

Draft Environmental Impact Report

Butte Fire Center Replacement Project

Prepared for:



California Department of
Forestry and Fire Protection

March 2026

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Prepared for:



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March 2026

20240029.25

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	asbestos-containing materials
AB	Assembly Bill
BP	before present
BMP	Best Management Practices
BFC	Butte “Magalia” Fire Center
BCAQMD	Butte County Air Quality Management District
BFC	Butte Fire Center
project	Butte Fire Center Replacement Project
CAPCOA	California Air Pollution Control Officers Association
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CCC	California Conservation Corp
CDC	California Department of Corrections
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
DPR	California Department of Parks and Recreation
DTSC	California Department of Toxic Substances Control
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CHL	California Historical Landmark
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
CO	carbon monoxide
CAP	Climate Action Plan
DGS	Department of General Services
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IS/MND	Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
MLD	most likely descendant
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NOA	naturally occurring asbestos
NO _x	nitrogen oxides
NOP	notice of preparation
NEIC	Northeastern Information Center
OPR	Office of Planning and Research

PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric
PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5}	particulate matter
PV	photovoltaic
PRC	Public Resources Code
ROG	reactive organic gases
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SR	State Route
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
THP	timber harvesting plan
UAIC	United Auburn Indian Community
US EPA	US Environmental Protection Agency
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled

1 INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed Butte Fire Center Replacement Project (project). This Draft EIR has been prepared under the direction of the Department of General Services (DGS) on behalf of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines.

1.1 PROJECT REQUIRING ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This section presents a synopsis of the project characteristics. For further information on the proposed project, see Chapter 2, "Project Description."

1.2 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USES OF THIS DRAFT EIR

According to CEQA, preparation of an EIR is required whenever it can be fairly argued, based on substantial evidence, that a proposed project may result in a significant environmental impact. An EIR is an informational document used to inform public-agency decision makers and the general public of the significant environmental impacts of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant impacts, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant environmental impacts. Public agencies are required to consider the information presented in the EIR when determining whether to approve a project. This Draft EIR has been prepared to meet the requirements of a project EIR as defined by Section 15161 of the State CEQA Guidelines. A project EIR focuses on the changes in the physical environment that would result from the implementation of a project, including its planning, construction, and operation. The State's intention in preparing a EIR is that no further environmental analysis would be required for additional regulatory approvals following approval of the project, absent conditions requiring a subsequent EIR, a supplement to the EIR, or an addendum. (See State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162–15164.)

1.3 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR includes an evaluation of Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources as well as other CEQA-mandated issues (e.g., cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, significant unavoidable impacts, alternatives):

Under the CEQA statutes and the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency may limit an EIR's discussion of environmental effects when such effects are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21002.1[e]; State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15128, 15143). Information used to determine which impacts would be potentially significant was derived from review of the 2021 Butte Fire Center Replacement IS/MND project (State Clearinghouse Number 2021100194); review of applicable planning documents and CEQA documentation; feedback from public and agency consultation; comments received during the public scoping period; and comments received on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see Appendix A of this Draft EIR).

The NOP was distributed on September 19, 2025, to responsible agencies, interested parties, and organizations, as well as private organizations and individuals that may have an interest in the project. The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the Butte Fire Center Replacement project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental document. As a result of the review of existing information and the scoping process, it was determined that cultural and tribal cultural resources should be evaluated fully in this Draft EIR. Further information on the NOP and scoping process is provided below in Section 1.5, "Public Review Process."

1.4 AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.4.1 Lead Agency and Responsible Agencies

CAL FIRE is the CEQA lead agency for preparation of this EIR. Responsible agencies are public agencies, other than the lead agency, that have discretionary-approval responsibility for reviewing, carrying out, or approving elements of a project. Responsible agencies should participate in the lead agency's CEQA process, review the lead agency's CEQA document, and use the document when making a decision on project elements. It is anticipated that approval from various agencies and departments, listed below, would be required to complete construction of the project.

Responsible Agency	Discretionary Approval
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	SHPO consultation and PRC 5024.5 concurrence
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	Construction General Permit
Butte County Air Quality Management District	Air Permit Authority to Construct Permit
Butte County Public Health Department	Wastewater Permit
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection	Timber Harvesting Plan
State Fire Marshal	Fire suppression and code compliance review
Division of the State Architect	Approval for Americans with Disabilities Act

1.5 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

As identified above in Section 1.3, "Scope of this Draft EIR," in accordance with CEQA regulations, an NOP was distributed on September 19, 2025, to responsible agencies, interested parties and organizations, and private organizations and individuals that could have interest in the project. The NOP was available for review on the CAL FIEW website at: <https://calfire.app.box.com/s/6uzjbg146cfn018h1jw98871hp740x7t/folder/238725157425>.

The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the Butte Fire Center Replacement project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and content of the document. The NOP and responses to the NOP are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. One response to the NOP was received from California Department of Toxic Substances Control and is addressed in Chapter 3.

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 45 days. During this period, comments from the general public as well as organizations and agencies on environmental issues may be submitted to the lead agency.

Upon completion of the public review and comment period, a Final EIR will be prepared that will include both written and oral comments on the Draft EIR received during the public-review period, responses to those comments, and any revisions to the Draft EIR made in response to public comments. The Draft EIR and Final EIR together will make up the EIR for the project.

Before adopting the project, the lead agency, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

1.6 DRAFT EIR ORGANIZATION

This Draft EIR is organized into chapters, as identified and briefly described below. Chapters are further divided into sections (e.g., Chapter 3, “Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures” and Section 3.1, “Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources”):

- ▶ The “Executive Summary”: This chapter introduces the project; provides a summary of the environmental review process, effects found not to be significant, and key environmental issues; and lists significant impacts and mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- ▶ Chapter 1, “Introduction”: This chapter provides a synopsis of the project; a description of the type, purpose, and intended uses of this Draft EIR; a description of the scope of this EIR; a description of the lead and responsible agencies; a summary of the public review process; and a description of the organization of this EIR; and definitions of standard terminology used in this EIR.
- ▶ Chapter 2, “Project Description”: This chapter describes the location, background, and goals and objectives for the project, and describes the project elements in detail.
- ▶ Chapter 3, “Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures”: The sections in this chapter evaluate the expected environmental impacts generated by the project, arranged by subject area (e.g., land use, hydrology and water quality). In Chapter 3.1, “Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources,” the regulatory background, existing conditions, analysis methodology, and thresholds of significance are described. The anticipated changes to the existing conditions after development of the project are then evaluated. For any significant or potentially significant impact that would result from project implementation, mitigation measures are presented and the level of impact significance after mitigation is identified.
- ▶ Chapter 4, “Alternatives”: This chapter evaluates alternatives to the project, including alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration, the No Project Alternative, and two alternative development options. The environmentally superior alternative is identified.
- ▶ Chapter 5, “Other CEQA Sections”: This chapter evaluates growth-inducing impacts and irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources, and discloses any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts.
- ▶ Chapter 6 “Report Preparers”: This chapter identifies the preparers of the document.
- ▶ Chapter 7, “References”: This chapter identifies the organizations and persons consulted during preparation of this Draft EIR and the documents and individuals used as sources for the analysis.

1.7 STANDARD TERMINOLOGY

This Draft EIR uses the following standard terminology:

- ▶ “No impact” means no change from existing conditions (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Less-than-significant impact” means no substantial adverse change in the physical environment (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Potentially significant impact” means a substantial adverse change in the environment that might occur (mitigation is recommended because potentially significant impacts are treated as significant).
- ▶ “Significant impact” means a substantial adverse change in the physical environment that would occur (mitigation is recommended).
- ▶ “Significant and unavoidable impact” means a substantial adverse change in the physical environment that would occur and that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of all feasible mitigation.

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2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In October 2021, the Department of General Services (DGS) on behalf of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Butte Fire Center Replacement Project (project). The project proposed the partial demolition and reconstruction of the facilities and structures associated with the Butte “Magalia” Fire Center (BFC), a California Conservation Corp (CCC)/CAL FIRE joint fire base. The IS/MND identified mitigation measures for biological resources, cultural resources, geological resources (paleontological), hazardous materials, and tribal cultural resources. The IS/MND was adopted by CAL FIRE and the project approved in December 2021 (State Clearinghouse Number 2021100194).

Since then, a statewide historical evaluation of all CAL FIRE facilities has been prepared. The evaluation contained a review of built environment structures and recommended that the BFC is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), and as a California Historical Landmark (CHL) as a historic district for its contribution to history and its architecture. As a result, impacts related to demolition and/or removal of any listed or eligible built environment resources must be evaluated through the preparation of an EIR. While some proposed elements of the project have been further refined (e.g., new building square footages), the proposed project remains largely the same as the project evaluated in the 2021 IS/MND.

2.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As CEQA lead agency, CAL FIRE has selected the following project objectives, consistent with those identified in the 2021 IS/MND. The objectives of the project are to:

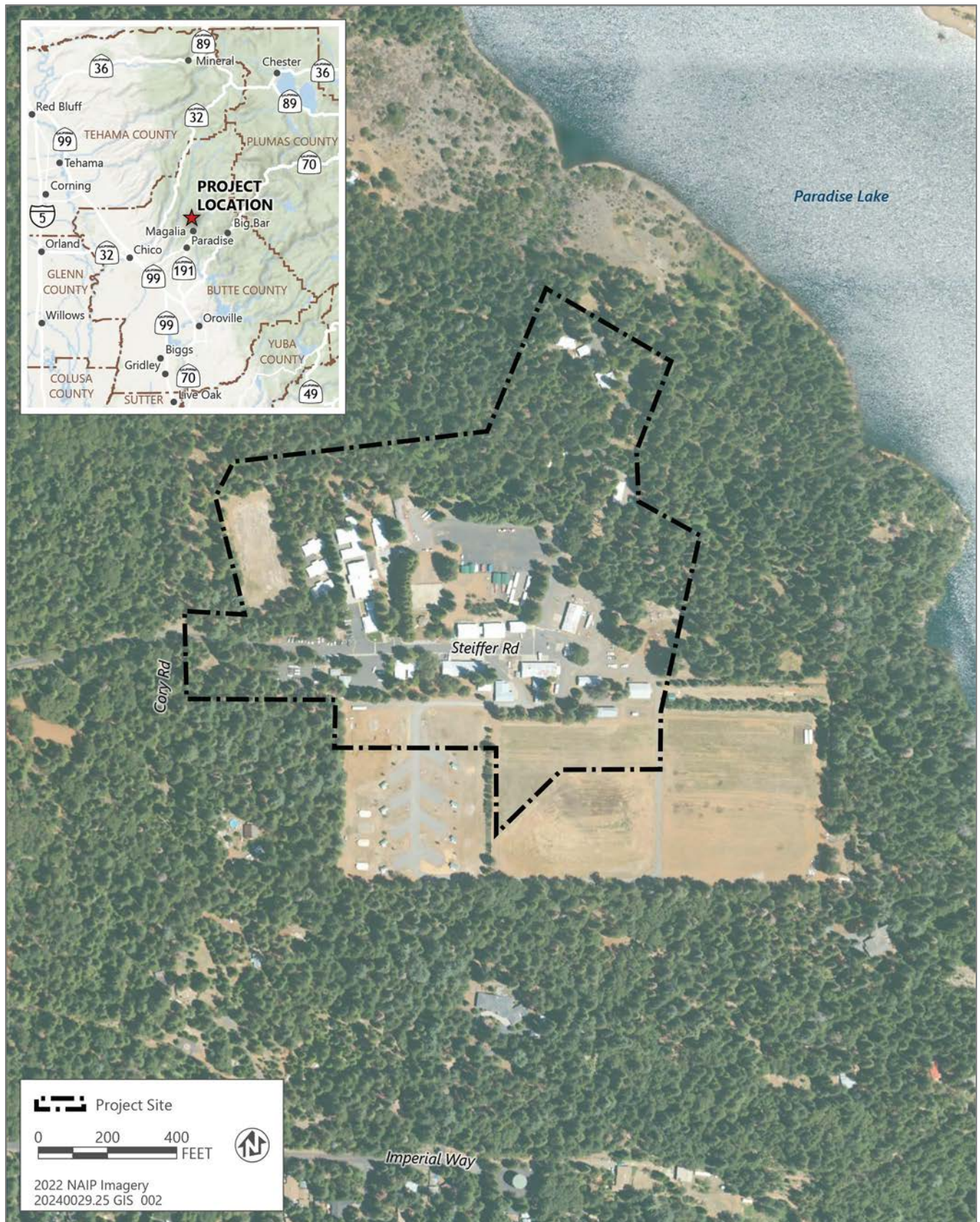
- ▶ Continue to support the mission of the CCC and the revenue stream generated from its activities.
- ▶ Respond to wildland fires, search and rescue, and flood fighting incidents as well as fire hazard reduction and other community projects.
- ▶ Provide training and supervision of fire crews and forest practice operations.
- ▶ Continue to operate and provide employment associated with the site’s auto repair shop.
- ▶ Modernize facility to meet current building standards and support equipment needs.
- ▶ Increase CAL FIRE capacity to serve the region and provide adequate protection during fire events.

2.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located at 6640 Steiffer Road (Accessor Parcel Number 065-110-058) in Magalia, unincorporated Butte County (Figure 2-1). The 84.1-acre site is located west of Paradise Lake and 1.75 miles north of the neighborhood of Paradise Pines. The project site is surrounded by forested land, with residential uses located approximately 1,500 feet south of the project site. The site has a moderate slope, descending about 30 feet from west to east, with an additional 10-foot drop to the Captain’s barracks in the northeast. Vegetation varies, and includes grasslands, barren patches, and dense forests.

2.4 BUTTE FIRE CENTER BACKGROUND

The BFC, originally established in 1949 as Magalia Camp, was a joint operation between CAL FIRE and the California Department of Corrections (CDC). The CDC withdrew in 1973, and in 1974, the facility reopened as the Butte Ecology Center under CAL FIRE and the California Ecology Corps. After the Ecology Corps ended in 1978, it became the BFC, jointly managed by CAL FIRE and CCC until 2003, when the CCC withdrew (Butte County 2025).



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-1 Project Location

From 2003 to 2016, CAL FIRE used the facility for regional firefighter training. In 2016, CAL FIRE and CCC resumed joint operations as a fire crew facility. In 2021, the center was renamed Magalia Fire Center to align with statewide naming conventions.

Today, the center houses CCC Corpsmembers and operational staff. As Type 1 fire crews, the CCC Corpsmembers respond to wildfires, floods, calls for rescue, and more, and engage in community and hazard reduction projects when not on active incidents. CAL FIRE staff supervise, train, and support operations, including running a full auto repair shop. The facility was recently renamed by CAL FIRE to be called the Magalia Fire Center, but project documents still refer to the facility as Butte Fire Center.

2.5 PROPOSED PROJECT

2.5.1 Project Characteristics

Consistent with the 2021 IS/MND, the project would involve demolition of 22 buildings and structures and four water tanks, as well as construction and renovation of the existing CCC/CAL FIRE multi-building complex. All 22 buildings and structures are contributors to the historic district which is comprised of 25 buildings and structures. A former gazebo and greenhouse collapsed from a snowstorm in early 2023.

Eleven buildings and structures would be retained: three dormitories, mess hall, two apparatus garages, electrical gear building (west of the two apparatus garages), saw/tool shop, two equipment storage structures (directly west of current greenhouse), and a portable building. Construction activities would occur under four sequences (two demolition and two construction sequences). The project would include construction of 20 new buildings, four solar photovoltaic covered parking canopies, one fueling area canopy and one vehicle wash area canopy. Onsite improvements would consist of grading and paving for internal fire access and pedestrian accessibility upgrades, retaining walls, as well as a new domestic water distribution system, fire water distribution system, sewer collection system, stormwater management system, propane distribution system, underground electrical power distribution system, lighting, vehicle fueling, and landscaping.

SEQUENCE 1

Sequence 1 would involve demolition of seven structures and buildings, including the existing warehouse, greenhouse, shed (associated with the greenhouse), abandoned building, storage building (associated with the abandoned building), gym, and well pump (Figure 2-2). Because lead-based paint and asbestos, as well as other hazardous building materials (e.g., universal waste, mercury switches, smoke detectors with radioactive elements), are present in buildings identified for demolition, materials would be properly handled, removed, and hauled to an approved landfill or other facility authorized to accept such materials for disposal.

Utility trenching and installation activities would also occur under this sequence and would include removal of portions and relocation of existing utility infrastructure as well as construction of new storm drains and landscape drains, sewer pipe connections, a public fire water main, and installation of a new fire hydrant.

SEQUENCE 2

Sequence 2 would involve construction of new buildings and occupancy of structures. Specifically, this sequence would include a new administration building, Captain's barracks, six crew dormitories, laundry building, warehouse, three apparatus garages, electrical gear building, training building, multipurpose building, auto shop, fueling structure, vehicle wash, hazmat storage building, water tanks, and a solar array over two parking areas (Figure 2-3). A portable building would also be introduced during Sequence 2 to be used for CAL FIRE programs. All buildings would be designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver rating requirements, although registration and certification will not be pursued.

Administration Building

The new administration building would be located in the southwest corner of the site along the entrance driveway. It would include 20 offices, three conference rooms, two records rooms, two open-plan workspaces, a breakroom, lobby and reception area, restrooms, a janitorial closet, and multiple storage closets. The building would feature separate wings for CCC and CAL FIRE personnel and would consolidate functions currently housed in separate buildings. The existing CCC and CAL FIRE administration buildings would be demolished during Sequence 3.

Captain's Barracks

The new Captain's barracks would be located in the northeast corner of the site. It would include 10 two-person bedrooms, five bathrooms, a laundry room, fitness room, library, kitchen, pantry, dining area, and coat room. This facility would replace three existing smaller structures that currently serve as the Captain's barracks, garage, and storage. These existing structures would be demolished during Sequence 3.

Crew Dormitories And Laundry

Three existing crew dormitories are located in the northwestern portion of the project site and would be retained. Sequence 2 would involve construction of an additional six new dormitories – two buildings east of the existing dormitories, and four buildings north of the existing dormitories.

The new laundry building would be constructed near the four northern crew dormitories to support convenient access for the CCC Corpsmembers. It would replace the existing laundry facility, which would be demolished in Sequence 3. The dormitory and laundry area would be connected through a series of pathways along with access to the parking area west of the new buildings. Corpsmembers live onsite, while some instructors commute from offsite locations.

