

Initial Study

Vertical Bridge Communication Tower Use Permit

Nevada County, California

To:

Nevada County Fire Marshal - Dan Collins	Nevada County Community Development Agency Director - Trisha Tillotson
Nevada County Building Department - Nick McBurney	Nevada County Economic Development - Kimberly Parker
Nevada County Consolidated Fire District (NCCFD) - Robert Tellam	Nevada County Counsel – Sims Ely, Doug Johnson
Nevada County Department of Public Works - Engineering	Nevada County Chief Fiscal Officer – Alicia Chaturvedula
Nevada County Environmental Health - Nicole Johnson	Nevada County Clerk of the Board – Jeff Thorsby
Northern Sierra AQMD - Suzie Tarnay	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
Nevada County Transit Services – Robin VanValkenburgh	Federal Communication Commission - Wireless Communications
Nevada County Sheriff	CA Department Of Parks And Recreation
District V Supervisor – Hardy Bullock	Caltrans Highways
District V Commissioner – Jo Garst	Laborers Pacific Southwest Region
North Central Information Center	Bear Yuba Land Trust
Nevada Irrigation District	California Native Plant Society – Redbud
Town of Truckee City Manager – Jen Callaway	Gold Country Broadband Consortium
Nevada County Assessor - Rolf Kleinhans	General Plan Defense Fund
COB – Mandy Stewart	Laurie Oberholtzer
CFO – Erin Mettler	Native American Heritage Commission
Nevada County CEO - Alison Lehman	Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe
Nevada County Assistant CEO – Patrick Eidman	Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
Pacific Gas & Electric	T'si Akim Maidu Tribal Council
Neighbors within 500 feet of project parcel	United Auburn Indian Community
Nick Kocelji	Cheryl Borad
Bob Thorpe	Edward and Carole Ellsworth
Nancy Baker	Sema Kelly

Aila Hale	Kim Meng
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File Number(s): PLN25-0071, CUP25-0002, PFX25-0013, EIS25-0004

Assessor's Parcel Number: 014-700-037

Applicant/Representative: Samantha Herrmann, Assurance Development
1499 Huntington Drive STE 305
South Pasadena, CA 91030
Telephone: (310) 488-6237

Property Owner: Manuel Corchero
23489 State Highway 20
Nevada City, California 95959

Zoning District(s): General Agricultural - 30 (AG-30)

General Plan: Rural (RUR-30)

Project Location: The project is located at 10111 Corchero Lane, Nevada City, CA 95959, 400 feet south of California State Highway 20, 8.5 miles east of the City of Nevada City.

Project Site and Surrounding Land Uses:

The proposed communication facility would be located in a 40-foot-by-40-foot lease area on the east side of an approximately 5-acre parcel. The parcel is located approximately 8.5 miles east of the City of Nevada City at 10111 Corchero Lane, Nevada City, CA 95959. The subject parcel (APN: 014-700-036) is zoned General Agricultural (AG-30) with a General Plan designation of Rural (RUR-30). The subject parcel is undeveloped.

The adjacent parcels are also zoned General Agriculture with a minimum parcel size of 30-acres (AG-30) and have General Plan designations of Estate (EST). Adjacent parcels range in size from approximately 5 acres to approximately 13 acres. Figure 1 shows the project parcel, surrounding properties, and the zoning of the area. Figure 2, below shows an aerial photo of the project parcel.

**PLN25-0071, CUP25-0002 Vertical Bridge Communication Tower:
Zoning, Vicinity and Public Notice Map**

This map displays the project location within various zoning districts. The project parcel is highlighted with a red cross-hatch pattern. Notified parcels are shown with a black dot pattern. Major roads are indicated by solid black lines.

Zoning Districts:

- FR-160 (Forest Reserve)
- AG-30 (Agriculture)
- FR-160-SC (Forest Reserve - Single-Corner)
- AG-30-SC (Agriculture - Single-Corner)

Roads:

- Missouri Ridge Drive
- Central House Road
- Missouri Bar Road
- Valencia Road
- Cochran Lane
- Mile Drive
- Rocky Road

Other Features:

- Chosen Place
- Project Location (indicated by a green square in the vicinity map inset)

Legend:

- Notified Parcels (Black dot pattern)
- Project Parcel (Red cross-hatch pattern)
- Major Roads (Solid black line)

Scale: 0 to 0.16 Miles

Disclaimer: Every attempt has been made to assure the accuracy of the map and this publicly available information. The user assumes all responsibility for the use of the information. THE MAP AND ASSOCIATED DATA ARE PROVIDED WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND, either expressed or implied. Nothing here can limit or be the subject matter of any contract or agreement between the parties. Before making decisions using the information provided on this map, contact the Planning Department for more information.

Figure 1 - Project Vicinity and Zoning



Figure 2 - Project Aerial Photo

Project Description:

The project is an application for a Conditional Use Permit for a proposed new telecommunication facility at 10111 Corchero Lane, Nevada City, CA 95959. The proposed facility will be designed as a one-hundred eighty foot (180') faux pine tree (monopine) with antennas at a tip height of one-hundred seventy-five feet (175'). All brackets, antennas and RRUs will be painted green to match the faux pine - tree. Associated equipment cabinets will be placed at the base of the pole within a new six-foot (6') chain link fence enclosure occupying 1600 square feet (referred to as the lease area). The lease area will contain two equipment cabinets, a fiber vault, electrical meters, a cable ice bridge, a utility H-frame, and 3 spots for future co-locations. The project will also include a PG&E transformer and approximately 320 feet of conduit from the lease area to a utility pole and fiber point of connection. The site will be accessed by a proposed 420 foot long gravel driveway off Corchero Lane. Corchero Lane is proposed to be widened. The project includes a Petition for Exception to Driveway Standards due to the applicant being unable to achieve 10 feet of fuel modification on the western side of Corchero Lane.

(See Figures 3, 4, and 5 below.)

Figure 3, below, shows the site plan showing the location of the proposed lease area on the subject parcel, the proposed gravel access driveway, and the existing Corchero Lane travel way with proposed widening.

This Facility is intended to fill a significant gap in T-Mobile's 5G and 4G LTE coverage experienced by its customers in the rural area north of Nevada City. A search ring was provided by T-Mobile's Radio Frequency ("RF") Engineer identifying the project's coverage needs. Property owners within the search ring were contacted. Many property owners did not respond and some property owners responded but the negotiations were not successful. The location for the proposed wireless communication facility project was selected as the most optimal over two (2) alternative sites that would require a substantial removal of trees or is within the scenic corridor zoning overlay along Highway 20.

