruction Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Roosting Bats. If trimming or removal of trees is planned to occur during the typical bat maternity roosting and pupping season between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preactivity survey, to be submitted to the County, within 14 days prior to ensure roosting bats are not present. If bat roosting is observed, work activities will be avoided within 100 feet of active roosts until bats have left the roosts. No trees or structures with active bat roosts may be removed until they have left the roosts or have been excluded from roosts. The appropriate timing for exclusion implementation will be determined based upon the species identified.

BIO-12 Preconstruction Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Special-status Amphibians and Reptiles. A qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey, to be submitted to the County, immediately prior to the start of work within 50 feet of suitable habitat for coast horned lizard, CRLF, Coast Range newt, lesser slender salamander, southwestern pond turtle, and western spadefoot toad. During the survey, the biologist shall gently disturb or rake the scrub understory and upper layers of oak tree duff to uncover or rouse special-status amphibians and reptiles. Construction monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during all initial ground disturbing and vegetation removal activities (e.g., grading, grubbing, vegetation trimming) within suitable habitat. If these species are found during preconstruction surveys or monitoring, they shall be allowed to leave the work area on their own volition or be hand captured and relocated to suitable habitat outside of the area of impact, if permitted.

To minimize the potential for impacts to dispersing amphibians, no work shall occur at night, no work shall occur during rainy conditions, and small mammal burrows within 100 feet of suitable

aquatic habitat shall be avoided. If burrows within 100 feet of suitable aquatic habitat cannot be avoided during project construction or continued operation, the appropriate resource agencies shall be contacted for guidance.

BIO-13 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Crotch Bumble Bee. Prior to the start of project activities and if work is planned to occur during the flight period of April 1 to September 1, a qualified biologist shall survey for Crotch's bumble bee within the work area two weeks prior to the start of initial ground disturbance. If a Crotch's bumble bee nest is observed, no work shall occur within 25 feet of the nest until it is no longer active. If an exclusion buffer is not feasible, the applicant shall contact the County for further guidance. If Crotch's bumble bee is found during the active spring and summer period, or presence is unknown (e.g., if a survey during the active period was not completed) and work is planned between October and March, potential overwintering habitat shall be avoided by a minimum of 50 feet. If potential overwintering habitat cannot be avoided, the County shall be contacted. The County shall coordinate with appropriate resource agencies for guidance to implement project activities and avoid take or proceed with an Incidental Take Permit. The results of the surveys shall be provided to the County prior to initial project activities.

Because bumble bees move nest sites each year, surveys shall be conducted each year prior to ground disturbance within undisturbed habitat in the project site. Survey results shall be provided to the County prior to the start of project activities and prior to the start of each year as applicable.

BIO-14 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Nesting Birds. To protect nesting birds, no construction shall occur from February 15 through August 31 unless the following measures are in place. Preconstruction surveys must be completed by a qualified biologist within one week prior to project initiation and submitted to the County. Surveys for raptors shall be conducted within a 250-foot radius of the project site. If any active non-listed raptor nests are observed, these nests and nest trees shall be protected, and a no-work buffer of 250 feet shall be established until the young have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest tree or parental care, or the nest is no longer active. Surveys for other non-listed avian species shall be conducted within a 50-foot radius of the project site. If any active nests are observed, these nests and nest trees shall be protected with a 50-foot no-work buffer. All activity will remain outside of the designated buffers until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledged or that proposed construction activities would not cause adverse impacts to the nest, adults, eggs, or young. If work activities are deemed to not be a threat to a given nest within a buffer zone, a qualified biologist may monitor the nest during work to ensure that the nesting birds are not disturbed (e.g., showing signs of stress or changes in behavior as a result of work activity). If any active nests of listed, fully protected, or otherwise special-status species are detected during the surveys, the appropriate wildlife protection agency shall be contacted for guidance on how to proceed.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

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

Setting

San Luis Obispo County possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage and has an abundance of historic and prehistoric cultural resources dating as far back as 9,000 B.C. The County protects and manages cultural resources in accordance with the provisions detailed by CEQA and local ordinances.

As defined by CEQA, a historical resource includes:

1. A resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).
2. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant. The architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural records of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence.

The COSE identifies and maps anticipated culturally sensitive areas and historic resources within the county and establishes goals, policies, and implementation strategies to identify and protect areas, sites, and buildings having architectural, historical, Native American, or cultural significance.

Discussion

(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

A Phase I archaeological study was conducted for the project site and area of disturbance in April of 2024 by Padre Associates, Inc. According to that study, the project site does not contain any historic resources identified in the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historic Resources. The project site does not contain a site under the Historic Site (H) combining designation and does not contain other structures of historic age (50 years or older) that could be potentially significant as a historical resource. Therefore, the project would result in *no impacts* associated with an adverse change in the significance of historical resources.

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

The project site is located on a site within the Santa Lucia mountains with steep topography and dense stands of oak trees interspersed with areas of annual grasses. Cienega Creek flows west to east across the southern portion of the project site but well outside the area of disturbance.

The project site is not subject to the Archaeology combining designation. A Phase I archaeological study was conducted for the project site and area of disturbance in April of 2024 by Padre Associates, Inc. which is incorporated by reference and available for review in its entirety at the Department of Planning and Building located at 976 Osos Street, San Luis Obispo. According to the Phase I study, a records search did not reveal any previously recorded resources within the Project site or a 0.25-mile search radius. The archaeologists conducted a pedestrian survey of the Project site on April 19, 2024. No cultural resources were observed, and no further archaeological study or monitoring are warranted.

In the unlikely event that resources are uncovered during grading activities, implementation of LUO 22.10.040 (Archaeological Resources) would be required. This section requires that, in the event archaeological resources are encountered during project construction, construction activities shall cease, and the County Planning and Building Department must be notified of the discovery so that the extent and location of discovered materials may be recorded by a qualified archaeologist, and the disposition of artifacts may be accomplished in accordance with state and federal law. This protocol would ensure full compliance with California State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 as well as CDFA requirements regarding accidental discovery of cultural resources.

Therefore, impacts related to a substantial adverse change in the significance of archaeological resources would be *less than significant*.

(c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Based on existing conditions, buried human remains are not expected to be present in the area proposed for development. In the event of an accidental discovery or recognition of any human remains, California State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and LUO 22.10.040 (Archaeological Resources) require that no further disturbances shall occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. With adherence to State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and County LUO, impacts related to the unanticipated disturbance of archaeological resources and human remains would be reduced to less than significant; therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

No historical resources are known or expected to occur within or adjacent to the areas proposed for development. Adherence with County LUO standards and State Health and Safety Code procedures would reduce potential impacts. Accordingly, impacts related to a substantial adverse change in the significance of archaeological resources would be *less than significant*.

Mitigation

None required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

VI. ENERGY

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

Setting

Local Utilities

The Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) is the primary electricity provider for urban and rural communities within San Luis Obispo County. Approximately 31% of electricity provided by PG&E is sourced from renewable sources and an additional 43% is sourced from non-renewable GHG-free resources (PG&E 2020).

PG&E offers two programs through which consumers may purchase electricity from renewable sources: the Solar Choice program and the Regional Renewable Choice program. Under the Solar Choice program, a customer remains on their existing electric rate plan and pays a modest additional fee on a per kilowatt-hour (kWh) basis for clean solar power. The fee depends on the type of service, rate plan, and enrollment level. Customers may choose to have 50% or 100% of their monthly electricity usage to be generated via solar projects. The Regional Renewable Choice program enables customers to subscribe to renewable energy from a specific community-based project within PG&E's service territory. The Regional Renewable Choice program allows a customer to purchase between 25% and 100% of their annual usage from renewable sources.

The Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) is the primary provider of natural gas for urban and rural communities within San Luis Obispo County. SoCalGas has committed to replacing 20% of its traditional natural gas supply with renewable natural gas by 2030 (Sempra 2019).

Local Energy Plans and Policies

The COSE establishes goals and policies that aim to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), conserve water, increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, and reduce GHG emissions. This element provides the basis and direction for the development of the County's EnergyWise Plan (EWP), which outlines in greater detail the County's strategy to reduce government and community-wide GHG emissions through a number of goals, measures, and actions, including energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy resources.

State Building Code Requirements

The California Building Code (CBC) contains standards that regulate the method of use, properties, performance, or types of materials used in the construction, alteration, improvement, repair, or rehabilitation of a building or other improvement to real property. The CBC includes mandatory green building standards for residential and nonresidential structures, the most recent version of which are referred to as the *2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards*. These standards focus on four key areas: smart residential photovoltaic systems, updated thermal envelope standards (preventing heat transfer from the interior to the exterior and vice versa), residential and nonresidential ventilation requirements, and non-residential lighting requirements. While the CBC has strict energy and green-building standards, U-occupancy structures (such as greenhouses used for cultivation activities) are typically not regulated by these standards.

Vehicle Fuel Economy Standards

In October 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA), on behalf of the Department of Transportation, issued final rules to further reduce GHG emissions and improve corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for light duty vehicles for model years 2017 and beyond. NHTSA's CAFE standards have been enacted under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act since 1978. This national program requires automobile manufacturers to build a single light-duty national fleet that meets all requirements under both federal programs and the standards of California and other states. This program would increase fuel economy to the equivalent of 54.5 miles per gallon (mpg) limiting vehicle emissions to 163 grams of carbon dioxide (CO_2) per mile for the fleet of cars and light-duty trucks by the model year 2025.

As part California's overall approach to reducing pollution from all vehicles, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has established standards for clean gasoline and diesel fuels and fuel economies of new vehicles. CARB has also put in place innovative programs to drive the development of low-carbon, renewable, and alternative fuels such as their Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) Program pursuant to California Assembly Bill (AB) 32 and the Governor's Executive Order S-01-07.

In January 2012, CARB approved the Advanced Clean Cars Program which combines the control of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) missions and criteria air pollutants, as well as requirements for greater numbers of zero-emission vehicles, into a single package of standards for vehicle model years 2017 through 2025. The new rules strengthen the GHG standard for 2017 models and beyond. This will be achieved through existing technologies, the use of stronger and lighter materials, and more efficient drivetrains and engines. The program's zero-emission vehicle regulation, the Advanced Clean Cars II rule, establishes a year-by-year roadmap so that by 2035 100% of new cars and light trucks sold in California will be zero-emission vehicles, including plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The regulation realizes and codifies the light-duty vehicle goals set forth in Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-79-20.

The program also includes a clean fuels outlet regulation designed to support the commercialization of zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell vehicles planned by vehicle manufacturers by 2015 by requiring increased numbers of hydrogen fueling stations throughout the state. The number of stations will grow as vehicle manufacturers sell more fuel cell vehicles. By 2025, when the rules will be fully implemented, the statewide fleet of new cars and light trucks will emit 34 percent fewer global warming gases and 75 percent fewer smog-forming emissions than the statewide fleet in 2016 (CARB 2016).

All self-propelled off-road diesel vehicles 25 horsepower (hp) or greater used in California and most two-engine vehicles (except on-road two-engine sweepers) are subject to the CARB's Regulation for In-Use Off-Road Diesel Fueled Fleets (Off-Road regulation). This includes vehicles that are rented or leased (rental or

leased fleets). The overall purpose of the Off-Road regulation is to reduce emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM) from off-road diesel vehicles operating within California through the implementation of standards including, but not limited to, limits on idling, reporting and labeling of off-road vehicles, limitations on use of old engines, and performance requirements.

Discussion

(a) Result in a 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?

Construction Activities

During construction activities, fossil fuels, electricity, and natural gas would be used by construction vehicles and equipment. The energy consumed during construction would be temporary in nature and would be typical of other similar construction activities in the county. Based on the size and scope of proposed earthwork and building construction, the project would not have the potential to result in adverse environmental impacts through its use of diesel fuel for construction equipment. In addition, project contractors save costs by avoiding the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, such as idling. Therefore, potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the consumption of energy resources during construction would be avoided and project construction activities would not result in a conflict with a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Therefore, project construction impacts associated with energy use would be *less than significant.*

Project Operations

Electricity and Natural Gas Use. There are no occupied buildings on the project site. The project's operational electricity needs would be met by a connection to PG&E infrastructure. Natural gas is provided by PG&E or on-site propane service.

The CBC 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards include mandatory energy efficiency standards. A new single family residence is subject to compliance with these standards. Lastly, the new residence will be required to comply with the relevant provisions of the 2022 California Green Building Code and the County of San Luis Obispo's Green Building Ordinance.

Therefore, project impacts associated with wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary electricity and natural gas use are considered *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Fuel Use. Ongoing occupation of the project would result in fuel use associated with motor vehicle trips generated by residential occupancy. All vehicles used by residents would be subject to applicable state and federal fuel economy standards and State-mandated smog inspections.

Based on adherence to applicable state and federal vehicle fuel regulations and the size and scope of proposed activities, project fuel use would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact and would not be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary.

Therefore, potential impacts associated with potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources and potential conflict with state or local plans regarding renewable energy or energy efficiency would be *less than significant.* and *less than cumulatively considerable.*

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Conclusion

The project would not result in a potentially significant energy demand and inefficient energy use during long-term operations that would be considered wasteful, inefficient and unnecessary. Potential impacts related to energy would be *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
	(i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? 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 18-1-B 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 waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Setting

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (Alquist-Priolo Act) is a California state law that was developed to regulate development near active faults and mitigate the surface fault rupture potential and other hazards. The Alquist-Priolo Act identifies active earthquake fault zones and restricts the construction of habitable structures over known active or potentially active faults. San Luis Obispo County is located in a geologically complex and seismically active region. The Safety Element of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan identifies three active faults that traverse through the county and are currently zoned under the Alquist-Priolo Act: the San Andreas, the Hosgri-San Simeon, and the Los Osos.

The County Safety Element also identifies 17 other faults that are considered potentially active or have uncertain fault activity. The Safety Element establishes policies that require new development to be located away from active and potentially active faults. The element also requires that the County enforce applicable building codes relating to seismic design of structures and require design professionals to evaluate the potential for liquefaction or seismic settlement to impact structures in accordance with the Uniform Building Code.