Warehouse

The new warehouse would be constructed in the eastern portion of the site and would support storage, vehicle maintenance, and serve as a hub for crew briefings and debriefings. It would include two offices, personal protection equipment, storage, a laundry intake facility, CCC gear storage, a breakroom, and a bathroom. CCC Corpsmembers would use the facility each morning and evening to prepare and clean tools, clothing, and materials for work projects. Designed for high visibility both inside and around the building, the warehouse would support passive security measures and safe operations. The existing two warehouses would be demolished during Sequence 1 as well as Sequence 2.

Apparatus Garages and Electrical Building

Two existing apparatus buildings and the central repair shop would be retained for equipment storage and repairs. Under Sequence 2, three new apparatus buildings would be built in the former gravel staging area within the Steiffer loop road. Additionally, a new electrical gear building containing an electric equipment room, restrooms, and a storage room would be constructed central to the project site, just north of the existing apparatus buildings.

Training Building

A new training building would be constructed in the center of the project site, featuring two classrooms, two storage rooms, two offices, a copy room, restrooms, and a break room. The existing training building would be demolished in Sequence 3. Classroom training for the CCC Corpsmembers typically takes place Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Multipurpose Building

The new multipurpose building, including an exercise facility, would be built near the existing mess hall and adjacent to the outdoor, concrete basketball court. It would operate Monday–Friday from 4:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on weekends from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., with additional informal use. During emergencies, it may serve as temporary worker shelter. The existing gym west of the CAL FIRE administration building would be demolished in Sequence 1.

Auto Shop, Fueling, and Vehicle Wash

The auto shop would be constructed on the eastern side of the project site along the main driveway. It would include three vehicle service bays, three offices, a welding room, parts room, saw shop, fluids storage, locker room, bathroom, break room, and an outdoor covered and fenced tire rack area. The existing auto shop would be demolished during Sequence 3.

A new fueling structure would be constructed adjacent to the existing fueling area, north of the existing auto shop along the main driveway and west of the new warehouse. A new vehicle wash and an adjacent equipment enclosure would be constructed in the eastern portion of the project site, near the new auto shop.

Hazmat Storage Building

The hazmat storage building and a 3,000-gallon split fuel tank would be constructed southeast of the new apparatus buildings. The fuel tank would store 1,000 gallons of gasoline and 2,000 gallons of diesel. The hazmat building would include three rooms, featuring a bulk fluids room for 55-gallon drums and a torch storage room.

Water Tanks

Two 170,000-gallon water tanks (fire and domestic water) above ground will be added to the site entrance, adjacent to the staging area.

Utility and Solar Infrastructure

A 20-foot-wide Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) pole line easement currently bisects the site. As part of project construction activities, the utility line would be undergrounded through the central portion of the site and PG&E would continue to supply electricity to the project site. The site is also served by existing propane tanks; one new tank is proposed to serve the demand of new buildings.

The Del Oro Water Company currently supplies water to the site, and the existing water main in Steiffer Road is adequate for continued service. New domestic and fire water distribution systems would connect each building to the existing water supply. Fire water improvements would include storage tanks (to be located along the site entrance at Steiffer Road), a pump and pressure system, fire hydrants, backflow prevention, and a fire pump to enhance pressure for the fire suppression system.

A new 55,552-square-foot retention basin would be installed in the same area as the existing basin, north of the proposed multipurpose and apparatus buildings. It would be designed to capture stormwater runoff from a 100-year storm event. Excess water would flow through a designated overflow with cobble and sheet flow, following existing drainage patterns. A previously abandoned septic system would be removed as needed for the basin's installation.

A photovoltaic (PV) solar array would be installed on canopies over new parking areas—constructed in Sequence 2—west of the dormitory and laundry areas. The PV system would connect to the site's electrical system to offset the fire center's energy use. The PV system would operate independently and would not be tied into the PG&E grid.

SEQUENCE 3

Sequence 3 would involve demolition of 17 structures and buildings. The demolition consists of the existing CAL FIRE building, CCC administration building, auto shop and two sheds, laundry building, storage building and garage, fueling station, crew dormitory, training building, warehouse, and Captain's barracks (two barracks, two associated garages, and a shed) (Figure 2-4). As described above, many of these new (i.e., replacement) buildings would be constructed in Sequence 2.

Any hazardous materials (e.g., lead-based paint, asbestos) encountered during demolition activities would be properly handled, removed, then hauled to an approved landfill or other facility authorized to accept such materials for disposal.

SEQUENCE 4

Sequence 4 would involve final site plan work within the site, including paving new parking lots, incorporation of concrete walkways and connection pathways, and retaining walls (Figure 2-5). A new outdoor area would be constructed south of the mess hall and a hose wash rack area would be installed southwest of the warehouse. Construction staging under Sequence 4 would be located south of Steiffer Road (west of the proposed hose wash racks), and east of the new water tanks at the site entrance.

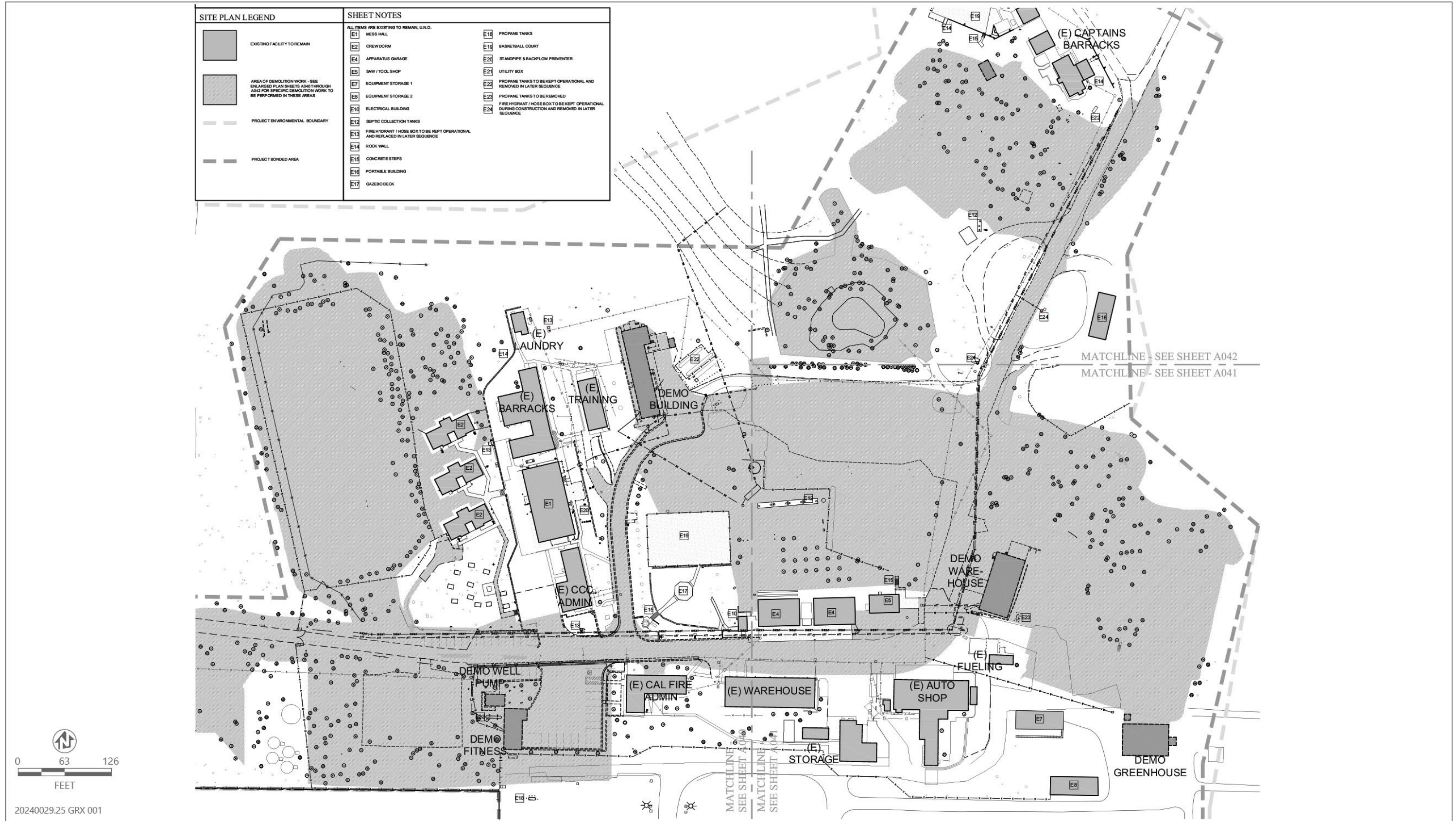
SITE ACCESS AND PARKING

The site has one main access point from Steiffer Road; a secondary forest road forms a loop from the north end back to Steiffer Road. The main driveway off Steiffer Road, located at the southwest corner of the project site, would be repaved and widened to ease traffic flow. A new (paved) internal road would connect facilities via the PG&E easement. The gravel road to the Captain's barracks would be upgraded (paved), and a central gravel staging area would be paved to form a loop road for better vehicle circulation. A new overflow staging area would be added in the south after demolishing existing structures. The project includes 234 dedicated parking spaces.

2.5.2 Project Changes

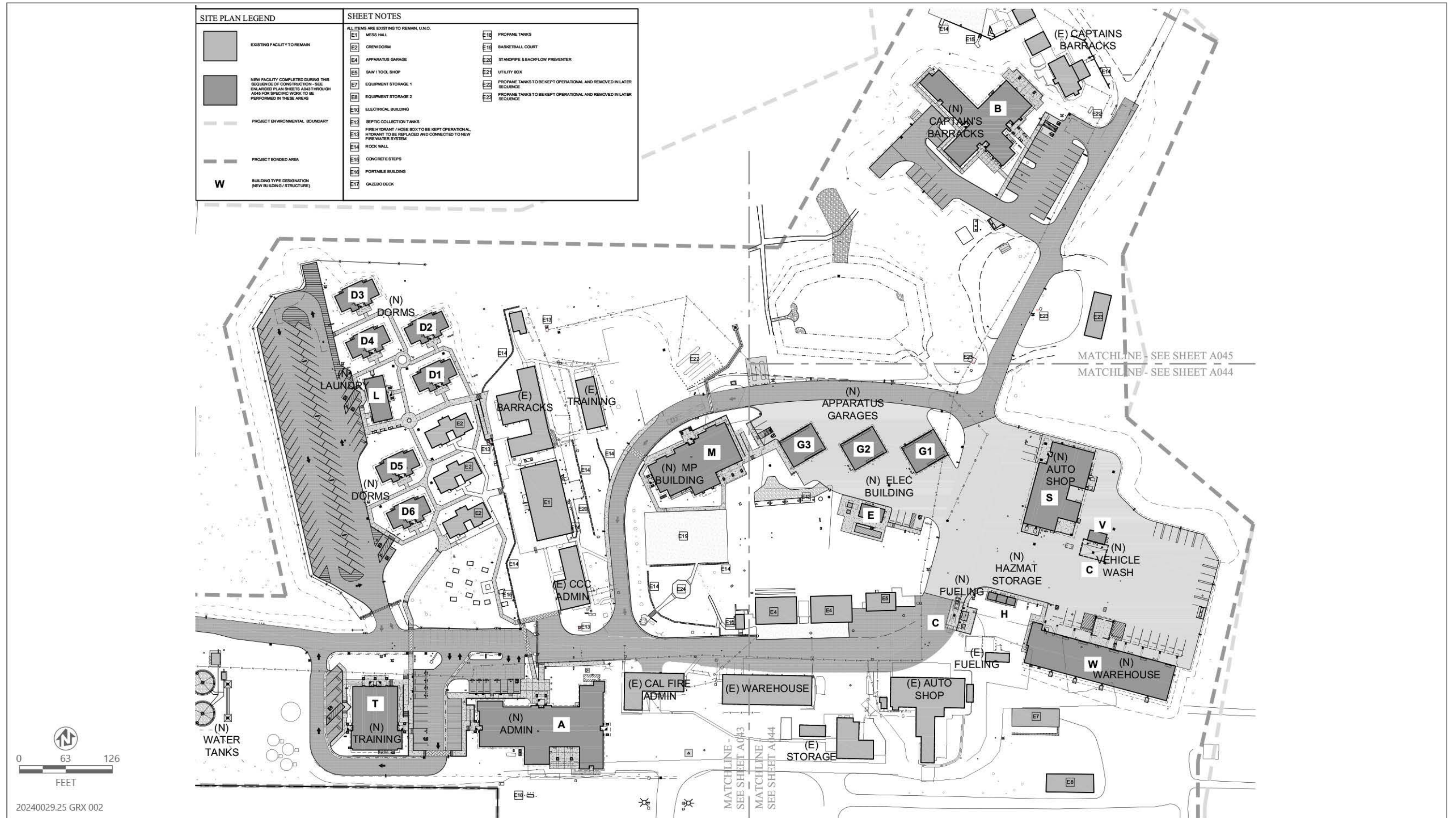
As previously described, the 2021 IS/MND evaluated the partial demolition and reconstruction of the facilities and structures associated with the BFC. The project evaluated in the 2021 IS/MND is largely consistent with the proposed project described above in Section 2.5, Project Characteristics, however, because the BFC is now eligible for listing in the NRHP, the CRHR, and as a CHL as a historic district, impacts related to demolition and/or removal of any listed or eligible built environment resources must be evaluated.

Minor changes, such as refinement of building square footages, have been made through the preparation of final site design plans, which were completed in February 2025. The 2021 IS/MND assessed approximately 64,000 square feet of new buildings and demolition of 42,743 square feet of existing structures, resulting in a net increase of 21,257 square feet of new structures. The final site plan revealed a total of 67,331 square feet of new occupied structures. While the revised project would include approximately 3,300 additional square feet of building area, the project objectives, staff capacity, function, and scale are the same as originally evaluated, and the minor increase in square footage is insufficient to result in increased environmental effects. The final site plan can be viewed in Figure 2-6.



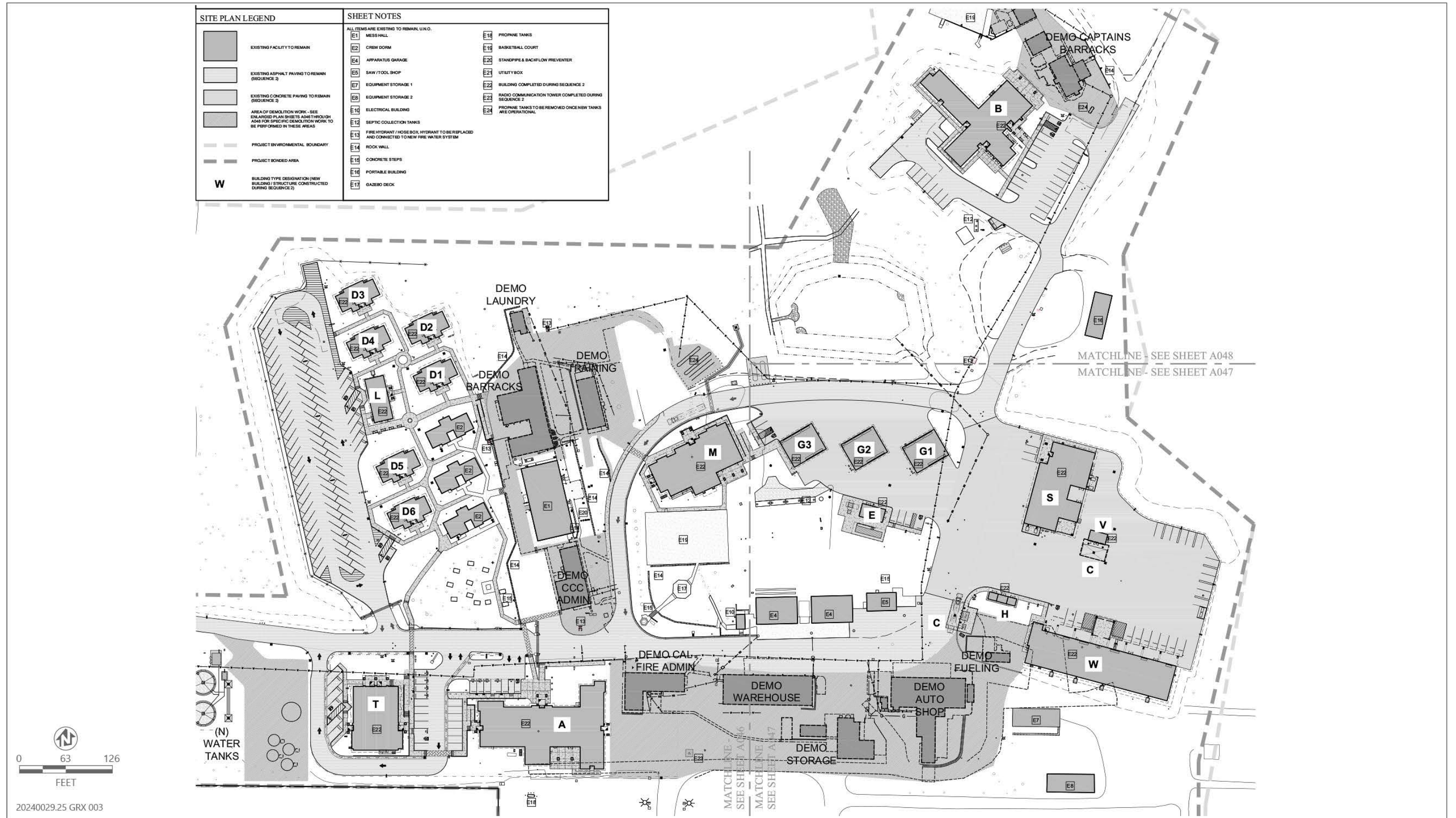
Source: Image produced and provided by Nichols Melburg & Rossetto Architects + Engineers in 2024; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-2 Sequence 1 Plan - First Demolition