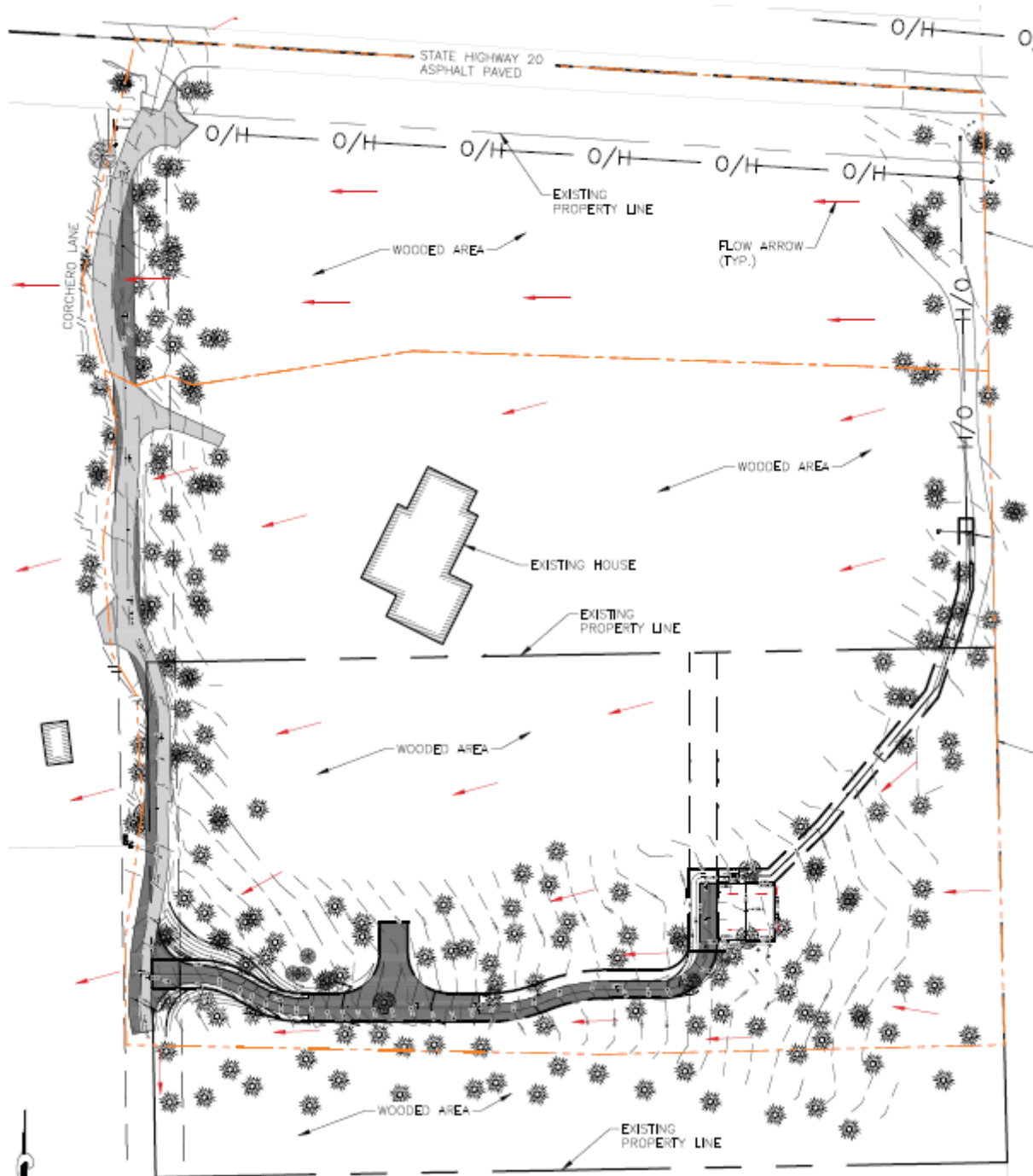


Figure 3 - Overall Site Plan



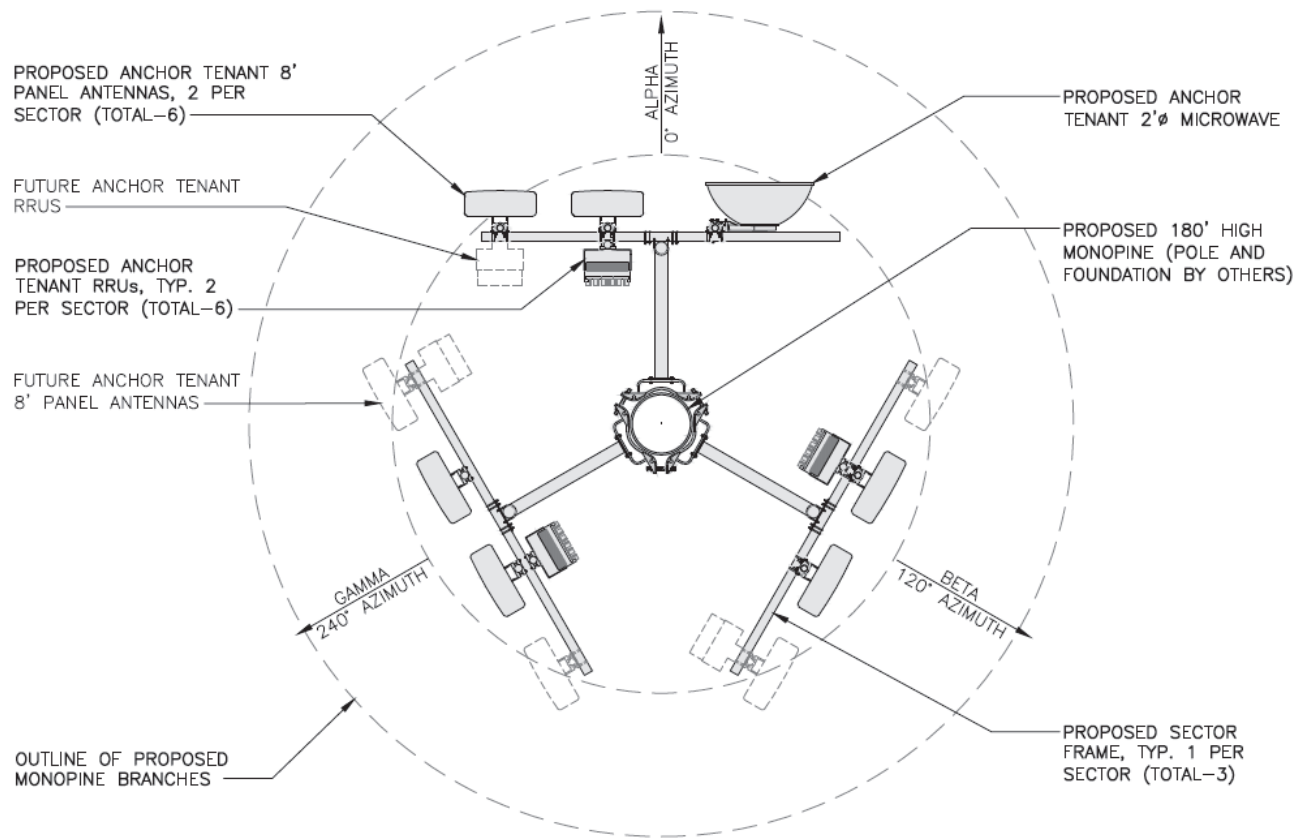


Figure 5 - Proposed Antenna Layout Plan

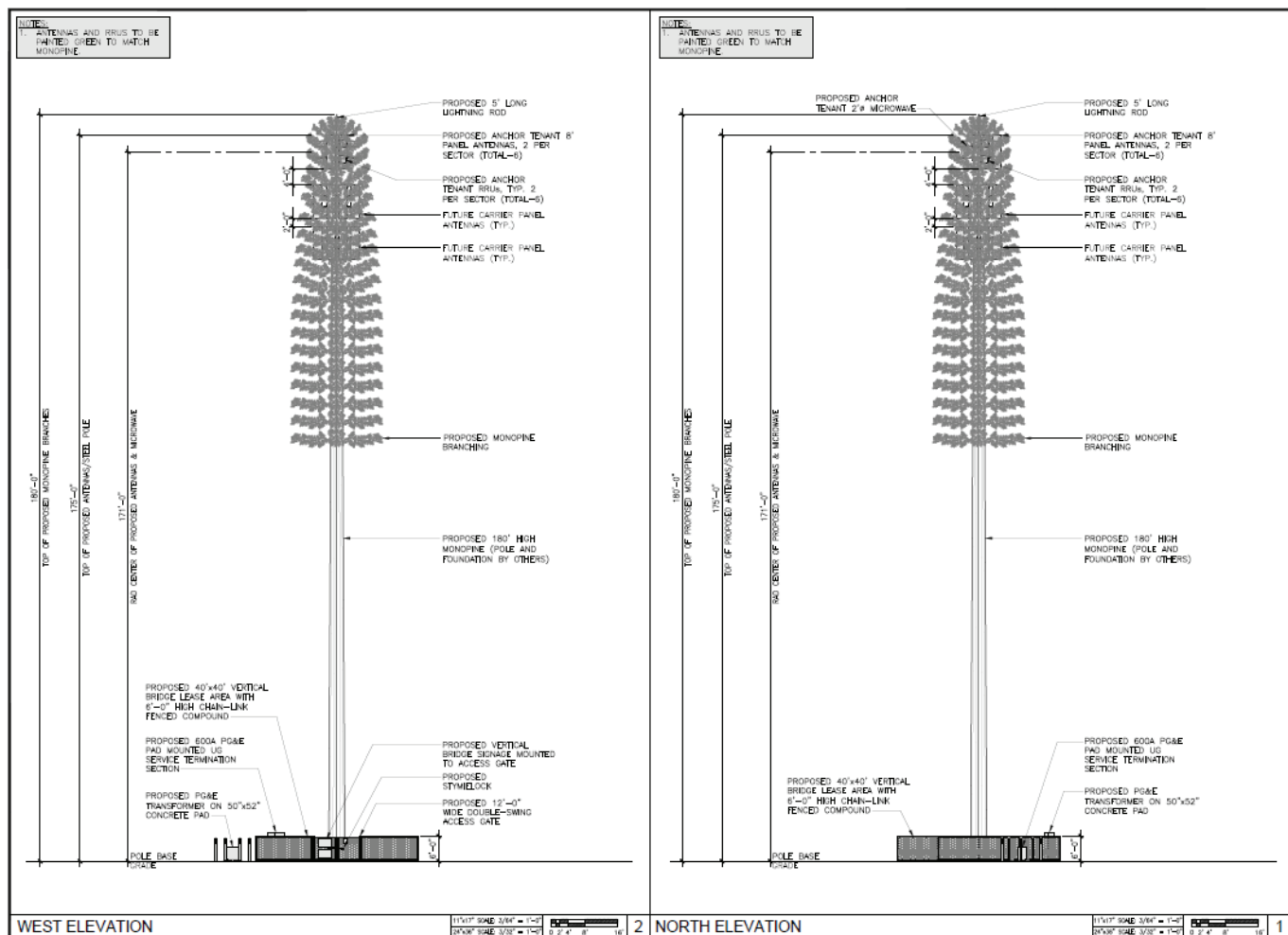


Figure 6 - Proposed Monopine Elevations

Other Permits, Which May Be Necessary:

Based on initial comments received, the following permits may be required from the designated agencies:

1. Building Permits – Nevada County Grading/Building Department
2. Hazardous Materials Storage Permit- Nevada County Environmental Health Department
3. Authority to Construct Permit- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

Relationship to Other Projects:

The project parcel is undeveloped and no permits have been issued on it by Nevada County. The proposed tower will be part of T-Mobile's wireless communications network, but the project was not applied for concurrently another wireless commutation project. However, it is assumed the tower will work with other existing towers currently in the T-Mobile network.

Tribal Consultation:

The project was routed to several tribal organizations including the Native American Heritage Commission, United Auburn Indian Community, the Shingle Springs Bank of Miwok Indians, and the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe. None of the entities contacted requesting consultation.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS and PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected:

All of the following environmental factors have been considered. Those environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is "Less Than Significant with Mitigation" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

—	1. Aesthetics	—	2. Agriculture / Forestry Resources	✓	3. Air Quality
✓	4. Biological Resources	✓	5. Cultural Resources	—	6. Energy
✓	7. Geology / Soils	—	8. Greenhouse Gas Emissions	✓	9. Hazards / Hazardous Materials
—	10. Hydrology / Water Quality	—	11. Land Use / Planning	—	12. Mineral Resources
✓	13. Noise	—	14. Population / Housing	—	15. Public Services
—	16. Recreation	—	17. Transportation	✓	18. Tribal Cultural Resources
✓	19. Utilities / Service Systems	—	20. Wildfire	✓	21. Mandatory Findings of Significance

Impacts and Recommended Mitigation Measures:

The following measures shall be implemented and included as notes on construction plans as outlined in each.

AIR QUALITY:

Mitigation Measure 3A: Authority to Construct Permit from the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. Building, altering, replacing, or operating any source of air contaminants, whether portable or stationary (but not mobile), may require an Authority to Construct permit from the Air Pollution Control Officer, unless the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) determines that such equipment is exempt from permitting or unless such equipment is currently registered with California Air Resources Board under the Portable Equipment Registration Program. The applicant shall contact NSAQMD in order to determine whether or not a future generator's engine requires permitting from the NSAQMD. The result of that contact and any resulting NSAQMD permits shall be provided to the Planning Department prior to issuance of any improvement permits.

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department and Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

Mitigation Measure 3B: Mitigate any asbestos discovered during construction. Prior to issuance of grading permits or improvement plans, all plans shall incorporate, at a minimum, the following asbestos control measures, which shall be implemented in the field: If serpentine, ultramafic rock or naturally occurring asbestos are discovered during construction or grading, the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District shall be notified within 24 hours, and specific requirements contained in Section 93105 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations must be strictly complied with.

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department and Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Mitigation Measure 4A. Avoid Impacts to Nesting Birds. The following note shall be added to all improvement/grading/construction plans to avoid impacts to sensitive bird species:

- a. If construction occurs during the active bird nesting season (i.e., February 1 to August 31) a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey no more than 14 days prior to initiation of construction to identify any potential nesting activity. The results of the survey shall be provided to the Nevada County Planning Department. If active nests are observed, construction activity must be prohibited within a 500-foot (~160-meter) buffer around the nest until the nestlings have fledged. All construction activity within the vicinity of active nests must be conducted in the presence of a qualified biological monitor. Construction activity may encroach into the buffer area at the discretion of the biological monitor.
- b. If work is expected to begin during the nesting season (February 1 and August 31), a preconstruction survey for nesting Cooper's hawk shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 14 days prior to initiation of earthmoving activities. The survey shall include the project site and suitable nesting habitat within 500 feet.
- c. Worker environmental awareness training shall be conducted by a qualified biologist for all construction personnel. This training instructs workers to recognize Cooper's hawk and its associated habitat(s)

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

Mitigation Measure 4B: Bat Protection. The following note shall be added to all improvement/grading/construction plans to avoid impacts to sensitive bat species:

- a. Restrict construction activities to the daylight hours to avoid impacts to foraging or night roosting bats.
- b. Require a qualified biologist to survey trees with the potential to support special-status bats within 100 feet of construction activities 7 days or less prior to the onset of construction. If there is no evidence that bats are present, such as visual or acoustic detection, guano, urine staining, or strong odors, no further mitigation is required.
- c. If a maternity roost is identified within a tree scheduled to be removed or within 100 feet of construction activities, create and maintain a buffer around the bat roost until such

time that the roost is no longer occupied. Consult with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine the appropriate size of the no-disturbance buffer.

- d. Under all circumstances, the “take” of individuals, including direct mortality of individuals or the destruction of roosts while bats are presents, is prohibited.

Timing: Prior to issuance of grading/improvement/building permits and throughout construction.

Reporting: Approval of future grading/improvement permit

Responsible Agency: California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Planning Department

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Mitigation Measure 5A: Halt Work and Contact the Appropriate Agencies if Cultural Resources are Discovered during Project Construction. All grading and construction plans shall include a Note outlining the requirements provided below to ensure that any cultural resources discovered during project construction are properly managed. These requirements include the following: All equipment operators and employees involved in any form of ground disturbance shall be trained to recognize potential archeological resources and advised of the remote possibility of encountering subsurface cultural resources during grading activities. If such resources are encountered or suspected, work within 200 feet shall be halted immediately and the Nevada County Planning Department shall be contacted. A professional archaeologist shall be retained by the developer and consulted to access any discoveries and develop appropriate management recommendations for archaeological resource treatment. If bones are encountered and appear to be human, California Law requires that the Nevada County Coroner be contacted. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, and the procedures outlined in California Environmental Quality Act Sections 15064.5(d) and (e) shall be followed. If Native American resources are involved, Native American Organizations and individuals recognized by the County shall be notified and consulted about any plans for treatment.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:

Mitigation Measure 9A: Submission of a 7460-1 Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration application.