Known faults and fault systems within the region that potentially could generate earthquakes affecting the site include the Oceanic-West Huasna, Rinconada, Hosgri-San Simeon, Los Osos and San Andreas faults (USGS 2013). Other unknown faults may exist in the region and movement on any of these faults could affect the proposed development during its design life. The nearest potentially capable fault line is the Cambria Faul located about 10 miles to the west, and the Rinconada fault located about 10 miles to the east.

The project site is within an area subject to the Geologic Study Area (GSA) combining designation which identifies areas where geologic and soil conditions could present new developments and/or their occupants with potential hazards to life and property. Based on the Safety Element, the project site is located in an area subject landslide risk but has a low liquefaction potential.

The residence is planned to be supported by drilled, cast-in-place concrete caissons constructed to follow the contours of the site; structural steel framing will extend from the caissons to support the residence floor, leaving a subfloor area of varying heights. The garage/shop building will be supported by either caissons or conventional continuous foundations following the site contours; it will have either a cast-in-place or cast-on-deck concrete floor. Cuts and fills in the building area are planned to be minimal, on the order of 6 feet or less from the existing topography. The road improvements may involve cuts and fills on the order of 8 to 10 feet from the existing topography, to provide appropriate slopes for emergency vehicle access.

The project application materials included the following geotechnical investigations for the project site:

- Earth Systems, February, 2022, Geotechnical Engineering and Geologic Hazard Report
- Earth Systems, July, 2024, Slope Stability Analysis

Each study was subjected to peer review by the County geologist (Cotton Shires and Associates, Inc., April 9, 2024, August 16, 2024 and February 13, 2025). These studies are incorporated by reference and are available for review in their entirety at the Department of Planning and Building located at 976 Osos street, San Luis Obispo. The findings and conclusions of these studies are summarized below.

Borings were taken of the project site where roadway and structures are proposed. Based on these investigations, the site is generally covered by a veneer of residual soil and colluvium, which was encountered in the borings ranging in thickness from approximately 1 to 3 feet. Below the residual soil and colluvium, sandstone was encountered in borings, and metavolcanic rock, serpentinite and chert were

observed in outcrops. The bedrock ranged from very soft to hard and decomposed to moderately weathered. The bedrock extended to the maximum depth explored of approximately 21.5 feet

Discussion

(a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

(a-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.

The project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Hazard Zone. The potential for ground rupture at the site during ground shaking is considered low. The closest known Quaternary age fault is the Cambria Fault about 10 miles to the west which is considered potentially active but does not underly the project site. Therefore, there would be *no impact* associated with potential impacts related to the rupture of a known earthquake fault.

(a-ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

Groundshaking refers to the motion that occurs in response to local and regional earthquakes. Seismic groundshaking is influenced by the proximity of the site to an earthquake fault, the intensity of the seismic event, and the underlying soil composition. As discussed above, the closest known Quaternary age faults are the Cambria Fault about 10 miles to the west and the Rinconada fault located about 10 miles to the east of the site which are considered potentially active but do not underly the project site.

In accordance with the 2019 CBC and ASCE 7-16 (ASCE 2017, 2018), the geotechnical analysis provides an assessment to determine the need for employing "Site-Specific Ground Motion Procedures" to calculate the ground motion parameters for the project. The Site Class was assessed based on the conditions encountered in exploratory borings and field reconnaissance. In accordance with Chapter 20 of ASCE 7-16 (ASCE 2017, 2018), the Site Class is "C– Very Dense Soil and Soft Rock", as stipulated in Section 20.3.2 and Table 20.3-1. Site specific ground motion procedures for seismic design are not required for Site Class C, as stipulated in Chapter 11 of ASCE 7-16 (ASCE 2017, 2018).

Mitigation measure GEO-1 requires the project to comply with the findings and recommendations of the geotechnical analyses of the project site. In addition, compliance with the CBC and other applicable standards will ensure the effects of a potential seismic event would be minimized through compliance with current engineering practices and techniques. With implementation of the project in compliance with relevant construction codes and mitigation GEO-1, the project would not expose people or structures to significant increased risks associated with seismic ground shaking; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

(a-iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Based on the Safety Element Liquefaction Hazards Map, the project site is located in an area with low potential for liquefaction. According to the geotechnical investigation, due to the subsurface and geologic conditions encountered and the absence of groundwater, the potential for liquefaction at the planned building area is considered to be nil. The potential for seismic settlement of unsaturated, loose to medium dense sand layers above the groundwater table is also considered to be nil, due to the shallow bedrock at the site.

Lastly, mitigation measure GEO-1 requires the project to comply with the findings and recommendations of the geotechnical analyses of the project site and to comply with CBC seismic requirements to address the site's potential for seismic-related ground failure including liquefaction; therefore, the potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

(a-iv) Landslides?

According to the Geologic Map of the York Mountain area by Seiders (1982), the project site is underlain by Franciscan Mélange, which is an assemblage of variably metamorphosed volcanic and sedimentary rocks. Based on the Safety Element Landslide Hazards Map, the project site is located in an area with a moderate potential for landslides.

According to the geotechnical investigation, the area of disturbance is located on a ridgeline underlain by bedrock of the Franciscan Mélange. This formation is known to be prone to landslides and soil slips. No historical or known landslides or soil slips were discovered during the literature review conducted by the engineering geologist; however, during the site reconnaissance a geomorphic feature characteristic of a landslide was observed on the side slope of the ridge approximately 300 feet south of the proposed development area.

A slope stability investigation was performed for the project site and area of disturbance (Earth Systems, July, 2024). To further evaluate the subsurface conditions in the area of the proposed fill prism, three test pits were excavated and logged. The excavation was performed by the client at locations directed by the engineering geologist. The test pits were logged by an engineering geologist certified by the State of California, and samples were collected to develop geomechanical properties for use in the slope stability models. samples obtained from the test pits were tested for unit weight and moisture (ASTM D 2937-10, modified for ring liners), plasticity index (ASTM D 4318-17), and cohesion and angle of shearing resistance by direct shear (ASTM D 3080-11).

Slope stability analyses were performed using the computer program Slide2 Version 9.033 (Rocscience 2024). Static analyses were performed on the Cross Section E-E' to calculate a factor of safety against failure. The slope stability analysis methods utilized for the calculations are Bishop Simplified and Janbu Simplified. The site-specific pseudostatic modeling included applying a horizontal seismic force calculated in accordance with the procedure recommended by the California Geological Survey (CGS 2008). The analysis is based on a probabilistic seismic hazard assessment from a deaggregation of the local seismic sources, and a geometric mean peak ground acceleration (PGA) considering a 10 percent in 50-year probability (475-year return interval) for seismic site class C (USGS 2024). The study concludes that the project site is suitable for the type of improvements contemplated for the roadway and the residence, so long as the recommendations outlined in the study are implemented.

The project would be required to comply with CBC seismic requirements to address the site's potential for landslides. With implementation of mitigation measure GEO-1 potential impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

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

The project would result in approximately 2.48 acres of site disturbance and would require 4,000 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 4,000 cy of fill. In addition, grading will take place on slopes in excess of 30 percent (Figure 6). Lastly, construction of the proposed all-weather access road and residence will increase surface stormwater flows on the site. Accordingly, during site preparation and grading/leveling activities, there would be potential for erosion to occur. The project application

materials include a preliminary grading, drainage and erosion control plan (Figures 7 and 8) that include drainage collection, storage and conveyance infrastructure to ensure runoff does not cause erosion or adversely impact the quality of downstream surface or groundwater bodies.

Section 22.51.120 of the LUO requires any project that would change the runoff volume or velocity leaving any point of the site, resulting in an impervious surface of more than 20,000 square feet, or involve hillside development on slopes steeper than 10 percent to prepare and implement a sedimentation and erosion control plan. LUO Section 22.51.120 includes requirements for specific erosion control materials and states that Best Management Practices (BMPs) shall be employed to control sedimentation and erosion. These mandatory BMPs are set forth in LUO Section 22.52.150 B. and C. Compliance with these mandatory BMPs will ensure water quality is protected from potential impacts associated with the construction and occupancy of the project.

In addition, the project would be subject to Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) requirements for preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) (LUO Section 22.52.130), which may include the preparation of a Storm Water Control Plan to further minimize on-site erosion. Upon implementation of the recommended BMPs, impacts related to soil erosion would be *less than significant*.

(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?*

As discussed above under item a-iv, based on the Safety Element Landslide Hazards Map, the project site is located in an area with a moderate landslide risk. Based on the Safety Element and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) data, the project is not located in an area of historical or current land subsidence (USGS 2019) and is located in an area with low potential for liquefaction.

However, the project will result in grading on slopes that exceed 30 percent (Figure 6) as well as 4,000 cy of cut and 4,000 cy of fill to construct the access roadway consistent with CalFire standards. The slope stability analysis discussed above under item a) suggests that the project site is suitable for the type of improvements contemplated for the roadway and the residence, so long as the recommendations outlined in the study are implemented.

Due to the distance to the nearest active fault zone and topography of the project site, lateral spreading is not likely to occur on-site. The project would be required to comply with the CBC standards designed to significantly reduce potential risks associated with unstable earth conditions. Lastly, mitigation measure GEO-1 requires the project to incorporate the findings and recommendations of the geotechnical investigations for the project site. Therefore, impacts related to on- or off-site landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

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

According to the NRCS, soils underlying the area of have a low shrink-swell potential. In addition, the residence will be required to comply with applicable CBC standards designed to reduce potential risks associated with expansive soils. Therefore, potential impacts associated with expansive soil would be *less than significant.*

(e) *Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?*

The project includes the construction of a new septic system to serve the residence. A percolation test was conducted as part of the geotechnical investigation of the site and the results were used to inform the preliminary design of the proposed septic leach field. The project will be conditioned to demonstrate compliance with County and RWQCB standards for septic systems prior to issuance of a building permit.

Therefore, potential impacts associated with having soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks would be *less than significant.*

(f) *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

The underlying geologic material is considered to have low to moderate paleontological sensitivity (County of Monterey 2014, SWCA Environmental Consultants 2019). Potential impacts to paleontological resources would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

Although the project site may be subject to significant geologic hazards such as landslides, compliance with the relevant provisions of the CBC and with incorporation of the findings and recommendations of the geotechnical investigations prepared for the site, impacts associated with geology and geologic hazards would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Mitigation

GEO-1 **Plans submitted at the time of application for grading/construction permits,** shall incorporate the findings and recommendations of the following geotechnical investigations prepared for the project site:

- Earth Systems, February, 2022, Geotechnical Engineering and Geologic Hazard Report
- Earth Systems, July, 2024, Slope Stability Analysis

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

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

Setting

Greenhouse gasses (GHGs) are any gases that absorb infrared radiation in the atmosphere. The primary GHGs that are emitted into the atmosphere as a result of human activities are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), and fluorinated gases. These are most commonly emitted through the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), agricultural practices, decay of organic waste in landfills, and a variety of other chemical reactions and industrial processes (e.g., the manufacturing of cement). Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is the most abundant GHG and is estimated to represent approximately 80–90% of the principal GHGs that are currently affecting the earth's climate. According to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), transportation (vehicle exhaust) and electricity generation are the main sources of GHGs in the state.

In October 2008, the CARB published the *Climate Change Proposed Scoping Plan*, which is the state's plan to achieve GHG reductions in California required by Assembly Bill (AB) 32. The Scoping Plan included CARB-recommended GHG reductions for each emissions sector of the state's GHG inventory. The largest proposed GHG reduction recommendations were associated with improving emissions standards for light-duty vehicles, implementing the Low Carbon Fuel Standard program, implementation of energy efficiency measures in buildings and appliances, the widespread development of combined heat and power systems, and developing a renewable portfolio standard for electricity production.

Senate Bill (SB) 32 and Executive Order (EO) S-3-05 extended the state's GHG reduction goals and require CARB to regulate sources of GHGs to meet the following goals:

- Reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020;
- Reduce GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030;
- Reduce GHG emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

The initial Scoping Plan was first approved by CARB on December 11, 2008, and is updated every 5 years. The first update of the Scoping Plan was approved by the CARB on May 22, 2014, which looked past 2020 to set mid-term goals (2030–2035) toward reaching the 2050 goals. An update to the Scoping Plan was released in November 2017. The 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan incorporates strategies for achieving the 2030 GHG-reduction target established in SB 32 and EO S-3-05. The Final 2022 Scoping Plan Update –

Achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2045 lays out a path to achieve targets for carbon neutrality and reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels no later than 2045, as directed by Assembly Bill 1279.

When assessing the significance of potential impacts for CEQA compliance, an individual project's GHG emissions will generally not result in direct significant impacts because the climate change issue is global in nature. However, an individual project could be found to contribute to a potentially significant cumulative impact. Projects that have GHG emissions above the noted thresholds may be considered cumulatively considerable and require mitigation. Accordingly, in March 2012, the SLOAPCD approved thresholds for GHG impacts which were incorporated into their 2012 CEQA Air Quality Handbook. The Handbook recommended applying a 1,150 $MTCO_2e$ per year Bright Line Threshold for commercial and residential projects and included a list of general land uses and estimated sizes or capacities of uses expected to exceed this threshold. According to the SLOAPCD, this threshold was based on a 'gap analysis' and was used for CEQA compliance evaluations to demonstrate consistency with the state's GHG emission reduction goals associated with AB32 and the 2008 Climate Change Scoping Plan which have a target year of 2020. However, in 2015, the California Supreme Court issued an opinion in the case of *Center for Biological Diversity vs California Department of Fish and Wildlife* ("Newhall Ranch") that determined that AB 32 based thresholds derived from a gap analysis are invalid for projects with a planning horizon beyond 2020. Since the bright-line and service population GHG thresholds in the Handbook are AB 32 based, and project horizons are now beyond 2020, the SLOAPCD no longer recommends the use of these thresholds in CEQA evaluations.