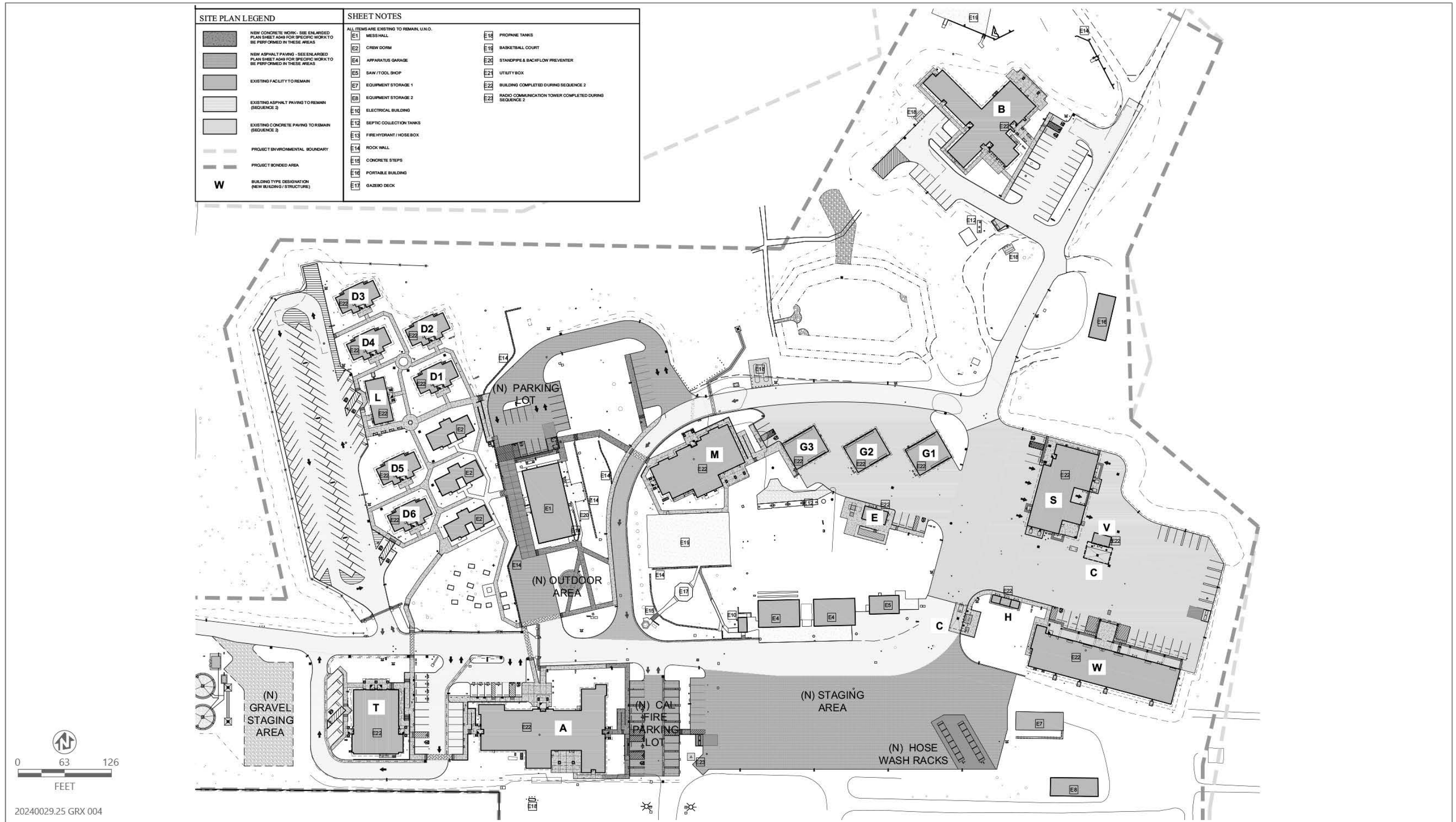
Source: Image produced and provided by Nichols Melburg & Rossetto Architects + Engineers in 2024; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-3 Sequence 2 Plan - New Construction



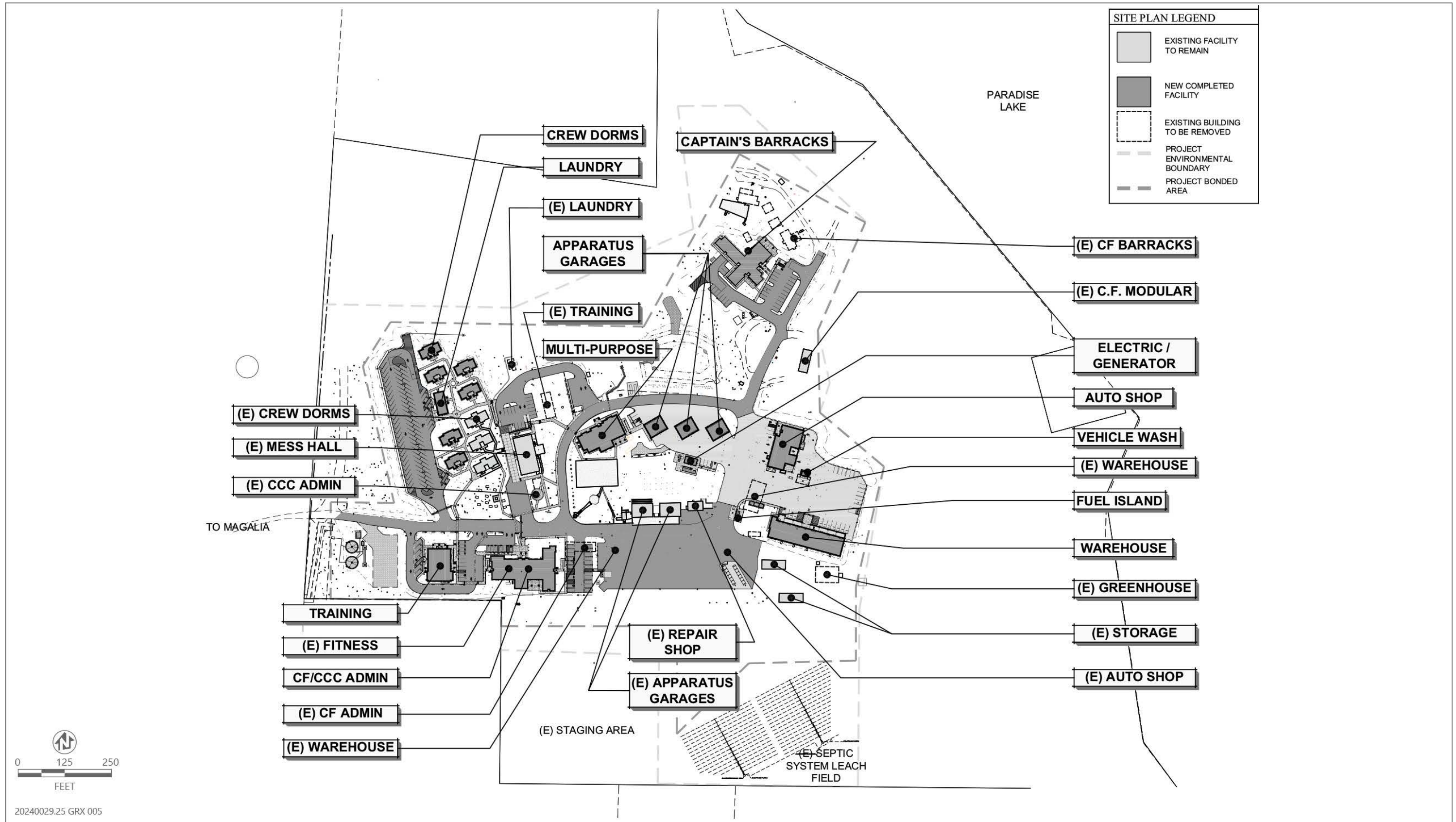
Source: Image produced and provided by Nichols Melburg & Rossetto Architects + Engineers in 2024; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-4 Sequence 3 Plan - Second Demolition



Source: Image produced and provided by Nichols Melburg & Rossetto Architects + Engineers in 2024; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-5 Sequence 4 Plan - Final Site Work



Source: Image produced and provided by Nichols Melburg & Rossetto Architects + Engineers in 2024; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-6 Overall Site Plan

2.5.3 Project Construction and Access

Demolition of the 22 buildings and structures and four water tanks is anticipated to begin in Quarter 3 of 2026. Construction activities would occur over a period of 24 to 30 months.

As discussed above, project construction activities would occur through sequences 1 through 4. Activities would occur within a 29-acre area of the project site and would involve demolition of existing buildings and structures, site clearing, grading, preparation (including preparation of building foundations), as well as construction of new buildings, parking areas, landscaping and utility connections. Approximately 42,000 cubic yards of earth would be excavated and approximately 33,000 cubic yards of fill would be required onsite. Excess excavated materials would be hauled off-site.

Primary access to the site is available via Steiffer Road. During construction, access to the site would remain open and temporary traffic controls would be implemented to direct vehicles and employees entering and existing the site, as well as for designated parking areas. Construction staging would occur within the site, with overflow vehicles directed towards the southern portion of the site during Sequence 4.

CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

The following construction equipment is anticipated to be used during project construction:

- ▶ concrete/industrial saw,
- ▶ rubber-tired or track dozer,
- ▶ tractors/loaders/backhoes,
- ▶ excavators,
- ▶ bobcats,
- ▶ drill rig,
- ▶ off-highway trucks,
- ▶ grader,
- ▶ scraper,
- ▶ crane,
- ▶ tower crane,
- ▶ man-lift,
- ▶ boom lift,
- ▶ construction elevator,
- ▶ scissor lift,
- ▶ forklift,
- ▶ concrete trucks,
- ▶ concrete pump trucks,
- ▶ roller/compactor,
- ▶ generator set,
- ▶ welding machine,
- ▶ compressor,
- ▶ haul trucks, and
- ▶ painting equipment.

Where feasible and available, diesel construction equipment would be powered by Tier 3 or Tier 4 engines as designated by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, if available for on-site delivery, diesel construction equipment would be powered with renewable diesel fuel that is compliant with California's Low Carbon Fuel Standards and certified as renewable by the CARB executive officer.

2.5.4 Project Operation

The BFC is currently staffed by 33 full-time CAL FIRE staff, including one division chief, 11 fire captains, one fire engineer, one stationary engineer, one office technician, four resource management technicians, one environmental scientist, nine forestry technicians, one forestry assistant, two heavy equipment mechanics, and one heavy equipment operator. Approximately 100 combined CCC operational staff and Corpsmembers operate at the BFC. CCC staff includes one district director, one conservation supervisor, eight conservationists, four administrative staff, three cooks, five special Corpsmembers, and 80 Corpsmembers.

2.6 POTENTIAL PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

For the purposes of CEQA, the term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit, authorization, or easement needed to complete some aspect of the proposed project. It is anticipated that approval from various agencies and departments, listed below, would be required to complete construction of the project.

- ▶ State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) - SHPO consultation and PRC 5024.5 concurrence
- ▶ State Fire Marshal - Fire suppression and code compliance review
- ▶ Division of the State Architect - Approval for Americans with Disabilities Act
- ▶ Butte County Air Quality Management District - Air Permit and Authority to Construct Permit
- ▶ Butte County Public Health Department - Wastewater Permit
- ▶ Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board - Construction General Permit

3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

As described in Chapter 2, “Project Description,” CAL FIRE prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Butte Fire Center (BFC) Replacement Project in 2021, which is hereby incorporated by reference into this analysis (see Appendix B). Though the IS/MND was adopted and the project approved by CAL FIRE in December 2021, since then, a statewide historical evaluation of all CAL FIRE facilities has been prepared. Results of the evaluation recommended that the BFC is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and as a California Historical Landmark for its contribution to history and its architecture. Because of this, further analysis was determined necessary to evaluate potential impacts to historical resources as part of this EIR. Chapter 3.1, “Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources,” presents analysis related to archaeological, historical, and Tribal cultural resources. All other resource topic evaluations from the 2021 IS/MND are discussed below.

This chapter is organized by environmental resource category. For each, the analysis includes an integrated discussion of the existing environmental conditions, potential environmental effects (including direct and indirect impacts), and measures to reduce significant effects, where feasible, associated with implementation of the project.

Chapter 4, “Other CEQA Sections,” includes an analysis of the project’s growth-inducing impacts, as required by Section 21100(b)(5) of CEQA. Chapter 5, “Alternatives,” presents a reasonable range of alternatives and evaluates the environmental effects of those alternatives relative to the proposed project, as required by Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terms to describe the level of significance of impacts identified during the environmental analysis:

- ▶ **Significant and Unavoidable Impact:** An impact that exceeds the defined threshold of significance and cannot be eliminated or reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- ▶ **Potentially Significant Impact:** An impact that exceeds the defined thresholds of significance, and can be reduced to a less than significant level through implementation of feasible mitigation measures. If feasible mitigation measures are not available or would not reduce the magnitude of the impact below the threshold of significance, the impact would be determined significant and unavoidable.
- ▶ **Less-than-Significant Impact:** An impact that does not exceed the defined thresholds of significance or that is potentially significant and can be eliminated or reduced to a less than significant through implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- ▶ **No Impact:** Where an environmental issue is evaluated and it is determined that the project would have no effect on the issue, the conclusion is drawn that the proposed project would have “No Impact” and no further analysis is presented.

Mitigation Measures: The CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15370) define mitigation as:

- a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

Cumulative Impacts: An analysis of cumulative impacts follows the project-specific impacts and mitigation measures evaluation in Section 3.1, "Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources." A cumulative impact is the combined effect of the proposed project together with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts.

The cumulative impact analysis includes a description of the cumulative analysis methodology and the geographic or temporal context in which the cumulative impact is analyzed. If a cumulative impact is significant when compared to existing or baseline conditions, the analysis must address whether the project's contribution to the significant cumulative impact is "considerable." If the contribution of the project is considerable, then the EIR must identify potentially feasible measures that could avoid or reduce the magnitude of the project's contribution to a less-than-considerable level. If the project's contribution is not considerable, it is considered less than significant, and no mitigation of the project contribution is required.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE CATEGORIES NOT EVALUATED FURTHER

In accordance with Section 15126.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR identifies and focuses on the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the project, giving due consideration to both its short-term and its long-term effects. Short-term effects are generally those associated with construction, and long-term effects are generally those associated with project operations. As identified in the 2021 IS/MND, the project was determined to have either less-than-significant impacts with mitigation incorporated, less-than-significant, or no impact for all environmental resource categories. The following discussion summarizes the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND and verifies that site conditions have not changed in such a way to necessitate further detailed analysis. Additionally, the following includes mitigation determined necessary under the 2021 IS/MND to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Minor revisions to the 2021 mitigation measures are included for clarity.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE CATEGORIES NOT EVALUATED FURTHER

Aesthetics

The project site is located in a rural residential area of unincorporated Butte County. Areas south and west of the project site include dense forest areas mixed with residential neighborhoods, retail spaces, and public facilities, connected by narrow, tree-lined roads. To the north and east, the landscape becomes less developed, featuring Paradise Lake and parts of the Plumas National Forest. Rural residential uses are located east, south, and west of the project site. Vegetation within the area is varied and includes grasslands, open bare areas, and densely forested areas. The project site is not located along any Caltrans designated State Scenic Highways (Caltrans 2025). A portion of State Route (SR) 70 extending from Oroville to the SR 89 junction is the only segment in Butte County eligible for scenic designation; it is located approximately 7.5 miles southeast of the project site. Views towards and from the project site are generally shielded by existing trees and the forested setting. Additionally, the project site is accessible only by CAL FIRE and CCC personnel, therefore no publicly accessible views are available from within the site.

Implementation of the project would involve demolition of 22 existing buildings, structures, and four water tanks. As part of construction activities and renovation of the CCC/CAL FIRE multi-building complex, 20 new buildings, four solar photovoltaic covered parking canopies, one fueling area canopy and one vehicle wash area canopy, and onsite improvements would be incorporated within the project site. During demolition and construction activities, the visual character of the site would be modified as a result of the presence of construction equipment, staging, and personnel. Once construction is complete, the project site would operate similar to existing conditions, with the addition of new/renovated buildings, structures, and other onsite improvements (i.e., access roads, landscaping, lighting). As previously described, views to and from the project site are limited and are not publicly accessible; project implementation would not adversely affect views in the project site. The project would introduce new site lighting, such as illumination for road identification signs, to improve visibility at night. Because of the distance and intervening forest separating the project site from sensitive receptors (i.e., residential uses), new site lighting is not expected to affect residential uses in the project vicinity.

For the reasons above, the project impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources would be less-than-significant, consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The project site is located within an urban and developed area and is designated as "Other Land"(DOC 2025a). According to the Butte County Zoning Ordinance, the site is zoned as Public, a designation not intended for agricultural use. Additionally, the site is not under a Williamson Act contract (DOC 2025b). The project is located in a forested area of the county, however, no designated forest land or lands under timber production are located in the project site or surrounding area. A timber harvesting plan (THP) is currently being implemented by CAL FIRE to remove trees within the northwestern portion of the site to enhance wildfire defensibility. This action is not considered part of the proposed project and would be completed prior to certification of this EIR.

The project would result in demolition of 22 existing buildings and construction/renovation of new onsite buildings, structures, and other improvements. Because the project is not located on any agricultural or forest designated lands, project implementation would not result in any adverse agricultural and forestry resource impacts. Consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND, impacts related to agriculture and forestry resources would be less than significant.

Air Quality

The project site is within the jurisdiction of the Butte County Air Quality Management District (BCAQMD) and involves the demolition and reconstruction of several buildings and related facilities at the BFC for continued use by the CCC and CAL FIRE. The closest sensitive receptors to the project site include rural single-family homes, with the nearest located approximately 200 feet south of the project site.

Construction of the proposed project would result in short-term emissions of criteria air pollutants, including reactive organic gases (ROG), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}). The highest levels of ROG, CO, and NO_x emissions are expected to occur during the ground disturbance activities. Particulate emissions (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) would primarily result from fugitive dust generated by excavation and earthmoving activities, as well as from construction equipment exhaust. Construction air quality modeling prepared for the 2021 IS/MND contemplated project construction activities as well as implementation of the THP and concluded that project construction activities would not exceed BCAQMD significance thresholds. As a result, the 2021 IS/MND also concluded that emissions associated with criteria air pollutants generated during construction activities would not be cumulatively considerable and no health risks would occur (DGS 2021). Because the 2021 IS/MND considered the proposed project elements in addition to the THP, the project evaluated in this EIR would result in even lower construction emissions and reduced air quality impacts than was previously assumed because the THP is now being implemented separately.

The 2021 IS/MND concluded that operation of the project would generate emissions of criteria air pollutants such as PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, CO, and sulfur dioxide (SO₂), along with ozone (O₃) precursors including ROG and NOx. Operational air quality modeling prepared for the 2021 IS/MND identified that project would not exceed BCAQMD significance thresholds and that operation would be similar to existing conditions (as a result of similar proposed features and structures) (DGS 2021).

The use of heavy-duty diesel equipment during construction would produce occasional objectionable odors. As described, nearby sensitive receptors are located within 200 feet of the project site. Construction activities would occur over the short term and would be temporary in nature. Further, construction-related emissions would not exceed any BCAQMD significance thresholds, and no adverse health effects are anticipated to occur. Once operational, potential odor sources would include the onsite fueling station and hazardous materials/storage building. Odor generating uses would be sited far enough from onsite sensitive receptors, such as the barracks, as well as offsite sensitive receptors (i.e., residences) such that no adverse odor effects would occur.