Prior to issuance of the Building Permit or Grading Permit, the applicant shall submit a 7460-1 application for approval from the Federal Aviation Administration of the evaluation of the proposed wireless telecommunication facility, which is in compliance with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77. The applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed monopine has been evaluated by the Federal Aviation Administration through the submission of the results of the evaluation to the Planning Department.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

NOISE:

Mitigation Measure 13A: Limit construction activities to reduce noise impacts. Hours of operation for construction activities shall be limited to the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday

through Friday. These limited hours of operation shall be noted on project plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department prior to permit issuance.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Mitigation Measure 18A: Unanticipated Tribal Cultural Resources. The following mitigation measures shall be required and shall be included as notes on all future site plans: If any suspected Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs) are discovered during ground disturbing construction activities, all work shall cease within 100 feet of the find, or an agreed upon distance based on the project area and nature of the find. A Tribal Representative from a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area shall be immediately notified and shall determine if the find is a TCR (PRC §21074). The Tribal Representative will make recommendations for further evaluation and treatment as necessary.

When avoidance is infeasible, preservation in place is the preferred option for mitigation of TCRs under CEQA and UAIC protocols, and every effort shall be made to preserve the resources in place, including through project redesign, if feasible. Culturally appropriate treatment may be, but is not limited to, processing materials for reburial, minimizing handling of cultural objects, leaving objects in place within the landscape, or returning objects to a location within the project area where they will not be subject to future impacts. Permanent curation of TCRs will not take place unless approved in writing by UAIC or by the California Native American Tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area.

The contractor shall implement any measures deemed by the CEQA lead agency to be necessary and feasible to preserve in place, avoid, or minimize impacts to the resource, including, but not limited to, facilitating the appropriate tribal treatment of the find, as necessary. Treatment that preserves or restores the cultural character and integrity of a TCR may include Tribal Monitoring, culturally appropriate recovery of cultural objects, and reburial of cultural objects or cultural soil. Work at the discovery location cannot resume until all necessary investigation and evaluation of the discovery under the requirements of the CEQA, including AB52, have been satisfied.

Timing: Prior to Issuance of grading/improvement/building permits and throughout construction

Reporting: Planning Department Approval of Grading and Construction Permits

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS:

Mitigation Measure 19A: Appropriately Dispose of Vegetative and Toxic Waste. Neither stumps nor industrial toxic waste (petroleum and other chemical products) are accepted at the McCourtney Road transfer station and if encountered, shall be properly disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and facilities.

Timing: Prior to building permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Nevada County Planning Department

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

See all Mitigation Measures listed above.

Mitigation Monitoring Matrix:

MITIGATION MEASURE	MONITORING AUTHORITY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMING
3A	Planning Department / Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District	Prior to building/grading permit issuance.
3B	Planning Department / Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District	Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction
4A	Planning Department	Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction
4B	California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Planning Department	Prior to Building Permit or Grading Permit issuance and during construction
5A	Planning Department	Prior to building permit issuance and during construction
9A	Planning Department	Prior to building/grading permit issuance
13A	Planning Department	Prior to building permit issuance and during construction
18A	Planning Department	Prior to Issuance of grading/improvement/building permits and throughout construction
19A	Planning Department	Prior to building permit issuance and during construction

INITIAL STUDY AND CHECKLIST

Introduction:

This checklist is to be completed for all projects that are not exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The information, analysis and conclusions contained in the checklist are the basis for deciding whether an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Negative Declaration (ND) is to be prepared. If an EIR is determined to be necessary based on the conclusions of the Initial Study, the checklist is used to focus the EIR on the effects determined to be potentially significant.

This Initial Study uses the following terms to describe the level of significance of adverse impacts. These terms are defined as follows:

- **No Impact:** An impact that would result in no adverse changes to the environment.
- **Less than Significant Impact:** An impact that is potentially adverse but does not exceed the thresholds of significance as identified in the impact discussions. Less than significant impacts do not require mitigation.

- **Less than Significant with Mitigation:** An environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment without mitigation, but which is reduced to a level that is less than significant with mitigation identified in the Initial Study.
- **Potentially Significant Impact:** An environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; either additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the significance determination, or the impact would or could cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. A finding of a potentially significant impact would result in the determination to prepare an EIR.

1. Aesthetics:

Existing Setting: The project parcel and adjacent parcels are zoned General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 30-acres (AG-30) and have General Plan designations of Rural-30 (RUR-30). Figure 1 shows the project parcel, surrounding properties, and the zoning of the area. Figure 2, above shows an aerial photo of the project parcel. Many of the surrounding parcels range in size from approximately 5 acres to approximately 13 acres and contain rural-residential development. The proposed lease area would be located in a disturbed area within a mixed conifer forest. The project parcel is currently undeveloped but some tree clearing and brush thinning appears to have occurred between 2018 and 2022. The elevation of the proposed lease area is approximately 4,187 feet above mean sea level.

Except as provide in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?			✓		A,L
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?			✓		A, 28
c. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓		A
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?				✓	A

Impact Discussion:

- 1a,c. Pursuant to the submitted site plans and visual simulations, the proposed 180-foot tall monopine wireless communication facility is designed to look like a pine tree to minimize aesthetic impacts. The faux branches/foilage and faux bark materials are designed to blend in with the surrounding pines to the greatest extent possible. Although there has been some tree thinning on the project parcel, there is still a substantial number of conifers which are very dense in areas. Based on the photo-simulations, the proposed monopine is nearly invisible from the publicly

accessible areas of California State Highway 20, Corchero Lane, and Chosen Place. The height and density of the trees closer to the publicly accessible areas makes the taller tower that is further away difficult to see due to the perspective. Additionally, while the forest environment is aesthetically pleasing, the relatively flat, privately owned, and ordinary project site isn't viewed as a scenic vista or a public vantage point. The proposed project is outside of the scenic corridor zoning overlay to the north. Therefore, the proposed communication facility will have a **less than significant** impact on a scenic vista and the visual character of public views of the site.

- 1b. The proposed project is not located along a State Scenic Highway nor is it located within a Historic District. The portion of Highway 20 500 feet to the north is eligible as a scenic highway, but has not been officially designated. The project will not impact rock outcroppings or historic buildings. The project does require the removal of 11 pine trees, but there is still a substantial number of trees to provide screening of the site so that it is not visible from the eligible scenic portion of Highway 20. Thus, the project is anticipated to result in a **less than significant impact**.
- 1d. The applicant proposes installing two service lights that will be downcast, manually controlled, and used during maintenance activities only. Typically, maintenance of the cell site is performed during daylight hours so it is anticipated that the service lights will be infrequently used. The site is surrounded by trees which will provide screening of the tower and lighting. A standard condition of approval would require the lighting be installed in compliance with Nevada County Code Section 12.04.108 which requires lights to be turned off between 11 p.m. and sunrise and be fully shielded and down-facing so as not to result in glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views. With the application of a standard condition of approval requiring compliance with County lighting standards, the project is not anticipated to result in substantial light or glare; therefore, **no impact** is anticipated to daytime or nighttime views due to lighting.

Mitigation Measures:

None required

2. AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY RESOURCES:

Existing Setting: The farmland designation of the project site is classified as “Area not Mapped” by the California Department of Conservation (2020). Neither the site nor any neighboring sites have been determined to contain any Important Farmlands. The parcel and the surrounding area is zoned as General Agricultural and many of the surrounding parcels include rural-residential development. Based on aerial imagery, it does not appear that any agricultural operations occur within the vicinity of the project. There are no Williamson Act Parcels or Timber Production Zones in the immediate vicinity of the project parcel.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
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a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection, to non-agricultural use?				✓	A,L,7
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or conflict with a Williamson Act contract?				✓	A,L,18
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resource Code section 12220(g)), timberland zoned Timberland Production Zone (per Section L-II 2.3.C of the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code)?				✓	A,L,18
d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?			✓		A,L,18
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?			✓		A,L,7

Impact Discussion:

2a-c. The subject parcel is located within an area designated by the California Department of Conservation as "Area not Mapped" and is not considered Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The subject parcel is zoned General Agricultural (AG-30) which does allow for agriculture uses. However, the parcel is undeveloped and is not used as an agricultural operation, which would be uncommon at the elevation of the project parcel. The subject parcel is not part of a Williamson Act Contract or within a Timberland Production Zone. A communication tower is allowed within the zoning of the project parcel with a Use Permit. Therefore, the project will have **no impact** on farmland, agricultural zoning, a Williamson Act contract, or forest zoning.

2d-e The project parcel includes forest land that is being converted into a communication tower which is a non-forest use, but the impact of the 40-foot by 40-foot lease area for the communication tower on forest land is negligible due to the small footprint relative to the parcel sizes. The development of the telecommunication tower would not substantially impact forest or agricultural uses on or off-site. Therefore, the project is anticipated to have a **less than significant impact** on the conversion of farmland and forestland.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

3. AIR QUALITY:

Existing Setting: Nevada County is located in the Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB). The MCAB includes the central and northern Sierra Nevada mountain range with elevations ranging from several

hundred feet in the foothills to over 6,000 feet above mean sea level along the Sierra Crest. The MCAB generally experiences warm, dry summers and wet winters. Ambient air quality in the air basin is generally determined by climatological conditions, the topography of the air basin, and the type and amount of pollutants emitted. The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District has responsibility for controlling air pollution emissions including “criteria air pollutants” and “toxic air pollutants” from direct sources (such as factories) and indirect sources (such as land-use projects) to improve air quality within Nevada County. To do so, the District adopts rules, regulations, policies, and programs to manage the air pollutant emissions from various sources, and also must enforce certain statewide and federal rules, regulations and laws. The Federal Clean Air Act of 1971 established national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). These standards are divided into primary and secondary standards. Primary standards are designed to protect public health and secondary standards are designed to protect plants, forests, crops, and materials. Because of the health-based criteria identified in setting the NAAQS, the air pollutants are termed “criteria” pollutants. California has adopted its own ambient air quality standards (CAAQS). Criteria air pollutants include ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and particulate matter. CAAQS include the NAAQS pollutants, in addition to visibility reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, and vinyl chloride. A nonattainment area is an area where a criteria air pollutant’s concentration is above either the federal and/or state ambient air quality standards. Depending on the level of severity, a classification will be designated to a nonattainment area. Failure of a state to reach attainment of the NAAQS by the target date can trigger penalties, including withholding of federal highway funds. Table 1 shows the current attainment/nonattainment status for the federal and state air quality standards in Nevada County.

For eight-hour average ozone concentrations, Nevada County is serious nonattainment for both the 2008 and 2015 state and federal ozone standards of 75 and 70 parts per billion, respectively (Table 1). Unlike other pollutants, ozone is not typically released directly into the atmosphere from any sources. Ozone is created by the interaction of Nitrogen Oxides and Reactive Organic Gases (also known as Volatile Organic Compounds) in the presence of sunlight, especially when the temperature is high. The major sources of Nitrogen Oxides and Reactive Organic Gases, known as ozone precursors, are combustion sources such as factories, automobiles and evaporation of solvents and fuels. Ozone is mainly a summertime problem, with the highest concentrations generally observed in July and August, when the days are longest, especially in the late afternoon and evening hours. Ozone is considered by the California Air Resources Board to be overwhelmingly transported to Nevada County from the Sacramento Metropolitan area and, to a lesser extent, the San Francisco Bay Area. This recognition of overwhelming transport relieves Nevada County of CAAQS-related requirements, including the development of CAAQS attainment plan with a “no-net-increase” permitting program or an “all feasible measures” demonstration. For particulate matter, ambient air quality standards have been established for both PM10 and PM2.5. California has standards for average PM10 concentrations over 24-hour periods and over the course of an entire year, which are 50 and 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively. (The notation “ $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ” means micrograms of pollutant per cubic meter of ambient air.) For PM2.5, California only has a standard for average PM2.5 concentrations over a year, set at 9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, with no 24-hour-average standard. Nevada County is in compliance with all of the federal particulate matter standards, but like most California counties it is out of compliance with the state PM10 standards. Particulate-matter is identified by the maximum particle size in microns as either PM2.5 or PM10. PM2.5, is mostly smoke and aerosol particles resulting from woodstoves and fireplaces, vehicle engines, wildfires, and open burning. PM-10 is a mixture of dust, combustion particles (smoke) and aerosols from sources such as surface disturbances, road sand, vehicle tires, and leaf blowers.