In 2023, the SLOAPCD released an update to these thresholds with their *2023 Administrative Update Version to APCD Board Adopted April 2012 Version*. These updated thresholds were developed by creating updated GHG emissions inventories for 2005 and 2018 for the incorporated cities and unincorporated areas in SLO county to consider whether jurisdictions were on track with the AB 32 GHG reduction target. Then, target GHG emissions for SLO county in 2020, 2030, and 2045 were calculated to be consistent with reduction targets specified in AB 32, SB 32, and AB 1279. Thresholds for the years in between those evaluated were linearly interpolated, and annual GHG efficiency thresholds were adjusted to factor in GHG reductions needed for new development using information from the City of SLO's 2020 qualified Climate Action Plan's Appendix C – CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds and Guidance. A project's initial operating year should be used to determine which of the updated GHG Bright Line Thresholds for new residential, commercial, and mixed-use development is applicable to the project. For projects with an initial operating year of 2030 or earlier, GHG emissions at or below the applicable threshold for that year are contributing to the state's SB 32 GHG reduction target. For projects with an initial operational year after 2030, GHG emissions at or below the applicable threshold for that year are contributing to the state's AB 1279 target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2045. Table 7 shows the GHG Bright-Line Thresholds for projects with an initial operating year between 2023 and 2030.

Table 7 -- San Luis Obispo County Bright-Line CEQA GHG Thresholds Between 2023 and 2030 for Residential, Commercial, and Mix-use Development Projects

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
GHG Bright-Line Thresholds (MT/Yr)	980	930	880	830	780	740	690	650

If the lead agency determines that a proposed project's operational phase GHG emissions are below the applicable threshold, then the project's GHG impacts would be deemed less than significant and consistent with state and local GHG reduction goals.

EnergyWise Plan

The County Energy Wise Plan (EWP) identifies changes that could occur in the County as a result of climate change, provides an inventory of GHG emissions in the County, and establishes a GHG emissions forecast and reduction targets for the County. This plan identifies strategies to reduce the county's GHG emissions by 15% below the baseline year of 2006 by the year 2020. This goal is consistent with Assembly Bill 32. The inventory denotes municipal and community-wide emissions caused by a range of activities in 2006, including transportation, waste, agriculture, energy, and aircraft-related activities. The EWP includes an Implementation Program that provides a strategy for action with specific measures and steps to achieve the identified GHG reduction targets including, but not limited to, the following:

- Encourage new development to exceed minimum Cal Green requirements;
- Require a minimum of 75% of nonhazardous construction and demolition debris generated on site to be recycled or salvaged;
- Continue to implement strategic growth strategies that direct the county's future growth into existing communities and to provide complete services to meet local needs;
- Continue to increase the amount of affordable housing in the County, allowing lower-income families to live closer to jobs and activity centers, and providing residents with greater access to transit and alternative modes;
- Reduce potable water use by 20% in all newly constructed buildings by using the performance method provided in the California Green Building Code;
- Require use of energy-efficient equipment in all new development;
- Minimize the use of dark materials on roofs by requiring roofs to achieve a minimum solar reflectivity index of 10 for high-slope roofs and 68 for low-slope roofs; and
- Use light-colored aggregate in new road construction and repaving projects adjacent to existing cities.

In 2016 the County published the EnergyWise Plan 2016 Update, which describes changes and modifications to the EnergyWise plan. These modifications include a summary of the progress made toward implementing measures in the 2011 EWP, overall trends in energy use and emissions since the baseline year of the inventory (2006), and the addition of implementation measures intended to provide a greater understanding of the County's emissions status.

Discussion

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

The California Energy Emissions Model (CalEEMod, 2022) was utilized to estimate the project's annual carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in metric tons (MTCO2e; Table 8) based on the Bright-Line CEQA GHG Thresholds Between 2023 and 2030 for Residential, Commercial, and Mix-use Development Projects described in the setting above and assuming a completion year of 2026 of 830 MMTCO2e per year.

Table 8 – Existing and Projected Operational GHG Emissions

Project Component	Quantity	Emissions Rate (Annual $MTCO_2e/sf$)		Estimated Projected Annual CO_2 Emissions (MT/year) Without Mitigation[1]
		Construction	Operation	
New Single Family Residence	1	13.5	4.20	17.70
			Total:	**17.70**

Sources: County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building, 2020, CalEEMOD version 2022

Notes:

1. CalEEMOD CalEEMOD version 2022

As shown in Table 8, project-related GHG emissions will be well below the 830 MTCO2e interim threshold and is assumed to have a less than significant adverse impact that is not cumulatively considerable and consistent with the GHG reduction objectives of AB32 and SB32.

Therefore, potential impacts associated with GHG emissions would be *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable*.

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

Energy inefficiency contributes to higher GHG emissions which in turn may conflict with the following state and local plans for energy efficiency.

2011 EnergyWise Plan (EWP). As discussed above, the County of San Luis Obispo EnergyWise plan (EWP), adopted in 2011, serves as the County's GHG reduction strategy. The GHG-reducing policy provisions contained in the EWP were prepared for the purpose of complying with the requirements of AB 32 and achieving the goals of the AB 32 Scoping Plan, which have a horizon year of 2020. The policy provisions are divided into community-wide measures and measures aimed at reducing GHG emissions associated with County operations. The GHG reduction measures contained in the EWP are generally programmatic and intended to be implemented at the community level. Measure No. 7. encourages energy efficient new development and provides incentives for new development to exceed Cal Green energy efficiency standards. The following is a summary of project consistency with the relevant supporting actions identified in the EWP for promoting energy efficiency in new development.

Supporting Action	Project Consistency
Require the use of energy-efficient equipment in all new development, including but not limited to Energy Star appliances, high-energy efficiency equipment, heat recovery equipment, and building energy management systems.	All new energy using fixtures will satisfy current energy efficiency requirements.
Encourage new projects to provide ample daylight within the structure through the use of lighting shelves, exterior fins, skylights, atriums, courtyards, or other features to enhance natural light penetration.	The proposed dwelling will be subject to current building codes relating to energy efficiency.
Minimize the use of dark materials on roofs by requiring roofs to achieve a minimum solar reflectivity index (SRI) of	

10 for high-slope roofs and 64 for low-slope roofs (CALGreen 5.1 Planning and Design).	

San Luis Obispo County 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The 2023 RTP, which was adopted by the SLOCOG Board in June 2023, provides a collective vision for the region's future balancing transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. The Plan identified and tested growth scenarios to accommodate the coming 42,000 new people, 18,000 new homes, and 18,000 new jobs. The plan helps guide future planning efforts and policy decisions that affect transportation, including its relationship with housing and land use that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our region. The 2023 RTP provides recommendations to help our cities and the County of San Luis Obispo make important decisions about transportation, housing, and land-use. The 2023 RTP provides forward looking recommendations out to 2045 because many of our local government decisions will influence the region's long-term growth and development over the coming decades.

The RTP includes the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy and outlines how the region will meet or exceed its GHG reduction targets by creating more compact, walkable, bike-friendly, transit-oriented communities, preserving important habitat and agricultural areas, and promoting a variety of transportation demand management and system management tools and techniques to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network. The RTP and SCS provide guidance for the development and management of transportation systems county-wide to help achieve, among other objectives, GHG reduction goals. The RTP/SCS recommend strategies for community planning such as encouraging mixed-use, infill development that facilitate the use of modes of travel other than motor vehicles.

The project consists of one single family residence located in a predominantly rural area.

As discussed in Section III. Air Quality, the project does not include development of retail or commercial uses that would be open to the public, therefore, land use planning strategies such as mixed-use development and planning compact communities are generally not applicable. The project would result in the construction and occupancy of a single family residence that would typically be occupied by three residents. Therefore the project would not significantly affect the local area's jobs/housing balance.

California Air Resources Board (CARB) 2022 Scoping Plan. Pursuant to AB 32, the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) prepared and adopted the initial Scoping Plan to "*identify and make recommendations on direct emissions reductions measures, alternative compliance mechanisms, market-based compliance mechanisms, and potential monetary and non-monetary incentives*" in order to achieve the 2020 goal, and to achieve "*the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG emissions reductions*" by 2020 and maintain and continue reductions beyond 2020. AB 32 requires CARB to update the Scoping Plan at least every five years.

The 2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan recommends strategies to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 or earlier, outlining a technologically feasible, cost-effective, and equity-focused path to achieve the state's climate target. The 2022 plan, addressing recent legislation and direction from Governor Newsom, extends and expands upon earlier scoping plans with a target of reducing anthropogenic emissions to 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The 2022 plan also takes the unprecedented

step of adding carbon neutrality as a science-based guide and touchstone for California's climate work. The plan outlines how carbon neutrality can be achieved by taking steps to reduce GHGs to meet the anthropogenic emissions target and by expanding actions to capture and store carbon through the state's natural and working lands and using a variety of mechanical approaches.

The strategies described in the 2022 Scoping Plan are programmatic and intended to be implemented state-wide and industry-wide. They are therefore not applicable at the level of an individual project. However, as discussed in Section XVII. Transportation, the project is not expected to generate a significant increase in construction-related or operational traffic trips or Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) which is consistent with Scoping Plan strategies for reducing vehicle miles traveled. Overall, the project would have a *less than significant impact* relating to consistency with adopted plans and policies aimed at reducing GHG emissions.

Conclusion

GHG emissions would be *less than significant and less than cumulatively considerable* and consistent with plans adopted to reduce GHG emissions.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e)	For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Setting

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List (Cortese List), which is a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to California Government Code (CGC) Section 65962.5, is a planning document used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with CEQA requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. The project is not located in an area of known hazardous material contamination and is not on a site listed on the Cortese List (State Water Resources Control Board [SWRCB] 2021; California Department of Toxic Substance Control [DTSC] 2021).

The County has adopted general emergency plans for multiple potential natural disasters, including the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, County Emergency Operations Plan, Earthquake Plan, Dam and Levee Failure Plan, Hazardous Materials Response Plan, County Recovery Plan, and the Tsunami Response Plan.

The California Health and Safety Code provides regulations pertaining to the abatement of fire-related hazards and requires that local jurisdictions enforce the CBC, which provides standards for fire resistive building and roofing materials, and other fire-related construction methods. The Safety Element of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan provides a Fire Hazard Zones Map identifies areas of the unincorporated areas in the county within moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones. The project is located within the State Responsibility Area in a very high fire hazard severity zone. Based on the Safety Element map of response times, it would take more than 20 minutes to respond to a call regarding fire or life safety. For more information about fire-related hazards and risk assessment, see Section XX, Wildfire.

The Paso Robles Airport is located about 15 miles to the northeast; the project site is not located within an Airport Review Area.

Discussion

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

Construction Activities

Construction activities may involve the use of oils, fuels, and solvents. In the event of a leak or spill, persons, soil, and vegetation down-slope from the site may be affected. The use, storage, and transport of hazardous materials is regulated by DTSC (22 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 66001, et seq.). The use of hazardous materials on the project site for construction and maintenance is required to be in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. In addition, compliance with best management practices (BMPs) for the use and storage of hazardous materials would also address impacts. These BMPs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Determining whether a product constitutes a hazardous material in accordance with federal and state regulations;
- Properly characterizing the physical properties, reactivity, fire and explosion hazards of the various materials;
- Using storage containers that are appropriate for the quantity and characteristics of the materials;
- Properly labeling of containers and maintaining a complete and up to date inventory;
- Ongoing inspection and maintenance of containers in good condition;
- Proper storage of incompatible, ignitable and/or reactive wastes;

Project operations would involve the intermittent use of small amounts of household hazardous materials such as fertilizer and pesticides that are not expected to be acutely hazardous.

The project will be conditioned to comply with all applicable fire protection standards as determined by CAL FIRE, including, but not limited to, preparation of a fire safety plan. Compliance with the Uniform Fire Code and the recommendations of CalFIRE will ensure that potential impacts associated with hazards to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be *less than significant.*

Ongoing Use of the Project Site

Historic aerial photography of the project site shows no evidence of crop production since at least 1990. Therefore, there would be *no impact* associated with hazards to the public or the environment associated with the previous or ongoing use of fertilizers or pesticides.

(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?

Oils, gasoline, lubricants, fuels, and other potentially hazardous substances would be used and temporarily stored onsite during construction activities. A spill or leak of these materials under accident conditions during construction activities could create a potentially significant hazard to the surrounding environment including the agricultural pond located downslope of the area of disturbance. Mitigation measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 have been recommended to reduce potential impacts associated with upset or accident conditions during project construction.

Through required compliance with these standards, potential operational hazards associated with the use of ethanol onsite would be effectively minimized. Therefore, potential impacts associated with hazards to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset or accident conditions would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

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

The closest school facility is located approximately 7 miles east of the project site. Therefore, the project site is not located within 0.25 miles of an existing or proposed school; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

Based on the California DTSC's Envirostor and SWRCB's GeoTracker, the proposed project site is not listed on, nor is it located in close proximity to, a site listed on the Cortese List, which is a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to CGC Section 65962.5; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

The nearest airstrip in proximity to the project site is the Paso Robles Airport located approximately 15 miles northeast of the site. The project site is not located within an Airport Review designation or adjacent to a private airstrip. The project site is not located within or adjacent to an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of a public airport or private airstrip; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

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

The project does not require any road closures and would be required to be designed to accommodate emergency vehicle access. The project would not impair implementation or physically interfere with County hazard mitigation or emergency plans; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

(g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

The project is located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and has not been subject to a wildfire since at least 1950. The project will be conditioned to implement building and site improvements in accordance with the Fire Code, as detailed in the referral response letter from CalFire, including, but not limited to implementation of a fire safety plan. Therefore, potential impacts associated with exposure of people or structures to significant risk involving wildland fires would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

The project may include the use of potentially hazardous materials during construction. Mitigation measures have been identified below to reduce potential impacts associated with routine transport, use, and disposal of these materials, as well as potential hazards associated with upset and accident conditions and wildland fire risk. Upon implementation of measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, potential impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

Mitigation

HAZ-1 **Equipment Maintenance and Refueling.** During all construction activities, the cleaning, refueling, and maintenance of equipment and vehicles shall occur only within designated staging areas. The staging areas shall conform to all Best Management Practices applicable to attaining zero discharge of stormwater runoff. At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and to avoid potential leaks or spills.