Because the project would not introduce new land uses, it would not contribute to population or employment growth beyond what was previously assumed in BCAQMD's air quality attainment plans. In addition, emissions from both construction and operation of the project would remain below the BCAQMD's significance thresholds, which are designed to ensure compliance with national air quality standards.

Consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND, impacts related to air quality would be less than significant.

Biological Resources

This section is based on the analysis and recommendations presented in a *Biological Resources Assessment* prepared by ECORP Consulting, Inc in 2021 (DGS 2021).

No special-status species have been documented within the project site; however, special-status plant and animal surveys have not been conducted and the project site includes potential habitat for special-status species. The 2021 IS/MND identified 25 special-status plant species, seven special-status birds, and two special-status bats that have potential to occur on the project site, and construction associated with the project could adversely affect special-status plants and wildlife species that may be present on the project site. Project development would permanently alter or remove potential habitat for special-status plants. The 2021 IS/MND concluded that implementation of mitigation measures BIO-1, PLANT-1, and PLANT-2 would avoid, minimize, or compensate for potential effects on special-status plants. Project development would also remove potential nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for special-status wildlife, and construction activities would generate temporary disturbances that may displace foraging birds and day-roosting bat species. With implementation of mitigation measures BIO-1, BIRD-1, BIRD-2, and BAT-1 would avoid or minimize potential effects on special-status wildlife and reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Worker Environmental Awareness Program

Prior to initial demolition activities, a qualified biologist shall conduct a mandatory Worker Environmental Awareness Program for all contractors, work crews, and any onsite personnel to aid workers in recognizing special-status species and sensitive biological resources that may occur onsite. The program shall include identification of the special status species and their habitats, a description of the regulator status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and Mitigation Measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area.

Mitigation Measure PLANT-1: Special-Status Plant Surveys

A qualified biologist shall perform floristic plant surveys according to USFWS, CDFW, and CNPS protocols prior to construction, timed according to the appropriate phenological stage for identifying target species. Known reference populations shall be visited or local herbaria records shall be reviewed, if available, prior to surveys to confirm the phenological stage of the target species. If no special-status plants are found within the project site, no further measures pertaining to special-status plants are necessary.

Mitigation Measure PLANT-2: Special-Status Plant Avoidance

If special status plants are identified within 25 feet of the project impact area, the following mitigation measures shall be required:

- ▶ If avoidance of special-status plants is feasible, the project proponent shall establish and clearly demarcate avoidance zones for special-status plant occurrences prior to construction. Avoidance zones shall include the extent of the special-status plants plus a 25-foot buffer, unless otherwise determined by a qualified biologist, and shall be maintained until the completion of construction. A qualified biologist/biological monitor shall be present if work must occur within the avoidance buffer to ensure special-status plants are not adversely affected by the work.
- ▶ If avoidance of special-status plants is not feasible, the project proponent shall mitigate for significant impacts to special-status plants. Mitigation measures shall be developed in consultation with CDFW. Mitigation measures may include permanent preservation of onsite or offsite habitat for special-status plants or translocation of plants or seeds from impacted areas to unaffected habitats.

Mitigation Measure BIRD-1: Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey for Raptors

If construction is to occur during the nesting season (generally February 1 through August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction nesting bird survey of all suitable nesting habitat on the project site within 14 days of the commencement of construction. The survey shall be conducted within a 500-foot radius of project work area for raptors. If any active nests are observed, these nests shall be designated a sensitive area and protected by an avoidance buffer established in coordination with CDFW until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. Pre-construction nesting surveys are not required for construction activity outside the nesting season.

Mitigation Measure BIRD-2: Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey for Non-Raptors

If construction is to occur during the nesting season (generally February 1 through August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction nesting bird survey of all suitable nesting habitat on the project site within 14 days of the commencement of construction. The survey shall be conducted within a 100-foot radius of project work. If any active nests are observed, these nests shall be designated a sensitive area and protected by an avoidance buffer established in coordination with CDFW until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledge and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. Pre-construction nesting surveys are not required for construction activity outside the nesting season.

Mitigation Measure BAT-1: Special-Status Bat Surveys

Within 14 days prior to project activities that may impact bat roosting habitat (e.g., removal of manmade structures or trees), a qualified biologist shall survey for all suitable roosting habitat within the project impact limits. If suitable roosting habitat is not identified, no further measures are necessary. If suitable roosting habitat is identified, a qualified biologist shall conduct an evening bat emergence survey that may include acoustic monitoring to determine whether or not bats are present. If roosting bats are determined to be present within the project site, consultation with CDFW prior to initiation of construction activities or preparation of a Bat Management Plan outlining avoidance and minimization measures specific to the roost(s) potentially affected shall be required.

The project site supports mixed conifer forest around the existing facilities, which are disturbed or developed and provide only marginal habitat for biological resources. Mixed conifer forest is not considered a sensitive natural community, and no riparian habitat is present on the project site. Therefore, the project would have no impact on riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities.

The project site contains a detention basin. Whether the detention basin is considered to be a water of the U.S. or state requires verification from USACE and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB); however, the detention basin is not likely to be jurisdictional under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) based on the current definition of waters of the U.S. under the Navigable Waters Protection Rule and waters of the state under the *State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State* (SWRCB 2019), and is not expected to be altered by project activities. Therefore, the project is not expected to adversely affect aquatic resources, including waters of the United States and state, and impacts related to these resources would be less than significant.

The project site provides limited migratory opportunities for terrestrial wildlife because of existing developed CAL FIRE and CCC operations onsite. Project construction could temporarily disturb and displace some wildlife from the project site. Some wildlife such as birds or nocturnal species are likely to continue to use the habitats opportunistically for the duration of construction. Once construction is complete, wildlife movements are expected to resume but would likely be more limited through the developed areas of the project site. The project is expected to have a less-than-significant impact on wildlife movement. There are no documented nursery sites and no nursery sites were observed within the study area during the reconnaissance-level survey conducted for the *Biological Resource Assessment* (DGS 2021). Therefore, the project is not expected to adversely affect wildlife nursery sites, and impacts related to wildlife nurseries would be less than significant.

The Biological Resources section of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Butte County General Plan 2030 addresses the protection, enhancement, utilization, and management of natural resources and the environment, and provides for the identification and replacement of areas of oak canopy (Butte County 2010). There are no oak woodlands present on the project site, and the project would not adversely affect oak woodlands protected under the County's Oak Woodland Mitigation Ordinance. The project would not conflict with any other local policies or ordinances and therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

The project site is not covered by any local, regional, or state conservation plan. Therefore, the project would have no impact related to a local, regional, or state conservation plan.

For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts to biological resources, and this issue is not discussed further.

Energy

As described in Chapter 2, Project Description, a 20-foot-wide Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) pole line easement currently bisects the site. As part of project construction activities, the utility line would be undergrounded through the central portion of the site and PG&E would continue to supply electricity to the project site. The site is also served by existing propane tanks; one new tank is proposed to serve the demand of new buildings.

Gasoline and diesel fuel would be used during construction activities. The project does not include any unusual features or operational characteristics that would lead to excessive or abnormal long-term fuel consumption. Compared to existing conditions and similar developments in the region, vehicle fuel use associated with the project would not be considered inefficient or wasteful (DGS 2021). Furthermore, the project would not conflict with or impede implementation of any state or local plans related to renewable energy development or energy efficiency. For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to energy resources, and this impact would be less than significant.

Geology

No active fault zones are located within or in the immediate vicinity of the project site. Four active or potentially active faults are located within 62 miles of the project site. These include Segments 1 and 2 of the Great Valley Fault System, the Battle Creek Fault, and the Hat Creek-McArthur-Mayfield Fault Zone, all situated between approximately 26 and 62 miles from the site (DOC 2025c). Additionally, the historically active Cleveland Hill Fault is located about 26 miles south of the project site. The project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, as

designated by the State of California. The nearest such zone is associated with the Cleveland Hill Fault. The site is also not situated within a State-Designated Seismic Hazard Zone for liquefaction (DOC 2025c). No evidence of landslides or slope instability was observed during site investigations (MPE 2021). Onsite soils exhibit very low expansion potential, further supporting stable development conditions. Project construction activities would adhere to the recommendations outlined in the project's geotechnical report, including over-excavation of all artificial fill soils and loose, soft, and/or disturbed native soils within project structural areas (MPE 2021).

Wastewater collection and treatment within the site is currently managed by an existing septic system located south of the facility. The project would connect new wastewater infrastructure to this existing system, including the septic lift stations to link with the current leach field. The existing septic system has sufficient capacity to accommodate wastewater volumes generated from the existing facility (DGS 2021).

The closest documented paleontological resource, a marine fossil complex from the Late Cretaceous and Eocene epochs, is located approximately 14 miles south of the site. While the upper layers at the project site are less likely to contain such resources, deeper excavations into older sedimentary formations may encounter significant vertebrate fossil remains. As such, the site is considered sensitive for paleontological resources (DGS 2021). The 2021 IS/MND determined that implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would reduce potential impacts related to paleontological resources. This measure requires construction to halt in the event of a fossil discovery and for a qualified paleontologist to evaluate the find. With this mitigation in place, project-related impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1: Discovery of Unknown Paleontological Resources.

If any paleontological resources (i.e., fossils) are found during project construction, construction shall be halted immediately in the subject area and the area shall be isolated using orange or yellow fencing until CAL FIRE is notified and the area is cleared for future work. A qualified paleontologist shall be retained to evaluate the find and recommend appropriate treatment of the inadvertently discovered paleontological resources. In addition, in the event of an inadvertent find, sediment samples should be collected and processed to determine the small fossil potential on the project site. If CAL FIRE resumes work in a location where paleontological remains have been discovered and cleared, CAL FIRE shall have a paleontologist onsite to observe any continuing excavation to confirm that no additional paleontological resources are in the area. Any fossil materials uncovered during mitigation activities shall be deposited in an accredited and permanent scientific institution for the benefit of current and future generations.

Since the adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, the conditions of the proposed project have not changed. The project would not result in any significant staffing increases, no increase in wastewater generation is anticipated as a result of the project. Because the project is larger than 1-acre, Best Management Practices (BMPs) as part of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be implemented to manage erosion and the loss of topsoil. In addition, the proposed project would implement Mitigation Measure GEO-1 to reduce impacts to less-than-significant level in the event of a paleontological find. For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to geology, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with project construction would primarily result from worker commute trips, haul trucks transporting materials to and from the site, and the operation of off-road construction equipment. Modeling prepared for the project concluded that construction activities would be estimated to produce approximately 659 metric tons of CO₂e in the first year and 829 metric tons of CO₂e in the second year of construction. These annual emissions would remain below the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) significance threshold of 900 metric tons of CO₂e. Upon completion of construction, these temporary emissions would cease (DGS 2021).

Once operational, GHG emissions are expected to be moderately higher than current levels, primarily due to a slight increase in daily vehicle trips and expanded building square footage. However, operational emissions would also remain below the CAPCOA significance thresholds.

The project would comply with the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, as outlined in CCR Title 24, Part 6 (California Energy Code). Butte County's Climate Action Plan (CAP) sets targets to reduce GHG emissions to 15 percent below 2006 levels by 2020, and 42 percent below 2006 levels by 2030. The project's estimated GHG emissions would not exceed applicable significance thresholds, which are designed to support achievement of these goals. Furthermore, the proposed buildings are intended to meet a minimum of LEED Silver certification, aligning with Goal 8 of the CAP, which encourages construction to meet CALGreen Tier 1 standards. Therefore, the project would be consistent with the Butte County CAP and would not conflict with any applicable GHG reduction plans or policies (DGS 2021).

Since the adoption of the IS, the conditions of the proposed project have not changed; the project would not generate new or higher GHG emissions nor would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulations. Thus, project impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions would be less-than-significant consistent with the impact conclusions provided in the 2021 IS/MND.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

A *Hazardous Materials Survey Final Report* was prepared by Entek Consulting Group, Inc. for the project site in 2020 (Entek 2020). Several samples collected during the survey were considered suspect for asbestos-containing materials (ACM) under current US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) guidelines (DGS 2021). According to these guidelines, all suspect materials must be presumed to contain asbestos unless confirmed otherwise through laboratory analysis. In total, 371 bulk samples were collected and analyzed for asbestos during the survey. The IS identified that implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 would ensure compliance with all recommendations in the Hazardous Materials Survey, including adherence to NESHAP regulations and Cal/OSHA requirements for asbestos-containing construction materials (ACCM) and lead-based paint (LBP).

Other potential onsite hazardous materials include existing fuel tanks specifically designed and certified for fuel storage. Refueling would occur through routine deliveries using licensed fuel transport trucks that comply with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations. Additional hazardous materials, such as lubricants, fuels, and solvents, may be used in small quantities during project activities. All onsite and offsite storage and use of hazardous materials would comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations, ensuring that such use would not pose a significant hazard to the public or environment (DGS 2021).

Additionally, there is potential for naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) to be present within the project site (Entek 2020). The IS includes Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 which would reduce the potential for airborne dust by requiring procedures in the event that ultramafic rock is or must become exposed to the air. Hazardous substances such as diesel fuel and oil will be used during demolition, construction, operations, and maintenance of the facility. BMPs outlined in the SWPPP and the project-specific Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan would be implemented to ensure no accidental releases of hazardous conditions or materials would occur during construction activities (DGS 2021).

Cedarwood Elementary School is the nearest school to the project site and is located approximately a 0.5 mile to the west. Due to the distance of the project site from Cedarwood Elementary, the potential for hazardous emissions resulting from the project to affect the school would be low. There are no private or public-use airports located within two miles of the project site. As a result, the project would not pose hazards to people living or working in the area due to airport operations.

A review of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Cortese List, EnviroStor, and the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) GeoTracker databases indicated no active or potential federal or state Superfund sites on or adjacent to the project site (DTSC 2025; SWRCB 2025). The proposed project would not interfere with Butte County's emergency response or recovery plans. In fact, it would enhance the capacity of local emergency services by improving the existing facility's functionality and ability to respond to emergencies.

Since adoption of the IS, the entire project site has been reclassified from a Moderate FHSZ to a Very High FHSZ (CAL FIRE 2025). The project site is surrounded on all sides by areas classified as Very High FHSZ, including portions of the

Plumas National Forest. The BFC is specifically designed and equipped to respond to both natural and human-caused emergencies, including wildfires. Implementation of the project would strengthen the operational capabilities of the BFC to support emergency response efforts; BFC would continue to operate during project construction activities. Additionally, the planned removal of approximately 881 trees near the facility (being implemented through the THP) would significantly improve defensible space and reduce wildfire risk compared to existing conditions. Since adoption of the IS, tree removal activities under the THP have commenced and are expected to be completed prior to certification of this EIR. Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 would continue to be applicable to the project to reduce potential impacts associated with hazardous materials and NOA exposure.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1: Hazardous Materials Survey Compliance.

The proposed project shall comply with all recommendations outlined in the Hazardous Materials Survey, as well as all pertinent NESHAP regulations and Cal/OSHA guidelines regarding the proper removal and disposal of hazardous materials from the project site.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2: Dust Prevention.

The project geologist shall prevent potential NOA from becoming airborne by minimizing prolonged exposure of uncovered earth in multiple areas. If ultramafic rock is or must become exposed to the air, then the following procedures must be put into effect. Water support, in the form of a water truck or mobile storage tank, shall be used in regular intervals to keep the open earth area wet and dust free. Proper signage noting the possibility of NOA and required PPE shall be posted in the area. PPE including coveralls and respirators shall be worn by all workers in the area. These procedures shall be followed as long as ultramafic rock is exposed and can be terminated when the rock is again covered with fill.

One comment related to hazards and hazardous materials was received in response to the Notice of Preparation. DTSC requested that surveys be conducted for presence of hazardous materials (e.g., lead-based paint, mercury, asbestos) prior to any building/structure demolition and that DTSC requirements be adhered to in the event that imported soil or fill is introduced onsite during project construction. As described above, a survey and report for the project were prepared in 2020 to identify onsite hazardous materials/conditions. Project implementation would comply with applicable regulations and requirements related to the release, use, transport, and upset conditions associated with hazards and hazardous materials to ensure that impacts remain less than significant. For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials, and impacts would remain less than significant with mitigation, as concluded in the 2021 IS/MND.

Hydrology

The project site would continue to be served by Del Oro Water Company for water supplies. Buildout of the project would not lead to a substantial increase in water demand compared to existing conditions. Further, the project would not significantly increase impervious surfaces, such that increased runoff affecting local water quality would occur. Because the project would disturb more than one acre of land, it would be subject to the statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit for construction activities (Order 98-08-DWQ). As required under this permit, a SWPPP would be developed for the project. The SWPPP would include BMPs to prevent construction-related pollutants from degrading water quality or violating waste discharge requirements. Once constructed, project operation would also comply with applicable water quality standards.

The project would not decrease groundwater supplies or interfere with any applicable groundwater management plan (e.g., Butte County Groundwater Management Plan). New onsite retention basins would be incorporated within the site to capture excess water generated during storm events. Water not captured through onsite retention basins would continue to flow through natural and existing drainage patterns. The site is located within Zone X, indicating an area of minimal flood hazard as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Since the adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, the conditions of the proposed project have not changed. Because the project would not significantly increase impervious surfaces nor alter the site's overall drainage pattern or introduce

structures that would impede or redirect runoff and/or flood flows, impacts related to drainage and flood risk are anticipated to remain less than significant. Further, the project would not increase water demand at the site and would comply with applicable regulations and requirements related to water protection (e.g., SWPPP BMPs). For these reasons, the project would not result in significant impacts related to hydrology and water quality, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed project includes upgrades to the existing CCC/CAL FIRE facility located in Butte County. No roadways or other connections to the surrounding community would be removed or altered such that physical division of an established community would occur. As a state-owned facility, the BFC is under the jurisdiction of the State of California and is therefore not subject to local city or county land use and zoning regulations. Regardless, implementation of the project would not conflict with any applicable local regulations or plans. For these reasons, the project would not result in significant impacts related to land use and planning, and impacts would remain less than significant, consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND.