Table 1: Attainment Status by Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District of State and Federal Air Quality Standards. In addition, the entire district is either Attainment or
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Unclassified for all State and Federal NO ₂ , SO ₂ , Pb, H ₂ S, visibility reducing particles, sulfates, and vinyl chloride standards.		
<u>Pollutant</u>	<u>State Designation</u>	<u>Federal Designation</u>
Ozone (O ₃)	Nevada County: Non-attainment (due to overwhelming transport)	<u>2008 O₃ Standard (75 ppb)</u> Western Nevada County: Serious Non-attainment;
		<u>2015 O₃ Standard (70 ppb)</u> Western Nevada County: Serious Non-attainment;
PM ₁₀	Nevada County: Non-attainment	Unclassified
PM _{2.5}	Nevada County: Unclassified	<u>2012 Annual Standard (9 µg/m³)</u> Nevada County: Unclassified/Attainment
		<u>2012 24-hour Standard (35µg/m³)</u> Unclassified/Attainment
CO	Nevada: Unclassified	Unclassified/Attainment

Ultramafic rock and its altered form, serpentine rock (or serpentinite), both typically contain asbestos, a cancer-causing agent. Ultramafic rock and serpentine are likely to exist in several areas of western Nevada County. The area of the project site is not mapped as an area that is likely to contain ultramafic rock, but it is adjacent to an ultramafic rock unit (California Department of Conservation, 2000). Natural occurrences of asbestos are more likely to be encountered in, and immediately adjacent to areas of ultramafic rock.

An evaluation of project impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions is provided in Section 8 of this Initial Study.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.				✓	A,G
b. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?			✓		A,G, L,21
c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?			✓		A,G,L, 21

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
d. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?		✓			A,G, 27

Impact Discussion:

- 3a. The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of an applicable air quality plan; therefore, **no impact** is anticipated on the potential adoption or implementation of an air quality plan.
- 3bc. The project does not propose a standby generator of any other emissions producing equipment. It is not anticipated that the operation of the communication facility will result in the direct emission of air pollutants. In the event of a power outage, the communication facility would rely on power from back-up batteries. The facility would be unmanned, with minimal traffic generated by technicians that would service equipment at the site. All surrounding residences are over 180 feet away from the communication facility. The proposed project would result in a temporary and incrementally small net increase in pollutants due to vehicle and equipment emissions during construction.

NSAQMD Rule 226 requires a Dust Control Plan when site disturbance will meet or exceed one acre. This project includes disturbance for the 1,600 square foot lease area, 3,400 feet of trenching for conduit, 10,400 square feet for the graveled driveway, and 3,482 square feet of widening Corchero Lane. In total, the project will have 0.43 acres of disturbance, so therefore, a dust control plan from the NSAMD is not required. Even for projects with less than an acre of disturbance, the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District still requires adherence to the best management practices in their Rule 226. Alignment with these rules is already required by law and is also carried forward as a condition of approval.

Therefore, impacts of exposing sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or impacts on attaining air quality standards are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

- 3d. The proposed wireless telecommunication facility project does not include a standby generator. However, if additional wireless telecommunication providers co-locate at the project site, they may request to install emergency backup generators. The operation of a generator would be infrequent and associated with maintenance and testing, and for use during power outages at the site. A generator would not cause substantial air pollutant emissions or objectionable smoke, ash, or odors because it would be required to meet modern emission standards of the Federal EPA and California Air Resources Board. The addition of a generator would require approval from the County through an Administrative Development Permit. During the review of the ADP, the County would ensure the generator aligns with the County zoning ordinance. A permit from the NSAQMD may be required as well. Therefore, Mitigation Measure 3A, requiring the applicant to contact NSAQMD to determine permitting requirements for a future generator is included. With the addition of Mitigation Measure 3A, impacts to air quality standards would be **less than significant with mitigation**.

Additionally, the construction phase of this project will entail some ground disturbance. Serpentine soils or ultramafic rock are not mapped on the project site, although there is still

potential for these materials to be encountered during construction. The NSAQMD requires notification in the event that ground disturbance yields serpentine, ultramafic rock or naturally occurring asbestos, as outlined in Mitigation Measure 3B. Therefore, with the addition of Mitigation Measure 3B, impacts from emissions would be ***less than significant with mitigation***.

Mitigation Measures:

To mitigate potential air quality impacts associated with the project construction activities, the following mitigation measure shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 3A: Authority to Construct Permit from the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. Building, altering, replacing, or operating any source of air contaminants, whether portable or stationary (but not mobile), may require an Authority to Construct permit from the Air Pollution Control Officer, unless the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) determines that such equipment is exempt from permitting or unless such equipment is currently registered with California Air Resources Board under the Portable Equipment Registration Program. The applicant shall contact NSAQMD in order to determine whether or not a future generator's engine requires permitting from the NSAQMD. The result of that contact and any resulting NSAQMD permits shall be provided to the Planning Department prior to issuance of any improvement permits.

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department and Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

Mitigation Measure 3B: Mitigate any asbestos discovered during construction. Prior to issuance of grading permits or improvement plans, all plans shall incorporate, at a minimum, the following asbestos control measures, which shall be implemented in the field: If serpentine, ultramafic rock or naturally occurring asbestos are discovered during construction or grading, the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District shall be notified within 24 hours, and specific requirements contained in Section 93105 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations must be strictly complied with.

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department and Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Existing Setting: The site is specifically located at a private rural residential development at 10111 Corchero Lane, within the community of Nevada City, California. Land use adjacent to the site generally consists of undeveloped open space and scattered rural residential development. Vegetation on the project site consists of a Sierra mixed conifer forest community. Waters of the U.S. were absent from the site; no water bodies having a perceptible OHWM were identified on site or adjacent to the site.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate,		✓			A,K,19

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?					
b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?			✓		A,K,10, 19, 33
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?				✓	A,K,10, 19
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?		✓			A,L,19, 33
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?			✓		A,16,19
f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				✓	A,18,19, 33

Impact Discussion:

- 4a. In compliance with Nevada County Code Section 12.04.212, the project area was surveyed by a Nevada County qualified biologist, Kyle Workman on April 24, 2025 (Workman, 2025). The biological inventory evaluated the potential for Special Status plants and wildlife, impacts to landmark trees or oak groves, and Waters of the U.S. to occur on or adjacent to the project site, as well as reviewed the property for locally protected resources per the requirements of Nevada County General Plan.

The project area is within the range of 36 special-status animal species that are of concern to USFWS and CDFW including the North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), the Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), various bird and bat species, three herptiles, and an invertebrate. The biologist did not note any observations or habitat potential for the Western Bumble Bee. The biologist determined that no suitable habitat exists for the majority of the 36 special status species, but determined there is suitable habitat for the Townsend's big-eared bat, Yuma myotis, fringed myotis, and Cooper's hawks. As a result, the biologist

recommends mitigation measures regarding timing of work, pre-construction surveys, and worker environmental awareness training which are implemented as Mitigation Measures 4A and 4B.

The project area is within the range of 21 special-status plant species that are of concern to USFWS and CDFW including the Dubious pea (*Allium sanbornii* var. *argillaceus*), Sanborn's Onion (*Allium sanbornii* var. *sanbornii*), True's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos mewukka* ssp. *Truei*), and various others. However, the biologist determined that no suitable habitat is present within the project area to support the listed plants known from the region.

Therefore, project impacts on on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species will be **less than significant with mitigation**.

- 4b 11 conifer trees are proposed to be removed for the development of the access and the communication facility, but the conifers are not considered a sensitive natural community by the Nevada County Code. The proposed 1,600 square foot communication tower lease area includes a vegetation management component as required by the Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal to reduce vegetation which provides fuel for wildfires. The Nevada County Fire Marshal is requiring that all flammable vegetation within 50 feet of the facility is cleared. The project is not within an oak woodland and the project biologist confirmed that no oak trees are proposed for removal. Additionally, the California Fish and Wildlife BIOs application does not identify the project parcel within a Conservation Plan or an essential habitat connectivity area. Based on the information above, the impacts to sensitive natural habitats, including oak woodlands will be **less than significant**.
- 4c The project biologist, Kyle Workman, determined that there are no Waters of the U.S. or Wetlands present in the project area as defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This determination aligns with a lack of waterbodies and courses identified on a United States Geological Survey Map. Therefore, there will be **no impact** on riparian habitat and wetlands.
- 4d The proposed communication tower will not impact migratory fish because there are no waterways on the project parcel. The Nevada County GIS portal shows the parcel has winter range for deer, but the 1,600 square foot lease area is not anticipated to impact the migrations of deer and other wildlife because the relatively small footprint of the lease area is not substantial enough to impact the way wildlife moves compared to existing conditions. California Fish and Wildlife classifies the terrestrial connectivity of the area as a large natural habitat area which is a lower ranking connectivity classification (2 of 5). Like much of the Western United States, the proposed Site is located within the Pacific Flyway. Although, no nests or nesting activity were observed during the biological assessment field survey, it is still possible that bird nests could be built within the area after the biological survey and prior to construction. Therefore, Mitigation Measure 4A is proposed to reduce impacts to nesting birds. Therefore, impacts on the movement of wildlife species is anticipated to be **less than significant with mitigation**.
- 4e. Nevada County has a number of local policies and ordinances that protect biological resources, including deer habitat; rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats; timber resources; and watercourses, wetlands, and riparian areas. According to the project biologist and a United States Geological Survey map, there are no watercourses, wetlands, or riparian areas near the vicinity of the project area. The project is within the range of a number of special status species, but there is no suitable habitat to support the majority of them and this document includes measures to mitigate the impacts on species that have the potential to occur. The project will not include the removal of any oak trees and the oak trees on the project are limited due to the project area having mostly conifers. Therefore, impacts to local ordinances or policies protecting biological resources will be **less than significant**.

- 4f. The project site is not part of a Habitat Conservation Plan or any other adopted conservation plans; therefore, there project would have **no impacts** or conflicts with adopted conservation plans.

Mitigation Measures:

To reduce potential impacts to sensitive biological resources, the following mitigation is required to be outlined on project construction plans for implementation during project construction:

Mitigation Measure 4A. Avoid Impacts to Nesting Birds. The following note shall be added to all improvement/grading/construction plans to avoid impacts to sensitive bird species:

- a. If construction occurs during the active bird nesting season (i.e., February 1 to August 31) a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey no more than 14 days prior to initiation of construction to identify any potential nesting activity. The results of the survey shall be provided to the Nevada County Planning Department. If active nests are observed, construction activity must be prohibited within a 500-foot (~160-meter) buffer around the nest until the nestlings have fledged. All construction activity within the vicinity of active nests must be conducted in the presence of a qualified biological monitor. Construction activity may encroach into the buffer area at the discretion of the biological monitor.
- b. If work is expected to begin during the nesting season (February 1 and August 31), a preconstruction survey for nesting Cooper's hawk shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 14 days prior to initiation of earthmoving activities. The survey shall include the project site and suitable nesting habitat within 500 feet.
- c. Worker environmental awareness training shall be conducted by a qualified biologist for all construction personnel. This training instructs workers to recognize Cooper's hawk and its associated habitat(s)

Timing: Prior to building/grading permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

Mitigation Measure 4B: Bat Protection. The following note shall be added to all improvement/grading/construction plans to avoid impacts to sensitive bat species:

- a. Restrict construction activities to the daylight hours to avoid impacts to foraging or night roosting bats.
- b. Require a qualified biologist to survey trees with the potential to support special-status bats within 100 feet of construction activities 7 days or less prior to the onset of construction. If there is no evidence that bats are present, such as visual or acoustic detection, guano, urine staining, or strong odors, no further mitigation is required.
- c. If a maternity roost is identified within a tree scheduled to be removed or within 100 feet of construction activities, create and maintain a buffer around the bat roost until such time that the roost is no longer occupied. Consult with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine the appropriate size of the no-disturbance buffer.
- d. Under all circumstances, the "take" of individuals, including direct mortality of individuals or the destruction of roosts while bats are presents, is prohibited.

Timing: Prior to issuance of grading/improvement/building permits and throughout construction.