HAZ-2 **Spill Response Protocol.** During all construction activities, all project-related spills of hazardous materials shall be cleaned up immediately. Appropriate spill prevention and cleanup materials shall be onsite at all times during construction.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
	(i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Setting

An unnamed ephemeral drainage flows northwest to southeast into a stock pond and generally defines the southern and western boundary of the project site. The stock pond has been constructed downstream of the ephemeral drainage on the adjacent property. Cienega Creek, a tributary of the Salinas River, is a 'blue line' creek that crosses the southerly boundary of the project site well outside the area of disturbance. There are no other blue line creeks associated with the project site. The creek supports a robust assemblage of riparian and riverine vegetation that lies outside the area of disturbance.

The RWQCB's Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin (Basin Plan; RWQCB 2017) describes how the quality of surface water and groundwater in the Central Coast Region should be managed to provide the highest water quality reasonably possible. The Basin Plan outlines the beneficial uses of streams, lakes, and other water bodies for humans and other life. There are 24 categories of beneficial uses, including, but not limited to, municipal water supply, water contact recreation, non-water contact recreation, and cold freshwater habitat. Water quality objectives are then established to protect the beneficial uses of those water resources. The RWQCB implements the Basin Plan by issuing and enforcing waste discharge requirements to individuals, communities, or businesses whose discharges can affect water quality.

In accordance with the LUO, a project that would change the runoff volume or velocity leaving any point of the site, result in an impervious surface of more than 20,000 square feet, or involve hillside development on slopes steeper than 10 percent is required to prepare a drainage plan for review and approval by the County. A drainage plan is not required where grading is exclusively for an exempt agricultural structure, crop production, or grazing. The LUO also requires the preparation of an erosion and sedimentation control plan for all construction and grading permit projects and site disturbance activities of one-half acre or more in geologically unstable areas, on slopes steeper than 30 percent, on highly erodible soils, or within 100 feet of any watercourse.

The County Department of Public Works is responsible for ensuring that new construction sites implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction, and that site plans incorporate appropriate post-construction stormwater runoff controls. Construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more must obtain coverage under the SWRCB's Construction General Permit. The Construction General Permit requires the preparation of a SWPPP to minimize on-site sedimentation and erosion. There are several types of projects that are exempt from preparing a SWPPP, including routine maintenance to existing developments, emergency construction activities, and projects exempted by the SWRCB or RWQCB. Projects that disturb less than 1 acre must implement all required elements within the site's erosion and sediment control plan as required by the LUO.

The project water demand will be served by a new groundwater well completed in 2022. Water for domestic consumption and fire suppression will be stored in a new water tank located near the building site for the new residence.

The project site does not lie within a Groundwater Basin as defined by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118.

For planning purposes, the flood event most often used to delineate areas subject to flooding is the 100-year flood. Areas subject to the 100-year flood of Cienega Creek have not been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Safety Element of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan establishes policies to reduce flood hazards and reduce flood damage, including, but not limited to, prohibition of development in areas of high flood hazard potential, discouragement of single-road access into remote areas that could be closed during floods, and review of plans for construction in low-lying areas.

Discussion

(a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?*

The project will involve 4,000 cubic yards of cut and 4,000 cy of fill and an area of disturbance of about 2.48 acres, including grading on slopes that exceed 30 percent. Accordingly, a sedimentation and erosion control plan will be required to minimize the potential for soil erosion, which will be subject to the review and approval of the County Building Division in accordance with LUO Section 22.52.120. The erosion and sedimentation control plan must set forth measures to minimize potential impacts related to erosion and will include requirements for specific erosion control materials, setbacks from creeks, and siltation. In addition, the project is located outside of a stormwater management area (MS4) and proposes a disturbance area greater than 1.0 acre, therefore, the project will be required to prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) by a qualified SWPPP developer in order to demonstrate compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act which prohibits certain discharges of stormwater containing pollutants.

The project will be conditioned to require all potentially hazardous materials to be stored, refilled, and dispensed on-site in full compliance with applicable County Department of Environmental Health standards and Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 and BIO-4 maintaining a minimum setback from the nearest creek or water feature, and compliance with existing County and state water quality, sedimentation, and erosion control standards. Therefore, as conditioned, the project would not result in a violation of any water quality standards, discharge into surface waters, or otherwise alter surface water quality; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

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

Project water demand would be served by a new groundwater well. Future water demand was derived by multiplying a water duty factor for each component of the project as summarized in Table 9.

Table 9 -- Estimate of Total Project Water Demand

Project Component	Quantity	Water Duty Factor	Total Water Demand (Acre-Feet Per Year[1])
Residence	1	0.8 AFY per dwelling unit[2]	0.80
Ornamental Landscaping	0.05 Acres	855 gallons per week[3]	0.01
Net New Water Demand:	**--**	**--**	**0.81 AFY[4]**

Sources:

1. One acre-foot is approximately 325,851 gallons.
2. Carollo Engineers, San Luis Obispo County 2012 Master Water Report, Volume III, Table 8. Water duty factors for inland areas. Indoor water use only.
3. University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Landscape Water Requirement Calculator, 2022
4. About 723 gallons per day: (0.81AFY*325851gal/AF/365 days).

The project application materials include a pump test for the newly constructed well (Miller Drilling Co., 2023). The well can produce 5.8 gallons per minute for 4 hours and recover in about 15 minutes. Therefore, the well can produce the expected daily demand for water (723 gallons) by pumping for about 2.0 hours per day. As conditioned, project impacts relating to water supply are not expected to substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin and project impacts are considered *less than significant with mitigation*.

(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:

(c-i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

The project will involve 4,000 cubic yards of cut and 4,000 cy of fill and an area of disturbance of about 2.48 acres, including grading on slopes that exceed 30 percent (Figure 6).

As discussed above, Cienega Creek, a tributary of the Salinas River, is a 'blue line' creek that crosses the southerly portion of the site outside the area of disturbance. In addition, a stock pond has been established downstream of the area of disturbance. Grading and construction activities have the potential to result in erosion which in turn could result in the siltation of the creek and ag pond. The project application materials include preliminary grading and erosion control plans (Figures 4, 5, 7, and 8) that include drainage collection, storage and conveyance infrastructure to ensure runoff does not adversely impact the quality of downstream surface or groundwater bodies. The project will be conditioned to prepare a final sedimentation and erosion control plan subject to the review and approval of the County Building Division in accordance with LUO Section 22.52.120.

In addition, the project will be required to comply with all National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements and prepare a SWPPP that incorporates BMPs during construction. Water quality protection measures would include protection of stockpiles, protection of slopes, protection of all disturbed areas, protection of access roads, and perimeter containment measures. Therefore, potential impacts associated with erosion and siltation from substantial alteration of the existing on-site drainage pattern would be *less than significant.*

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

The project will include the construction of impervious surfaces associated with the proposed all-weather access road, residence, garage/workshop and patio. Collectively, these features will increase the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff generated on site. The application materials include a preliminary grading and erosion control plan that includes drainage collection, storage, and conveyance infrastructure to ensure runoff does not adversely impact the quality of downstream surface or groundwater bodies.

In addition, the project will be subject to post-construction stormwater requirements through preparation and implementation of a SWPPP, which would identify appropriate Best Management Practices to capture and treat runoff before it leaves the site. Based on required compliance with applicable state and County drainage and stormwater control regulations, the project's impacts associated with increased surface runoff resulting in flooding on- or off-site would be *less than significant.*

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

The project will be subject to post-construction stormwater requirements through preparation and implementation of a SWPPP, which would identify appropriate Best Management Practices to capture and treat runoff before it leaves the site. Based on required compliance with applicable state and County drainage and stormwater control regulations, the project's impacts associated with increased surface runoff resulting in exceedance of the capacity of existing or planned drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff would be *less than significant.* See also the discussion in Section IV. Biology and mitigation BIO-4.

(c-iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Based on the County Flood Hazard Map, the area of disturbance is not located within a mapped 100-year flood zone. Therefore, *no impacts would occur.*

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

Based on the Safety Element Flood Hazard Map, the project site is not located within a mapped 100-year flood zone (County of San Luis Obispo 2013). Based on the San Luis Obispo County Tsunami Inundation Maps, the project site is not located in an area with potential for inundation by a tsunami (CDOC 2021). The area of disturbance is not located within close proximity to a standing body of water with the potential for a seiche to occur. Therefore, the project site has no potential to release pollutants due to project inundation and *no impacts would occur.*

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

As discussed in the setting, the project site does not lie within a designated groundwater basin subject to preparation of a sustainable groundwater management plan. As discussed in the setting, the project is required to comply with relevant permitting of the RWQCB. Therefore, potential impacts associated with conflict or obstruction of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

The project will result in *less than significant impacts* associated with water supply, water quality and hydrology. See also the discussion in Section IV. Biology and mitigation BIO-4.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

See Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

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

Setting

The LUO was established to guide and manage the future growth in the county in accordance with the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan; regulate land use in a manner that will encourage and support orderly development and beneficial use of lands; minimize adverse effects on the public resulting from inappropriate creation, location, use, or design of buildings or land uses; and protect and enhance significant natural, historic, archeological, and scenic resources within the county. The LUO is the primary tool used by the County to carry out the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan.

The Land Use Element (LUE) of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan provides policies and standards for the management of growth and development in each unincorporated community and rural areas of the county and serves as a reference point and guide for future land use planning studies throughout the county. The LUE identifies strategic growth principles to define and focus the County's proactive planning approach and balance environmental, economic, and social equity concerns. Each strategic growth principle correlates with a set of policies and implementation strategies that define how land will be used and resources protected. The LUE also defines each of the 14 land use designations and identifies standards for land uses based on the designation they are located within. The project parcel and adjacent properties are all within the Residential Rural land use designation.

The inland LUE also contains the area plans of each of the four inland planning areas: Carrizo, North County, San Luis Obispo, and South County. The area plans establish policies and programs for land use, circulation, public facilities, services, and resources that apply "areawide," in rural areas, and in unincorporated urban areas within each planning area. Part three of the LUE contains each of the 13 inland community and village plans, which contain goals, policies, programs, and related background information for the County's unincorporated inland urban and village areas.

The project site is located within the North County Planning Area and the Adelaida Sub-Area and is subject to the Geologic Study Area Combining Designation.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Discussion

(a) Physically divide an established community?

The project does not propose project elements or components that would physically divide the site from surrounding areas and uses. The project would be consistent with the general level of development within the project vicinity and would not create, close, or impede any existing public or private roads, or create any other barriers to movement or accessibility within the community. Therefore, the proposed project would not physically divide an established community and *impacts would be less than significant.*

(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?

The project would be consistent with the property's land use designation and the guidelines and policies for development within the applicable area plan, inland LUO, and the COSE. The project, as it may be conditioned, was found to be consistent with standards and policies set forth in the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan, the San Luis Obispo Area Plan, the SLOAPCD Clean Air Plan, and other land use policies for this area. The project would be required to be consistent with standards set forth by County Fire/CAL FIRE and the County Public Works Department.

The project would be required to implement measures to mitigate potential impacts associated with air quality, biological resources, geology and hazardous materials; therefore, with mitigation, the project would not conflict with policies or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects and impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

Conclusion

The project would be consistent with local and regional land use designations, plans, and policies and would not divide an established community. Potential impacts related to land use and planning would be *less than significant with mitigation* measures associated with air quality, biological resources, geology, hazards and hazardous materials.

Mitigation

Implement mitigation measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, BIO-1 through BIO-14, GEO-1, HAZ-1 and HAZ-2.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Result in the loss of availability of a locally- important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) requires that the State Geologist classify land into mineral resource zones (MRZ) according to the known or inferred mineral potential of the land (California PRC Sections 2710–2796).

The three MRZs used in the SMARA classification-designation process in the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara Production-Consumption Region are defined below (California Geological Survey [CGS] 2015):

- **MRZ-1:** Areas where available geologic information indicates that little likelihood exists for the presence of significant mineral resources.
- **MRZ-2:** Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists. This zone shall be applied to known mineral deposits or where well-developed lines of reasoning, based upon economic-geologic principles and adequate data, demonstrate that the likelihood for occurrence of significant mineral deposits is high.
- **MRZ-3:** Areas containing known or inferred aggregate resources of undetermined significance.

The LUO provides regulations for development in delineated Energy and Extractive Resource Areas (EX) and Extractive Resource Areas (EX1). The EX combining designation is used to identify areas of the county where:

1. Mineral or petroleum extraction occurs or is proposed to occur;
2. The state geologist has designated a mineral resource area of statewide or regional significance pursuant to California PRC Sections 2710 et seq. (SMARA); and
3. Major public utility electric generation facilities exist or are proposed.

The purpose of this combining designation is to protect significant resource extraction and energy production areas identified by the County LUE from encroachment by incompatible land uses that could hinder resource extraction or energy production operations, or land uses that would be adversely affected by extraction or energy production.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Discussion

(a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

Based on the California Geological Survey (CGS) Information Warehouse for Mineral Land Classification, the project site is not located within an area that has been evaluated for mineral resources and is not in close proximity to an active mine (CGS 2021).

In addition, based on Chapter 6 of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element – Mineral Resources, the project site is not located within an extractive resource area or an energy and extractive resource area. The project is not located within a designated mineral resource zone area or within an Extractive Resource Area combining designation. There are no known mineral resources in the project area; therefore, there would be *no impact* to mineral resources.

(b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally- important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

The project is not located within a designated mineral resource zone or within an Extractive Resource Area combining designation. There are no known mineral resources in the project area; therefore, there would be *no impact* to mineral resources.

Conclusion

No impacts to mineral resources would occur and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None necessary.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

XIII. NOISE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:					
(a)	Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The Noise Element of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan provides a policy framework for addressing potential noise impacts in the planning process. The purpose of the Noise Element is to minimize future noise conflicts. The Noise Element identifies the major noise sources in the county (highways and freeways, primary arterial roadways and major local streets, railroad operations, aircraft and airport operations, local industrial facilities, and other stationary sources) and includes goals, policies, and implementation programs to reduce future noise impacts. Among the most significant polices of the Noise Element are numerical noise standards that limit noise exposure within noise-sensitive land uses and performance standards for new commercial and industrial uses that might adversely impact noise-sensitive land uses.