Mineral Resources

The project site is not located within a designated mineral resource zone (DGS 2021). The project would not result in the loss of any known mineral resources of regional or statewide importance nor result in the loss of availability of any locally important mineral resource recovery areas. Thus, the project would not result in significant impacts related to mineral resources, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Noise

Construction noise associated with the project would be temporary and would vary depending on the specific activities being performed at each phase. Noise would primarily result from the operation of off-road construction equipment onsite and from construction-related vehicle traffic on nearby roads. The nearest noise-sensitive land uses include rural single-family residences, located approximately 200 feet south of the project boundary. Construction equipment would be dispersed throughout the site rather than concentrated near any single sensitive receptor, which would reduce the potential for prolonged noise exposure at any one location (DGS 2021).

The project is anticipated to generate approximately 19 new vehicle trips per day during construction, which would not result in a doubling of traffic volumes on local roadways. As a result, any increase in traffic-related noise would be negligible and not perceptible to nearby residents (DGS 2021). Operational noise from the proposed project is expected to be consistent with existing conditions. Consequently, the noise environment surrounding sensitive receptors would remain unchanged.

Construction-related groundborne vibration during construction is typically associated with the use of equipment such as pile drivers, jackhammers, or heavy-duty machinery like bulldozers and trucks; no pile driving is required for this project. Because vibration levels decrease rapidly with distance, and construction activities would be spread throughout the site, impacts to nearby receptors are expected to be minimal. Similarly, continued project operation would not involve any large-scale stationary equipment capable of generating significant vibration (DGS 2021).

The project site is not located within an airport land use plan and is more than two miles from any public or public-use airport. The nearest airport, Chico Municipal Airport, is located approximately 15 miles east of the project site. Therefore, no airport-related noise impacts are anticipated.

Since the adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, the conditions of the proposed project have not changed; there would be no increase in the generation of ambient noise levels or groundborne vibrations. For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to noise, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Population and Housing

The proposed project would operate similarly to existing conditions once complete. It would not introduce new housing or expand offsite infrastructure that would accommodate or result in population increases in the area. Likewise, the project would not result in the displacement of any people or existing residences. CAL FIRE and CCC personnel would continue to operate from the existing fire base throughout the construction period. Therefore, the project would not result in significant impacts related to population and housing, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Public Services

Public safety services in the area are provided by the Butte County Sheriff's Department, which also plays a key role in emergency response for the Magalia community. The Butte Fire Center serves Magalia, the unincorporated areas of Butte County, and the Plumas National Forest for fire protection services. Nearby public-school facilities include Cedarwood Elementary School, located approximately 0.5-miles west of the project site, and Magalia Adventist School, located approximately 1 mile northwest. Recreational resources in the area include several local parks, with Loch Lomond Glen Park and Coutolenc Park located nearest to the project site. The proposed project does not involve the development of residential housing and would not induce population growth or increase demand for public services.

For the reasons described above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to public services, and impacts would remain less than significant, consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND.

Recreation

Two parks are located near the project site. Loch Lomond Glen Park, situated approximately one mile to the west, includes a 10-site campground, a swimming hole, and a zip line. Coutolenc Park, located approximately 1.2 miles south and managed by the Paradise Recreation and Park District, offers hiking trails and an archery range. Additionally, Magalia Community Park is located approximately 2.6 miles south of the site. The proposed project would not increase the local population and, as such, is not expected to affect the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks, nor recreational facilities. Furthermore, the project does not include any new public recreational amenities nor require the construction or expansion of recreational infrastructure. Thus, the project would not result in potentially significant impacts related to recreation, and impacts would remain less than significant, consistent with the conclusions of the 2021 IS/MND.

Transportation

Short-term construction-related vehicle trips would include transporting construction equipment, worker commutes, hauling materials to the site, and removing excess fill. These construction-related trips would be temporary and would cease once construction is completed. The project's long-term operations would not increase vehicle trips to a level that would negatively affect the local circulation system, nor substantially increase trips beyond existing conditions.

No project elements would necessitate the removal of traffic lanes, reduce roadway capacity, nor disrupt transit services. According to the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), projects generating fewer than 110 daily trips may be screened from Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis. The project would maintain the current number of CAL FIRE and CCC staff employed at the site once construction is complete and would generate fewer than 110 net new daily trips. Thus, the project qualifies for screening under OPR guidelines (DGS 2021).

CAL FIRE's mandatory project application review would include evaluation of the project's site design to ensure emergency vehicle access. The project includes updated fire protection and emergency response facilities, as well as improvements to internal circulation, further resulting in enhanced emergency access within the site (DGS 2021).

Consistent with the 2021 IS/MND analysis, construction-related vehicle trips would be temporary and therefore would not result in sustained transportation impacts.

For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to transportation, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Utilities and Service Systems

As described in Chapter 2, Project Description, the project would include a new domestic water distribution system, fire water distribution system, sewer collection system, stormwater management system, propane distribution system, underground electrical power distribution system. As discussed throughout the analysis provided above, project components (including new/expanded infrastructure) would be constructed in compliance with applicable regulations and requirements (e.g., applicable IS/MND mitigation measures, and SWPPP BMPs) such that no significant environmental effects would occur.

Water supplies for the project would continue to be provided by Del Oro Water Company and project implementation would not result in increased water demand. Similarly, wastewater generated as a result of the project would be consistent with the site's existing wastewater generation.

Construction activities would generate solid waste associated with building demolition while long-term operation would generate solid waste amounts similar to current conditions (DGS 2021). Disposal of all construction-related solid waste would occur in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

For the reasons above, the project would not result in significant impacts related to utilities and service systems, and impacts would remain less than significant.

Wildfire

Since adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, the entire project site has been reclassified from a Moderate FHSZ to a Very High FHSZ (CAL FIRE 2025). The project site is surrounded on all sides by areas classified as Very High FHSZ, including portions of the Plumas National Forest. The BFC is specifically designed and equipped to respond to both natural and human-caused emergencies, including wildfires.

As an active fire and emergency response facility, the project would maintain operations during construction activities. Construction of the proposed project would not interfere with or conflict with any established emergency response or evacuation plans. Construction and operation of new buildings and utility infrastructure to support current BFC operations would not result in exposure to nor exacerbate any fire risk or wildfire conditions. Further, no recent fire events have occurred within the project site such that significant risks associated with post-fire instability or drainage would occur. Thus, the project would not result in significant impacts related to utilities and service systems, and impacts would remain less than significant.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE CATEGORIES EVALUATED FURTHER

As described in Chapter 1, "Introduction," this EIR provides a more detailed evaluation of Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources as a result of the statewide historical evaluation of all CAL FIRE facilities and the resultant recommendation that the BFC is eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and as a CHL for its contribution to history and its architecture:

The format of Section 3.1 is as follows:

- ▶ **Regulatory Setting** gives a summary of regulations, plans, policies, and laws that are relevant to the environmental effects in each resource section. Regulations originating from the federal, state, and local levels are each discussed as appropriate.
- ▶ **Environmental Setting** presents the existing environmental conditions on the project site and surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15125). This setting generally serves as the baseline against which environmental impacts are evaluated.

- ▶ **Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures** identifies the thresholds of significance used to determine the level of significance of the environmental impacts for each resource topic, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Sections 15126, 15126.2, and 15143). The thresholds of significance used in this Draft EIR are based on the checklist presented in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines; best available data; and regulatory standards of federal, state, and local agencies. The level of each impact is determined by comparing the effects of the project to the environmental setting. Key methods and assumptions used to frame and conduct the impact analysis as well as issues or potential impacts not discussed further (such issues for which the project would have no impact) are also described.

Project impacts are organized numerically in each subsection (e.g., Impact 3.1-1, Impact 3.1-2, Impact 3.1-3, etc.). A bold-font impact statement, a summary of each impact, and its level of significance precedes the discussion of each impact. The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion.

The Draft EIR must describe any feasible measures that could avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant adverse impacts, and the measures are to be fully enforceable through incorporation in and adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Public Resources Code Section 21081.6[b]). Mitigation measures are not required for effects that are found to be less than significant. Where feasible mitigation for a significant impact is available, it is described following the impact along with its effectiveness at addressing the impact. Each identified mitigation measure is labeled numerically to correspond with the number of the impact that would be mitigated by the measure. Where sufficient feasible mitigation is not available to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, or where CAL FIRE lacks the authority to ensure that the mitigation is implemented when needed, the impacts are identified as remaining "significant and unavoidable."

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3.1 CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section analyzes and evaluates the potential impacts of the project on known and unknown cultural resources. Cultural resources include districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects generally older than 50 years and considered to be important to a culture, subculture, or community for scientific, traditional, religious, or other reasons. They include pre-historic resources, historic-period resources, and "tribal cultural resources" (the latter as defined by Assembly Bill (AB) 52, Statutes of 2014, in Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21074).

Archaeological resources are locations where human activity has measurably altered the earth or left deposits of prehistoric (e.g., precontact) or historic-era physical remains (e.g., stone tools, bottles, former roads, house foundations). Historical (or built-environment) resources can include standing buildings (e.g., houses, barns, outbuildings, cabins), intact structures (e.g., dams, bridges, roads, districts), and landscapes. Tribal cultural resources are sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects, with cultural value to a tribe.

One comment letter regarding cultural resources was received in response to the Notice of Preparation (see Appendix A). The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) requested AB 52 and SB 18 compliance information; SB 18 does not apply to the project because there is not a General Plan amendment associated with the project (which is the trigger for SB 18 compliance) and SB 18 is not a CEQA requirement. Therefore, it is not discussed in this section. AB 52 compliance is described below.

3.1.1 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation's master inventory of known historic properties. It is administered by the National Park Service and includes listings of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level.

The formal criteria (36 CFR 60.4) for determining NRHP eligibility are as follows:

1. The property is at least 50 years old (however, properties under 50 years of age that are of exceptional importance or are contributors to a district can also be included in the NRHP);
2. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and associations; and
3. It possesses at least one of the following characteristics:

Criterion A Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history (events).

Criterion B Is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past (persons).

Criterion C Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant, distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (architecture).

Criterion D Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history (information potential).

For a property to retain and convey historic integrity, it must possess most of the seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. Integrity of location refers to whether the property has been moved since its construction. Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure,

and style of a property. Setting is the physical environment of a historic property that illustrates the character of the place. Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. This intangible quality is evoked by physical features that reflect a sense of a past time and place. Association is the direct link between the important historic event or person and a historic property. Continuation of historic use and occupation help maintain integrity of association.

Listing in the NRHP does not entail specific protection or assistance for a property, but it does guarantee consideration in planning for federal or federally assisted projects, eligibility for federal tax benefits, and qualification for federal historic preservation assistance. In addition, project effects on properties listed in the NRHP must be evaluated under CEQA.

The National Register Bulletin series was developed to assist evaluators in the application of NRHP criteria. For example, National Register Bulletin #36 provides guidance in the evaluation of archaeological site significance. If a property cannot be placed within a particular theme or time period, and thereby lacks "focus," it will be unlikely to possess characteristics that would make it eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Secretary's Standards) provide guidance for working with historic properties. The Secretary's Standards are used by lead agencies to evaluate proposed rehabilitative work on historic properties. The Secretary's Standards are a useful analytic tool for understanding and describing the potential impacts of proposed changes to historic resources. Projects that comply with the Secretary's Standards benefit from a regulatory presumption that they would not result in a significant impact to a historic resource.

In 1992 the Secretary's Standards were revised so they could be applied to all types of historic resources, including landscapes. They were reduced to four sets of treatments to guide work on historic properties: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. The four distinct treatments are defined as follows:

- ▶ **Preservation** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- ▶ **Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
- ▶ **Restoration** depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- ▶ **Reconstruction** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

STATE

California Register of Historical Resources

All properties in California that are listed in or formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP are also listed in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR). The CRHR is a listing of State of California resources that are significant in the context of California's history. It is a Statewide program with a scope and with criteria for inclusion similar to those used for the NRHP. In addition, properties designated under municipal or county ordinances are also eligible for listing in the CRHR.

A historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the criteria defined in CCR Title 15, Chapter 11.5, Section 4850 to be included in the CRHR. The CRHR criteria are tied to CEQA because any resource that meets the criteria listed below is considered a significant historical resource under CEQA. As noted above, all resources listed in or formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP are automatically listed in the CRHR.

The CRHR uses four evaluation criteria:

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

Similar to the NRHP, a historical resource must meet one of the above criteria and retain integrity to be listed in the CRHR. The CRHR uses the same seven aspects of integrity used by the NRHP.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

California Historical Landmarks (CHL) are numbered sequentially as they are listed by the State Historical Resources Commission. California Historical Landmarks numbered 770 and above are automatically listed in the California Register. According to PRC Section 5031(a), to be eligible for California Historical Landmark designation, a property must be of statewide historical importance and must demonstrate its statewide significance by meeting one of the following three requirements:

1. The property is the first, last, only, or most significant historical property of its type in the region. The regions are Southern California, Central California, and Northern California. If a property has lost its historic appearance (integrity), it may still be listed as a site.
2. The property is associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of California. The primary emphasis should be the place or places of achievement of an individual. Birthplace, death place, or place of interment shall not be a consideration unless something of historical importance is connected with the person's birth or death. If a property has lost its historic appearance (integrity), it may still be listed as a site.
3. The property is a prototype of, or an outstanding example of, a period, style, architectural movement, or construction, or it is one of the more notable works, or the best surviving work in a region of a pioneer architect, designer, or master builder. An architectural landmark must have excellent physical integrity, including integrity of location. An architectural landmark generally will be considered on its original site, particularly if its significance is basically derived from its design relationship to its site. Note: Only preeminent examples will be listed for architectural importance. Good representative examples of a style, period, or method of construction are more appropriately nominated to other registration programs.

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires public agencies to consider the effects of their actions on "historical resources," "unique archaeological resources," and "tribal cultural resources." Pursuant to PRC Section 21084.1, a "project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment." Section 21083.2 requires agencies to determine whether projects would have effects on unique archaeological resources. PRC Section 21084.2 establishes that "[a] project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment."

Historical Resources

"Historical resource" is a term with a defined statutory meaning (PRC Section 21084.1; State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064.5[a] and [b]). Under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a), historical resources include the following:

- 1) A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the CRHR is considered a historical resource (PRC Section 5024.1).

- 2) A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in PRC Section 5020.1(k) or identified as significant in a historical resource survey meeting the requirements of PRC Section 5024.1(g), will be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.
- 3) Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource will be considered by the lead agency to be historically significant if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the CRHR (PRC Section 5024.1).
- 4) The fact that a resource is not listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC Section 5020.1[k]), or not identified in a historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC Section 5024.1[g]) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be a historical resource as defined in PRC Sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

Unique Archaeological Resources

CEQA also requires lead agencies to consider whether projects would affect unique archaeological resources. PRC Section 21083.2(g) states that "unique archaeological resource" means an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions, and there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.
2. Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.
3. Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

Tribal Cultural Resources

CEQA also requires lead agencies to consider whether projects would affect tribal cultural resources. PRC Section 21074 states:

- a) "Tribal cultural resources" are either of the following:
 - 1) Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
 - A) Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources.
 - B) Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of 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 in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1 for the purposes of this paragraph, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.
- b) A cultural landscape that meets the criteria of subdivision (a) is a tribal cultural resource to the extent that the landscape is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape.
- c) A historical resource described in Section 21084.1, a unique archaeological resource as defined in subdivision (g) of Section 21083.2, or a "nonunique archaeological resource" as defined in subdivision (h) of Section 21083.2 may also be a tribal cultural resource if it conforms with the criteria of subdivision (a).

Public Resources Code Section 21080.3

AB 52, signed by the California Governor in September of 2014, established a new class of resources under CEQA: "tribal cultural resources," defined in PRC Section 21074. Pursuant to PRC Sections 21080.3.1, 21080.3.2, and 21082.3, lead agencies undertaking CEQA review must, upon written request of a California Native American Tribe, begin consultation before the release of an EIR, negative declaration, or mitigated negative declaration. CEQA Sections 21080.3.1 and 21080.3.2 state that within 14 days of determining that a project application is complete, or to undertake a project, the lead agency must provide formal notification, in writing, to the tribes that have requested notification of proposed projects in the lead agency's jurisdiction. If it wishes to engage in consultation on the project, the tribe must respond to the lead agency within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification. The lead agency must begin the consultation process with the tribes that have requested consultation within 30 days of receiving the request for consultation. Consultation concludes when either: 1) the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect, if a significant effect exists, on a tribal cultural resource, or 2) a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

Public Resources Code Section 21083.2

Treatment options under PRC Section 21083.2(b) to mitigate impacts to archaeological resources include activities that preserve such resources in place in an undisturbed state. PRC Section 21083.2 states:

- (a) As part of the determination made pursuant to Section 21080.1, the lead agency shall determine whether the project may have a significant effect on archaeological resources. If the lead agency determines that the project may have a significant effect on unique archaeological resources, the environmental impact report shall address the issue of those resources. An environmental impact report, if otherwise necessary, shall not address the issue of nonunique archaeological resources. A negative declaration shall be issued with respect to a project if, but for the issue of nonunique archaeological resources, the negative declaration would be otherwise issued.
- (b) If it can be demonstrated that a project will cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts to be made to permit any or all of these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. Examples of that treatment, in no order of preference, may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:
 - (1) Planning construction to avoid archaeological sites.
 - (2) Deeding archaeological sites into permanent conservation easements.
 - (3) Capping or covering archaeological sites with a layer of soil before building on the sites.
 - (4) Planning parks, greenspace, or other open space to incorporate archaeological sites.
- (c) To the extent that unique archaeological resources are not preserved in place or not left in an undisturbed state, mitigation measures shall be required as provided in this subdivision.
- (d) Excavation as mitigation shall be restricted to those parts of the unique archaeological resource that would be damaged or destroyed by the project.
- (e) In no event shall the amount paid by a project applicant for mitigation measures required pursuant to subdivision (c) exceed the following amounts:
 - (1) An amount equal to one-half of 1 percent of the projected cost of the project for mitigation measures undertaken within the site boundaries of a commercial or industrial project.
 - (2) An amount equal to three-fourths of 1 percent of the projected cost of the project for mitigation measures undertaken within the site boundaries of a housing project consisting of a single unit.
 - (3) If a housing project consists of more than a single unit, an amount equal to three-fourths of 1 percent of the projected cost of the project for mitigation measures undertaken within the site boundaries of the project for the first unit plus the sum of the following:
 - (A) Two hundred dollars (\$200) per unit for any of the next 99 units.

- (B) One hundred fifty dollars (\$150) per unit for any of the next 400 units.
- (C) One hundred dollars (\$100) per unit in excess of 500 units.
- (f) Unless special or unusual circumstances warrant an exception, the field excavation phase of an approved mitigation plan shall be completed within 90 days after final approval necessary to implement the physical development of the project or, if a phased project, in connection with the phased portion to which the specific mitigation measures are applicable. However, the project applicant may extend that period if he or she so elects. Nothing in this section shall nullify protections for Indian cemeteries under any other provision of law.