Reporting: Approval of future grading/improvement permit

Responsible Agency: California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Planning Department

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Existing Setting: The cultural resources report prepared by Carrie D. Willis, RPA discusses three cultural periods in the prehistoric occupation of northern California: an early hunting period (9000-6000 B.C.), a subsequent period focused on food gathering (6000-2000 B.C.), and a third period (2000 B.C.-1700 A.D.) marked by greater exploitation of wetlands and lakes for food and diverse resources. The Nisenan, a subgroup of the California Penutian linguistic family, inhabited the Yuba, Bear, and American River drainages. Hunting, gathering, and fishing went on all year with the greatest activity in late summer and early fall. Major food sources were acorns, which were ground into flour using bedrock mortars and cooked in watertight baskets. The Nisenan engaged in limited trade with neighboring tribes for various goods.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines?		✓			A,J,22
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines?		✓			A,J,22
c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?		✓			A,J,22

Impact Discussion:

5a-c. A North Central Information Center letter determined there is moderate potential for locating indigenous-period/ethnographic-period and historic-period cultural resources within the proposed project area. Therefore, a cultural resources report was prepared by Carrie D. Wills, RPA. On March 26, 2025, Carrie D. Wills, RPA, visited the project location for the purpose of establishing the area of potential effects (APE). The results of the site investigation indicate no pre-contact cultural resources will be affected by the proposed construction of a new telecommunications facility. The site is not located within 250-feet of the boundaries of a National Register of Historic Places (NR) listed or eligible historic district. In addition, there are no individual NR listed or eligible historic properties located in the Visual APE. The results of the record search conclude the project site is not located within 250-feet of the boundaries of a historic district. In addition, no individual historic properties are located within ½-mile of the project site. The archeologist did not provide any mitigation measures.

On May 13, 2025, AB52 letters were sent to the Nevada City Rancheria Tribe, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, the T'si Akim Maidu Tribal Council, and the United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria. No comments were received from any of the tribes.

Due to neither the Registered Professional Archeologist nor any of the tribes expressing concern about the development of the communication tower, it is not anticipated that there will be impacts to a historical resource, an archaeological resource, or human remains.

While cultural resource discovery has been determined to be unlikely, Mitigation Measure 5A is proposed and would require construction to be halted in the unlikely event that there is a discovery of cultural resources, including historic, prehistoric, tribal, and paleontological resources. With the inclusion of proposed Mitigation Measure 5A and 18A, impacts to these resources will be ***less than significant with mitigation***.

Mitigation Measures:

To mitigate potentially adverse cultural or historical resources impacts associated with the proposed activities on site, the following mitigation measure shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 5A: Halt Work and Contact the Appropriate Agencies if Cultural Resources are Discovered during Project Construction. All grading and construction plans shall include a Note outlining the requirements provided below to ensure that any cultural resources discovered during project construction are properly managed. These requirements include the following: All equipment operators and employees involved in any form of ground disturbance shall be trained to recognize potential archeological resources and advised of the remote possibility of encountering subsurface cultural resources during grading activities. If such resources are encountered or suspected, work within 200 feet shall be halted immediately and the Nevada County Planning Department shall be contacted. A professional archaeologist shall be retained by the developer and consulted to access any discoveries and develop appropriate management recommendations for archaeological resource treatment. If bones are encountered and appear to be human, California Law requires that the Nevada County Coroner be contacted. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, and the procedures outlined in California Environmental Quality Act Sections 15064.5(d) and (e) shall be followed. If Native American resources are involved, Native American Organizations and individuals recognized by the County shall be notified and consulted about any plans for treatment.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

6. ENERGY:

Existing Setting:

The project site is currently an undeveloped parcel in a mixed conifer forest. Pacific Gas and Electric has existing powerlines running parallel to the south side of California State Highway 20. There is a utility pole point of connection to the north of the project parcel.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during			✓		A

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
construction or operation?					
b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?				✓	A,D

Impact Discussion:

- 6a. The proposed telecommunication tower and equipment facility would be unmanned. Technicians would only be on-site for testing and maintenance of equipment. 12 pure-lead batteries will be present for emergency use during power outages. The development area is fairly small, at about 1,600 square feet plus the driveway development, road widening, and utility trenching, resulting in 0.43 acres of disturbance in total. It is not anticipated that this will be an energy intensive construction project. The project does not require energy resources beyond what is required to operate the telecommunications tower and facility. The site would be powered by electric service that is already established in the area. Due to the scale of the project, the use of energy resources would not be excessive and therefore, the project would have a **less than significant impact**.
- 6b. The telecommunications tower and equipment facility would not conflict with any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Building permits would be required in order to construct the project. As part of the building permit review, all equipment and structures would be required to meet applicable energy standards identified in the California Building Code. Likewise, the project would not obstruct or prevent plans for renewable energy or efficiency. Therefore, the project would have **no impact** to state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Mitigation:

None Required.

7. GEOLOGY / SOILS:

Existing Setting: The proposed lease area and subject monopine lie at a ground elevation of approximately 4,187 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). The lease area is at an approximate 10% slope on an undeveloped parcel within a mixed conifer forest. Land use adjacent to the site generally consists of undeveloped open space and scattered rural residential development.

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was adopted in 1972 to prevent the construction of buildings in areas where active faults have surface expression. Ground or fault rupture is generally defined as the displacement that occurs along the surface of a fault during an earthquake. The project site is not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone and is approximately 0.5 miles west of a pre-quaternary fault, which is a fault that is older than 1.6 million years or a fault without recognized Quaternary displacement. High landslide hazards are not identified on the project parcel by the California Department of Conservation.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, the project area of the parcel is 100% Cohasset cobbly loam, 30 to 50 percent slopes. The Cohasset series consists of deep and very deep, well drained soils that

formed in material weathered from volcanic rock. These soils are on volcanic ridges and mountain slopes in mountains. The soil series is well drained with slow to rapid runoff and moderate permeability.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury or death involving: i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. ii. Strong seismic ground shaking? iii. Seismic-related ground failure including liquefaction? iv. Landslides?			✓		A, L, 12, 16, 31, 32
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?			✓		A, D, 11, 26
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?			✓		D, L, 12, 16, 32
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?			✓		A, D, 11, 26
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?				✓	A
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?		✓			A, L

Impact Discussion:

7a-d. The topography of the lease area and gravel access is gently sloping at about 10%. Development of the lease area, access driveway, and road widening would result in about 0.43 acres of disturbance. Project development would require issuance of a County Building Permit, which would require all structures, including the tower and the equipment cabinets, to comply with all California Building Code (CBC) and Nevada County Code requirements to ensure protection during seismic events and would require typical erosion and dust control measures.

As part of the project improvements and site inspections by the Building Department, soil compaction testing would be required for any grading at the site where the telecommunications tower would be installed. Therefore, as required by the Nevada County Building Department and General Plan Policy GH – 10.2.2, the project would be conditioned to require the submission of 2 sets of wet stamped/signed final geotechnical evaluation reports at the time of the submission of the Building Permit. The purpose of the geotechnical report is to ensure that the proposed project complies with all soil stability requirements of the California Building Code. Drainage calculations to ensure offsite drainage is not impacted would also be required at the time of building permit submittal. Due to the lease area being gently sloping, the erosion hazard is anticipated to be slight. The Cohasset series is a well-drained cobbly loam soil, so it is not anticipated to be expansive like a soil with higher clay content. As proposed, it is anticipated that the monopine and supporting structure would meet all structural design requirements of the California Building Code and the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. Furthermore, the project area is not in an area that is mapped with high landslide activity (California Geological Survey Map, Sheet 58, 2011). Therefore, given the above condition of approval requirement it is anticipated that project impacts to geologic and seismic hazards would be **less than significant**.

No specific potential hazards have been identified for the project site. According to the California Department of Conservation (2010), Nevada County is not in an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. There may be some minor ground vibrations caused by the construction activities at the project site, but ground shaking is not expected to be substantial. Due to the project site and standard building permit requirements, impacts associated with unstable earth conditions are expected to be **less than significant**.

- 7e. The proposed facility would be unstaffed with only infrequent short maintenance visits by technicians; it does not include a restroom or other facility requiring wastewater disposal; therefore, there would be **no impact** related to wastewater disposal.
- 7f. There are no known paleontological resources or unique geological features in or around the project site. Being that there will be ground disturbance for access improvements and the installation of the telecommunications tower and equipment facility, Mitigation Measure 5A would require work to halt in the event that there is an unanticipated discovery of paleontological resources. Direct or indirect damage to paleontological resources is anticipated to be **less than significant with mitigation**.

Mitigation:

See Mitigation Measure 5A.

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS:

Existing Setting: Global climate change refers to changes in average climatic conditions on the earth as a whole, including temperature, wind patterns, precipitation and storms. Global warming, a related concept, is the observed increase in the average temperature of the earth's surface and atmosphere. One identified cause of global warming is an increase of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are those gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. GHGs are emitted by natural and industrial processes, and the accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere regulates the earth's temperature. Events and activities, such as the industrial revolution and the increased combustion of fossil fuels (e.g. gasoline, diesel, coal, etc.), are believed to have contributed to the increase in atmospheric levels of GHGs. GHGs that are regulated by the State and/or EPA are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) and

nitrous oxide (NO₂). Emission inventories typically focus on GHG emissions due to human activities only, and compile data to estimate emissions from industrial, commercial, transportation, domestic, forestry, and agriculture activities. CO₂ emissions are largely from fossil fuel combustion and electricity generation. Agriculture is a major source of both methane and NO₂, with additional methane coming primarily from landfills. Most HFC emissions come from refrigerants, solvents, propellant agents, and industrial processes, and persist in the atmosphere for longer periods of time and have greater effects at lower concentrations compared to CO₂. Global warming adversely impacts air quality, water supply, ecosystem balance, sea level rise (flooding), fire hazards, and causes an increase in health-related problems.

To reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, the California Legislature enacted AB 32 (Núñez and Pavley), which is referred to as the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (September 27, 2006). AB 32 provided initial direction on creating a comprehensive, multiyear program to limit California's GHG emissions at 1990 levels by 2020, and initiate the transformations required to achieve the state's long-range climate objectives. In April 2015, the California Air Resources Board issued Executive Order B-30-15 to set an interim target goal of reducing GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 to keep California on its trajectory toward meeting or exceeding the long-term goal of reducing GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 as set forth in EO S-3-05. SB 32, enacted in 2016, codified the 2030 the emissions reduction goal of CARB Executive Order B-30-15.

In addition, the Governor signed Senate Bill 97 in 2007 directing the California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (formally Office of Planning and Research) to develop guidelines for the analysis and mitigation of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and mandating that GHG impacts be evaluated in CEQA documents. CEQA Guidelines Amendments for GHG Emissions were adopted by LCI (OPR) on December 30, 2009. The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) has prepared a guidance document, *Guidelines for Assessing Air Quality Impacts of Land Use Projects*, which includes mitigations for general air quality impacts that can be used to mitigate GHG emissions when necessary.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓		A,F,20
b. Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓		A,F,20

Impact Discussion:

8a-b. California is divided geographically into air basins for the purpose of managing the air resources of the State on a regional basis. An air basin generally has similar meteorological and geographic conditions throughout. Nevada County and Placer County are both within the Mountain Counties Air Basin. Nevada County is within the jurisdiction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, but the NSAQMD has not adopted thresholds of significance for greenhouse gases. However, Placer County Air Pollution Control District has adopted thresholds of significance for greenhouse gases. Due to greenhouse gas emissions being not only a regional but also a global concern, and the similarities between the neighboring air districts, it was determined that the Placer APCD thresholds are relevant standard for the determination of significance.

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) does not provide adequate inputs for unstaffed communication tower facilities. Use of default inputs generally results in a gross overestimation of emissions. For this reason and because the project is relatively small and would result in a very short construction period with very few operational vehicle trips, CalEEMod was not used for this study.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main component of greenhouse gases. Placer County AQMD's bright-line CO₂ equivalent threshold is equivalent to a project size of approximately 646 single-family dwelling units, or a 323,955 square foot commercial building. The proposed communication facility would be substantially less intense to construct and the operational greenhouse gas emissions are anticipated to be negligible. The communication facility would be unstaffed and would not contribute substantially to more vehicle trips than existing conditions. The project does not propose the installation of generators or any other emissions producing equipment. Therefore, greenhouse gas emissions associated with the 180-foot tall monopine would be **less than significant** because the project is substantially less intensive than the Placer County AQMD bright-line CO₂ equivalent threshold.