Noise sensitive uses that have been identified by the County include the following:

- Residential development, except temporary dwellings
- Schools (preschool to secondary, college and university, and specialized education and training)
- Health care services (e.g., hospitals, clinics, etc.)
- Nursing and personal care
- Churches
- Public assembly and entertainment
- Libraries and museums
- Hotels and motels

- Bed and breakfast facilities
- Outdoor sports and recreation
- Offices

All sound levels referred to in the Noise Element are expressed in A-weighted decibels (dBA). A-weighting de-emphasizes the very low and very high frequencies of sound in a manner similar to the human ear.

The LUO establishes acceptable standards for exterior and interior noise levels and describes how noise will be measured for determining compliance with county noise level standards. Exterior noise level standards are applicable when a land use affected by noise is one of the sensitive uses listed in the Noise Element. Exterior noise levels are measured from the property line of the affected noise-sensitive land use.

Table 10 -- Maximum allowable exterior noise level standards[1]

Sound Levels	Daytime 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.	Nighttime [2]
Hourly Equivalent Sound Level (L_{eq}, dB)	50	45
Maximum level, dB	70	65

[1] When the receiving noise-sensitive land use is outdoor sports and recreation, the noise level standards are increased by 10 db.

[2] Applies only to uses that operate or are occupied during nighttime hours.

The existing ambient noise environment is characterized by marginal traffic on Tassajara Creek Road as well as noise associated with ongoing agricultural operations on surrounding properties. The nearest sensitive receptors are offsite residences located about 500 feet from potential construction areas.

Discussion

(a) *Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

Construction Impacts. The County LUO noise standards are subject to a range of exceptions, including noise sources associated with construction, provided such activities do not take place before 7 a.m. or after 9 p.m. on weekdays, or before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. on Saturday or Sunday. Noise associated with agricultural land uses (as listed in Section 22.06.030), traffic on public roadways, railroad line operations, and aircraft in flight are also exempt.

According to the 2005 Federal Highway Administration's Roadway Construction Noise Mode Database, noise associated with heavy construction equipment can range from about 73 to 101 dBA for non-impact equipment. Noise levels 50 feet from stationary equipment can range from 68 to 88 dBA. Table 11 provides an estimate of noise generated by temporary construction equipment that may be used for construction of the project.

Table 11 -- Estimate of Noise From Construction Equipment

Equipment	Quantity	dBA at 50 Feet[1]	dBA at 250 Feet[1]
Backhoe	1	78	64
Dozer	1	82	68
Excavator	1	81	67
Dump Truck	1	76	62
Generator	1	81	67
Pickup Truck	2	75	61
Total:	7	872[2]	

Notes:

1. Source: Federal Highway Administration's Roadway Construction Noise Mode Database.
2. Assumes all equipment are operating concurrently.

The nearest property line to the area of disturbance for a parcel other than the two where construction activities will occur is about 50 feet away. As shown in Table 11, construction related noise would likely temporarily exceed the maximum hourly daytime levels allowed by the County's noise standards at the nearest property line located to the south of the area of disturbance. Project construction would result in a temporary increase in noise levels associated with construction activities, equipment, and vehicle trips. Construction noise would be variable, temporary, and limited in nature and duration. The County LUO requires that construction activities be conducted during daytime hours and that construction equipment be equipped with appropriate mufflers recommended by the manufacturer. Compliance with these standards would ensure short-term construction noise would be *less than significant*.

Operational Impacts. Operational noise will be limited to motor vehicle traffic associated with home ownership. Therefore, operational noise will be below than County standards and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impacts associated with the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels would be *less than significant.*

(b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

The project will not involve the use of pile driving, or other high impact activities that would generate substantial groundborne noise or groundborne vibration during construction. In addition, construction equipment has the potential to generate minor groundborne noise and/or vibration, but these activities would be limited in duration. The project does not propose a use that would generate long-term operational groundborne noise or vibration. Therefore, impacts related to exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels would be *less than significant.*

(c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The nearest airstrip in proximity to the project site is the Paso Robles Airport located approximately 15 miles to the east. The project site is not located within an Airport Review designation or adjacent

to a private airstrip. The project site is not located within or adjacent to an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of a public airport or private airstrip; therefore, *no impact would occur*.

Conclusion

Short-term construction activities would be limited in nature and duration and conducted during daytime periods per LUO standards. Operational noise levels will be less than the standards set forth in the LUO and are considered less than significant. No other potentially significant impacts were identified, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The Housing Element of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan recognizes the difficulty for residents to find suitable and affordable housing within San Luis Obispo County. The Housing Element includes an analysis of vacant and underutilized land located in urban areas that is suitable for residential development and considers zoning provisions and development standards to encourage development of these areas. Consistent with state housing element laws, these areas are categorized into potential sites for very low- and low-income households, moderate-income households, and above moderate-income households.

In its efforts to provide for affordable housing, the County currently administers the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which provide limited financing to projects relating to affordable housing throughout the county.

The project site is currently vacant.

Discussion

(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)?

The project proposes construction of a residence that would be occupied by about three persons. Employed residents would not require new or additional housing as a result of the proposed project. The project would not generate new employment opportunities that would encourage population growth in the area. The project does not include the extension or establishment of new public roads, utilities, or other infrastructure to the site that would induce development and population growth in new areas. Therefore, the project would not directly or indirectly induce substantial growth and impacts would be *less than significant.*

(b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The project would not displace existing housing or necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Conclusion

No impacts to population and housing would occur and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None necessary.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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 for any of the public services:				
	Fire protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Police protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Schools?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Parks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Fire protection services in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County are provided by CAL FIRE, which has been under contract with the County to provide full-service fire protection since 1930. Approximately 180 full-time state employees operate the County Fire Department, supplemented by as many as 100 state seasonal fire fighters, 300 County paid-call and reserve fire fighters, and 120 state inmate fire fighters. CAL FIRE responds to emergencies and other requests for assistance, plans for and takes action to prevent emergencies and reduce their impact, coordinates regional emergency response efforts, and provides public education and training in local communities. CAL FIRE has 24 fire stations located throughout the county, and the project would be served by the Templeton Fire Station, located approximately 7 miles east of the project site in the community of Templeton. Emergency personnel would be able to reach the site in more than 20 minutes of receiving a call.

Police protection and emergency services in the unincorporated portions of the county are provided by the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office Patrol Division responds to calls for service, conducts proactive law enforcement activities, and performs initial investigations of crimes. Patrol personnel are deployed from three stations throughout the county, the Coast Station in Los Osos, the North County Station in Templeton, and the South Station in Oceano. The project would be served by the County Sheriff's Office, and the nearest sheriff station is located approximately 7 miles to the east in the community of Templeton.

San Luis Obispo County has a total of 12 school districts that currently enroll approximately 34,000 students in over 75 schools. The project site is located within the Paso Robles Unified School District.

Within the County's unincorporated areas, there are currently 23 parks, three golf courses, four trails/staging areas, and eight Special Areas that include natural areas, coastal access, and historic facilities currently operated and maintained by the County.

Public facilities fees, Quimby fees, and developer conditions are several ways the County currently funds public services. A public facility fee program (i.e., development impact fee program) has been adopted to address impacts related to public facilities (county) and schools (CGC Section 65995 et seq.). The fee amounts are assessed annually by the County based on the type of proposed development and the development's proportional impact and are collected at the time of building permit issuance. Public facility fees are used as needed to finance the construction of and/or improvements to public facilities required to the serve new development, including fire protection, law enforcement, schools, parks, and roads.

Discussion

(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 for any of the public services:*

Fire protection?

The project will be designed to comply with all fire safety rules and regulations, including the California Fire Code and California PRC, which include improvements to the existing access road to accommodate emergency vehicle access, vegetation clearing or trimming around all existing and proposed structures, and potential installation of a water storage tank for fire protection (if fire sprinklers are required). The project will be conditioned to implement all requirements identified by the County Fire Department/CAL FIRE (letter of April, 2024 from Kevin McLain) for the project including items to be completed prior to final inspection/operation. Based on the limited amount of development proposed, the project would not create a significant new demand for fire services. In addition, the project will be subject to public facility fees to offset the increased cumulative demand on fire protection services. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*. Additional information regarding wildfire hazard impacts is discussed in Section XX, Wildfire. Additional information regarding fire related hazard impacts is discussed in Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

Police protection?

The project would be subject to public facility fees to offset the project's cumulative contribution to demand on law enforcement services. Therefore, impacts related to police services would be *less than significant.*

Schools?

As discussed in Section XIV, Population/Housing, the project would not induce significant population growth and would not result in the need for additional school services or facilities. However, the project would be subject to school impact fees, pursuant to California Education Code Section 17620, to help fund construction or reconstruction of school facilities. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Parks?

As discussed in Section XIV, Population and Housing, the project would not induce a substantial increase in population growth and would not result in the need for additional parks or recreational

services or facilities to serve new populations; therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

Other public facilities?

As discussed above, the proposed project would be subject to applicable fees to offset negligible increased demands on public facilities; therefore, there would be *no impacts* related to other public facilities.

Conclusion

The project does not propose development that would substantially increase demands on public services and would not induce population growth that would substantially increase demands on public services. The project would be subject to payment of development impact fees to reduce the project's negligible contribution to increased demands on public services and facilities. Therefore, potential impacts related to public services would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None are necessary.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XVI. RECREATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The Parks and Recreation Element (Recreation Element) of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan establishes goals, policies, and implementation measures for the management, renovation, and expansion of existing parks and recreation facilities and the development of new parks and recreation facilities in order to meet existing and projected needs and to assure an equitable distribution of parks throughout the county.

Public facilities fees, Quimby fees, and developer conditions are several ways the County currently funds public parks and recreational facilities. Public facility fees are collected upon construction of new residential units and currently provide funding for new community-serving recreation facilities. Quimby Fees are collected when new residential lots are created and can be used to expand, acquire, rehabilitate, or develop community-serving parks. Finally, a discretionary permit issued by the County may condition a project to provide land, amenities, or facilities consistent with the Recreation Element.

The County Bikeways Plan identifies and prioritizes bikeway facilities throughout the unincorporated area of the county, including bikeways, parking, connections with public transportation, educational programs, and funding. The Bikeways Plan is updated every 5 years and was last updated in 2016. The plan identifies goals, policies, and procedures geared towards realizing significant bicycle use as a key component of the transportation options for San Luis Obispo County residents. The plan also includes descriptions of bikeway design and improvement standards, an inventory of the current bicycle circulation network, and a list of current and future bikeway projects within the county.

Discussion

(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 project proposes the construction of a single family residence that could be occupied by as many as three persons. The project is not proposed in a location that would affect any existing trail, park, recreational facility, coastal access, and/or natural area. The project would not result in substantial growth within the area and would not substantially increase demand on any proximate

existing neighborhood or regional park or other recreational facilities. Payment of standard development impact fees would ensure any incremental increase in use of existing parks and recreational facilities would be reduced to *less than significant.*

(b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The project does not include the construction of new recreational facilities and would not result in a substantial increase in demand or use of parks and recreational facilities. Implementation of the project would not require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

The project would not result in the significant increase in use, construction, or expansion of parks or recreational facilities. Therefore, potential impacts related to recreation would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None necessary.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The County Department of Public Works maintains updated traffic count data for all County-maintained roadways. In addition, Traffic Circulation Studies have been conducted within several community areas using traffic models to reasonably simulate current traffic flow patterns and forecast future travel demands and traffic flow patterns. These community Traffic Circulation Studies include the South County Circulation Study, Los Osos Circulation Study, Templeton Circulation Study, San Miguel Circulation Study, Avila Circulation Study, and North Coast Circulation Study. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) maintains annual traffic data on state highways and interchanges within the county.

The County has established Level of Service (LOS) "C" or better for rural roadways. The project site is currently undeveloped and generates a very low volume of traffic. As discussed in the baseline conditions, traffic counts for Santa Rosa Creek Road taken north of Highway 46 in 2022 revealed an average daily traffic volume of 134 and an afternoon peak hour volume of 11.

In 2013 SB 743 was signed into law with the intent to "more appropriately balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions" and required the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to identify new metrics for identifying and mitigating transportation impacts as determined by the CEQA process. As a result, in December 2018, the California Natural Resources Agency certified and adopted updates to the State CEQA Guidelines. The revisions included new requirements related to the implementation of SB 743 and identified VMT per capita, VMT per employee, and net VMT as new metrics for transportation analysis under CEQA (as detailed in Section 15064.3[b]). The County of San Luis Obispo has developed a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Program (Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines; Rincon, October 2020 & VMT Thresholds Study; GHD, March 2021). The program provides operating thresholds and includes a screening tool for evaluating VMT impacts.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

The County's Framework for Planning (Inland), includes the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan. The Framework establishes goals and strategies to meet pedestrian circulation needs by providing usable and attractive sidewalks, pathways, and trails to establish maximum access and connectivity between land use designations. Due to the remote location of the project site, there are no pedestrian, bicycle, or public transit facilities serving the project site.

The 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the region's long-range (2023-2045) plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). RTP provides a collective vision for the region's future balancing transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. The Plan identified and tested growth scenarios to accommodate the coming 42,000 new people, 18,000 new homes, and 18,000 new jobs. The plan helps guide future planning efforts and policy decisions that affect transportation, including its relationship with housing and land use that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our region.

Discussion

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

The project does not propose substantial temporary or long-term alteration of any proximate transportation facilities. Motor vehicle trips associated with the project are expected to add a net increase of about 9.6 average daily trips to Santa Rosa Creek Road and SR 46. Construction activities will require temporary construction trips to and from the site. The project is not likely to generate foot or bicycle traffic or generate public transit demand and would have a less than significant impact on levels of service/conditions for these facilities.

The project was referred to the Public Works Department who did not identify any road-related or traffic impact concerns (JR Beard, letter of April 4, 2024).