Public Resources Code, Section 5024

The California State Legislature enacted PRC Section 5024 and 5024.5 as part of a larger effort to establish a State program to preserve historical resources. These sections of the code require State agencies to take a number of actions to ensure preservation of State-owned historical resources under their jurisdictions. These actions include evaluating resources for NRHP eligibility and California Historical Landmark eligibility, maintaining an inventory of eligible and listed resources, and managing these historical resources so that they will retain their historic characteristics.

PRC Section 5024(f) requires state agencies to submit to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for comment documentation for any project having the potential to affect state-owned historical resources under its jurisdiction listed in or potentially eligible for inclusion in the NRHP, or registered or eligible for registration as California Historical Landmarks. The SHPO has 30 days after receipt of the notice for review and comment.

California Native American Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Sites Act

The California Native American Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Sites Act (PRC Section 5097.9) applies to both State and private lands. The act requires, upon discovery of human remains, that construction or excavation activity cease and that the county coroner be notified. If the remains are those of a Native American, the coroner must notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), which notifies and has the authority to designate the most likely descendant (MLD) of the deceased. The act stipulates the procedures the descendants may follow for treating or disposing of the remains and associated grave goods.

Health and Safety Code, Sections 7050.5

Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code requires that construction or excavation be stopped in the vicinity of discovered human remains until the coroner can determine whether the remains are those of a Native American. If they are determined to be those of a Native American, the coroner must contact NAHC.

Public Resources Code, Section 5097

PRC Section 5097 specifies the procedures to be followed if human remains are unexpectedly discovered on nonfederal land. The disposition of Native American burials falls within the jurisdiction of NAHC. Section 5097.5 of the code states:

No person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure, or deface any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, or any other archaeological, paleontological or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over such lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

LOCAL

The Butte County General Plan contains the following policies that are applicable to cultural and tribal cultural resources (Butte County 2023):

- ▶ **Policy COS-P15.1:** Historic and cultural resources management shall be coordinated with nearby jurisdictions, including the five incorporated municipalities, the Lassen and Plumas National Forests, other planning and regulatory agencies, and local tribes.

- ▶ **Policy COS-P15.2:** In consultation with the Northeast Information Center, create guidelines for evaluating development project impacts to surface and subsurface cultural resources, including specific mitigations for impacts that are identified.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P15.3:** The Northeast Information Center and appropriate historic and preservation professionals shall be consulted when considering re-use of historic sites.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P16.1:** Areas found during construction to contain significant historic or prehistoric archaeological artifacts shall be examined by a qualified consulting archaeologist or historian for appropriate protection and preservation. Historic or prehistoric artifacts found during construction shall be examined by a qualified consulting archaeologist or historian to determine their significance and develop appropriate protection and preservation measures.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P16.2:** Any archaeological or paleontological resources on a development project site shall be either preserved in their sites or adequately documented as a condition of removal. When a development project has sufficient flexibility, avoidance and preservation of the resource shall be the primary mitigation measure.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P16.3:** Demolition permit applications on potentially important historic sites shall be subject to discretionary review.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P17.4:** Impacts to the traditional Native American landscape shall be considered during California Environmental Quality Act or National Environmental Protection Act review of development proposals.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P17.5:** Human remains discovered during implementation of public and private development projects shall be treated with dignity and respect. Such treatment shall fully comply with the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other appropriate laws.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P17.6:** If human remains are located during any ground disturbing activity, work shall stop until the County Coroner has been contacted, and, if the human remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the NAHC and most likely descendant have been consulted.
- ▶ **Policy COS-P17.7:** Consistent with State local and tribal intergovernmental consultation requirements such as SB18, the County shall consult with Native American tribes that may be interested in proposed new development projects and land use policy changes.

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

Unless otherwise cited, the environmental setting comprises the regional precontact history, ethnohistory, and historic-era setting. The following setting information is based on the *Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Butte Fire Center Replacement Project*, prepared by ECORP Consulting, Inc. (ECORP 2021).

REGIONAL PRECONTACT HISTORY

It is generally believed that human occupation of California began at least 10,000 years before present (BP). The archaeological record indicates that between approximately 10,000 and 8,000 BP, a predominantly hunting economy existed, characterized by archaeological sites containing numerous projectile points and butchered large animal bones. Although small animal bones and plant grinding tools are rarely found within archaeological sites of this period, small game and floral foods were probably exploited on a limited basis. A lack of deep cultural deposits from this period suggests that groups included only small numbers of individuals who did not often stay in one place for extended periods.

Around 8,000 BP, there was a shift in focus from hunting toward a greater reliance on plant resources. This period, which extended until around 5,000 BP, is sometimes referred to as the Millingstone Horizon. An increase in the size of groups and the stability of settlements is indicated by deep, extensive middens at some sites from this period. In sites dating to after about 5,000 BP, archaeological evidence indicates that reliance on both plant gathering and hunting continued as in the previous period, with more specialized adaptation to particular environments. During this period,

new peoples from the Great Basin began entering southern California. These immigrants, who spoke a language of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic stock, seem to have displaced or absorbed the earlier population of Hokan-speaking peoples.

Paleo-Indian Period

This period began when the first people began to inhabit what is now known as the California culture area. It was commonly believed these first people subsisted on big game and minimally processed foods, (i.e., hunters and gatherers), presumably with no trade networks. More recent research indicates these people may have been more sedentary, relied on some processed foods, and traded. Populations likely consisted of small groups traveling frequently to exploit plant and animal resources.

Archaic Period

This period was characterized by an increase in plant gathering for food, more elaborate burial goods, and increase in trade network complexity. The three divisions, Lower, Middle and Upper Archaic, correspond to pre-contact climate changes and are characterized by the following aspects:

- ▶ **Lower Archaic Period.** This period is characterized by cycles of widespread floodplain and alluvial fan deposition. Artifacts from this period include chipped-stone crescents and early wide-stemmed points, marine shell beads, and obsidian from eastern Nevada and the north Coast Ranges. These types of artifacts found on sites dating to this period indicate trade was occurring in multiple directions. A variety of plant and animal species were also utilized, including acorns, wild cucumber, and manzanita berries.
- ▶ **Middle Archaic Period.** This period is characterized by a drier climate period within two distinct settlement/subsistence patterns in this period: the Foothill Tradition and the Valley Tradition. Artifacts from the foothill tradition include locally sourced flaked-stone and groundstone cobbles, while the Valley Tradition was generally characterized by diverse subsistence practices and extended periods of sedentism.
- ▶ **Upper Archaic Period.** This period is characterized by an abrupt change to wetter and cooler environmental climate conditions. Much greater cultural diversity is evident from this period. More specialized artifacts, such as bone tools, ceremonial blades, polished and groundstone plummets, saucer, and saddle *Olivella* shell beads, *Haliotis* shell ornaments, and a variety of groundstone artifacts are characteristic of this period.

Emergent Period

This period is most notably marked by the introduction of the bow and arrow, the emergence of social stratification linked to wealth, and more expansive trade networks signified by the presence of clam disk beads that were used as currency. The Augustine pattern (the distinct cultural pattern of the Emergent Period) is characterized by the appearance of small projectile points (largely obsidian), rimmed display mortars, flanged steatite pipes, flanged pestles, and chevron-designed bird-bone tubes. Large mammals and small seeded resources appear to have made up a larger part of the diet during this period.

ETHNOHISTORY

Ethnographically, the project site is within the ethnographic tribal territory of the Maidu, located in the lower foothills of the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada range and in the periphery of the Northern Sacramento Valley. The Maidu were grouped into three divisions by early ethnographers based on language and material culture: the Northeastern (Mountain Maidu), Northwestern (Konkow), and Southern (Nisenan). Because many believe the Mountain Maidu and Konkow to be so closely related, ethnographers tended to group them as one.

The Konkow occupied territory located immediately adjacent and to the southwest of the Mountain Maidu, along the Feather and Sacramento rivers, to their southern boundary at the Sutter Buttes. The Konkow were primarily located in the lower elevations of the Sierra Nevada and along the valley floor.

The village community was the primary settlement type among the Maidu and consisted of a cluster of three to five geographically well-defined small villages. The Konkow, in comparison, were dispersed throughout the valley floor along river canyons, in less concentrated settlement areas. Both tribal groups preferred permanent settlement locations on rises above flood-prone meadows and marshes and with broad views of the surrounding terrain. Residential structure types and building materials varied seasonally.

HISTORIC-ERA SETTING

Regional History

The project site is located in the northern portion of Butte County. Butte County was one of the first 27 California counties and originally encompassed a much larger area. It was named for the landform now known as the Sutter Buttes, located in present-day Sutter County to the south. In the latter part of the 19th century, the county land was primarily agricultural, with timber and mineral lands encompassing less than half the county area. Captain Luis A. Argüello led an expedition to the region in 1820 and was likely the earliest nonnative to explore the area. Fur trappers of the Hudson Bay Company followed and traversed the region as early as 1828.

The project site is located near the community of Magalia. The original settlement was known as Dogtown prior to its name being changed to Magalia (the Latin word for cottages or huts). In April 1859, a 54-pound gold nugget was discovered at a hydraulic mine in the Feather River Canyon and became known as the Dogtown Nugget. The Dogtown Nugget Discovery Site in Magalia is now a California Historical Landmark (CHL #771), located approximately 3 miles south of the project site.

CAL FIRE and BFC History

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE, formerly CDF) was established in 1905 during the Conservation Movement of the early 20th century; the Forest Protection Act of 1905 was central to the establishment of the agency. By 1908, there were 721 fire wardens in California, 269 of whom were employed by the USFS. CAL FIRE and State Forester were synonymous through 1919, when the California State Legislature first provided it funding. By the following year, 10 districts were established in northern California counties, each with a ranger who oversaw operations. The California Conservation Corp (CCC), established by Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of his administration's Emergency Conservation Work Programs, established fire suppression camps throughout the State, and they erected 50 new fire lookouts between 1934 and 1936. All of these sites were part of the CAL FIRE detection system, and many CCC camps became permanent fire stations.

The BFC was originally operated as the Magalia Camp from 1949 to 1973. The Magalia Camp was converted to the Butte Ecology Center in the 1970s and later was used as the Magalia Nursery. The Butte Ecology Center was managed by CAL FIRE and the California Ecology Corps. By 1978, the camp began the BFC and the Magalia Nursery operated from within the center. The goal of the nursery was to grow and sell tree seedlings to help reforest burned and understocked forest land. The camp is now used as a firefighter training facility and sits on 80 acres of land.

Project Site History

At the time of its opening in 1949, the BFC was known as the Magalia Honor Camp and was used as a joint CDF-California Department of Corrections (CDC) facility. In 1952, the facility was transitioned to be the Magalia Reforestation Center, beginning its reforestation mission. The CDCR portion of the facility initially operated with inmates from San Quentin State Prison before being switched to those at Folsom State Prison by 1953, and the facility was also sometimes referred to as the Magalia Conservation Camp. At some point in the mid-1950s, Paradise Lake was created by the damming of Little Butte Creek, which introduced a lake to the east side of the facility, which is visible from the residences located at the northeast end of the property (Mead & Hunt 2023).

By 1963, the nursery was documented in the *Paradise Post* newspaper as having seven acres dedicated to raising conifers "for reforestation, erosion control, windbreaks, and Christmas tree farms." The species were primarily Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, but also included white fir, Coulter pine, Sierra redwood, and other conifer varieties. In the mid-1960s, the tree farm was "enlarged from seven to 15 acres." The seedlings grown at Magalia were also

available to the public for purchase (though not for profit-generation), to reforest logged private land, or for the public to buy for replanting fire-stricken private property (Mead & Hunt 2023).

In 1973, the CDC phased out the conservation camp program from the facility. Replacing it was a new “ecology program” consisting of conservation work by employees between 17 and 31 years of age. The new ecology program retained the firefighting and reforestation missions of the facility. By this time, species cultivated at the nursery included Jeffrey pine, knobcone pine, Ponderosa pine, scotch pine, and sugar pine, as well as Douglas fir, white fir, red fir, Sierra redwood, and Russian olive (Mead & Hunt 2023).

In 1993, state budget cuts narrowly spared the nursery portion of the facility from closure, but resulted in the closure of the state’s other nursery at Ben Lomond in Santa Cruz County. In 2009, the facility’s nursery program was shuttered as a result of state budget reallocation, though the firefighting component of the facility remained in operation. When the nursery closed in 2009, it was the last state-run nursery in California (Mead & Hunt 2023).

RECORDS SEARCHES, SURVEYS, AND CONSULTATION

The project site boundary has not changed since the 2021 IS/MND was adopted. In addition, the records search previously conducted for the 2021 IS/MND is recent, having been completed within the last five years. Therefore, the records search results and pedestrian survey conducted in 2021 for the IS/MND remain applicable to the proposed project.

On January 28, 2021, a records search of the project site was conducted at the Northeastern Information Center (NEIC), at California State University, Chico. The following information was reviewed as part of the records search:

- ▶ NRHP and CRHR,
- ▶ California Office of Historic Preservation Historic Property Directory,
- ▶ California Inventory of Historic Resources,
- ▶ California State Historic Landmarks,
- ▶ California Points of Historical Interest, and
- ▶ Historic properties reference map.

An archaeological pedestrian survey of the project site was conducted on March 4, 2021, by ECORP’s cultural resources staff. At that time, the ground surface was examined for indications of surface or subsurface cultural resources by and under the direction of professionals meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for prehistoric and historic archaeology. No archaeological sites and materials were identified as a result of the pedestrian survey (ECORP 2021), subsequently no subsurface testing was required or conducted.

In 2021 an IS/MND was prepared for the project and was adopted in 2021, (State Clearing House #2021100194). Since the adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, a statewide historical evaluation of all CAL FIRE facilities has been prepared. The evaluation contained a review of built environment structures which included the proposed project property (Mead & Hunt 2023).

BFC Historic District Evaluation

The BFC historic district (historic district) is comprised of 25 buildings and structures. The historic district consists of two facility types – Demonstration State Forest and Nurseries that collectively convey significance to the Reforestation and Conservation theme. A historic district is a geographic area that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, areas, structures, or objects which are united historically, culturally, or aesthetically by plan, history, or physical development.

The historic district has a strong association with the theme of Reforestation and Conservation and the development of CAL FIRE’s nursery/reforestation program. The historic district is one of only two nurseries established by CAL FIRE; LA Moran in Davis is the other nursery, established in the 1920s. The CAL FIRE facility at the BFC was established in 1949 and transitioned into a reforestation center in 1952 and represents CAL FIRE’s continued operation of its

important nursery/reforestation program in the mid-twentieth century. The historic district was constructed between 1927 and 1974 and retains a majority of its character-defining features. Therefore, the historic district meets NRHP/CRHR/CHL Criteria A/1/1 as a good representation of the development of Reforestation and Conservation theme. In applying the historic context's integrity considerations for this property, it retains integrity in the essential aspects of integrity under Criterion A/1/1.

No historically significant individuals were identified that were closely associated with this property. It is therefore not eligible under NRHP Criterion B/2/2 following the registration requirements for this facility type for the Reforestation and Conservation theme.

The historic district is a good example of the nursery property type, and it retains a majority of the buildings present during the potential period of significance, 1949-1974. It retains a seed processing and refrigeration building, office, and storage sheds that collectively convey the historic function of the nursery facility in addition to other buildings, including barracks, mess hall, gas and oil houses, pump houses, apparatus building, tool shed, auto shop, and laundry building. Areas cleared for cultivation are still visible at the nursery reflecting the function and operation of the facility during the period of significance. Therefore, the facility is eligible under NRHP/CRHR/CHL Criteria C/3/3. In applying the historic context's integrity considerations for this property, it retains integrity in the essential aspects of integrity under NRHP/CRHR/CHL Criteria C/3/3.

Finally, this property includes several building types, many of which reflect common designs that are found at many CAL FIRE facilities and whose function, use, design, and construction are readily apparent and therefore do not have the potential to provide information about history or prehistory that is not available through historic research. The property is therefore not eligible under NRHP/CRHR Criteria D/4.

For these reasons, CAL FIRE determined the historic district is eligible for NRHP, CRHR, and CHL listing, and is therefore a historical resource under CEQA. On August 28, 2025, CAL FIRE initiated consultation with the SHPO requesting concurrence that the BFC historic district was eligible for inclusion in the NRHP and as a CHL for the aforementioned reasons. CAL FIRE also requested input on potential mitigation measures and for concurrence that the project's impact to the BFC historic district would be substantial and adverse. Consultation with SHPO remains ongoing.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Native American Consultation

A search of the NAHC Sacred Lands File database was requested, to identify tribally sensitive properties on file in or near the project site. On October 17, 2025, Ascent received the negative results of the Sacred Lands File search. A negative result means that no tribes have reported an area to be sacred which could indicate the presence of a tribal cultural resource.

Native American Consultation

On October 31, 2025, CAL FIRE emailed/mailed AB 52 notification letters to the following 34 tribal representatives:

- ▶ Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians, Francis Steel Jr, Chairman
- ▶ Butte Tribal Council, Ren Reynolds
- ▶ Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria, Glenda Nelson, Chairperson
- ▶ Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria, Nelson Smith, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
- ▶ Greenville Rancheria, Kyle Self, Vice Chair
- ▶ Honey Lake Maidu, Ron Morales, Chairperson
- ▶ Konkow Valley Band of Maidu, Matthew Williford, Acting Chairperson/Cultural Resources Director
- ▶ Konkow Valley Band of Maidu, Wayne Nine, Cultural Advisor
- ▶ Konkow Valley Band of Maidu, Konkau Association Corporation, Contracting Department

- ▶ Maidu Cultural and Development Group, Lorena Gorbet
- ▶ Mechoopda Indian Tribe, Dennis Ramirez, Chair
- ▶ Mechoopda Indian Tribe, Kyle McHentry, Cultural Director
- ▶ Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians, Benjamin Clark, Chairperson
- ▶ Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, Richard Johnson, Chairman
- ▶ Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, Saxon Thomas, Tribal Council Member
- ▶ Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, Shelly Covert, Tribal Secretary
- ▶ Pakan'yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria, Alejandra Ramirez, Co-Chair
- ▶ Pakan'yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria, Scott Dinsmore, Co-Chair
- ▶ Redding Rancheria, Jack Potter Jr., Chairperson
- ▶ Redding Rancheria, Tracy Edwards, Chief Executive Officer
- ▶ Redding Rancheria, James Hayward Sr., Cultural Resources Manager
- ▶ Redding Rancheria, Lillie Lucero, THPO
- ▶ Round Valley Reservation/ Covelo Indian Community, Patricia Rabano, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer,
- ▶ Round Valley Reservation/ Covelo Indian Community, James Russ, President
- ▶ Susanville Indian Rancheria, Arian Hart, Chairperson
- ▶ TSI-AKIM Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, Don Ryberg, Chair
- ▶ TSI-AKIM Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, Ben Cunningham-Summerfield, Cultural Advisor
- ▶ TSI-AKIM Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, Richard Cunningham, Vice Chairman
- ▶ TSI-AKIM Maidu of the Taylorsville Rancheria, Ben Cunningham, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
- ▶ United Auburn Indian Community, Josef Fore, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
- ▶ United Auburn Indian Community, Anna Starkey, Cultural Regulatory Specialist
- ▶ Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Bernadette Nieto, Tribal Administrator
- ▶ Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Serrell Smokey, Chairperson
- ▶ Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Billyhawk Enos, THPO

The United Auburn Indian Community (UAIC) responded to the AB 52 notification letter on October 31, 2025, that the project falls outside of UAIC's area of cultural and geographic affiliation. Therefore, UAIC declined consultation and they do not have any comments on the proposed project. In a letter dated November 13, 2025, Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians stated that while they are not aware of any tribal cultural resources on the project site, they would like to be notified if any materials are encountered during construction. None of the other tribes responded to the AB 52 notification.