Mitigation Measures:

None required

9. HAZARDS / HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:

Existing Setting: The property is not within or adjacent to any hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (Department of Toxic Substances Control 2010). The project area is in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as designated by Cal-Fire. The project is not located within ¼ mile of an existing or proposed school.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			✓		C, 29
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓		C, 29
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				✓	C,L
d. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				✓	C,25

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?		✓			A,L
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓	H,M
g. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?			✓		A,M

Impact Discussion

- 9a-b. The project would include 12 lead batteries for electricity storage. Hazardous material storage must comply with California Health and Safety Code Sections 25500 - 25519 and 25100 - 25258.2. As a condition of approval, the applicant and/or facility operator must apply for and obtain a permit for the storage of hazardous materials and the generation of hazardous wastes from the Nevada County Department of Environmental Health (NCDEH), the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). This application may result in the applicant filing a Hazardous Material Business Plan (HMBP) within 30 days of triggering threshold quantities. However, if the hazardous materials are below threshold quantities, an Environmental Health permit for hazardous material storage is not required. If the hazardous materials are below threshold quantities, a significant hazard is not anticipated.

Small quantities of hazardous materials would be stored, used, and handled during construction. The hazardous materials anticipated for use are small volumes of petroleum hydrocarbons and their derivatives (e.g., gasoline, oils, lubricants, and solvents) required to operate the construction equipment. These relatively small quantities would be below reporting requirements for hazardous materials business plans and would not pose substantial public health and safety hazards through release of emissions or risk of upset. Safety risks to construction workers for the proposed project would be reduced by compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the government agency responsible for the authorization and licensing of facilities such as cellular towers that generate RF radiation. Radiofrequency (RF) radiation emanates from antenna on cellular towers and is generated by the movement of electrical charges in the antenna. The energy levels it generates are not great enough to ionize, or break down, atoms and molecules, so it is known as “non-ionizing” radiation. For guidance in health and safety issues related to RF radiation, the FCC relies on other agencies and organizations, including the EPA, FDA, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and OSHA, which have all been involved in monitoring and investigating issues related to RF exposure. The FCC has developed and adopted guidelines for human exposure to

RF radiation using the recommendations of the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), with the support of the EPA, FDA, OSHA and NIOSH. According to the FCC, both the NCRP exposure criteria and the IEEE standard were developed by expert scientists and engineers after extensive reviews of the scientific literature related to RF biological effects. The exposure guidelines are based on thresholds for known adverse effects, and they incorporate wide safety margins. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) the FCC is required to evaluate transmitters and facilities for significant impacts on the environment, including human exposure to RF radiation. When an application is submitted to the FCC for construction or modification of a transmitting facility or renewal of a license, the FCC evaluates it for compliance with the RF exposure guidelines, which were previously evaluated under NEPA. Failure to show compliance with the FCC's RF exposure guidelines in the application process could lead to the additional environmental review and eventual rejection of an application. The Radio Frequency – Electromagnetic Fields Exposure Report prepared by Hammett & Edison, Inc Consulting Engineers, predicted that for a person standing anywhere on the ground, the proposed site has exposure levels that are 1.3% of the FCC's public exposure limit. For an elevation of 20 feet, the report concludes the tower will emit 2% of the public exposure limit. If additional carriers were to seek co-location on this tower, they would be subject to the FCC permitting and compliance.

Lastly, it should be noted that Section 704 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 states that, "No State or local government or instrumentality thereof may regulate the placement, construction, and modification of personal wireless service facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions to the extent that such facilities comply with the Commission's regulations concerning such emissions". Because the proposed facility would operate under federally mandated limits on RF radiation for cellular towers and is regulated by the FCC in this respect, the County may not regulate the placement or construction of this facility based on the RF emissions. Therefore, impacts related to hazardous materials released from or generated by this project are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

- 9c. The project site is not located adjacent to, or within a quarter mile of, any schools. Therefore, the project would have **no impact** relative to the handling or emitting of hazardous materials in close proximity to a school.
- 9d. The wireless telecommunication tower facility is not proposed on or near a property that is on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. The nearest sites identified by the Department of Toxic Substance Controls are approximately 5.6 miles away. Therefore, there would be **no impact** relative to creating a significant hazard to the public or the environment due to the project site.
- 9e. The project site is not located within an airport land use plan and is approximately 7.4 miles from the compatibility zone of the nearest airport –the Nevada County Airport. While it is not anticipated that the FAA would consider the proposed monopine an obstruction, the requirement of the submission of the FAA's findings will ensure that the proposed project would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area or for operating aircraft and would result in the project impacts being **less than significant with mitigation** which is proposed herein as Mitigation Measure 9A.
- 9f. There is currently no adopted emergency response plan for the project area. However, Nevada County has a Wildfire Evacuation Plan, a Basic Emergency Plan, and a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. It is not anticipated that these plans would be adversely impacted by the communication facility. It is likely that increased cellular coverage would help with the issuance of emergency

alerts. Due to the project being an unstaffed communication facility that would not have full-time occupants and the lack of an adopted emergency response plan in the area, the project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, adopted emergency response plans, and **no impact** on any emergency response plan would occur as a result of the project.

- 9g. The County Office of the Fire Marshal and Nevada County Consolidated Fire District reviewed the project and did not express any concerns about the construction and operation of the telecommunication tower. The Office of the Fire Marshal is requiring as a Condition of Approval that the applicant provide a 50-foot radius of defensible space around all communication equipment and the tower itself. This defensible space will be required to be verified through an inspection. Due to the tower being unmanned and the vegetation clearance, the proposed project would not expose people or structures to wildland fires, and therefore would have a **less than significant impact**.

Mitigation Measures:

To mitigate potentially adverse impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials, the following mitigation measures shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 9A: Submission of a 7460-1 Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration application.

Prior to issuance of the Building Permit or Grading Permit, the applicant shall submit a 7460-1 application for approval from the Federal Aviation Administration of the evaluation of the proposed wireless telecommunication facility, which is in compliance with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77. The applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed monopine has been evaluated by the Federal Aviation Administration through the submission of the results of the evaluation to the Planning Department.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

10. HYDROLOGY / WATER QUALITY:

Existing Setting: The United States Geological Survey does not identify any watercourses on the parcel or within the vicinity of the project. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory does not identify any wetlands on the parcel. The biological inventory conducted by Kyle Workman states that waters of the U.S. were absent from the site; no water bodies having a perceptible OHWM were identified on the site or adjacent to the site. Workman also determined that no hydrophytic plant species were observed on the project site.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?			✓		A,C,I,20
b. Substantially decrease groundwater				✓	C

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?					
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: i. result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; ii. substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite; iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or iv. impede or redirect flood flows?			✓		A,D,9,19
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?				✓	A,9
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?				✓	A,D,19

Impact Discussion:

- 10a.c. The proposed project will include disturbance for the 1,600 square foot lease area, 3,400 feet of trenching for conduit, 10,400 square feet for the graveled driveway, and 3,482 square feet of widening Corchero Lane. The disturbance could alter the existing drainage pattern of the site, so the Building Department is requiring complete erosion control, grading, drainage, construction and utility plans with the future submittal of the building permit for the communication tower. The Department of Public Works is requiring that the grading and drainage plans include a supporting Hydrology and Hydraulics (H&H) analysis prepared by a registered civil engineer. The analysis must demonstrate that the proposed project will result in no net increase in stormwater runoff and shall fully comply with the requirements of Nevada County Land Use and Development Code Section 16.12. The unmanned communication facility will not generate wastewater. With implementation of the standard requirements, the project would have a **less than significant** impact in regard to violation of any water quality standards, wastewater discharge requirements, or water quality degradation. Additionally, impacts related to erosion, and storm water flows drainage would be **less than significant**.
- 10b. The proposed communication tower facility is unstaffed and does not have any water need. The proposed project will therefore have **no impact** on the existing wells on this or any of the adjacent parcels.

10d,e. There is no flood hazard or designated flood zone on the project site. Furthermore, the project is not in a tsunami or seiche zone, and it does not include housing, or conflict with or obstruct the implementation of a water quality control plan. It does not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam. Therefore, there would be **no impact** associated with the placement of the telecommunications tower and equipment facility on flood zones or water quality control plans.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

11. LAND USE / PLANNING:

Existing Setting: The proposed wireless telecommunication facility is proposed in Western Nevada County on a 5-acre parcel with a General Agricultural (AG-30) zoning designation. The property has a 30-acre minimum parcel size and an Rural (RUR-30) General Plan designation.

The nearest residence would be located on the adjacent parcel to the west and would be located approximately 270 feet from the proposed communication facility lease area. The adjacent parcels are also zoned General Agricultural with minimum parcel sizes of 30-acres (AG-30) and have General Plan designations of Rural (RUR). Adjacent parcels range in size from approximately 5 acres to approximately 13 acres and contain rural residential development.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Physically divide an established community?				✓	A,17,18
b. Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?				✓	A,B,18,19

Impact Discussion:

- 11a. The project is located in a rural area and it would not physically divide an established community. The project is proposed on a 5-acre parcel with access improvements and a total lease area of 1,600 square feet for the telecommunications tower site and facility; therefore, there would be **no impact** to the physical divide of a community from this project.
- 11b. The Communication tower is proposed within a General Agricultural zoning district and communication towers are an allowable use with an approved Use Permit in AG zoning districts. The development of the tower and facility would not interfere with other uses in the vicinity and would align with all the County site development standards, except for the access standards due to there not being adequate room within the access easement for the required 10 feet of fuel modification on each side. As a result, the applicant applied for a Petition for Exception to

Driveway Standards which is being processed concurrently with this application. The applicant will still implement fuel modification in alignment with the driveway standards on the eastern side of the Corchero access and to the greatest extent possible on the western side of the Corchero access, while remaining within the easement. The Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, the Department of Public Works, and the Office of the Fire Marshal reviewed the Petition for Exception to driveway standards and did not express any concerns due to the communication tower being unmanned, the public safety improvements created by enhanced communication, and the road improvements to Corchero Lane. The project aligns with all other access standards and site development standards. The tower would be disguised as a pine tree to blend in with the surrounding pine trees, meeting the camouflaging requirements of Section 12.03.080 of the Nevada County Code.

The lease area for the facility would be approximately 160 feet from the northern, eastern, and southern property lines, and it would be over 400 feet from the western property line, which provides for a large buffer to other land uses. The proposed tower would be 180 feet from the northern, eastern, and southern property lines, representing a 100% setback which is consistent with all required setbacks of the AG zoning district. There is no adopted area plan for the project location. The project supports Nevada County General Plan Policy 1.7.18 which seeks to “encourage and support a sustainable and technologically current high-speed broadband transmission system...”. Potential conflicts with applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations that could result in physical impacts are identified within this Initial Study and are found to be less than significant. Therefore, there are **no impacts** related to land use policy inconsistency and land use incompatibility.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

12. MINERAL RESOURCES:

Existing Setting: The project area is not mapped within a significant Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) or area of known valuable mineral deposits (*Nevada County 2017*).