Based on the existing low level of traffic on Santa Rosa Creek Road, and the expected increase in average daily trips, the project is not expected to result in any long-term changes in traffic or circulation or reduce the Level of Service below LOS "C". The project would be consistent with the County Framework for Planning (Inland) and consistent with the projected level of growth and development identified in the 2023 RTP. The project does not propose uses that would interfere or conflict with applicable policies related to circulation, transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian systems or facilities. And would not conflict with adopted policies, plans or programs for transportation. Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

No significant traffic impacts were identified, and no mitigation measures above what are already required by existing regulations are necessary.

(b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Section 15064.3 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that a CEQA compliance document include an assessment of whether a project would generate potentially significant levels of VMT. To assist in these efforts, the County of San Luis Obispo has developed new Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines (TIAG) (March 2021) that include thresholds of significance for VMT as well as screening criteria and methodologies for performing VMT analysis.

The TIAG is accompanied by a VMT screening model that compares the current (baseline) per capita VMT in a particular VMT impact zone with future per capita VMT inclusive of the project. As a result, the VMT analysis of a given project is also considered to be a cumulative impact analysis.

Map Based Screening. The TIAG includes two maps that depict areas of the unincorporated county where residential and work-based projects would generate an average VMT that is 15% below (or lower than) the baseline VMT metric (or 85% of the baseline or lower) and would therefore not require a VMT analysis. According to Figure 1 of the TIAG screening maps, the project site is not located within one of these areas. Therefore, the project does not meet this screening criteria. However, if VMT generated by a project is not presumed to be less than significant based on these screening maps, it does not necessarily mean that the project would have a VMT impact, only that a less than significant impact cannot be assumed, and that a VMT analysis would be necessary to make that determination.

Project Size. Small projects that are found to be consistent with the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments Sustainable Communities Strategies (SLOCOG SCS) or San Luis Obispo County General Plan and generate fewer than 110 daily trips are considered to have a less than significant VMT impact. According to the TIAG, a single family residential project with 11 or fewer units would generate less than 110 daily trips and would be considered to have a less than significant impact on VMT. Since the project is consistent with the North County Plan and proposes one single family residence, it is considered to have VMT impacts that are *less than significant and less than cumulatively considerable.*

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

A project referral package was sent to the Public Works Department and they did not identify any traffic related issues (JR Beard, letter of April 4, 2024). The project will be conditioned to construct all access improvements to Santa Rosa Creek Road consistent with County standards. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

The project will be conditioned to construct all access improvements from Santa Rosa Creek Road consistent with County standards. More specifically, the access road must be improved to an all weather surface and must be 16 feet wide with turnouts as needed and an area for emergency vehicles to turn around.

The project would not result in road closures during short-term construction activities or long-term operations. Individual access to adjacent properties would be maintained during construction activities and throughout the project area. Project implementation would not affect long-term access through the project area and sufficient alternative access exists to accommodate regional trips. Therefore, the project would not adversely affect existing emergency access and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

The project would not alter existing transportation facilities or result in the generation of substantial additional trips or vehicle miles traveled. Payment of standard development fees and compliance with existing regulations would ensure potential impacts were reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
	(i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☐	☐	☒
	(ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Approved in 2014, AB 52 added tribal cultural resources to the categories of resources that must be evaluated under CEQA. Tribal cultural resources are defined as either of the following:

1. Sites, features, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
    a. Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR; or
    b. Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of California PRC Section 5020.1.
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth California PRC Section 5024.1(c).

In applying these criteria for the purposes of this paragraph, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe.

Recognizing that tribes have specific expertise with regard to their tribal history and practices, AB 52 requires lead agencies to provide notice to tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of a proposed project if they have requested notice of projects proposed within that area. If the tribe requests consultation within 30 days upon receipt of the notice, the lead agency must consult with the tribe regarding the potential for adverse impacts on tribal cultural resources as a result of a project. Consultation may include discussing the type of environmental review necessary, the presence and/or significance of tribal cultural resources, the level of significance of a project's impacts on the tribal cultural resources, and available project alternatives and mitigation measures recommended by the tribe to avoid or lessen potential impacts on tribal cultural resources.

In accordance with AB 52 Cultural Resources requirements, outreach to the Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, tiṭyu tiṭyu yak tiłhini Northern Chumash, and Northern Chumash Tribal Council.

Discussion

(a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

(a-i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

As discussed in Section V. Cultural Resources, the Phase I study determined that the site does not contain any known tribal cultural resources that have been listed or been found eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in PRC Section 5020.1. Potential impacts associated with the inadvertent discovery of tribal cultural resources would be subject to LUO 22.10.040 (Archaeological Resources), which requires that in the event resources are encountered during project construction, construction activities shall cease, and the County Planning and Building Department shall be notified of the discovery so that the extent and location of discovered materials may be recorded by a qualified archaeologist, and the disposition of artifacts may be accomplished in accordance with state and federal law. Therefore, there would be *no impact* related to a substantial adverse change in the significance of tribal cultural resources.

(a-ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (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.

As discussed in Section V. Cultural Resources, the Phase I study determined that the site does not contain any known tribal cultural resources within the areas of disturbance. Impacts associated with potential inadvertent discovery would be minimized through compliance with existing standards and regulations (LUO 22.10.040), would reduce potential impacts to *less than significant*.

Conclusion

Cultural resources are not expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site. In the event unanticipated sensitive resources are discovered during project activities, adherence with LUO standards

and State Health and Safety Code procedures would reduce potential impacts to less than significant; therefore, potential impacts to tribal cultural resources would be *less than significant.*

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The County Department of Public Works provides water and wastewater services for specific County Service Areas (CSAs) that are managed through issuance of water/wastewater "will serve" letters. The Department of Public Works currently maintains CSAs for the communities of Nipomo, Oak Shores, Cayucos, Avila Beach, Shandon, the San Luis Obispo County Club, and Santa Margarita. Other unincorporated areas in the county rely on on-site wells and individual wastewater systems. Regulatory standards and design criteria for on-site wastewater treatment systems are provided by the Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (California OWTS Policy).

The Department of Public Works is responsible for ensuring that new construction sites implement BMPs during construction, and that site plans incorporate appropriate post-construction stormwater runoff controls. Construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more must obtain coverage under the SWRCB's

Construction General Permit. PG&E is the primary electricity provider and both PG&E and SoCalGas provide natural gas services for urban and rural communities within the county. The project would be served by an existing well. The project's energy needs would be provided by PG&E.

There are three landfills in San Luis Obispo County: Cold Canyon Landfill, located near the city of San Luis Obispo; Chicago Grade Landfill, located near the community of Templeton; and Paso Robles Landfill, located east of the city of Paso Robles. The project's solid waste needs would be served by the Chicago Grade landfill.

Discussion

(a) *Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

The project will be served by a new well and a new septic system. Based on the project description, the project, as conditioned, is not expected to result in a substantial increase in the demand for water, wastewater, or stormwater collection, treatment, or disposal facilities that would require the construction of new or expanded facilities other than those on site necessary to serve the project. The project would not result in a substantial increase in energy demand, natural gas, or telecommunications; no new or expanded facilities would be required. No utility relocations are proposed. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

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

As discussed in Section X, Hydrology and Water Quality, the project will result in an estimated new water demand of 0.81 AFY and will be served by an existing well constructed in 2022. The well test conducted in 2023 concluded that the well can adequately supply the residence. The project will be conditioned to demonstrate the adequacy of the water supply for domestic use and fire protection prior to building permit issuance. As conditioned, impacts related to water supplies would be *less than significant.*

(c) *Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*

The project will not be served by a community wastewater provider. Therefore, *no impacts would occur.*

(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?*

The nearest landfill to the site is the Chicago Grade Landfill located approximately 15 miles to the southeast. The landfill has a remaining capacity of approximately 8.8 million cubic yards. The incremental amount of waste generated by the project that is not recycled/reused would be within the service capacity of the landfill. Construction activities would result in the generation of minimal solid waste materials; no significant long-term increase in solid waste would occur. Local landfills have adequate permit capacity to serve the project and the project does not propose to generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals. Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

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

The project would not result in a substantial increase in waste generation during project construction or operation. Construction waste disposal would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

The project would not result in significant increased demands on wastewater or stormwater infrastructure and facilities. No substantial increase in solid waste generation would occur. Therefore, potential impacts to utilities and service systems would be *less than significant.*

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

XX. WILDFIRE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:					
(a)	Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

In central California, the fire season usually extends from roughly May through October; however, recent events indicate that wildfire behavior, frequency, and duration of the fire season are changing in California. Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) are defined by CALFIRE based on the presence of fire-prone vegetation, climate, topography, assets at risk (e.g., high population centers), and a fire protection agency's ability to provide service to the area (CAL FIRE 2007). FHSZs throughout the county have been designated as "Very High," "High," or "Moderate." In San Luis Obispo County, most of the area that has been designated as a "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone" is located in the Santa Lucia Mountains, which extend parallel to the coast along the entire length of San Luis Obispo County. The project is located within the State Responsibility Area and a "Very High" fire hazard severity zone, and, based on the County's fire response time map, it would take more than 20 minutes to respond to a call regarding fire or life safety.

The County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) addresses several overall policy and coordination functions related to emergency management. The EOP includes the following components:

- Identifies the departments and agencies designated to perform response and recovery activities and specifies tasks they must accomplish;

- Outlines the integration of assistance that is available to local jurisdictions during disaster situations that generate emergency response and recovery needs beyond what the local jurisdiction can satisfy;
- Specifies the direction, control, and communications procedures and systems that will be relied upon to alert, notify, recall, and dispatch emergency response personnel; alert the public; protect residents and property; and request aid/support from other jurisdictions and/or the federal government;
- Identifies key continuity of government operations; and
- Describes the overall logistical support process for planned operations.

Topography influences wildland fire to such an extent that slope conditions can often become a critical wildland fire factor. Conditions such as speed and direction of dominant wind patterns, the length and steepness of slopes, direction of exposure, and/or overall ruggedness of terrain influence the potential intensity and behavior of wildland fires and/or the rates at which they may spread (Barros et al. 2013).

The Safety Element establishes goals, policies, and programs to reduce the threat to life, structures, and the environment caused by fire. Policy S-13 identifies that new development should be carefully located, with special attention given to fuel management in higher fire risk areas, and that new development in fire hazard areas should be configured to minimize the potential for added danger. Implementation strategies for this policy include identifying high risk areas, developing and implementing mitigation efforts to reduce the threat of fire, requiring fire resistant material be used for building construction in fire hazard areas, and encouraging applicants applying for subdivisions in fire hazard areas to cluster development to allow for a wildfire protection zone.

The California Fire Code provides minimum standards for many aspects of fire prevention and suppression activities. These standards include provisions for emergency vehicle access, water supply, fire protection systems, and the use of fire resistant building materials.

The County EOP outlines the emergency measures that are essential for protecting public health and safety. These measures include, but are not limited to, public alert and notifications, emergency public information, and protective actions. The EOP also addresses policy and coordination related to emergency management.

According to data provided by CalFire, the project site has not been subject to a wildfire since at least 1950.

Discussion

(a) *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The project does not require any road closures, and the access road is being designed to accommodate emergency vehicle access.

Santa Rosa Creek Road serves multiple properties with residences in a very high fire hazard area including the project site. The project will be conditioned to demonstrate compliance with the regulations provided in Title 14 of the State Response Area Fire Safety Regulations provided in section 1270.02(b) prior to building permit issuance. As conditioned, implementation of the proposed project would not have a permanent impact on any adopted emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans. Temporary construction activities and staging would not substantially alter existing circulation patterns or trips. Access to adjacent areas would be maintained throughout the duration of the project.

Based on the County's Land Use View tool and Dam and Levee Failure Plan, the project is not located within an area that would be inundated in the event of a dam failure. The project would not impair

implementation or physically interfere with County hazard mitigation or emergency plans; therefore, no impacts related to emergency plans would occur.

Therefore, the project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

(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?

The residence will be located in an area surrounded by dense stands of live oaks and chaparral. Winds in the area vary from 6-8 miles per hour and primarily come from the north and west. As described in Section VI. Geology and Soils, the potential for landslides in the project area of disturbance is low, so long as the recommendations of the geotechnical investigations are implemented. Although the project is proposing a limited amount of disturbance in areas of steep slopes for construction of the access road, such disturbance would not be conducive to the formation of debris flows.

The site is located within a State Responsibility Area and based on the County's fire response time map, it would take more than 20 minutes to respond to a call regarding fire or life safety. In accordance with the referral response from CalFire (Kevin McLean, April 19, 2024) the project will be conditioned to incorporate all required fire safety rules and regulations, including:

- Relevant provisions of the California Uniform Fire Code and Public Resources Code;
- Improvements to the access road and site to accommodate emergency vehicle access. More specifically, the fire access road must comply with the requirements of C.C.R Title 14 and San Luis Obispo County Title 16.
- Vegetation clearing or trimming (fuel management);
- Demonstration of an approved water supply for fire protection which shall be made available as soon as combustible material arrives on the site. Provision of a 5,000 gallon water storage tank for fire protection and the installation of fire hydrants and automatic fire sprinklers.

In addition, the project will be conditioned to comply with all applicable fire protection standards as determined by CalFire, including, but not limited to, preparation of a fire safety plan; the project will be required to comply with the requirements of the plan for the life of the project. Compliance with the Uniform Fire Code and the recommendations of CalFIRE in their referral response (Kevin McLean, April 19, 2024) will ensure that potential impacts associated with slope, prevailing winds, and other factors will be *less than significant*.

Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

(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?

As discussed above under item (b), the project would be designed to comply with all fire safety rules and regulations, including the California Fire Code and Public Resources Code, which includes construction of an access road/driveway to accommodate emergency vehicle access, vegetation clearing or trimming around all proposed structures, and installation of water storage for fire protection. These infrastructure improvements are required for the life of the project and would

reduce fire risk (see also the response provided under item b), above). Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant.*

(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?