3.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

METHODOLOGY

The impact analysis for archaeological resources is based on the conclusion of 2021 IS/MND *Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Butte Fire Center Replacement Project* (ECORP 2021). The impact analysis for historical resources is based on the California Department of Parks and Recreation 523 (DPR) form set (Mead and Hunt 2023). The impact of tribal cultural resources is based on the outcome of consultation under AB 52. The analysis is also informed by the provisions and requirements of federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to cultural resources.

PRC Section 21083.2(g) defines a “unique archaeological resource” as an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets one or more of the following CRHR-related criteria: (1) that it contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information; (2) that it has a special and particular quality, such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type; or (3) that it is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important precontact history or historic-era event or person. An impact on a resource that is not unique is not a significant environmental impact under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[c][4]). If an archaeological resource qualifies as a resource under CRHR criteria, then the resource is treated as a unique archaeological resource for the purposes of CEQA.

PRC Section 21074 defines “tribal cultural resources” as “sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe” that are listed or determined eligible for listing in the CRHR, listed in a local register of historical resources, or otherwise determined by the lead agency to be a tribal cultural resource.

For the purposes of the impact discussion, “historical resource” is used to describe built-environment historic-period resources. Archaeological resources (both precontact and historic-era), which may qualify as “historical resources” pursuant to CEQA, are analyzed separately from built-environment historical resources.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the project would result in a significant impact on cultural resources if it would:

- ▶ cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
- ▶ cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
- ▶ cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in PRC 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; or
- ▶ substantially disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER

All potential archaeological, historical, and tribal cultural resources issues identified in the significance criteria are evaluated below.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact 3.1-1: Cause a Substantial Adverse Change in the Significance of a Historical Resource

Implementation of the project would result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a recommended-eligible historical resource. This would result in a **significant** impact as described in State CEQA Guideline 15064.5(b)(1).

Impacts to historical resources were determined to be less than significant in the 2021 IS/MND because no eligible historical resources had been identified in the project site. However, since the adoption of the 2021 IS/MND, the buildings and structures within the project site have been re-recorded, evaluated, and recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and CHL as a historic district (see "Section 3.1.2 Environmental Setting"). The 2023 DPR evaluated the BFC as a historic district and recommended it eligible under NRHP, CRHR, and CHL Criteria A/1/1, B/2/2/, and C/3/3 within the themes of Reforestation and Conservation and Architecture (Mead & Hunt 2023). Although SHPO is currently reviewing the 2023 evaluation and eligibility recommendations pursuant to PRC Section 5024(f), CAL FIRE has decided to assume that SHPO will concur with at least one of the eligibility recommendations. Therefore, the BFC historic district is a state-owned historical resource under CEQA.

Implementation of the proposed project would involve demolition of the majority of the historic district. The demolition of 22 of the 25 buildings and structures from the historic district would result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of this historical resource because project activities would diminish the integrity of the BFC district. Character-defining features and contributing elements to the BFC district would be demolished and therefore its ability to convey its significance would be adversely affected. Because the historic district would no longer be eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, or CHL, impacts to historical resources would be **potentially significant**.

Mitigation Measures

If the BFC historic district is determined by SHPO to be eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and CHL, or only the NRHP and CRHR, Mitigation Measures 3.1-1a, 3.1-1b, and 3.1-1c shall apply. If SHPO determines that the BFC historic district is eligible for listing in only the CRHR, Mitigation Measures 3.1-1b and 3.1-1c shall apply. If SHPO determines that the BFC is not eligible as a historic district for listing in any of the registers, then no mitigation measures will be required.

Mitigation Measure 3.1-1a: Document historic district prior to removal.

CAL FIRE shall complete Historic American Building Survey documentation of the historic district before any demolition work is conducted. Documentation shall consist of written history of the property, plans and drawings of the historic resources, and photographs, as described below:

- ▶ **Written History.** The report shall be reproduced on archival bond paper.
- ▶ **Plans and Drawings.** An architectural historian (or historical architect, as appropriate) shall conduct research into the availability of plans and drawings of the historic district as the district currently exists. If such plans/drawings exist, their usefulness as documentation for the district shall be evaluated by the architectural historian. If deemed adequate, the plans/drawings shall be reproduced on archival mylar. If no plans/drawings are available, or if the existing plans/drawings are not found to be useful in documenting the historic resource, a historical architect shall prepare dimensioned plans and exterior elevations of the building. A combination of existing and new drawings is acceptable. All drawings shall be reproduced on archival mylar.
 - The architectural historian shall conduct research into the existence of the original architectural plans and drawings of the district. If found, the plans shall be reproduced on archival mylar. Alternatively, the architectural plans can be scanned and saved as TIFF files. The scanning resolution shall be not less than 300 dpi.
 - All digital files, including drawing files, shall be saved on media and labeled following the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation Digital Photography Specifications.
- ▶ **Photographs.** Digital photographs shall be taken of the historic district following the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation Digital Photography Standards.

The documentation shall be prepared by an architectural historian, or historical architect as appropriate, meeting the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation, Professional Qualification Standards. The documentation shall be submitted to the Butte County Library, the Butte County Historical Society, the Northeast Information Center, and the CAL FIRE headquarters in Sacramento.

Mitigation 3.1-1b: Butte Fire Center interpretation.

CAL FIRE will create an interpretive resource outlining the historic district's historic status, historic context, and significance. This resource will be available in a digital and/or physical format for public engagement and may be shared with a relevant local organization such as Butte County Historical Association. It will also be made available as part of CAL FIRE and CCC training materials at the site.

Mitigation Measure 3.1-1c: Salvage of usable materials.

Prior to the issuance of demolition, building, or site permits that would remove 22 buildings and structures from the historic district, CAL FIRE shall prepare and submit a list of features that may be salvaged, in whole or in part, during demolition or alteration. This plan shall be prepared by a professional familiar with architectural salvage or under the guidance of a professional who meets the standards for history, architectural history, or architecture as set forth by the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. The project proponent shall make a good faith effort to salvage and protect materials of historical interest to be used as part of the interpretive program (if required), incorporated into the architecture of new buildings that will be constructed on the site, if feasible used at another CAL FIRE facility, or offered to non-profit or cultural affiliated groups. If this proves infeasible, the sponsor shall attempt to donate significant character-defining features or features of interpretive or historical interest to a historical organization or other educational or artistic group. CAL FIRE shall prepare a salvage plan for review and approval by DGS staff prior to issuance of any site demolition permit. If transfer or donation of salvaged materials are declined by groups, then the project proponent shall have met the intent of the Salvage Plan.

Significance after Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.1-1a, 3.1-1b, 3.1-1c would lessen the impacts related to the loss of the historic district through structure documentation, creation of an interpretive resource, and salvage of useable materials. However, because the historic district would no longer exist, impacts to the historical resources would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

Impact 3.1-2: Cause a Substantial Adverse Change in the Significance of Unique Archaeological Resources or Human Remains

Project-related ground-disturbing activities could result in discovery or damage of yet undiscovered archaeological resources as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 or PRC Section 21083.2(g). This would be a **potentially significant** impact.

Impacts to archaeological resources and human remains were determined to be potentially significant in the 2021 IS/MND. No site conditions have changed since the 2021 IS/MND was adopted and the project approved. Therefore, the following data from the 2021 IS/MND remains applicable.

The project site was investigated by a professional archaeologist. No archaeological sites were identified in the project site as a result of the NEIC records search or pedestrian survey conducted in 2021. However, ground disturbance associated with the demolition and construction of the proposed project has the potential to encounter previously undiscovered or unrecorded archaeological sites and materials.

The records search for the 2021 IS/MND did not identify the presence of human remains within the project site. As part of the proposed project, there is no new information that indicates the presence of precontact or historic-era marked or unmarked human burials within the project site or its immediate surroundings. However, the location of grave sites and Native American remains can occur outside of identified cemeteries or burial sites. Therefore, there is a possibility that unmarked, previously unknown Native American or other graves could be present within the project site and could be uncovered by project-related construction activities.

For these reasons, project activities could damage or destroy previously undiscovered archaeological resources or human remains. This would be a **potentially significant** impact.

2021 IS/MND Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measure was identified in the 2021 IS/MND.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1: Unanticipated Discovery

If subsurface deposits believed to be cultural or human in origin are discovered during construction, all work shall halt within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. A qualified professional archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for prehistoric and historic archaeologist, shall be retained to evaluate the significance of the find, and shall have the authority to modify the no-work radius as appropriate, using professional judgment. The following notifications shall apply, depending on the nature of the find:

1. If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does not represent a cultural resource, work may resume immediately and no agency notifications are required.
2. If the professional archaeologist determines that the find does represent a cultural resource from any time period or cultural affiliation, the archaeologist shall immediately notify CAL FIRE and DGS. The agencies shall consult on a finding of eligibility and implement appropriate treatment measures, if the find is determined to be a Historical Resource under CEQA, as defined in Section 15064.5(a) of the CEQA Guidelines or a Historic Property under Section 106 NHPA, if applicable. Work may not resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the site either: 1) is not a Historical Resource under CEQA, as defined in Section 15064.5(a) of the CEQA Guidelines or a Historic Property under Section 106; or 2) that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.
3. If the find includes human remains, or remains that are potentially human, the professional archaeologist shall ensure reasonable protection measures are taken to protect the discovery from disturbance (AB 2641). The archaeologist shall notify the Butte County Coroner (per Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code). The provisions of Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.98 of the California PRC, and AB 2641 will be implemented. If the Coroner determines the remains are Native American and not the result of a crime scene, the Coroner will notify the NAHC, which then will designate a Native American Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for the Project (Section 5097.98 of the PRC). The designated MLD will have 48 hours from the time access to the property is granted to make recommendations concerning treatment of the remains. If the landowner does not agree with the recommendations of the MLD, the NAHC can mediate (Section 5097.94 of the PRC). If no agreement is reached, the landowner must rebury the remains where they will not be further disturbed (Section 5097.98 of the PRC). This will also include either recording the site with the NAHC or the appropriate Information Center; using an open space or conservation zoning designation or easement; or recording a reinternment document with the county in which the property is located (AB 2641). Work may not resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction.

Significance after Mitigation

Consistent with the 2021 IS/MND, implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1 would reduce impacts associated with archaeological resources and human remains to a **less-than-significant** level because it would require the performance of professionally accepted and legally compliant procedures for the discovery and protection of previously undocumented significant archaeological resources and human remains.

Impact 3.1-3: Cause a Substantial Adverse Change in the Significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource

Project-related ground-disturbing activities could result in discovery or damage of yet undiscovered tribal cultural resources as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. This would be a **potentially significant** impact.

Impacts to tribal cultural resources were determined to be potentially significant in the 2021 IS/MND. Although site conditions have not changed, because a NOP was issued for this current project, CAL FIRE was required to notify tribes again. As described above, CAL FIRE sent AB 52 notification letters that the proposed project was being addressed under CEQA, as required by PRC 21080.3.1, to the 34 Native American tribal representatives that had previously requested such notifications. Notifications were sent on October 31, 2025. No tribes requested consultation and no resources or landscapes of cultural significance were identified. In addition, neither the NAHC Sacred Lands File search nor the NEIC record search indicated the presence of indigenous sites within the project site. Therefore, no tribal cultural resources as defined by PRC Section 21074 were identified within the project site.

However, there is potential for ground disturbance during project construction in this area to encounter previously undiscovered tribal cultural resources. These activities could damage or destroy tribal cultural resources, and this would be a **potentially significant** impact.

2021 IS/MND Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measure was identified in the 2021 IS/MND.

Mitigation Measure TCR-1: Unanticipated Discoveries

If subsurface deposits are encountered which represent a Native American or potentially Native American resource that does not include human remains, all work shall cease in the vicinity of the find and the contractor shall immediately contact CAL FIRE and DGS and coordinate to contact a member of a culturally affiliated tribe. If the tribal representative determines the find is a TCR, the tribe, CAL FIRE, and DGS shall consult on appropriate treatment measures. Preservation in place is the preferred treatment, if feasible. Work may not resume within the no-work radius until the lead agencies, through consultation as appropriate, determine that the site either: 1) is not a Tribal Cultural Resource or a Historical Resource under CEQA, as defined in Section 15064.5(a) of the CEQA Guidelines; or 2) that the treatment measures have been completed to their satisfaction. This Mitigation Measure shall be implemented in conjunction with Mitigation Measure CUL-1.

Significance after Mitigation

Consistent with the 2021 IS/MND, implementation of 2021 IS/MND Mitigation Measures TCR-1 would reduce impacts associated with tribal cultural resources to a **less-than-significant** level by requiring appropriate treatment and proper care of tribal cultural resources, in the case of a discovery.

Impact 3.2-4: Potential to Contribute to a Significant Cumulative Impact to Cultural Resources

The project, in combination with other cumulative development in the area, could result in impacts to cultural resources in the area. Through the implementation of mitigation measures, the contribution of the project would not be cumulatively considerable with respect to archaeological resources or tribal cultural resources. However, because the project would result in permanent removal of a historic district, impacts to historical resources would be significant. Therefore, cumulative impacts to cultural resources as a whole would be **significant**.

The cumulative context for the cultural resources analysis considers a broad regional system of which the resources are a part. The cumulative context for archaeological and tribal cultural resources is the tribal territory of the Maidu, located in the lower foothills of the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada and in the periphery of the Northern Sacramento Valley. The cumulative context for historical resources includes the statewide facilities of CAL FIRE.

Because all significant cultural resources are unique and nonrenewable members of finite classes, meaning there are a limited number of significant cultural resources, all adverse effects erode a dwindling resource base. The loss of any one archaeological site could affect the scientific value of others in a region because these resources are best understood in the context of the entirety of the cultural system of which they are a part. The cultural system is represented archaeologically by the total inventory of all sites and other cultural remains in the region. As a result, a meaningful approach to preserving and managing cultural resources must focus on the likely distribution of cultural resources, rather than on a single project or parcel boundary.

Historical Resources

CAL FIRE's statewide historic survey identified 39 facilities that were recommended eligible as *historic districts*—approximately 20 percent of all 201 facilities surveyed. Those historic districts represent all CAL FIRE facility types including fire lookout stations, fire forest stations, air attack bases, conservation camps, demonstration state forests, and nurseries. Those historic districts also include 250 resources that are considered *contributing resources* to one of the districts (ASM 2024). The BFC historic district is one of three nursery historic districts. Implementation of the project would result in removal of a CEQA historical resource as well as one of the few remaining nursery historic districts in the state. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.1-1a, 3.1-1b, and 3.1-1c would lessen the impacts related to the loss of the BFC historic district, but would not reduce the project's impact associated with an adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. This permanent loss in the resource would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to a historic impact.

Archaeological Resources, Tribal Cultural Resources, and Human Remains

No known unique archaeological resources, tribal cultural resources, or human remains are located within the boundaries of the proposed project site; nonetheless, project-related earth-disturbing activities could damage undiscovered archaeological resources, tribal cultural resources, or burial sites. The proposed project in combination with other projects in the area could contribute to ongoing substantial adverse changes in the significance of unique archaeological resources or disturb human remains. Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1, would avoid potential adverse effects to archaeological resources by ensuring proper identification, evaluation, and treatment of previously unidentified archaeological material. CUL-1 also requires compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and California Public Resources Code Section 5097, which would provide an opportunity to avoid or minimize the disturbance of human remains, and to appropriately treat any remains that are discovered, such that impacts would be less than significant. Similarly, implementation of TRC-1 requires appropriate treatment and proper care of tribal cultural resources in coordination with the culturally affiliated tribe. Therefore, implementation of the project would not contribute to a cumulative loss of archaeological resources, tribal cultural resources, or disturbance of human remains.

Conclusion

Therefore, although cumulative impacts to archaeological resources, human remains, and tribal cultural resources would be less than significant, because the project would result in permanent removal of a historic district, cumulative impacts to cultural resources as a whole would be **significant and unavoidable**. No additional mitigation measures are available.

4 ALTERNATIVES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15126.6(a) (State CEQA Guidelines) requires EIRs to describe "... a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a range of potentially feasible alternatives that will avoid or substantially lessen the significant adverse impacts of a project, and foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives that are infeasible. The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. There is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason." This section of the State CEQA Guidelines also provides guidance regarding what the alternatives analysis should consider. Subsection (b) further states the purpose of the alternatives analysis is as follows:

Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.

The State CEQA Guidelines require that the EIR include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative must be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed (CCR Section 15126.6[d]).

The State CEQA Guidelines further require that the "no project" alternative be considered (CCR Section 15126.6[e]). The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving a proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. If the no project alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, CEQA requires that the EIR "...shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives." (CCR Section 15126[e][2]).

In defining "feasibility" (e.g., "... feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project ..."), CCR Section 15126.6(f) (1) states, in part:

Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent). No one of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives.

In determining what alternatives should be considered in the EIR, it is important to consider the objectives of the project, the project's significant effects, and unique project considerations. These factors are crucial to the development of alternatives that meet the criteria specified in Section 15126.6(a). Although, as noted above, EIRs must contain a discussion of "potentially feasible" alternatives, the ultimate determination as to whether an alternative is feasible or infeasible is made by the lead agency's decision-making body, here the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Board of Directors. (See PRC Sections 21081.5, 21081[a] [3].)