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				✓	A,L,1
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?				✓	A,L,1

Impact Discussion:

12a-b. The proposed project is not mapped within a known mineral resource area or MRZ and would not change existing or potential land uses on the project site, therefore there would be **no impact** to mineral resources.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

13. NOISE:

Existing Setting: The project site is located within a Rural General Plan land use designation and is zoned General Agriculture (AG-30). Adjacent land uses are primarily dispersed rural-residential development. The closest residences are the Corchero residence on an adjacent parcel to the north and another residence to the south. Other than natural noises, ambient noise sources include the occasional vehicle traveling on State Highway 20 to the north. Nevada County Code Section 12.04.070 establishes noise standards for Rural land use categories at the following average levels:

- 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. – 55 dB Leq and maximum 75 dB Lmax
- 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. – 50 dB Leq and 65 dB Lmax
- 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. – 40 dB Leq and 55 dB Lmax

Nevada County Code 12.04.070.D.8., states that the above standards shall not apply to those activities associated with the actual construction of a project or to those projects with the provision of emergency services or functions.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?			✓		A,17,18
b. Generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?		✓			A,18
c. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.				✓	A,18

Impact Discussion:

- 13a. No noise producing equipment is proposed with the project. The communication facility does not propose a generator at this time and will instead rely on batteries for backup power. Any noise emitted from transformers, antennas, or cabinets is anticipated to be negligible. With the lease area being 160 feet from the property lines, the energy from any sound waves is anticipated to dissipate to levels substantially below the maximum noise level allowed by the County Code. The vegetation around the site will also contribute to the attenuation of the sound. Any future generators will require approval from the County and will need to demonstrate compliance with the County noise standards. Therefore, noise impacts are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

- 13b. Construction noise and any potential ground vibration during the construction activities could impact nearby residents. This impact would be less than significant with mitigation as recommended in Mitigation Measure 13A, below, which limits construction activity hours to between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. After the completion of the tower construction project, the ongoing operation of the facility would be less than significant as noted above. With Mitigation Measure 13A, any construction noise impacts would be reduced to a level that is **less than significant with mitigation**.
- 13c. The proposed project is an unstaffed communication facility located 9-miles from the closest airport, the Nevada County Airport. The site is unmanned and not within the vicinity of an airport. Therefore, the project would not expose any future occupants to excessive airport noise levels. There would be **no impacts** related to airport noise.

Mitigation Measure:

To reduce potentially significant impacts associated with construction noise, the following mitigation measure shall be noted on project plans:

Mitigation Measure 13A:– Limit construction activities to reduce noise impacts. Hours of operation for construction activities shall be limited to the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. These limited hours of operation shall be noted on project plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department prior to permit issuance.

Timing: Prior to building permit/grading issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

14. POPULATION / HOUSING:

Existing Setting: The subject property is currently undeveloped and is surrounded by parcels developed with dispersed rural residential uses. The project site is zoned AG-30. Residential uses are allowed but at one unit per 30 acres for new subdivisions.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?				✓	A,17,18
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓	A,17,18

Impact Discussion:

- 14a,b. The proposed project would continue the same general type of land use currently developed and designated for this site and would not result in population growth or displacement of housing or people. Therefore, the proposed project would have **no impact** related to these issues.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

15. PUBLIC SERVICES:

Existing Setting: The following public services are provided to this site:

Fire: Nevada County Consolidated provides fire protection services to this site.

Police: The Nevada County Sheriff provides law enforcement services.

Schools: Nevada Joint Union High School District and Nevada City School District provides school services to this site.

Parks: Grass Valley and Nevada City provides recreation facilities and opportunities.

Water & Sewer: There is no public water or sewer service available in this area.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of or need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the following the public services:					
1) Fire protection?			✓		H,M
2) Police protection?				✓	A
3) Schools?				✓	A,L,P
4) Parks?				✓	A,L
5) Other public services or facilities?				✓	A,B,L

Impact Discussion:

15a.1 The project is not anticipated to have significant impacts on fire protection services. It would include the installation of electrical services to the project site, equipment, and batteries. As discussed in Section 9 *Hazards/Hazardous Materials*, 50 feet of defensible space would be required around the communication equipment to reduce fire fuels. There are also required improvements to the driveway surface and the fuel along the driveway. The development of the communication tower would not result in the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios. It is likely that the additional cellular coverage provided by the tower would increase capacity to issue emergency alerts to citizens. Given that there could be a possible need for fire protection services, but no need for alteration or addition of fire facilities, the impact is considered to be **less than significant**.

15a.2-5 The project facility is unstaffed and not anticipated to impact law enforcement services, schools, public recreational facilities, or public services. As noted in Section 14 *Population/Housing* above, the project would not result in a permanent or substantial temporary increase in population that

could impact these services. The project would not impact sewer services or water services because the project does not require these services. The communication equipment and tower would utilize PG&E electrical service. Utility lines would be trenched and connected to an existing utility pole point of connection on the neighboring parcel to the north. No comments have been received from PG&E regarding this project. **No impacts** are anticipated for police protection, schools, parks, and public utility services.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

16. RECREATION:

Existing Setting: The Pioneer Trail is north of the proposed project site. A parcel owned by the Bureau of Land Management is 400 feet to the southeast. Land within the Tahoe National Forest that contains a trail system is 1.2 miles east of the project site. There are no other recreation facilities in the project vicinity. The project is located in the Grass Valley/Nevada City Recreation benefit zone.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?				✓	A
b. Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?				✓	A

Impact Discussion:

16a,b. The project would not adversely affect recreation facilities because the facility would be unstaffed and would therefore not create demand for recreational services or increase the use of existing recreational facilities. The proposed communication facility is not near the trail system within the Tahoe National Forest and is about 560 feet from the Pioneer Trail. Due to the distance and the density of trees between the communication facility and Pioneer trail, it is not anticipated that the communication facility will have any impact on the use of the trail. Therefore, the proposed project would have **no impact** related to these issues.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

17. TRANSPORTATION / CIRCULATION:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is located on a parcel accessed from Corchero Lane, a small gravel road, which is off of California State Highway 20. The area is very rural and there is no public transportation available.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?				✓	A,B
b. Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			✓		A,B
c. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				✓	A,B
d. Result in inadequate emergency access?				✓	A,B,H,M

Impact Discussion:

- 17a. The site would not conflict with any policies regarding transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities. There are no existing transit services available in this area so they would not be affected by the project. The project would have **no impact** regarding these policies or services.
- 17b. CEQA Section 15064.3 - Determining the Significance of Transportation Impacts describes specific considerations for evaluating a project's transportation impacts. Generally, vehicle miles traveled is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. For the purposes of this section, "vehicle miles traveled" refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project.

According to the Senate Bill 743 Vehicle Miles Traveled Implementation, adopted by the Nevada County Transportation Commission, a project's or plan's VMT impact may be considered less than significant if "the project or plan total weekday VMT per service population is equal to or less than "X" percent below the subarea mean under baseline conditions" and "the project or plan is consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan and the Nevada County Regional Transportation Plan."

A specific reduction "X" below subarea baseline VMT may be selected by each jurisdiction based on key factors such as the setting (as noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(b)(1)), evidence related to VMT performance, and policies related to VMT reduction.)

However, analysis of smaller, less complex projects can be simplified by using screening criteria. The Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation suggests that screening thresholds may be used to identify when land use projects should be expected to cause a less than-significant impact without conducting a detailed study. Screening thresholds identified by the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) Senate Bill 743 Vehicle Miles Traveled Implementation document include:

- Projects in western Nevada County consistent with a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) or General Plan that generate less than 630 VMT per day. This value is based on the CEQA exemptions allowed for projects up to 10,000 square feet as described in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303. The specific VMT estimate relies on the vehicle trip generation rate

contained in the OPR Technical Advisory for small project screening and average vehicle trip lengths for western Nevada County using the travel forecasting model.

A technician for each carrier is expected to travel to the site once a month for service. If three more carriers are added to the site, the most vehicle miles traveled would be for four roundtrip traffic trips to the site per month, which is substantially below the screening criteria of 630 VMT per day. Additional vehicle trips during the construction phase of the tower are anticipated as well, but these impacts will be temporary and unlikely to exceed the screening criteria.

The Nevada County Department of Public Works reviewed the project and did not require a traffic study because it determined the project is unlikely to create substantial draw and thus, would only have minimal impacts related to VMT's. Further, the project is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning intensities for the project site and surrounding area. Thus, given the above discussions, the proposed project is anticipated to have **less than a significant impact** on CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

- 17c,d The proposed communication facility would be accessed by a 420-foot long driveway within a 20-foot wide easement which is off of Corchero Lane. Corchero Lane is a privately-maintained road and the Department of Public Works did not require improvements due to the occupancy type of the communication facility. However, the Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal required that the access to the communication tower be improved to meet current driveway surfacing, width, and fuel modification requirements.

The applicant is unable to meet the fuel modification requirements along the entire length of the access due to there not being adequate room within the Corchero Lane easement for the required 10 feet of fuel modification on each side of travel way. As a result, the applicant applied for a Petition for Exception to Driveway Standards which is being processed concurrently with this application. The applicant will still implement fuel modification in alignment with County standards on the eastern side of the Corchero access and to the greatest extent possible on the western side of the Corchero access, while remaining within the easement. The Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, the Department of Public Works, and the Office of the Fire Marshal reviewed the Petition for Exception to driveway standards and did not express any concerns due to the communication tower being unmanned, the public safety improvements created by enhanced communication, and the road improvements to Corchero Lane.

Due to the access being improved over existing conditions, access related hazards are decreased rather than increased. Additionally, with the conditions required by the Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal, the project will not have inadequate emergency access. Therefore, **no impacts** related to traffic hazards and emergency access are anticipated.

Mitigation Measures:

None required.

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Existing Setting: The cultural resources report prepared by Carrie D. Willis, RPA discusses three cultural periods in the prehistoric occupation of northern California: an early hunting period (9000-6000 B.C.), a subsequent period focused on food gathering (6000-2000 B.C.), and a third period (2000 B.C.-1700 A.D.) marked by greater exploitation of wetlands and lakes for food and diverse resources. The Nisenan, a subgroup of the California Penutian linguistic family, inhabited

the Yuba, Bear, and American River drainages. Hunting, gathering, and fishing went on all year with the greatest activity in late summer and early fall. Major food sources were acorns, which were ground into flour using bedrock mortars and cooked in watertight baskets. The Nisenan engaged in limited trade with neighboring tribes for various goods.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:		✓			J,22
i. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or					
ii. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.		✓			J,22

Impact Discussion:

18a.i-ii A North Central Information System letter determined there is moderate potential for locating indigenous-period/ethnographic-period and historic-period cultural resources within the proposed project area. Therefore, a cultural resources report was prepared by Carrie D. Wills, RPA. On March 26, 2025, Carrie D. Wills, RPA, visited the project location for the purpose of establishing the area of potential effects (APE). The results of the site investigation indicate no pre-contact cultural resources will be affected by the proposed construction of a new telecommunications facility. The site is not located within 250-feet of the boundaries of a National Register of Historic Places (NR) listed or eligible historic district. In addition, there are no individual NR listed or eligible historic properties located in the Visual APE. The results of the record search concluded the site is not located within 250-feet of the boundaries of a historic district. In addition, no individual historic properties are located within ½-mile of the project location. The archeologist did not provide any mitigation measures.

On May 13, 2025, AB52 letters were sent to the Nevada City Rancheria Tribe, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, the T'si Akim Maidu Tribal Council, and the United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria. No comments were received from any of the tribes.

Due to neither the Registered Professional Archeologist nor any of the tribes expressing concern about the development of the communication tower, it is not anticipated that there will be impacts to any tribal cultural resource.

While tribal resource discovery has been determined to be unlikely, Mitigation Measure 18A is proposed that would require construction to be halted in the unlikely event that there is a discovery of cultural resources, including historic, prehistoric, tribal, and paleontological resources. With the inclusion of proposed Mitigation Measure 5A and 18A, impacts to these resources will be **less than significant with mitigation**.

Mitigation Measures:

To offset potentially adverse impacts related to Tribal Cultural Resources, the following mitigation measure shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 18A: Unanticipated Tribal Cultural Resources. The following mitigation measures shall be required and shall be included as notes on all future site plans: If any suspected Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs) are discovered during ground disturbing construction activities, all work shall cease within 100 feet of the find, or an agreed upon distance based on the project area and nature of the find. A Tribal Representative from a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area shall be immediately notified and shall determine if the find is a TCR (PRC §21074). The Tribal Representative will make recommendations for further evaluation and treatment as necessary.