The residence will be located on a relatively level area at the northerly terminus of the proposed access road in an area surrounded by scattered oak trees, chaparral, and annual grasses. Although the project is proposing disturbance in areas of steep slopes as described in Section VI., Geology and Soils, the potential for landslides on the project site and the area of disturbance is considered low, so long as the recommendations of the geotechnical investigations are implemented. The project includes the construction of a residence that would incorporate the provisions of a complete grading, drainage and erosion control plan consistent with County and CalFire standards. Therefore, the project will not expose the occupants to significant risks such as downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes and project impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

As conditioned, the project would not expose people or structures to new or exacerbated wildfire risks and would not require the development of new or expanded infrastructure or maintenance to reduce wildfire risks. Therefore, potential impacts associated with wildfire would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Mitigation

None are required.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

(a) *Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?*

As discussed in each resource section above, upon implementation of identified mitigation measures, the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to biological or cultural resources and would not substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*

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

The State CEQA Guidelines define cumulative impacts as "two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Section 15355 of the State CEQA Guidelines further states that individual effects can be various changes related to a single project or the change involved in a number of other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The State CEQA Guidelines state that the discussion of cumulative impacts should reflect the severity of the impacts as well as the likelihood of their occurrence. However, the discussion need not be as detailed as the discussion of environmental impacts attributable to the project alone. Furthermore, the discussion should remain practical and reasonable in considering other projects and related cumulatively considerable impacts.

Aesthetics

The analysis provided in Section I., Aesthetics, concludes that the project will result in development that is consistent with the type, scale, character and location of surrounding properties and areas visible from public vantages. Project impacts, when combined with additional development and activities likely to occur on surrounding properties within the viewshed are considered *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The analysis provided in Section II, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, indicates that the project would have no impact to important farmland and would not result in the conversion of surrounding farmland to another use. In addition, no potential impacts to forest land or timberland would occur. The project would not result in a conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or with the existing Open Space Agreement. Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable development, the contribution of the project's potential impacts to agriculture and forestry resources is considered *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Air Quality

The analysis provided in Section III, Air Quality, concludes that the project's potential construction-related emissions would not exceed SLOAPCD thresholds of significance. In addition, construction related emissions are not expected to adversely impact sensitive receptors on surrounding parcels. The project site may be within an area underlain by naturally occurring asbestos. With implementation of recommended mitigation measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, project construction, operational, and cumulative impacts would be *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation*.

Biological Resources

The analysis provided in Section IV, Biological Resources, concludes that the project would have a less-than-significant impact upon implementation of the identified avoidance and mitigation measures for special-status wildlife species and their habitats. With implementation of measures BIO-1 through BIO-14 potential impacts to biological resources would be less than significant.

Based on the mitigation measures identified to reduce potential project impacts, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable development in the area, project impacts associated with biological resources would be *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation*.

Cultural Resources

The analysis provided in Section V. Cultural Resources concludes that project development would not result in significant impacts to cultural resources and project related impacts are considered less than significant.

Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable development in the area, project impacts associated with cultural resources would be *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Energy

The analysis provided in Section VI. Energy concludes that the project's contribution to the overall increased demand for electricity and natural gas would not have the potential to result in potentially cumulatively considerable environmental impacts the wasteful, inefficient and unnecessary use of energy because the residence would be required to comply with relevant building codes relating to energy conservation. Therefore, the project's environmental impacts associated with energy use would be *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Geology and Soils

As discussed in Section VII. Geology and Soils, the project is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Hazard Zone and would be required to comply with the CBC and other applicable standards to ensure the effects of ground instability or a potential seismic event would be minimized through compliance with current engineering practices and techniques as well as incorporation of the recommendations of the geotechnical analyses prepared for the site. Therefore, project related impacts to soils and geologic resources is considered *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation*. Based on the underlying geologic formation, the project's potential impacts to previously unknown paleontological resources would be *less than significant* and *less than cumulatively considerable.*

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As discussed in Section VI, Energy, the project is estimated to generate an additional 17.7 metric tons of CO_2. As stated in Section VIII., a project estimated to generate less than 830 MMTCO2e GHG is assumed to have a less than significant adverse impact that is not cumulatively considerable and consistent with the GHG reduction objectives of AB32 and SB32.

Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with GHG emissions would be *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

As discussed in Section IX. Hazards and Hazardous Materials, construction activities may include the use of hazardous materials that could result in potential hazards through routine transport, use, and disposal as well as under upset or accident conditions. Mitigation measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 have been identified to reduce potential impacts by restricting the location of equipment maintenance, refueling and other potentially hazardous activities, and identifying the appropriate response protocol for immediate cleanup of any spills.

Project impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials would be *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation.*

Hydrology and Water Quality

As discussed in Section X. Hydrology and Water Quality, the project is not located within a mapped groundwater basin as determined by the Department of Water Resources. Project related water demand is estimated to be 0.81 AFY which can be satisfied by the existing well. The project will be conditioned to provide evidence of sufficient water supplies to the Department of Environmental Health and CalFire standards. Therefore, project impacts are considered *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Noise

As discussed in Section XIII, Noise, project related noise associated with construction activities and outdoor cultivation would be less than significant.

Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable development, the contribution of the subject project to potential noise impacts is considered *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Population and Housing

The most recent projection of regional growth for San Luis Obispo County is the 2050 Regional Growth Forecast (RGF) for San Luis Obispo County, prepared and adopted by SLOCOG in 2017. Using the Medium Scenario, the total county population, housing, and employment for both incorporated and unincorporated areas is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 0.50% per year. Between 2015 and 2050, the County's population is projected to increase by 44,000, or about 1,260 residents per year. Within the unincorporated area, the population is expected to increase by about 19,500 residents, or about 557 per year. Employment is expected to increase by about 6,441, or about 184 per year.

The project could be expected to be occupied by about three residents. Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable development in the unincorporated county, the contribution of the subject project to impacts related to housing and population is considered *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Public Services

The project would be subject to adopted public facility (County) and school (CGC Section 65995 et seq.) fee programs to offset impacts to public services. Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other reasonably foreseeable projects, the contribution of the subject project to potential public services impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable.

Transportation

As discussed in Section XVII, Transportation, the project would not result in a conflict with a plan or policy addressing the circulation system, or increase hazards due to a geometric design feature. Therefore, the project's potential traffic impacts would be *less than cumulatively considerable*.

County Fire/CAL FIRE requirements will be enforced as conditions of approval.

Project related VMT is expected to fall below the County's thresholds of significance.

Moreover, each new project will be required to mitigate the project-specific impacts to the transportation network. Such mitigation may include, but is not limited to, the installation of roadway and intersection improvements necessary to serve the project and the payment of applicable road improvement fees. Therefore, when considered with the potential impacts of other

reasonably foreseeable development, the contribution of the subject project to roadway impacts would be *less than cumulatively considerable*.

Other Impact Issue Areas

Based on the project's less-than-significant impacts and the discretionary review of all surrounding reasonably foreseeable future development, the project's potential impacts associated with the following issue areas would be *less than cumulatively considerable*:

- Land Use Planning;
- Mineral Resources;
- Recreation;
- Tribal Cultural Resources;
- Utilities and Service Systems; and
- Wildfire.

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

Environmental impacts that may have an adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly, are analyzed in each environmental resource section above. In addition, implementation of mitigation measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, and identified in in the resource sections above would reduce potential adverse effects on human beings to less than significant; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

Conclusion

Potential impacts would be less than significant upon implementation of mitigation measures identified in the resource sections above.

Sources

Provided in Exhibit A.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Exhibit A - Initial Study References and Agency Contacts

The County Planning Department has contacted various agencies for their comments on the proposed project. With respect to the subject application, the following have been contacted (marked with an ☒) and when a response was made, it is either attached or in the application file:

Contacted	Agency	Response
☒	County Public Works Department	**In File****
☒	County Environmental Health Services	**None**
☒	County Agricultural Commissioner's Office	**None**
☐	County Airport Manager	**Not Applicable**
☐	Airport Land Use Commission	**Not Applicable**
☒	Air Pollution Control District	**None**
☐	County Sheriff's Department	**Not Applicable**
☐	Regional Water Quality Control Board	**Not Applicable**
☐	CA Coastal Commission	**Not Applicable**
☐	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife	**Not Applicable**
☐	CA Department of Forestry (Cal Fire)	**Not Applicable**
☒	CA Department of Transportation	**None**
☐	Community Services District	**Not Applicable**
☒	Other Building	**In File****
☒	Other AB 52 Tribes	**None**

** "No comment" or "No concerns"-type responses are usually not attached

The following checked ("☒") reference materials have been used in the environmental review for the proposed project and are hereby incorporated by reference into the Initial Study. The following information is available at the County Department of Planning and Building.

☒ Project File for the Subject Application

County Documents

☐ Coastal Plan Policies
☒ Framework for Planning (Coastal/Inland)
☒ General Plan (Inland/Coastal), includes all maps/elements; more pertinent elements:
- ☒ Agriculture Element
- ☒ Conservation & Open Space Element
- ☐ Economic Element
- ☒ Housing Element
- ☒ Noise Element
- ☒ Parks & Recreation Element/Project List
- ☒ Safety Element

☒ Land Use Ordinance (Inland/Coastal)
☒ Building and Construction Ordinance
☒ Public Facilities Fee Ordinance
☐ Real Property Division Ordinance
☐ Affordable Housing Fund
☐ Airport Land Use Plan
☒ Energy Wise Plan
☒ North County Area Plan/Adelaida Sub Area
☐ Design Plan
☐ Specific Plan
☐ Annual Resource Summary Report
☐ Circulation Study

Other Documents

☒ Clean Air Plan/APCD Handbook
☒ Regional Transportation Plan
☒ Uniform Fire Code
☒ Water Quality Control Plan (Central Coast Basin – Region 3)
☒ Archaeological Resources Map
☐ Area of Critical Concerns Map
☐ Special Biological Importance Map
☐ CA Natural Species Diversity Database
☒ Fire Hazard Severity Map
☒ Flood Hazard Maps
☒ Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey for SLO County
☒ GIS mapping layers (e.g., habitat, streams, contours, etc.)
☐ Other

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

The project application materials are incorporated by reference in their entirety and available for review at the Department of Planning and Building, 976 Osos Street, Suite 200, San Luis Obispo. In addition, the following project specific information and/or reference materials have been considered as a part of the Initial Study:

Project-Specific Studies and Supporting Materials

Project application materials

Earth Systems, February, 2022, Geotechnical Engineering and Geologic Hazard Report

Earth Systems, July, 2024, Slope Stability Analysis

Miller Drilling Co., September 14, 2023, Pump Test Report

Padre Associates, Inc., April 2024, Phase I Archaeological Study. 10200 Green Valley Road

Terra Verde Environmental Consulting, LLC, October, 2020, Biological Resources Assessment 10200 Green Valley Road Development Project

SWCA Environmental Consultants, July, 2025, Biological Resources Assessment Addendum for the Grolle Development Project, Templeton, San Luis Obispo County, California

Referral response from CalFire (Kevin McLean, April 19, 2024)

Cotton Shires and Associates, Inc., Geologic Peer Review, April 9, 2024

Cotton Shires and Associates, Inc., Geologic Peer Review, August 16, 2024

Cotton Shires and Associates, Inc., Geologic Peer Review, February 13, 2025

Referral response from the Public Works Department, JR Beard, April 4, 2024

Referral response, Stormwater Program Manager, April 8, 2024

State of California Department of Water Resources, May 9, 2022, Well Completion Report

Other County References

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San Luis Obispo County.1999.General Plan Safety Element. https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/getattachment/893b6c58-7550-4113-911c-3ef46d22b7c8/Safety-Element.aspx accessed August 2018

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California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). 2019. EnviroStor. Available at <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2019. California Scenic Highways Mapping Tool. Available at: < https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?useExisting=1&layers=f0259b1ad0fe4093a5604c9b838a486a>.

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County of San Luis Obispo Staff. 2019. California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod, 2022) Results.

Diblee, Thomas W., Jr. 2004. Geologic Map of the Creston & Shedd Canyon Quadrangles, San Luis Obispo County, California. National Geologic Map Database. Available at: <https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Prodesc/proddesc_71748.htm>.

Department of Planning and Building website: https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Planning-Building/Department-Services/Agriculture,-Water,-and-Energy/Water-Programs/Programs-and-Services/PRGWB-Area-of-Severe-Decline.aspx

Occupational Health and Safety Administration Technical Manual, Section III, Chapter 5 part II.B.6.

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E). 2019. Delivering Low-Emission Energy. Available at: <https://www.pge.com/en_US/about-pge/environment/what-we-are-doing/clean-energy-solutions/clean-energy-solutions.page>.

San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD). 2012. CEQA Air Quality Handbook. April 2012.

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State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2015. GeoTracker. Available at <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>

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University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Landscape Water Requirement Calculator, 2022

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Exhibit B - Mitigation Summary Table

Per Public Resources Code Section 21081.6, the following measures also constitute the mitigation monitoring and/or reporting program that would reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels. These measures would become conditions of approval (COAs) should the project be approved. The Lead Agency (County) or other Responsible Agencies, as specified in the following measures, are responsible to verify compliance with these COAs.

Air Quality

AQ-1 **Naturally Occurring Asbestos Survey. Prior to issuance of grading or construction permits**, the applicant shall retain a registered geologist to conduct a geologic evaluation of the property, including sampling and testing for NOA in full compliance with SLOAPCD requirements and the CARB ATCM for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations (17 CCR 93105). This geologic evaluation shall be submitted to the County Department of Planning and Building upon completion. If the geologic evaluation determines that the project would not have the potential to disturb NOA, the applicant must file an Asbestos ATCM exemption request with the SLOAPCD.

AQ-2 **Naturally Occurring Asbestos Remediation.** If NOA are determined to be present on-site per AQ-3, proposed earthwork, demolition, and construction activities for initial site improvements and future residential development shall be conducted in full compliance with the various regulatory jurisdictions regarding NOA, including the CARB ATCM for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations (17 CCR 93105) and requirements stipulated in the National Emission Standard for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP; 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 61, Subpart M – Asbestos). These requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Written notification, within at least 10 business days of activities commencing, to the SLOAPCD;
2. Preparation of an asbestos survey conducted by a Certified Asbestos Consultant; and
3. Implementation of applicable removal and disposal protocol and requirements for identified NOA.