4.2 CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVES

4.2.1 Attainment of Project Objectives

Consistent with the project objectives identified in the 2021 IS/MND, the objectives of the project are to:

- ▶ Continue to support the mission of the CCC and the revenue stream generated from its activities;
- ▶ Respond to wildland fires, search and rescue, and flood fighting incidents as well as fire hazard reduction and other community projects;
- ▶ Provide training and supervision of fire crews and forest practice operations;
- ▶ Continue to operate and provide employment associated with the site's auto repair shop;
- ▶ Modernize facility to meet current building standards and support equipment needs; and
- ▶ Increase CAL FIRE capability to serve the region and provide adequate protection during fire events.

4.2.2 Environmental Impacts of the Butte Fire Center Replacement Project

The purpose of this section is to briefly summarize the significant impacts to the environment with implementation of the Butte Fire Center Replacement Project, as identified in Chapter 2 of this document. Significant and unavoidable environmental impacts resulting from the project were identified for historical resources. Specifically, the proposed project would result in partial demolition and reconstruction of the facilities and structures associated with the BFC historic district, which have been recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), and as a California Historical Landmark (CHL) as a historic district for its contribution to history and its architecture. Although mitigation measures require documentation of the buildings before removal, because the buildings would be lost, the impact is considered significant and unavoidable.

See Section 3.1, "Cultural and Cultural Tribal Resources" of this Draft EIR for a more detailed summary of the impact conclusions and mitigation measures identified.

4.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT EVALUATED FURTHER

As described above, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) provides that the range of potential alternatives for the project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project, and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. Alternatives that fail to meet the fundamental project purpose need not be addressed in detail in an EIR. (*In re Bay-Delta Programmatic Environmental Impact Report Coordinated Proceedings* (2008) 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1165-1167.)

In determining what alternatives should be considered in the EIR, it is important to acknowledge the objectives of the project, the project's significant effects, and unique project considerations. These factors are crucial to the development of alternatives that meet the criteria specified in Section 15126.6(a). Although, as noted above, EIRs must contain a discussion of "potentially feasible" alternatives, the ultimate determination as to whether an alternative is feasible or infeasible is made by lead agency decision-maker(s). (See Pub. Resources Code, § 21081(a)(3).) At the time of action on the project, the decision maker may consider evidence beyond that found in this EIR in addressing such determinations. The decision maker, for example, may conclude that a particular alternative is infeasible (i.e., undesirable) from a policy standpoint, and may reject an alternative on that basis provided that the decision maker adopts a finding, supported by substantial evidence, to that effect, and provided that such a finding reflects a reasonable balancing of the relevant economic, environmental, social, and other considerations supported by substantial evidence. (*City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 401, 417; *California Native Plant Society v. City of Santa Cruz* (2009) 177 Cal.App.4th 957, 998.)

The EIR should also identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected during the planning or scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination.

4.3.1 Retain Site Elements Alternative

The Retain Site Elements Alternative would be similar to the proposed project in that it would remove some of the historic buildings while retaining the more historically significant buildings located within the historic district. The Retain Site Elements Alternative would remove those buildings that are less critical to the historic district's nursery function such as the mess hall, gas and oil houses, pump houses, apparatus building, tool shed, auto shop, and laundry building. New facilities and structures would be constructed in places where historic buildings would be previously demolished.

Under this alternative, the number of affected historic structures would be reduced, thereby potentially retaining the historic district and decreasing impacts to historic resources. However, this alternative was eliminated from further consideration because it would not meet the project objectives related to facility modernization in order to meet current building standards and support equipment needs. For these reasons, the Retain Site Elements Alternative has been eliminated from further consideration in this Draft EIR.

4.3.2 Retain and Rehabilitate Alternative

The Retain and Stabilize Alternative would address structural deficiencies within the BFC historic district to retain and stabilize the buildings over the long term. Under this alternative, all historic buildings would be structurally stabilized and brought up to code. This would include enlarging entryways and adding height, if necessary. Additionally, distinctive features and finishes that characterize the property shall be preserved and deteriorated historic features shall be repaired to retain the defining historic characteristics of the buildings and environment. All existing structures would remain in place and would maintain their current function. The structures would be rehabilitated to meet current needs, to the greatest extent feasible.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards) provide guidance for working with historic properties and are a useful analytic tool for understanding and describing the potential impacts of proposed changes to historic resources. Projects that comply with the Secretary's Standards benefit from a regulatory presumption that they would not result in a significant impact to a historical resource. The Standards for Rehabilitation are used to acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

This alternative was eliminated from further consideration because it fails to meet a project objective and would be cost prohibitive. The objective of modernizing the facility to meet current building standards and support equipment needs would not be met because no new facilities or onsite improvements would occur. This would include, but is not limited to, constructing new facilities to meet the growing demand for training opportunities, vehicle maintenance and equipment storage, and living quarters for fire crew personnel. While some historic buildings could be modified in compliance with the Standards for Rehabilitation to accommodate the size of modern vehicles and equipment, it is unlikely that enough of the buildings could be stabilized and enlarged to meet current needs and the project objective. Additionally, these modifications would be costly and would not achieve a fiscally sustainable project and the length of needed to design and implement these upgrades would prohibit CAL FIRE from adequately responding to wildland fires, search and rescue, and flood fighting incidents. For these reasons discussed above, the Retain and Rehabilitate Alternative has been eliminated from further consideration in this Draft EIR.

4.4 ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS

The following alternatives are evaluated in this Draft EIR.

- ▶ **Alternative 1: No Project–No Development Alternative** assumes no demolition of the existing structures nor construction of new buildings. The project site would remain in its current condition.
- ▶ **Alternative 2: Expand Footprint Alternative** assumes no demolition of the existing structures but would make space on the existing property to construct new buildings. The existing historical structures would be structurally stabilized.
- ▶ **Alternative 3: Off-Site Alternative** assumes no demolition of the existing structures. The project would be constructed at an alternate location. The existing historical structures would be decommissioned and abandoned.

Further details on these alternatives, and an evaluation of environmental effects relative to the proposed project, are provided below.

4.4.1 Alternative 1: No Project–No Development Alternative

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(1) requires that the no project alternative be described and analyzed “to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the project with the impacts of not approving the project.” The no project analysis is required to discuss “the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published...as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services” (Section 15126.6[e][2]).

Under this alternative, no partial demolition and reconstruction and renovation of the BFC would result. No new or expanded facilities to support equipment needs would be constructed and no upgrades to existing facilities to meet current building standards would occur. Additionally, the need to increase CAL FIRE’s capacity to serve the region and provide adequate fire protection will not be met. It is assumed that the existing facilities and equipment would continue to be used until it is no longer considered viable and then likely decommissioned and left to gradually deteriorate over time, unprotected from the elements. Under this alternative, CAL FIRE would not be able to increase its capability to provide reliable and adequate fire protection services to the region. No long-term operations and maintenance would occur to manage the existing historical facilities and structures on site.

The No Project Alternative would not meet the project objectives. However, as required by CEQA, the No Alternative is evaluated in this Draft EIR. This alternative would not meet any of the objectives identified in Section 5.2.1, “Attainment of Project Objectives.”

CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would remain the same as under the existing conditions, and no historic structures would be demolished or restored. Additionally, no sub-surface archaeological resources would have the potential to be affected by implementation of the No Project Alternative because it includes no excavation or other ground-disturbing activities. Furthermore, the historical structures on the site would not be demolished. Although implementation of the No Project Alternative might appear to avoid the significant impact of the proposed project by avoiding demolition of historic structures located within a NRHP, CRHR, and CHL-eligible historic district, further deterioration under the No Project Alternative would likely ultimately result in an overall similar impact because over time, deterioration would further compromise the already aging nature of the buildings. It is likely that these buildings would become so greatly deteriorated, it would no longer be able to convey its historical significance and the BFC would no longer be eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and as a CHL. Compared to the proposed project, the No Project Alternative would, in the long-term, result in slightly less impact to cultural and tribal cultural resources than the proposed project and would not ultimately substantially reduce or avoid the significant impact since the structures would continue to fall into disrepair over time.

4.4.2 Alternative 2: Expanded Footprint Alternative

Alternative 2 would involve expanding the footprint of the project site to create space for new development without removing any existing historical structures. As a result, construction activities would occur outside of the existing developed areas within the site and increased ground disturbance of non-disturbed areas would occur. Specifically, surrounding dense vegetation and trees would need to be cleared for construction, including grading, paving, trenching, as well as the construction of new buildings, roadways, and utility infrastructure (e.g., water, wastewater, electrical/gas, and telecommunication lines). Historic structures would be stabilized, as needed, and would continue to be used, though potentially not as they currently function.

This alternative would achieve most of the project objectives but not to the degree of the project and would not provide maximum operational flexibility. Because this alternative would result in expanded construction ground disturbing impacts outside of the currently developed area, there is potential for increased impacts associated with disturbance of unknown archaeological sites, biological resources, and hydrology and water quality impacts. Although the Expanded Footprint Alternative would allow CAL FIRE to continue to operate and provide employment opportunities, it would not modernize existing facilities to meet current growing operational and educational demand and support equipment needs.

CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

The existing BFC historic district would not be demolished, thereby avoiding a significant and unavoidable impact to historical resources.

However, Alternative 2 would still require excavation and disturbance of site soils during construction of new development, which could result in the potential to disturb undiscovered/unrecorded subsurface archaeological and tribal cultural resources. Therefore, as described for the proposed project, implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and TCR-1 would reduce impacts associated with archaeological resources and tribal cultural resources to a less-than-significant level by requiring appropriate treatment and proper care of resources, in the case of a discovery. Therefore, compared to the proposed project, the Expanded Footprint Alternative would result in a similar impact to tribal cultural resources than the proposed project.

4.4.3 Alternative 3: Off-Site Alternative

Under Alternative 3, a new BFC would be constructed at an off-site location somewhere within Butte County. Existing buildings and structures within the project site would be decommissioned and abandoned. Given the feasibility considerations associated with off-site locations (e.g., cost increases and logistical challenges due to proximity to connecting infrastructure) that would come with locating the new project site, this analysis assumes the nearest feasible off-site location as it would represent the least increase in impacts related to construction length and disturbance area. This would be consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 and the intent/purpose of alternatives within an EIR. As potential off-site locations get farther away from the existing connections, such as service area and transmission infrastructure, there would be greater environmental effects from the increased construction.

Because CAL FIRE has long been planning for the reuse of the existing BFC, the location of Alternative 3 would require substantial changes to planned infrastructure and connections. These changes could take considerable time, incur increased costs, and result in greater impacts to air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, and utilities compared to the proposed project. Finally, this alternative would not minimize impacts to nearby sensitive receptors because it would require a greater amount of construction, including potential trenching, boring, and underground utility installation and potential disruption to roadways, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

This alternative would achieve most of the project objectives but not to the degree of the project. Although the Off-Site Alternative would have the same level of utility and service demand as the proposed project, by locating the new BFC farther away from existing connections, Alternative 3 would not provide maximum operational flexibility. Since an offsite parcel is not owned or controlled by CAL FIRE, this alternative would also not maximize the use of available CAL FIRE properties and resources.

CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Under this alternative, no demolition of the existing facilities and structures associated with the BFC historic district would occur. After construction of the new BFC is complete, the historical buildings and structures would be decommissioned and abandoned and left to gradually deteriorate over time, unprotected from the elements. No long-term operations and maintenance would occur to manage the existing historical facilities and structures on site.

It is likely that these buildings would become so greatly deteriorated, it would no longer be able to convey its historical significance and the BFC would no longer be eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and as a CHL. Compared to the proposed project, because the Offsite Alternative would not include demolition of any historic structures, in the long-term, this alternative would result in a slightly lesser impact to cultural resources than the proposed project. However, it would not substantially reduce or avoid the significant impact since the structures would continue to fall into disrepair over time.

Alternative 3 would avoid potential immediate impacts to archaeological and tribal cultural resources within the known historic district; however, it is possible that archaeological and tribal cultural resources could be identified and damaged during ground-disturbing activities during construction at an off-site location. Additionally, because an off-site location is likely to have not been previously developed, there is a greater chance for unknown resources to be encountered. As described for the proposed project, implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and TCR-1 would reduce impacts associated with archaeological and tribal cultural resources to a less-than-significant level by requiring appropriate treatment and proper care of significant resources, in accordance with the wishes of the geographically and culturally affiliated tribe, in the case of a discovery.

Overall, the Offsite Alternative is anticipated to result in a slighter greater impact to cultural and tribal cultural resources than to those that would occur with the project.

4.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Because the No Project–No Development Alternative (described above in Section 5.4.1) would avoid all adverse impacts resulting from construction and operation of the project analyzed in Chapter 3, it is the environmentally superior alternative. However, the No Project–No Development Alternative would not meet the project objectives as presented above in Section 5.2.

When the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126[d][2]) require selection of an environmentally superior alternative from among the other action alternatives evaluated. As illustrated in Table 4-1, below, the Expanded Footprint Alternative would be the environmentally superior action alternative because although the environmental impacts would be similar to the proposed project and no significant impacts would be completely avoided, the historical structures will be kept intact and structurally stabilized.

Table 4-1 Summary of Environmental Effects of the Alternatives Relative to the Proposed Project

Environmental Topic	Proposed Project	Alternative 1: No Project – No Development Alternative	Alternative 2: Expanded Footprint Alternative	Alternative 3: Off-Site Alternative
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	SU	Less	Similar, but less impact to known historic resource	Similar, but less impact to known historic resource

5 OTHER CEQA SECTIONS

5.1 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 21100(b)(5) specifies that the growth-inducing impacts of a project must be addressed in an environmental impact report (EIR). Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides the following guidance for assessing growth-inducing impacts of a project:

Discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a wastewater treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also, discuss the characteristics of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

A project can induce growth directly, indirectly, or both. Direct growth inducement would result if a project involved construction of new housing. Indirect growth inducement would result, for instance, if implementing a project resulted in any of the following:

- ▶ substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises);
- ▶ substantial short-term employment opportunities (e.g., construction employment) that indirectly stimulates the need for additional housing and services to support the new temporary employment demand; and/or
- ▶ removal of an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public utility or service (e.g., construction of a major sewer line with excess capacity through an undeveloped area).

Growth inducement itself is not an environmental effect but may foreseeably lead to environmental effects. If substantial growth inducement occurs, it can result in secondary environmental effects, such as increased demand for housing, demand for other community and public services and infrastructure capacity, increased traffic and noise, degradation of air or water quality, degradation or loss of plant or animal habitats, conversion of agricultural and open-space land to urban uses, and other effects.

5.1.1 Summary of Growth-Inducing Impacts

Project construction activities would involve construction crews of approximately 200 people. Demolition of the 20 buildings and structures and four water tanks is anticipated to begin in Quarter 3 of 2026. Construction activities would occur over a period of 24 to 30 months. It is anticipated that construction crews would be part of the existing workforce in the greater Butte County area and therefore would not result in the need to hire new construction employees within the region. Once operational, the reconstructed facility would not increase staffing levels and would not induce population growth because it would not introduce new land uses associated with population increases (e.g., housing, employment centers). The project would not include land uses that would result in people relocating to the area and would not displace housing units or people. Additionally, project activities would not extend utilities to an area not currently served, and would, therefore, not contribute to future growth of the project area. As such, implementation of the project would not cause growth inducing impacts.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

The State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires EIRs to include a discussion of the significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented. As documented in Chapter 3 (project level and cumulative level impacts) of this Draft EIR, after implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, the impacts associated with the proposed Butte Fire Center Replacement Project would be reduced to a less-than-significant level depending, in part, on determinations by SHPO. The following impacts are considered significant and unavoidable; that is, no feasible mitigation is available to reduce the project's impacts to a less-than-significant level.

5.2.1 Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

Impact 3.1-1: Cause a Substantial Adverse Change in the Significance of a Historical Resource

The proposed project would result in physical changes within an NRHP-eligible and CRHR-eligible historical resource, the Butte Fire Center Historic District. The combined effects of physically demolishing facilities and buildings that contribute to the district's significance, and altering the district's historic integrity of setting and association through the introduction of new facilities and buildings would together constitute a substantial adverse change under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(2)(A). These actions would materially impair the physical characteristics of the Butte Fire Center Historic District that convey its historical significance and support its eligibility for listing in the NRHP and CRHR. Therefore, the project would result in a significant impact on the historical resource.

As discussed in Section 3.1, "Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources," although CALFIRE is currently presuming eligibility, final determination by SHPO could result in the Butte Fire Center Historic District being determined not a historical resource. SHPO's comments and determination would guide implementation of the appropriate mitigation measures, described below. For the purposes of this discussion, the potential for a significant and unavoidable impact on the historic resource is acknowledged.

Mitigation Measures 3.1-1a, 3.1-1b, and 3.1-1c require CAL FIRE to complete documentation of the structure, which involves preparation of written history for the property, plans and drawings of the historical resource, and photographs. However, even after implementation of these measures, the project would still result in a significant impact because the historical resource would no longer exist.

Chapter 4, "Alternatives," includes a discussion of alternatives that would reduce or eliminate impacts to historical architectural resources, including the Expanded Footprint Alternative and the No Project-No Development Alternative. However, these alternatives are infeasible, do not meet the basic project objectives, or would result in other environmental consequences. Consequently, mitigation is available to only partially mitigate the impacts of the project on historic architectural resources. Therefore, after application of all feasible mitigation measures, this impact would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

5.3 SIGNIFICANT AND IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The State CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the project. Specifically, the State CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(c) states:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible, since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generation to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

The project would result in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of energy and material resources during construction and operation, including the following:

- ▶ construction materials, including such resources as soil, rocks, wood, concrete, glass, and steel;
- ▶ water supply for project construction and operation; and
- ▶ energy expended in the form of electricity, natural gas, diesel fuel, gasoline, and oil for equipment and transportation vehicles that would be needed for project construction and operation.

These nonrenewable resources would represent only a modest portion of the resources available in the region and would not affect the availability of these resources for other needs in the region.

Demolition and construction activities would not result in inefficient use of energy or natural resources. During demolition of the existing facilities and buildings, materials such as concrete and metals would be recycled. During construction, contractors would use best available engineering techniques, construction and design practices, and equipment operating procedures.

Project operation would not result in substantial long-term consumption of energy and natural resources. All buildings would be designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver rating requirements, although registration and certification will not be pursued. In addition, the new BFC would include water conservation and reuse measures that exceed 2016 Title 24 water efficiency requirements. All plumbing fixtures in the building would be low-flow/high-efficiency fixtures.

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Chapter 2 Project Description

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