When avoidance is infeasible, preservation in place is the preferred option for mitigation of TCRs under CEQA and UAIC protocols, and every effort shall be made to preserve the resources in place, including through project redesign, if feasible. Culturally appropriate treatment may be, but is not limited to, processing materials for reburial, minimizing handling of cultural objects, leaving objects in place within the landscape, or returning objects to a location within the project area where they will not be subject to future impacts. Permanent curation of TCRs will not take place unless approved in writing by UAIC or by the California Native American Tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area.

The contractor shall implement any measures deemed by the CEQA lead agency to be necessary and feasible to preserve in place, avoid, or minimize impacts to the resource, including, but not limited to, facilitating the appropriate tribal treatment of the find, as necessary. Treatment that preserves or restores the cultural character and integrity of a TCR may include Tribal Monitoring, culturally appropriate recovery of cultural objects, and reburial of cultural objects or cultural soil. Work at the discovery location cannot resume until all necessary investigation and evaluation of the discovery under the requirements of the CEQA, including AB52, have been satisfied.

Timing: Prior to Issuance of grading/improvement/building permits and throughout construction

Reporting: Planning Department Approval of Grading and Construction Permits

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

19. UTILITIES / SERVICE SYSTEMS:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is currently undeveloped and not served by any utilities. Power is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric and there are exiting utility lines on the neighboring parcel to the north.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?			✓		A,D
b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?				✓	A
c. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?				✓	C
d. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?		✓			A,C
e. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?				✓	B

Impact Discussion:

- 19a. The proposed project would not create a need for new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, storm water drainage, or natural gas facilities. Any additional storm drainage runoff generated by the project would be required to be kept on site and would not affect any off-site drainage facilities. The project would require extensions of electrical power and communication systems to the equipment facility. Electrical and conduit would be brought to the project site from an existing utility pole on the northern parcel through a utility easement. The electrical and conduit expansion would involve about 300 feet of trenching so that the conduit can be installed underground. The project itself is an extension of communication systems and all impacts from that extension are evaluated within this Initial Study. Therefore, there would be a **less than significant impact** related to these issues.
- 19b,c. The project would not require water or wastewater treatment service and therefore, would have **no impact** on sufficient water supplies or adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve the project.

- 19d. The operational phase of the proposed project would not result in an increase of solid waste. While not anticipated, construction activities, could potentially produce solid waste in the form of construction materials or industrial waste like glues, paint, and petroleum products, resulting in potentially adverse landfill and solid waste disposal impacts. Impacts would be **less than significant with mitigation** as identified in Mitigation Measure 19A below which requires proper disposal of waste not accepted by the regional landfill.
- 19e. The development and operation of the proposed cellular telecommunication facility is not anticipated to result in significant amounts of solid waste; however, any waste generated would be required to comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste and therefore, project related impacts to these regulations are anticipated to have **no impact**.

Mitigation Measures:

To offset potentially adverse impacts related to construction waste, this mitigation measure shall be included as a note on all construction plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department prior to permit issuance.

Mitigation Measure 19A: Appropriately Dispose of Vegetative and Toxic Waste. Neither stumps nor industrial toxic waste (petroleum and other chemical products) are accepted at the McCourtney Road transfer station and if encountered, shall be properly disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and facilities.

Timing: Prior to building permit issuance and during construction

Reporting: Agency approval of permits or plans

Responsible Agency: Nevada County Planning Department

20. WILDFIRE:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is in the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District in a very high fire severity zone. The project is near three unstaffed Nevada County Consolidated Fire Stations and an unstaffed Fire Station in the Town of Washington. The project site is located approximately 9.3 driving miles away from Nevada County Consolidated Station 84, which is staffed.

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire severity hazard zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓	A,H,M,23
b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, or other factor, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrollable spread of wildfire?			✓		A,B,H,M, 18
c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?			✓		A,H,M

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire severity hazard zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?			✓		A,H,M,12, 32

Impact Discussion

- 20a. The Safety Element of the Nevada County General Plan addresses wildfire hazards in Nevada County and has several policies to improve fire safety. The Safety Element discusses the importance of ingress and egress by roadways, and Policy FP-10.7.3 requires that a condition of development is to maintain private roads, including the roadside vegetation. Proposed conditions of approval require fuel modification and access improvements.

The proposed telecommunications tower and facility would increase technology and provide more coverage for communication in the rural area. The proposed project complies with adopted plans for emergencies and does not pose conflicts; therefore, the project would have **no impact** on impairing emergency plans.

- 20b. The installation of the telecommunications tower and facility would not expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations or wildfire due to the project being unmanned during typical operation. Therefore, the project would have a **less than significant impact** on exposing project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrollable spread of wildfire.
- 20c. The electric service and telecommunication lines that would be brought to the project site from an existing utility pole. The new lines would be trenched underground, rather than installed as overhead power lines. The project was reviewed by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Nevada County Consolidated Fire District. Nevada County Consolidated did not have any concerns about the approval of the project and the Office of the Fire Marshal provided conditions of approval requiring 50 feet of fuel modification from the tower and 10 feet of fuel modification from each side of the access where it can be feasibly done within the easement. The access improvements will enhance emergency access and the fuel modification is anticipated to reduce the fuel for a fire. The biological impacts of the fuel modification are discussed in Section 4 of this Initial Study. All improvements would require building permits and conformance with Chapter V of the County Code for building and grading standards. The development of the access driveway, the required improvements to Corchero lane, and maintenance of the vegetation clearance around the communication facility would not significantly impact the environment. The project has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the Fire Marshal, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, and the Department of Public Works and emergency water sources were not required. Therefore, the project would have a **less than significant impact** on the spread of wildfire and fire risks.
- 20d. The project would require building permits for the grading and site improvements, which would require compliance with the Nevada County grading standards outlined in Nevada County Code Title 14. The building permits would require grading and erosion control plans for the soil disturbance, and a drainage analysis to ensure no additional runoff leaves the project site. As

part of the project improvements and site inspections by the Building Department, soil compaction testing would be required for the grading where the telecommunications tower would be installed. Furthermore, the project area is not in an area that is mapped with high landslide activity. With the soil compaction testing, erosion control measures, the area not having high landslide activity, and no waterways being in the project area, the project would have a **less than significant impact** on flooding, landslides, runoff, and slope instability.

Mitigation:

None required.

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?		✓			A,19,33
b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?			✓		A
c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		✓			A

Impact Discussion:

21a,c. As discussed in Sections 1 through 20 above, development of the proposed project would comply with all local, state, and federal laws governing general welfare and environmental protection. Project implementation during construction and operation could result in potentially adverse impacts to air quality, biological, and cultural resources, geology/soils, hazards/hazardous materials, noise, tribal cultural resources, and possible impacts to utilities/services. Each of those impacts is mitigated to levels that are **less than significant with mitigation** as outlined in each section.

21b. A project's cumulative impacts are considered significant when the incremental effects of the project are "cumulatively considerable," meaning that the project's incremental effects are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future

projects. Reasonably foreseeable projects that could have similar impacts to the proposed project include other anticipated projects within the project vicinity that could be constructed or operated within the same timeframe as the project. All the proposed project's impacts, including operational impacts, can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this Initial Study and compliance with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Therefore, the proposed project would have **less than significant** environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable.

Mitigation Measures:

To offset potentially adverse impacts to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology/soils, hazards/hazardous materials, noise, tribal cultural resources, and utilities/services, see Mitigation Measures 3A-3B, 4A – 4B, 5A, 9A, 13A, 18A and 19A.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PROJECT PLANNER:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- _____ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- X I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- _____ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- _____ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or a "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- _____ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

David Nicholas Digitally signed by David Nicholas
Date: 2025.11.12 17:06:48 -08'00'

David Nicholas, Associate Planner

Date

APPENDIX A – REFERENCE SOURCES

- A. Planning Department
 - B. Department of Public Works
 - C. Environmental Health Department
 - D. Building Department
 - E. Nevada Irrigation District
 - F. Natural Resource Conservation Service/Resource Conservation District
 - G. Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District
 - H. Nevada County Consolidated Fire District
 - I. Regional Water Quality Control Board (*Central Valley Region*)
 - J. North Central Information Service, Anthropology Department, CSU Sacramento
 - K. California Department of Fish & Wildlife
 - L. Nevada County Geographic Information Systems
 - M. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire)
 - N. Nevada County Transportation Commission
 - O. Nevada County Agricultural Advisor Commission
 - P. Grass Valley/ Nevada Joint Union School District
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- 1. State Division of Mines and Geology. Mineral Classification Map, 1990.
 - 2. State Department of Fish and Game. Migratory Deer Ranges, 1988.
 - 3. State Department of Fish and Game. Natural Diversity Data Base Maps, as updated.
 - 4. Cal Fire. Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map for Nevada County, 2007. Adopted by CalFire on November 7, 2007. Available at: < <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/wildfire-planning-engineering/wildland-hazards-building-codes/fire-hazard-severity-zones-maps/> >.
 - 5. State Division of Mines and Geology. Geologic Map of the Chico, California Quadrangle, 1992.
 - 6. State Division of Mines and Geology. Fault Map of California, 1990.
 - 7. California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection. 2020. Nevada County Important Farmland Data. Available at: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/ciftimeseries/>.
 - 8. State Dept. of Forestry & Fire Protection. Nevada County Hardwood Rangelands, 1993.
 - 9. U.S.G.S, 7.5 Quadrangle Topographic Maps, as updated.
 - 10. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National Wetlands Inventory, December 1995.
 - 11. United States Department of Agricultural, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Web Soil Survey, accessed 10/2/2025, <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>
 - 12. U.S. Geological Service. Nevada County Landslide Activity Map, 1970, as found in the Draft Nevada County General Plan, Master Environmental Inventory, December 1991, Figure 8-3.
 - 13. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood Insurance Rate Maps, as updated.
 - 14. Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. Guidelines for Assessing Air Quality Impacts of Land Use Projects, 2016.
 - 15. County of Nevada. Nevada County General Plan Noise Contour Maps, 1993.
 - 16. Nevada County. 1991. Nevada County Master Environmental Inventory. Prepared by Harland Bartholomew & Associates, Inc. (Sacramento, CA). Nevada County, CA.
 - 17. Nevada County. 1995. Nevada County General Plan: Volume 1: Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Implementation Measures. Prepared with the assistance of Harland Bartholomew & Associates, Inc. (Sacramento, CA). Nevada County, CA.
 - 18. Nevada County. Nevada County Zoning Regulations. Adopted July 2000, and as amended.
 - 19. Environmental Assessment Specialists, Inc, Kyle Workman, Biological Resources Impact Analysis, October 13, 2025.
 - 20. California Attorney General's Office. "Addressing Climate Change at the Project Level." January 6, 2010.

21. US Environmental Protection Agency. Current Nonattainment Counties for All Criteria Pollutants. March 31, 2021. www.epa.gov/oaqps001/greenbk/ancl.html.
22. Cultural Resource Records, Carrie D Wills M.A. RPA, March 31, 2025.
23. Nevada County. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. August 2017. <https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/19365/Nevada-County-LHMP-Update-Complete-PDF?bidId=>
24. Removed
25. California Department of Toxic Substances Control. Accessed October 2, 2025: <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>
26. USDA Soil Conservation Service. "Soil Survey of Nevada County Area, California." Soil Survey, Reissued 1993.
27. California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines & Geology. "Report 2000-19: A General Location Guide for Ultramafic Rocks in California – Areas More Likely to Contain Naturally Occurring Asbestos." 2000.
28. California Department of Transportation. California Scenic Highway Mapping System. Accessed May 29, 2025, <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>
29. Hammett & Edison, Inc-Radio Frequency Electromagnetic Fields Exposure Report. 10/16/2024.
30. Nevada County. Land Use and Development Code Section 5, Article 13, Grading. Amended December 2016.
31. California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey. 2010. Accessed October 2, 2025. <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/fam/app/>
32. Susceptibility to deep-seated landslides, California Geological Survey, Accessed May 29, 2025, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?url=https://gis.conservation.ca.gov/server/rest/services/CGS/MS58_LandslideSusceptibility_Classes/MapServer&source=sd
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