Biological Resources

BIO-1 **Environmental Awareness Training.** An environmental awareness training shall be presented to all construction personnel by a qualified biologist prior to the start of any project activities. The training shall include color photographs and a description of the ecology of all special-status species known or with potential to occur on site, as well as other sensitive resources requiring avoidance near the project site. The training shall include a description of protection measures required by discretionary permits, an overview of the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts, and implications of noncompliance with these regulations. The biologist will provide an overview of the required avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. A sign-in sheet with the name and signature of the qualified biologist who presented the training, and the names and signatures of the environmental awareness trainees will be kept. A fact sheet conveying the information provided in the environmental awareness training will be provided to all project personnel and anyone else who may enter the project site.

BIO-*2* **Site Maintenance and General Operations.** The following general measures are recommended to minimize impacts during active construction:

- The use of heavy equipment and vehicles shall be limited to the proposed project limits and defined staging areas/access points. The boundaries of each work area and staging area shall be clearly defined and marked with high visibility fencing or flagging. No work shall occur outside these limits.
- In the vicinity of sensitive resources and habitats including but not limited to Drainage 1, the stock pond, the spring, and the Valley Needlegrass Grassland, signs shall be posted at the boundary of the work area indicating the presence of sensitive resources.
- Project plans, drawings, and specifications shall show the boundaries of all sensitive resource areas and the location of erosion and sediment controls, delineation of construction limits, and other pertinent measures to ensure the protection of sensitive habitats and resources.
- Staging of equipment and materials shall occur in designated areas with appropriate demarcation and perimeter controls. No staging areas shall be located within 100 feet of sensitive habitat or jurisdictional aquatic resources.
- Secondary containment, such as drip pans, shall be used under construction equipment to prevent leaks and spills of potential contaminants.
- Washing of concrete, paint, or equipment, and refueling and maintenance of equipment shall occur only in designated staging areas. These activities will occur at a minimum of 100 feet from sensitive habitat or jurisdictional aquatic resources. Sandbags and/or absorbent pads and spill control kits shall always be available for use in the event of a spill or leak.
- Construction equipment shall be inspected by the operator daily to ensure that equipment is in good working order and that there are no fuel or lubricant leaks.
- Plastic monofilament netting (erosion control matting) or similar material will not be used on site due to the potential for entangling special-status small mammals or reptiles.
- Acceptable substitutes are coconut coir matting or tackified hydroseeding compounds.
- The use of pesticides (including rodenticides) and herbicides on the property shall follow all local, state, and federal regulations to avoid primary and secondary poisoning of sensitive species that may be using the site.

BIO-3 **Lighting.** Any temporary construction lighting or permanent lighting introduced for new developments shall avoid nighttime illumination of suitable habitat features for special-status species (i.e. adjacent grassland, chaparral, and oak woodland). Temporary construction lighting will be kept to the minimum amount necessary and shall be directed toward active work areas and away from open spaces. To minimize the effects of future exterior lighting on special-status wildlife species, all utdoor lighting fixtures shall be positioned and/or shielded to avoid direct lighting of off-site natural habitat areas. Exterior lighting shall be in accordance with International Dark Sky Association guidelines for reducing light pollution for the benefit of wildlife.

BIO-4 Jurisdictional Waters. In addition to BIO-2, the following recommendations are provided to protect drainages and aquatic resources from indirect impacts.

- Construction activity within 100 feet of drainages shall occur only when conditions are dry.
- To prevent erosion and sedimentation into jurisdictional waters during construction, an erosion and sedimentation control plan shall be developed and implemented. It shall outline Best Management Practices for temporary stabilization. Acceptable stabilization methods include the use of weed-free, natural fiber (i.e., non-monofilament) rolls, jute or coir netting, and/or other industry standard materials. Erosion control devices shall be installed and maintained for the duration of the project.
- Install protective fencing or similar around the mapped valley needlegrass grassland community to ensure no inadvertent impacts during construction activities such as overland travel, grading, or staging of equipment and materials.

BIO-5 Special-status Plant Species. The following specific recommendations are made to reduce the anticipated impacts to specialstatus plant populations to the maximum extent feasible:

- Install protective fencing or similar around special-status plant populations that are not expected to be impacted by the proposed project.

BIO-6 Special-Status Plant Species, Specific Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation. As proposed, the project will result in impacts to Palmer's spineflower and Bishop manzanita. The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures shall be implemented to address impacts to these species.

Palmer's Spineflower

1. The extent of the mapped Palmer's spineflower shall be shown on all plan sets and used to protect Palmer's spineflower populations during project implementation.
2. Prior to construction, high visibility fencing shall be installed at the limits of ground disturbance in areas within 50 feet of Palmer's spineflower populations mapped in 2025. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of Palmer's spineflower.
3. In areas where Palmer's spineflower will be impacted by ground disturbance, the top four to six inches of top soil shall be salvaged during initial grading and spread in suitable habitat identified by a qualified biologist outside of the area of disturbance and existing mapped Palmer's spineflower populations.

Bishop Manzanita

4. The extent of the mapped Bishop manzanita chaparral shall be shown on all plan sets and used to protect Bishop Manzanita chaparral during project implementation.
5. Prior to construction, high visibility fencing shall be installed at the limits of ground disturbance in areas within 50 feet of Bishop manzanita chaparral. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of Bishop manzanita.

6. In areas where no ground disturbance will occur but vehicle and/or equipment access in necessary, Bishop manzanitas will be trimmed the minimum amount necessary to facilitate access, leaving as much of the plant intact to allow for resprouting. Limits of access routes shall be delineated using high visibility fencing.

7. Areas within the Bishop manzanita chaparral disturbed by project activities shall be monitored annually for three years for invasive plant species removal. Any invasive plant species identified within these areas shall be removed annually prior to seed set and disposed of at a landfill. Herbicides will not be used to manage invasive species in these areas to avoid impacts to the special-status plants present in these habitats.

BIO-7 Oak Tree Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation. As proposed, the project is anticipated to result in the removal of one valley oak and impacts to up to five valley oak trees and one coast live oak tree. However, if during project implementation fewer trees are removed or impacted, as-built plans may be provided to the County upon completion of construction showing the reduced impacts to reduce mitigation requirements accordingly. The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures shall be implemented to address impacts to oak trees:

1. The canopy edge and trunk location of oak trees located within 50 feet of proposed construction shall be surveyed and placed on all plan sets. The tree map shall be used to protect oak trees during project implementation.

2. Impacts to oak tree canopies or sensitive root zones should be avoided to the extent feasible. Impacts may include pruning, ground disturbance or placement of fill or impervious surfaces (e.g., asphalt, permanent structures) within the sensitive root zone, installation of year-round irrigation or other supplemental water within the sensitive root zone, and trunk damage.

3. Prior to ground-breaking, tree protection fencing shall be installed as close to the outer limit of the sensitive root zone as practicable for construction operations to protect trees located within 50 feet of construction that shall be preserved. The fencing shall be in place throughout the duration of construction. Demarcation such as t-posts and a minimum of two strands of yellow rope are adequate.

4. All construction activity shall remain outside delineation fencing installed for protection of oak trees.

5. A licensed arborist or qualified botanist shall be hired to oversee all removal or trimming of existing roots and necessary branch trimming.

6. Care shall be taken to avoid surface roots within the top 18 inches of soil. If any roots are exposed during construction, they shall be covered with a layer of soil to match existing topography.

7. Impacts to oak trees shall be assessed by a licensed arborist or qualified botanist prior to final inspection and reported to the County of San Luis Obispo.

8. For oak tree removals or impacts during project implementation, the applicant shall provide in-kind mitigation (on-site if feasible), typically 4:1 for removals and 2:1 for impacted trees.

9. Mitigation trees shall be planted within suitable habitat on-site and monitored for five years with the success goal of seventy-five percent survival by year five. Any mortality beyond this threshold during the five-year monitoring period shall be replaced with new plantings as soon as feasible, during the appropriate season..

BIO-8 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for American Badger. A qualified biologist shall complete a preconstruction survey within 30 days prior to the start of initial project activities to ensure American badgers are not present within proposed work areas. If potential dens are discovered, an exclusion buffer shall be established within 50 feet of the den. If active dens are found during the breeding and rearing season, no activity shall occur within 200 feet of the den without agency guidance and approval.

BIO-9 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Monterey Dusky-footed Woodrat. Prior to the start of work within 50 feet of suitable woodrat habitat, a survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to identify and flag woodrat middens for avoidance. A minimum 10-foot buffer area shall be clearly delineated around any woodrat middens that are discovered during the survey. Due to the likelihood of woodrats fleeing the midden as a result of nearby construction activity, a biologist shall monitor initial vegetation clearing and ground disturbance within 25 feet of woodrat middens. If woodrats are observed fleeing middens, work shall be temporarily halted until woodrats are outside the area of impact. Woodrat middens that are deemed unavoidable shall be carefully dismantled mechanically (e.g., excavator with thumb) or with hand tools from the top down, allowing woodrats to escape unharmed. A biological monitor shall be present for dismantling.

BIO-10 Avoidance Measures for Mountain Lion. The general avoidance and minimization measures listed in Section 4.2.1 will avoid or minimize impacts to mountain lions. In particular, the measure related to the use of rodenticides is important. Anticoagulant rodenticides, such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difenacoum, and difethialone as well as other pesticides and herbicides have negative effects on mountain lion populations in Southern California and the Central Coast. Therefore, the use of these products on the property shall follow all local, state, and federal regulations to avoid primary and secondary poisoning of mountain lions.

BIO-11 Preconstruction Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Roosting Bats. If trimming or removal of trees is planned to occur during the typical bat maternity roosting and pupping season between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preactivity survey within 14 days prior to ensure roosting bats are not present. If bat roosting is observed, work activities will be avoided within 100 feet of active roosts until bats have left the roosts. No trees or structures with active bat roosts may be removed until they have left the roosts or have been excluded from roosts. The appropriate timing for exclusion implementation will be determined based upon the species identified.

BIO-12 Preconstruction Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Special-status Amphibians and Reptiles. A qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey immediately prior to the start of work within 50 feet of suitable habitat for coast horned lizard, CRLF, Coast Range newt, lesser slender salamander, southwestern pond turtle, and western spadefoot toad. During the survey, the biologist shall gently disturb or rake the scrub understory and upper layers of oak tree duff to uncover or rouse special-status amphibians and reptiles. Construction monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during all initial ground disturbing and vegetation removal activities (e.g., grading, grubbing, vegetation trimming) within suitable habitat. If these species are found during

preconstruction surveys or monitoring, they shall be allowed to leave the work. area on their own volition or be hand captured and relocated to suitable habitat outside of the area of impact, if permitted.

To minimize the potential for impacts to dispersing amphibians, no work shall occur at night, no work shall occur during rainy conditions, and small mammal burrows within 100 feet of suitable aquatic habitat shall be avoided. If burrows within 100 feet of suitable aquatic habitat cannot be avoided during project construction or continued operation, the appropriate resource agencies shall be contacted for guidance.

BIO-13 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Crotch Bumble Bee. Prior to the start of project activities and if work is planned to occur during the flight period of April 1 to September 1, a qualified biologist shall survey for Crotch's bumble bee within the work area two weeks prior to the start of initial ground disturbance. If a Crotch's bumble bee nest is observed, no work shall occur within 25 feet of the nest until it is no longer active. If an exclusion buffer is not feasible, the applicant shall contact the County for further guidance. If Crotch's bumble bee is found during the active spring and summer period, or presence is unknown (e.g., if a survey during the active period was not completed) and work is planned between October and March, potential overwintering habitat shall be avoided by a minimum of 50 feet. If potential overwintering habitat cannot be avoided, the County shall be contacted. The County shall coordinate with appropriate resource agencies for guidance to implement project activities and avoid take or proceed with an Incidental Take Permit. The results of the surveys shall be provided to the County prior to initial project activities.

Because bumble bees move nest sites each year, surveys shall be conducted each year prior to ground disturbance within undisturbed habitat in the project site.

BIO-14 Preconstruction Survey and Avoidance Measures for Nesting Birds. To protect nesting birds, no construction shall occur from February 15 through August 31 unless the following measures are in place. Preconstruction surveys must be completed by a qualified biologist within one week prior to project initiation. Surveys for raptors shall be conducted within a 250-foot radius of the project site. If any active non-listed raptor nests are observed, these nests and nest trees shall be protected, and a no-work buffer of 250 feet shall be established until the young have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest tree or parental care, or the nest is no longer active. Surveys for other non-listed avian species shall be conducted within a 50-foot radius of the project site. If any active nests are observed, these nests and nest trees shall be protected with a 50-foot no-work buffer. All activity will remain outside of the designated buffers until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledged or that proposed construction activities would not cause adverse impacts to the nest, adults, eggs, or young. If work activities are deemed to not be a threat to a given nest within a buffer zone, a qualified biologist may monitor the nest during work to ensure that the nesting birds are not disturbed (e.g., showing signs of stress or changes in behavior as a result of work activity). If any active nests of listed, fully protected, or otherwise special-status species are detected during the surveys, the appropriate wildlife protection agency shall be contacted for guidance on how to proceed.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Geology and Soils

GEO-1 **Plans submitted at the time of application for grading/construction permits,** shall incorporate the findings and recommendations of the following geotechnical investigations prepared for the project site:

- Earth Systems, February, 2022, Geotechnical Engineering and Geologic Hazard Report
- Earth Systems, July, 2024, Slope Stability Analysis

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

HAZ-1 **Equipment Maintenance and Refueling.** During all construction activities, the cleaning, refueling, and maintenance of equipment and vehicles shall occur only within designated staging areas. The staging areas shall conform to all Best Management Practices applicable to attaining zero discharge of stormwater runoff. At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and to avoid potential leaks or spills.

HAZ-2 **Spill Response Protocol.** During all construction activities, all project-related spills of hazardous materials shall be cleaned up immediately. Appropriate spill prevention and cleanup materials shall be onsite at all times during construction.